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Haphazardly Ambidextrous

Interpretations of the Vice in 16th-Century English Drama

The paper examines the Vice character of English drama from non-cycle interludes – both interpretations of the character as well as Vices from specific plays, such as *The Play of the Weather*, *Cambises*, *Appius and Virginia* and others, and it argues for a complex view of the character, where his typical villainy, his humour and mockery and his histrionic skills form a unique merger, which is essential in understanding the figure. According to the argument the Vice may but does not have to sustain the moral message of the play, and examples are given for showing that his characteristic comedy is misunderstood as mere buffoonery or condemnable evil. Instead of trying to separate the dark and vicious Vice from the buffoonish evil who is not harmful, it is suggested that we take into account the strong connections between the Vice and the popular fool, and see the Vice as the specimen of the trickster-archetype.

> *Merry Report*. Well than, as wyse as ye seme to be,
> Yet can ye se no wisdome in me. (119–20)

In this paper I intend to examine a unique and problematic character, or rather, a character-type of 16th century English drama, the Vice. The character, a tempter, a mischievous, humorous villain is a real crux: he appears first of all in morality plays, but not necessarily there, sometimes the term "Vice" is used for him in the cast list, but not necessarily; sometimes, however, the term "Vice" is used for figures who to some extent seem to be not typical Vices. There are several unanswered questions about him. One crucial question is whether we can call a figure "Vice" if this title is not given to him in the play, but in his function he seems to comply with those that are. For example, the character called Mischief in a 15th century morality *Mankind*, is frequently discussed as "Vice" in literature, although the first instance that we know of that explicitly describes a character as "Vice" in a play is from 1523. Also, the question arises whether all existing Vices are indeed manifestations of the same type.

I cannot exclude the possibility that from a perspective different from mine there may be significant differences between these figures, differences that require that the figures are treated respectively. But although individual Vices in individual plays taken as a group display a colourful spectrum, there are certain characteristics – such as their metadramatic behaviour, their improvisational attitude, their characteristic comedy – that I find convincing enough for seeing them as having a certain function within the play and thus being the manifestations of one type, no matter how complex that type is. With this present project I wish to support such a vision of the type, and I propose to map some crucial elements of its complexity.

No matter whether we take the perspective of 16th century audiences or 20th century critics, a basic problem with the Vice has always been the sense of comedy that makes him, although evil, appealing. His comedy has long worried critics, because of its obvious moral implications, and those critics dealing with the Vice frequently felt the need to downplay the strongly appealing nature of the character, or even if they admitted its appeal, they fought to fit it within a larger pattern where it will necessarily appear as condemnable. Somerset, for example, gives an insightful account of the Vice's comedy, but still maintains that the audience sees him as evil.[1] Happé refers to examples where the Vice is not punished but escapes in the end – an idea that makes difficult the application of the workings of Justice – but points out that the final joke is still on the Vice, suggesting that in the end the audience laughs not *with* the Vice but *at* him.[2] Dessen gives a detailed overview of the entertainment function of the Vice comedian and his relatedness to the jester and the fool, and still, finds the "diabolic associations" so significant as to dismiss this comedy in the end by simply saying that it has a distinct edge.[3]

I would like to suggest, and this is partly what I will try to demonstrate in my account of morality Vices, that perhaps we should accept that even if a play has a clear moral doctrine, the Vice, by being outside of it (as he frequently is, indeed), *does not* need to contribute to this doctrine, quite the contrary. Also, since he is *not* necessarily evil, he does not necessarily have to be punished – again supporting the idea that

1. J. A. B. Somerset, " 'Fair is foul and foul is fair': Vice-Comedy's Development and Theatrical Effects," in *The Elizabethan Theatre V*, ed. G.R. Hibbard (Waterloo: University of Waterloo, 1975) 54–75.

2. Peter Happé, " 'The Vice' and the Popular Theatre, 1547-80," in *Poetry and Drama 1570–1700*, ed. Anthony Coleman (London and New York: Methuen 1981) 13–31, p.28.

3. Alan Dessen, *Shakespeare and the Late Moral Play* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 22.

he may have nothing to do with the moral doctrine of the play.[4] I would like to have a look at actual plays containing a Vice in order to show the colourful palette of his appearance, to support my argument that he is perhaps not best understood as contributing to a structure of a clear moral message. My choices of plays are purposely diverse. I will discuss in relative detail the vice of a play that is called a comedy, another vice that appears in a combination of history play and morality, an exemplum, and I will draw on examples taken from other texts as well, such as moralities illustrating proverbs – in order to show that no matter how different the genres are (and probably the aims of the several authors as well), there are significant similarities in Vices even in plays as different as the ones I examine.

Merry Report

The first instance of the description "the Vice" among characters of a play appears in two comedies by John Heywood, *The play of Love* (from the 1520s or early 1530s) and *The Play of the Weather* (1527–33). Heywood's Vices are considered atypical by many interpreters because they lack a supposedly essential characteristic: they hardly seem to be evil at all.[5] This is why, for example, Bernard Spivack delivers a carefully structured argument in which he explains why these "Vices" are not representative vices in the first place, and also, why it is erroneous to draw consequences about the genus vice based on these instances. Spivack refers chiefly to Chambers when he disagrees with earlier commentary on the Vice, and presents his own view on Heywood's vices in the above mentioned plays: "Both roles, superficially examined, seem to present nonallegorical comedians, provoking at least one scholar to

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4. The issue is further problematised when the character who has the last word and who gives the final interpretation of the events is not a virtuous character, such as, say, the one called Remedy, as in *Wealth and Health*, but a Vice. If he is both involved in evil schemes and is a director-entertainer Vice, the origin and prime mover of the whole play, the worst thing we can say about him is that he presents himself paradoxically in his own play in a morally condemnable way, in order to make the moral message complete.

5. Interestingly, however, these comedic figures may be linked to a stage device with demonic connections, as in *The Play of Love* the figure called No-lover nor-loved, who is referred to as "vice" in the cast runs among the audience crying "water, water, fire, fire," while his head is full of squibs, implying that his hair caught fire while off-stage. The connection is made by the use of "squibs," fire-crackers: these were used by earlier stage devils, and thus Heywoord's Vice could at this point probably be associated with them by the audience. For this remark I am indebted to Kent Cartwright.

argue that the Vice is essentially a dramatic outgrowth of the medieval clown or jester, extraneous to the morality drama and brought into it merely to create its comedy."[6]

Spivack even explains how such a Vice appeared on stage. He claims that the vice who distinguished himself from his allegorical cohorts and developed into a theatrical personality (I take it that he means the master-of-ceremonies-type vice who is surrounded by similar minor and less potent vices, such as Mischief and his three companions in *Mankind*) subsequently "could be lifted out of his allegorical and homiletic context and cultivated in comedy of the type Heywood was writing."[7] Such an explanation eliminates any other ideas about vices that would not fit into Spivack's main idea about the Vice as *radix malorum*, the origin of all evil, an explanation that in my view leaves out a crucial attribute of this figure.

Heywood's Vice in *The Play of the Weather*[8] is indeed not evil, but I would not like to exclude him from a discussion of the Vices exactly because he has much in common with the allegedly "all-evil" Vices. Also, he is impudent enough to mock the chief god, Jupiter, already at his entrance on the stage. As Merry Report enters, Jupiter asks him who he is: "Why, what arte thou that approchyst so ny?" (l 101), to which the Vice answers:

> *Mery Report.* Forsothe, and please your lordshyppe it is I.
> *Jupiter.* All that we knowe very well, but what I?
> *Mery Report.* What I? Some saye I am perse I.
>   But what maner I, so ever be I,
>   I assure your good lordshyp I am I.   (102–6)

As he himself gives an explanation of his name, it is Merry Report because he will report even the sad news merrily: "And for my name, reporting alway trewly / What hurte to reporte a sad mater merely?" (136–7).

I find it interesting how Merry Report seems to imply that until the report is true, there might be nothing wrong with its indecorously merry delivery. Another characteristic of his is that he has no prejudice, no attachment to anything. All weather is the same for him, therefore he is able to report on people's opinions without bias:

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6. Bernard Spivack, *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 136.

7. Spivack, p. 136.

8. Richard Axton and Peter Happé eds., *The Plays of John Heywood* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991).

> For all wethers I am so indifferent,
> Wythout affeeccyon standynge so up right –-
> Son lyght, mone lyght. . .
> Temperate or dystemperate – what ever yt be,
> I promiyse your lordshyp all is one to me.   (154–60)

He employs the characteristic tool of audience-involvement of Vices and addresses the audience after Jupiter sends him away to his job:

> Now good my lorde god, Our Lady be with ye!
> Thynke ye I may stand thrustyng amonge you there?
> Nay by God, I muste thrust about other gere.   (175–8)

Also, he says,

> Now syrs, take hede for here cometh goddess servaunt.
> Avaunte, carterly keytyfs, avaunt!
> Why, ye drunken horesons, wyll yt not be?
> By fayth, have ye no ther cap nor kne?   (186–9)

On the one hand, he is humiliating members of the audience ("drunken horesons"); on the other, he is stressing his own importance as being "goddess servaunt." Although Merry Report has mocked Jupiter at the beginning with his entrance by not giving due respect to the main God, in the end he indeed makes a good and faithful servant considering how he carries out his job. He does give a truthful account of the different opinions of people, representatives of different social types about what sort of weather they would like to have. He boasts about his position of being god's servant, but establishes a questionable reputation when saying that being the devil's servant could be more fun: "I thynke goddess servauntes may lyve holyly / But the devils servauntes lyve more meryly" (988–9).

Still, no matter what he says, he seems rather merry even as Jupiter's servant. He is not cruel or mean, apart from his longing to be the devil's servant instead. The only thing that makes him potentially condemnable is when after having presented their wishes the suitors leave him, he pretends not to care for them. But again in the end he does not betray either of them, and indeed he is indifferent in presenting their various wishes to Jupiter. He does not have to escape or be punished either in the end.

In the introduction to *The Plays of John Heywood*, the editors describe Heywood's Vices the following way:

> They are playmakers and go-betweens, not fixed in any social 'estate,' but able to mimic any. They relate as easily to the audience as to other players, taking liberties with both. Their capers and apparent improvisations add movement, dance perhaps, and song-like antics often reminiscent of children's games. But the Vice figures are the least innocent of Heywood's roles: knowing, verbally clever, and irrepressibly bawdy.[9]

Based on this view another opinion can be formed that opposes Spivack's ideas. The comedy of this Vice is not entirely benign, but there are other things that are much more important: the fact that his behaviour is not consequent or logical (he does not behave according to his opinion expressed in his side remarks), that he relates to the other characters and the audience in the same mockingly disrespectful manner, he does not belong to a social position but, as was pointed out in the quotation above, he can mimic any such position.

Ambidexter

Similarly to Merry Report who was reluctant to reveal his name to Jupiter, Ambidexter from *Cambises* (1558–69)[10] is creating suspense too by delaying disclosure of who he is, what name he is called by. He pretends to have forgotten his name, but once he remembers, he gives an explanation of its meaning.[11]

> Ha, my name, my name would you so fain knowe?
> Yea, iwis shall ye, and that with all speed:
> I have forgot it therefore I cannot showe,
> A, A, now I have it, I have it in deed.
> My name is Ambidexter, I signifie one,
> That with bothe hands finely can play. . .   (146–51)

This half morality, half history play, a transition towards the chronicles, similarly to the previous play, features a Vice who is capable of behaving as people be-

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9. Axton and Happé, p. 13.

10. Robert Carl Johnson ed., *A Critical Edition of Thomas Preston's Cambises* (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1975).

11. "The earliest sense in English (1532) was restricted to law: 'one who takes bribes from both sides.' In 1555 the word is used by Bishop Ridley with the sense of a 'double-dealer,' but these are the only two recorded usages prior to our play. The sense of double-dealing or playing on both sides is germane to our character" (Johnson, explanatory notes, 170).

longing to different social level; he very skilfully plays his different parts. After Ambidexter has fought with the ruffians and taken part in the lewd and comic conversation with Meretrix in scene 2, at the beginning of scene 3 he prepares to meet Sisamness and says he will behave like a gentleman: "Beholde where he cometh, I wil him meet: / And like a gentleman I meane him to greet" (305–6).

As it turns out, however, in this particular scene his "gentleman-like" behaviour is restricted to showing some respect to Sisamenes in acting as benevolent advisor and suggesting that he "play with bothe hands and turn with the winde" (321).

Ambidexter proves to be a forerunner of Iago when he very skilfully makes the King suspicious of his brother, no matter how ungrounded this suspicion is. The Vice is withholding the truth: he pretends to be reluctant to utter a lie, intensifying the tension when suggesting to King Cambises that his brother is looking for his death. His method is to reveal, while acting as if he were denying what he reveals.

King. How sayst thou? speake the trueth, was it so or no?
Ambidexter. I think so if it please your grace, but I cannot tel.   (685–6)

Ambidexter is capable of displaying histrionic skills in a spectacular way on stage. The way he pretends to be sorry for the dead queen is highly ironic, since the audience has just noticed the sad event of the Queen's song, an improvised, psalm-like farewell before she leaves the stage to be executed.

A, A, A, A, I cannot chuse but weep for the Queene:
Nothing but mourning now at the Court there is seen.
Oh, oh, my heart, my heart, Oh my bum wil break:
Very greef so torments me that scarce I can speake.
Who could but weep for the losse of such a lady?
That can not I doo, I sweare by mine honesty.   (1127–32)

Funnily in the last line, when he swears he is true and honest, he indeed cannot identify with crying from heart – although we have seen him cry ironically in the previous lines. But actually there is nothing he will identify with, since he is constantly playing. His laughter is no more true than his weeping, as he himself points it out in another example; laughter is just the other side of his ambidextrous quality. Ambidexter's pretence of weeping and being sorry after another execution, the one of Lord Smirdis, displaces the audience's genuine sorrow after they saw the tragic circumstances of his death. Ambidexter first pretends to weep and then ironically bursts out in laughter: "Ha, ha, weep, nay, laugh, with both hands to play" (744).

As these two examples show, Ambidexter comes very close to being the epitome of actors, whose tears and laugher are not more real than his. But he is indeed the explicator of the moral message: before the king enters dying at the end of the play, he foreshadows the fate that the king deserves: "He hath shed so much blood that his wil be shed: / If it come so to passe, in faith then he is sped" (1151–2). And the moral message is reinforced by the dying King as well: "A just reward for my misdeeds, my death dooth plain declare" (1166).

At the end of the play Ambidexter is not punished for anything; he just leaves the stage: "Farewel my maisters, I wil go take barge. / I meane to be packing, now is the tide" (1178–9).

Johnson in his critical introduction to the play stresses several times how the play does not necessarily need Ambidexter's character to go on. He sees the employment of this character as evidence of his popularity and as a problem of historical structure (the tradition, the historical function of the Vice) vs. artistic motivation.[12] After showing how Ambidexter's presence was not essential for any of the main events, he summarises the Vice's function in the following way: "Ambidexter's role is reduced to that of expositor; he is the link between scenes, the reporter of off-stage events, the prophet of future events, the philosopher, the knave. He exists to entertain and elucidate."[13] The two comic scenes are Ambidexter's, and although they counteract the serious tone of the main plot, as Johnson points out, they also "suggest a secondary theme: men play with both hands and turn with the wind at all levels of society." In this function the Vice is the one to reveal how corrupt people are, rather than corrupting them himself. It is clear also that the only character in the play he ostensibly "corrupts," namely Sisamnes, has been corrupt already, even before he met Ambidexter.

To sum up Ambidexter's role in *Cambises* I would like to draw attention to his presence in the play rather as an idea of playing and entertainment than as a powerful and vicious character. If we accept Johnson's view of the subplot supplementing the main one and showing how people are the same in all layers of society, then the corrupting schemes of the Vice depend rather on revealing the corruptedness of society on its several layers than actual, "original" corruption. Outside his element, the comic scenes, as Johnson reminds us, Ambidexter is quite ineffective, an ineffective courtier of some sort.

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12. Johnson, p. 18.
13. Johnson, p. 22.

Haphazard

The prologue of *A New Tragical Comedy of Appius and Virginia* (1559–67)[14] makes clear that the play is an exemplum. In the prologue we read that both married women and virgins are to follow the way Virginia remained pure and chaste, even if the only way of preserving her chastity was to ask for her own death. The Vice of the play is called Haphazard. At the Vice's first entry, before he reveals his name, he asks the audience who they think he is. Although they may probably guess that he is a Vice-like character from his reference to the devil ("Who dips with the devil, he had need have a long spoon. . ."), the Vice enters into a long but, in its heterogeneity, quite funny and intriguing monologue enumerating a whole colourful spectrum of real and metaphoric occupations and characteristics, ranging from lawyer through "sower of lies" to mackerel.

> Yet, a proper gentleman I am, of truth:
> Yea, that may ye see by my long side-gown:
> Yea, but what am I?
> A scholar, or a school-master, or else some youth:
> A lawyer, a student, or else a country clown?
> A broom-man, a basket maker, or a baker of pies,
> A flesh or a fishmonger, or a sower of lies?
> A louse or a louser, a leek or a lark,
> A dreamer, a drumble, a fire or a spark?
> A caitiff, a cut-throat, a creeper in corners,
> A hairbrain, a hangman, or a grafter of horners?
> By the gods, I know not how best to devise,
> My name or my property best to disguise.
> A merchant, a may-pole, a man or a mackerel,
> A crab or a crevis, a crane or a cockerel?

And at this point, although he has not yet completed his list, which goes on for another dozen lines in a similar fashion, Haphazard gives an answer to the questions he posed before: "Most of all these my nature doth enjoy; / Sometime I advance them, sometime I destroy."

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14. John S .Farmer ed., *Five Anonymous Plays* (London: Early English Drama Society, 1908), pp. 10–11.

Thus, the answer to which one of all these should be accepted as his identity is that he can be anything, quite freely, just the way he fancies to advance or destroy his nature, or in other words, his "identity." The other possible explanation of these lines is intriguing as well: it is according to his fancy that he will destroy or advance the enumerated occupations, or their representatives. I would like to stress again the actor-like playfulness in his juggling with his self, and his "identity" that is exactly inconstancy, a non-identity, a function that is a possibility of anything.

The haphazardness of the Vice is not a distressing or a threatening one. It fits in well with the topsy-turvy tradition of the comic, as is clear from his monologue describing the world turned upside-down haphazardly, where wives wear the codpiece, and maids are the masters:

> Hap may so hazard, the moon may so change,
> That men may be masters, and wives will not range:
> But in hazard it is, in many a grange,
> Lest wives wear the cod-piece, and maidens coy strange.
> As peacocks sit perking by chance in the plum-tree,
> So maids would be masters by the guise of this country.

The effect of such topsy-turvydom is entirely comic in its fiction of infinite possibilities where even a gentleman may have to go begging, where anything that does not comply with the existing order may happen. The effect of the comic is intensified by the twist that Haphazard makes in the lines quoted above: it is now the existing order that may happen by hazard, namely, that the men be masters if the moon changes so. But no matter what happens (and the Vice is playing with "hap" meaning both his name and things that happen), even events that should signify the end of the world, everything is comic in the end, even if the sky falls on the earth: "If hap the sky fall, we hap may have larks." The speech is ended elegantly by Haphazard urging the audience to pay: "Well, fare you well now, for better or worse: / Put hands to your pockets, have mind to your purse."[15]

As for his corrupting force, Haphazard is not very strong in that, since Appius is already prone to lust even before Haphazard arrives, and positive allegorical characters, Justice and Conscience, try to counteract the Vice's influence in vain. Funnily, Haphazard does not promise the judge he corrupts that he will surely get Virginia; this is just a suggestion, a mere tip:

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15. Farmer, p. 17.

> There is no more ways, but hap or hap not,
> Either hap or else hapless, to knit up the knot:
> And if you will hazard to venture what falls,
> Perhaps that Haphazard will end all your thralls.[16]

Still, Haphazard knows beforehand that the Judge has no chance, and in this he reinforces the audience's expectations of rightfulness. Although it may seem from his explanations that there might be some haphazard chance for anyone and it is worth giving it a try, the play shows that he is not trustworthy: the events demonstrate that following his advice leads to destruction. The speech in which Haphazard reveals this to the audience contains humorously nonsensical elements:

> When gain is no gain, sir,
> And gauds nought set by,
> Nor puddings nor pie-meat
> Poor knaves will come nigh,
> Then hap and Haphazard
> Shall have a new coat.
> And so it may happen
> To cut covetousness' throat.
> Yea, then shall Judge Appius
> Virginia obtain;
> And geese shall crack mussels
> Perhaps in the rain.[17]

The nonsensical elements reveal a partly comic and fictive, partly deadly time, a quasi-future, which on the one hand makes Appius ridiculous because he has no chance to have Virginia (have her when geese crack mussels), and on the other hand makes clear that he will be punished for his sin and will die. So it is not only that the Vice will reinforce the audience's ideas about sinful behaviour and its punishment, but also he actually seems to be the one to punish the sinner. As he puts it, it may happen that Haphazard may cut Covetousness's throat.

When Appius is just about to meet his death, Haphazard comes and has a confusing speech of seven lines, which are hardly intelligible because he speaks half-nonsense, half a riddle, as if it meant something. And actually Appius does pick up the important idea that foreshadows his doom:

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16. Farmer, p. 20.
17. Farmer, pp. 22–3.

> *Haphasard.* I came from Caleco even the same hour,
>   And hap was hired to hackney in hempstrid:
>   In hazard he was of riding on beamstrid.
>   Then, crow crop on tree-top, hoist up the sail,
>   Then groaned their necks by the weight of their tail:
>   Then did carnifex put these together,
>   Paid them their passport for clust'ring thither.
> *Appius.* Why, how now, Haphasard, of
>   What dost thou speak?
>   Methinks in mad sort thy talk thou dost break.
>   Those three words, chopt all in one
>   Is carnifex: that signifieth hangman.
>   Peace! no such words before me utter.[18]

At the end of the play, Haphazard turns to Reward to get reimbursed for his services of keeping Appius informed, following the logic that he advised Appius earlier, namely that the worst thing that can happen is a no. However, Reward informs him that his reward is a rope. Haphazard attempts an escape first, but he is held back, after which he pleads for his life in a manner that suggests that even before being hanged he is still in his comic element rather than desperate: "Must I needs hang? By the gods! It doth spite me / To think how crabbedly this silk lace will bite me."[19]

His humour, however, does not save him. He is given no mercy, and exits the stage while urging his cousin Cutpurse to follow him, in fact to "follow the livery." Haphazard's example is such that in the end the final joke is on him, and the idea he stood for has proven unwise to follow. Thus he reinforces morally correct behaviour, including in the scene where he was explicitly critical of the covetousness of the judge.

Punisher or punished?

Another example of a play in which the Vice receives his final punishment is *Horestes* (1567),[20] where he appears as a beggar in the end of the play. Still, I would like to draw attention to the fact that no matter how sad the end of the Vice may look (sad

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18. Farmer, pp. 38–9.
19. Farmer, p. 44.
20. Marie Axton ed., *Tree Tudor Classical Interludes* (Cambridge: D.S.Brewer and Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982).

from his point of view), his opinion may be different about it. We have seen above how the final joke is indeed on Haphazard, but still he is capable of commenting mockingly on the sad end of his career. The instance of *Horestes*' Vice is even less clear-cut. It seems that although he (who called himself Revenge in the same monologue) does advertise his poor and lamentable condition of becoming a beggar at first, he does not identify with this condition in the long run. First he perceives it as punishment for his "labor," and feels miserable:

> I woulde I were ded and layde in my grave.
> Oundes of me, I am trymley promouted.
> Ah, ah, oh! Well, now for my labor these trynketes I have.   (1038–40)

But he soon changes his mind about it, and finds the bright side even of being a beggar:

> But peace! Who better then beggars doth fare –
> For all they be beggares and have no great port –
> Who is maryer then the pooryste sort?   (1049–51)

I am not considering here how inconstant the Vice is even in this second and more cheerful opinion, namely, that after having found the merry side of being a beggar he decides rather to be a servant, and offers his service to members of the audience. What are the moral implications of the fact that the Vice became a beggar? Can this demotion be seen as a final punishment for his schemes? Once the Vice has found the merry side of being a beggar, the punishment does not seem to be severe because it has no bad effect on him, at least in his interpretation: he was simply able to reinvent the negative context he was put in.

It is not only the final punishment of some Vices that is not clear-cut, but their evil nature is unreliable as well. In the next example, the Vice is much less a corrupting force than an agent who plays in order to punish the corrupt. In *Like Will to Like* (1562–8),[21] Nichol Newfangle the Vice offers Tom Tosspot and Rafe Roister lands of St. Thomas-a-Watering and Tyburn Hill – both places of execution:

> But thou shalt have it, if thou prove thyself the Verier knave;
> A piece of ground it is, that of Beggars' manor do[th] hold,
> And whoso deserves it, shall have it, ye may be bold –
> Call'd Saint Thomas-a-Waterings or else Tyburn Hill. . .[22]

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21. W. Carew Hazlitt ed., *Old English Plays* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1874), vol. III.
22. Hazlitt, vol. III, p. 324.

By doing this as part of the joke he is playing on them, Nichol Newfangle acts out justice, and the audience will laugh together with the Vice at the stupidity of the ruffians. Laughing with the Vice is quite essential in my argument, because we see here an instance where the audience's merriment regarding the Vice's schemes is connected to the audience's complete approval of the same deeds. Similarly, when he hands over his former companions Cutpurse and Pickpurse to Severity the judge and helps him to tie them up, Nichol Newfangle has a double function: he betrays his friends, thus appearing clearly untrustworthy, but at the same time he is an agent that helps the workings of justice be realised – no matter that he admitted at his entry that Lucifer is his godfather, and it is the devil who taught him "all kinds of sciences."

Two explanations are possible for the fact that the Vice may be working in line with justice. One is that he is indeed part of the moral scheme: he is engaged partly in corruption and partly in punishing of the corrupt – the way it is expected from him in a given situation, so that in the end he contributes to the overall working of justice. We see that Lucifer fits well in the moral structure, too, and he makes it clear that he is proud and arrogant and cannot stand seeing vicious people in the company of virtuous ones. Here Lucifer, the embodiment of evil, openly acknowledges its corruption and thus fits himself into the system. The other explanation for why it is sometimes *with* and sometime *a*t the Vice that the audience laughs is that the Vice is indeed an outsider, not an intrinsic element of the moral world, a character with exemption who is quite inconsistent in his malevolent behaviour and whose schemes are not clearly predictable.

At the end of the same play, Nichol Newfangle is carried out on the Devil's back, and he bids merry farewell to the audience, and speaks of his return: "Farewell, my masters, till I come again, / For now I must make a journey into Spain."[23] The beauty of these lines I see as the way the Vice makes the play open-ended and at the same time presents himself as somebody who transcends the confines of a single play. Another example of how it is not necessarily always categorical deception that the Vice is up to is a scene from the play *The Tide Tarrieth no Man* (1576). If we compare the chief vice and his three minions in the drama, we see that the Vice does not necessarily hide his evil identity behind an appealing and cheerful façade with which he is trying to mislead people, but that he is rather ambiguous. When the evil characters decide to go about the business of corrupting humans (Courage informs the audience about this in his entry), the Vice's three minions all change their real names to other

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23. Hazlitt, vol. III, p. 353.

names by dropping the negative and revealing adjective, so that Hurtful Help, Painted Profit and Feigned Furtherance become Help, Profit and Furtherance. Courage, however, clearly can remain "himself" with his original name. He even gives a nonsensical explanation of what they are about to do and why. Actually it is a whole nonsensical story, constantly involving breaches of logic, like dead men first being buried some miles away from December, and later running away, or lines such as the following: "And after they louved like brother and brother / For very louve, they did kyll one another." If we are looking for his consequent malevolent behaviour and we want to perceive him as the root of all evil, the fact that the others had to change their names but he did not makes about as much sense as his nonsensical tale. The idea of the Vice as not exclusively malevolent is stressed by Darryl Grantley in connection with a Vice called Common Conditions, a name that is identical with the title of the play in which he appears: "The Vice is an interesting hybrid of the narrative specimen and the scheming servant of classical comedy, and though he often plots evil, his actions are far from consistently malevolent. He also repeatedly draws attention to his cowardice. At times, especially in the pirate episode, he appears to be used as a general-purpose character to animate the narrative."[24]

The question remains still, how are we to interpret the power of the Vice, how temporary and transitional is its validity? Dessen quotes a transitional play *Wealth and Health* (1554) where in the end of the play the deeds of the two vice-like figures, Ill Will and Shrewed Wit, are restored by Remedy, who says that the vices may "reign a while, wrongfully and unjust / Yet truth will appear and their misdeeds blame" (931–32). Dessen says, "The power of these Vices (and later the Vice) is temporary, for the short term only, a formulation that lasts throughout the period and indeed becomes basic to the dramatic career of the Vice."[25] Dessen's opinion may well stand; however, the message of a Vice leaving the stage while joking is not as clear as it would be if the Vice were entirely humiliated. It seems that the Vice does not subject his view to the moral one, he does not act according to a logic where he, as evil, has to be the loser. Still, even if here we may account for the Vice's comic and unrepentant exit as part of the Vice's comic tradition, and remember that finally the audience laughed at him, the same device will still maintain a perspective (that of the unrepentant Vice) that is not contained within the moral one, and will be much more disturbing when the same behaviour appears in later drama, for example at the clos-

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24. Darril Grantley, *English Dramatic Interludes 1300–1580* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), p. 61.

25. Dessen, pp. 23–24.

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ing scene of the *Revenger's Tragedy*, where Vindice, after being sentenced to death by the representative of the newly established order, Antonio, exists to be executed, but feels that all is perfectly well: "I' faith we're well – our mother turned, our sister true, / We die after a nest of dukes! Adieu" (5.3.125–6).[26]

An opposite of this exit would be plays where the Vice is spectacularly punished and humiliated on stage, and is shown as a coward – despicable for the audience. I have no knowledge of such Vices, and it seems to be a characteristic of the Vice to face whatever punishment may come in a cheerful mood when he exits the stage.[27] I claim that this tradition is much more than simply making the Vice a butt of laughter due to his alleged ignorance of his "real" situation, and it is very problematic to interpret it within the moral message of the play.

In conclusion, I am suggesting that we accept the Vice, a recurring character of non-cycle interludes, as a game-maker who is quite unreliable in his malevolence, whose schemes may work in order to sustain moral order, who may be but does not have to be punished after misdeeds, and who has affinity for nonsense and playing – in other words, a character who enjoys and displays a sense of liberty within the drama.

Still, I do not insist that the Vice always and necessarily enjoys the exemption and can get away unpunished, although I do insist that he sometimes does. In a morality such as *Like will to Like*, written in the tradition of Protestant interludes, it is quite probable that the seemingly inconsistent actions of the vice (corruption as well as punishing corruption) were consistently contributing to the didactic point of the play – just as in a sermon. However, once the didactic message of the sermon is not controlled by a single narrative voice and the narrative is scattered among characters, let alone when it is exactly the Vice who is delivering the moral message, when we have a Vice who is the "controlling narrative voice," interpretations may arise that

26. Cyril Tourneur, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, ed. Brian Gibbons (London: A & C Black, 1989).

27. It is typical of Vices not to care about the punishment that awaits them, if there is punishment to come at all. The closest a Vice comes to humiliation is his being rather desperate, although defiant and aggressive at the end of Nice Wanton (ll. 420–30 and 434). Leonard Tennenhouse, ed. *The Tudor Interludes: Nice Wanton and Impatient Poverty* (New York: Garland, 1984). Another example shows the Vice badly punished; however, he is not punished by the representatives of virtue for his evil deeds, but by the Devil for not carrying out his task properly. See Thomas Garter, *The Most Virtuous and Godly Susanna*, 1578, ed. W.W. Greg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), ll. 1392–1403. For the references I am indebted to Kent Cartwright.

would perhaps be impossible if the "message" were delivered in a non-dramatic form. The dramatic form itself already contributes to the possibility that some voices within it may have an effect that is not consistent with the intended moral message.

The Fool in the Vice

Examining the relatedness of the Vice to the popular fool offers much more liberal interpretations as to the position of the figure within a moral pattern. The vice depicted by Mares does not fall readily into the morality pattern, because he embodies a sense of freedom, something that makes him an outsider in the play not only because he is an entertainer, a link between the play and the audience, but also because he enjoys exemption from the strict moral rules of the allegory.[28] Compared to later interpretations, I find it highly significant that Mares stresses the freedom of the Vice from the allegorical-moral framework of the play. He seems to imply that it is the popular origin of the figure in the fool that makes him difficult to fit in the morality pattern. Late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century dictionary entries and passages from translated works quoted by Alan Dessen show how the terms "jester," "fool," and "vice" are used as either synonyms or closely related terms. For example, he says, "In his translation of Pliny, Philemon Holland expands the Latin *mima* into 'a common vice in a play' and, a sentence later, describes 'such another vice that played the fool and made sport between whiles in enterludes.' " Dessen also shows examples of how the traditional attribute of the Vice, his dagger of lath, would be accompanied with furred hood, a fool's coat or coxcombs — actually attributes of the fool.[29]

Bernard Spivack uses the morality *Like Will to Like* in support of his argument that the Vice is misunderstood if taken as a fool or buffoon. He stresses the miseries Nichol Newfangle has brought on the characters of the play in order to remove him from the merely jovial side of his role. In my view, however, the example makes the complexity of the Vice explicit: in cases where the Vice's actions, his comedy, are morally justified because his comedy clearly serves the punishment of evil characters, then from the audience's perspective the character "Vice" appears here as one whom they can embrace with no reservation as both comic and supporting the accepted system of values. If this were true, there would be no debate about the place of the character in the moral setup. Part of a quotation from Stubbes's *Anatomy of Abuses*

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28. Frances Hugh Mares, "The Origin of the Figure Called 'the Vice' in Tudor Drama," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 12 (1958–1959) 11–23.

29. Dessen, p. 18-9.

in which "playing the vice" appears among highly condemnable activities, is inserted by Spivack in his argument in order to support "a very much darker picture of the Vice" that he wants to argue for as opposed to a farcical characterization. However, the quotations actually do not support his interpretation, because if the Vice did have a "homiletic substance,"[30] people like Stubbes would not have been so outraged about him and the plays in which he appeared to the audiences delight.

Spivack, in order to provide background for his view of the Vice as a figure whose humour is wrongly stressed, quotes a passage from a poem of the eighties against Martin Marpelate, which "shows that even in the final period of the moralities he [the Vice] was not regarded only as jester": "Now Tarleton's dead, the consort lackes a vice; / For knaue and foole thou maist beare pricke and price."[31]

Spivack seems to acknowledge that the jester indeed is an important component of the Vice. Still, he does not allow another interpretation of the figure than the moral one. The problem, however, is not in regarding the Vice *only* as jester, as the quotation would imply, but rather in regarding the Vice only as knave, a devilish intriguer, whose function within the play is ultimately to be condemned. By regarding the clown or fool or jester element in the Vice as significant, the potential moral interpretation does not disappear; rather, it becomes more complex and ambiguous.

Spivack insists on the Vice whose farcical aspect "is only a dramatic glitter of his role, not its homiletic substance,"[32] and sees a subsequent "comic degeneration of the role," which is not possible to discover "so long as he performs in a context of allegory, where his characteristic intrigue is never without its sharp edge of homiletic significance and his effect without grave consequences."[33] However, the passage Spivack refers to in my view supports exactly the intrinsic connection between the Vice and the Fool, the fact that the Fool is underestimated as a mere jester, and the fact that the fool and the Vice have never really separated, from the time the Vice appeared on stage, to the moment when he went out of fashion.

Looking at all the contemporary examples that Dessen and Spivack enumerate, from the close relation of Vice and fool that becomes clearly evident, I find it indeed noteworthy that the scholars adduce all the illustrations merely to confute in the end the idea that the Vice in a number of cases is justly understood as fool, and they in-

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30. Spivack, p. 200.
31. "A Whop for and Ape: Or Martin Marpelate Displaied" (1589) in *The Complete Works of John Lyly*, ed. R.W. Bond (Oxford, 1902) III, p. 417.
32. Spivack, p. 200.
33. Spivack, p. 202.

sist that in the end the Vice is defined by his "homiletic substance," while if he is taken as identical with a fool, then he is not a real and representative Vice.

A critic with whom I agree on this matter is Enid Welsford who, although merely in passing, deals with the Vice of the Interludes, and mentions two examples where "the Vice is unmistakably a court-jester."[34] David Wiles too deals in a few sentences with the matter of distinction between fools and Vices, partly drawing on Welsford's examples given on the costume of Vices and fools, and points out the close connection between the fool and the Vice.[35] It seems evident that once we are ready to understand the Vice not so much as a devil but rather an entertainer, his characteristic comedy as well as his moral evaluation are put in a different light.

As I tried to make clear in my argument on the Vice, quite a substantial effort of critics was spent on *separating* the dark and vicious Vice from the buffoonish agent who is comic but not harmful. I see that such a separation can be made only at the expense of his force, underestimating the Vice's comedy and its effect. If the Vice is seen either as supporting a homiletic structure or as mere buffoonery, we are missing the point. Instead of separating the comic and destructive elements in the Vice, we should rather see them inseparable: a unique merger that is intrinsic to the character, and that gives him the unfathomable energy and power he possesses.

As already mentioned and illustrated with the examples, a crucial function of the Vice is to mediate between play and audience, involving the audience in the performance. In Weimann's words, the Vice is both a *conférencier* and chorus, acting as a link between locus and platea, where locus means a place of an illusionary character, the setting of the playworld, while platea is "an entirely unlocalised and unrepresentational setting . . . the broad and general acting area in which the communal festivities were conducted."[36]

This mediatory function of the Vice gains an additional essential function in Knapp's view, which sees the Vice not merely as a go-between, but as the character who makes the point, who formulates the gist, or the "message," of the play.[37] The

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34. Enid Welsford, *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), p. 285.

35. David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 2-3.

36. Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in Theater* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 78.

37. "Serving as the analogue or companionable *raissoneur* for those persons who are the titular heroes or villains of the action, the Tudor Vice gives us a merry report of what the action is about, abstracting a narrative context into a thematic statement, helping us to formu-

irony inherent in this setup is, of course, that a character who is morally at least dubious, if not the embodiment or drive of moral corruptions, is the one to usher the audience to the message of the morality.

The character is most compelling, however, because in addition to being the agent of involvement, the play's chorus and commentator, he frequently seems to be the very prerequisite or source of the play itself. A very clear example where the Vice suggests that it is the play itself that is identical with temptation, and the audience identical with sinners, can be found at the beginning of *Like Will to Like*. The Vice, Nichol Newfangle, enters with a knave of clubs in his hand, and, according to the stage directions, he passes it over to a member of the audience: "he offereth to one of the men or boys standing by." His irony in uttering the title of the play in his first line immediately puts the audience in a position of meeting the Vice by the very logic of the proverbial title and makes them accomplices. Nichol makes the most out of the fact that the audience now has the opportunity to meet him. He reminds them of himself, whom they may have forgotten. The whole scene is alluring, where Nichol is directly addressing the audience and is evidently trying hard to win their sympathy.

Once we see that the Vice (as master of ceremonies, as engine of the plot, and as source of temptation) can be equated with the play, the question of whether to accept or refute the Vice gains a wider perspective. This is why in some cases it seems that condemning the Vice was identical with condemning the whole institution. I have mentioned above Spivack's reference to a passage of a harsh critic of theatre, Philip Stubbes. Stubbes in his *Anatomy of Abuses* describes everything bad that can be learned from playing and acting:

> If you will learn falshood; if you will learn cozenage; if you will learn to decive; if you will learn to play the hypocrite, to cog, to lie, and falsify; if you will learn to jest, laugh and fleer, to grin, to nod, and mow; if you will learn to play the vice, to swear, tear, and blaspheme both heaven and earth . . . and commit all kind of sin and mischief, you need to go to no other school, for all these good examples may you see painted before your eyes in interludes and plays.[38]

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late the rhetorical point of the play. . ." (Robert S. Knapp, *Shakespeare: The Theater and the Book* [Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989], pp. 99–100).

38. Tanya Pollard ed., *Shakespeare's Theater: A Sourcebook* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 121–2.

The Vice in Stubbes's text most probably indeed refers to the character in theatre, because he uses the phrase "learn to play the. . ." three times in the long (and in the above-quoted version cut) passage, and in all these cases he continues the phrase with mentioning stock characters on stage, like the hypocrite, the vice, the glutton. There is no question about whether the Vice is condemnable or not in this context, actually he can even be understood as the epitome of all the immoral falsities of theatre, since he features most of the elements of the sinful behaviour described so minutely by Stubbes: he not only lies and falsifies by profession, but laughs, jests and fleers, as well as murders, steals and robs. The Vice may be seen as a character who embodies all the attributes of an actor in theatre, and perhaps it is no accident that Stubbes himself uses the word "ambidexter" as a synonym for actors. "Beware, therefore, you masking players, you painted sepulchres, you double dealing ambidexters. . ."[39] A parallel passage that sees the Vice as the epitome of theatre can be found in a later antitheatrical treatise, William Prynne's *Histriomastix*. Prynne is grieving over the unfortunate fact that "witty, comely youths" devote themselves to the stage, "where they are trained in the School of Vice, the play-house. . ."[40] However, not only Vices can turn out to epitomise actors but fools as well. Welsford notes that "supposed early references to fools prove to be references to 'histriones,' 'buffoni,' 'joculatores' and other vague terms for actors and entertainers."[41]

The figure, together with the fool, was a relic of an earlier drama already on the Shakespearean stage. He certainly left his traits on a number of Shakespeare's characters, and appeared as transformed, perhaps frequently as a psychologically more complex character, but always as someone who preserved his unique sense of play and game. Not surprisingly, it is usually the Machiavellian villains who are regarded as his successors, those who are dangerously alluring and wicked or even devil-like, such as Gloucester, Edmund, Aaron or Iago. But we should be aware that not only "tamed" villains, like Falstaff, or almost benign ones or simple mischiefs, such as Puck or Feste show a remarkable dramatic indebtedness to the Vice, but also that all successors of the Vice are simplified in our interpretation if we necessarily wish to see them as having no genuine appeal – at least if we agree that theatre is or may be appealing.

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39. Pollard, p. 118.
40. Pollard, p. 291
41. Enid Welsford, *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), p. 114.

However, the Vice appears in the 17th century as well, not only as transformed into a psychologically complex villain or the clown of the performance, but "in person," in a customary ambiguous context, familiar from the moralities, in Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass*. Here the Vice carries off Pug, the devil on his back – just the opposite way as in moralities, where the Vices were carried away by the devil. The Vice explains the unusual situation the following way: "The Devil was wont to carry away the evil; / But, now, the Evil out-carries the Devil" (5.6.76–7).

I would like to draw attention to the fact that the Vice here seems to have more power than in his earlier appearances, leaving the stage on the Devil's back, as in Fulwell's *Like Will to Like* from 1568. The inverted tradition in Jonson's play could stress his evil and deceptive nature, but there is another possibility as well, and it is the playful and comic quality of the scene, featuring a Vice who misbehaves from the point of view of the devil and deviates from the pattern applied in some morality plays, but who behaves according to the "haphazard" and comically subversive convention, namely disregards all authority and all prescribed modes of behaviour. If we do not stick to the idea that the foolish Vice is either unrepresentative or a degeneration of the homiletic original, we can see Jonson as continuing the original tradition, which did allow such liberties to the Vice. In other words: the Vice is leaving the stage at the early 17th century, in a no less unpredictable or ambiguous manner as when he enters it a century earlier.

Anikó Oroszlán

"Actors" in "Barbaresque Mantells"

The Blackness of the Female Performers in Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness*

Ben Jonson's successive masques *The Masque of Blackness* and *The Masque of Beauty* have generally been interpreted in terms of Neo-Platonic symbolism and imagery. However, since these court masques were not only pieces of written poetry, but also well-organised spectacles, it might be of interest to approach them from the perspective of performance and in comparison to popular theatre. The present paper discusses how theatricality, popular entertainment, acting, and professional players are connoted by the "blackness" and the changeable nature of the female masquers in Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness*. Considering his ambiguous and vehement relationship to the stage designer Inigo Jones, I am also examining Jonson's antitheatrical attitude and his struggle to keep his poetry "white," "beauteous," at a distance from the mutability of performance.

1

The question of the first women on the early English stage is one of the numerous mysteries in theatre history. It seems that there is no real consensus whether the first English female performers could be regarded as the first English actresses or not. Sandra Richards, in her book, *The Rise of the English Actress*, starts discussing her topic with the Restoration era, and as for the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, she only deals with examples of non-professional women players and entertainers appearing on public stages or in marketplace shows.[1] She does not mention a word about court plays; however, performances of the royal court could have been influenced by popular drama, since scripts were written by playwrights who worked for public stages as well, and what is more, professional actors were often engaged to participate in court spectacles. Thus, as female performers of masques got in touch

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1. Sandra Richards, *The Rise of the English Actress* (London: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 1–5.

with popular playmaking, they could have gathered real theatrical interests, and it is possible to examine them in relation to public performance.

Within this context, in this paper I am going to discuss Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* (1605), focusing on the symbolism of blackness and its relation to the female performers. This masque, together with its sequel, *The Masque of Beauty* (1608), has been interpreted by D. J. Gordon,[2] Stephen Orgel,[3] and others concerning their emblematic background and Neo-Platonic imagery. It also has been proved that Jonson's masques, especially their anti-masque parts, carry the characteristics of popular entertainments.[4] What I would like to suggest is that blackness – besides its Neo-Platonic association to Darkness, Night, Death, etc., and the performers being female, alien, and black – has a certain theatrical connotation as well. In other words, their "black" condition in *The Masque of Blackness* relates the female masquers to popular (male) players. So what I intend to point out is that the first English women on stage – at least as far as the reactions of their audience is concerned – are not that far from being the first English "actresses."

Since my special interest is theatre history and performance – and in this case, female players – in the 16th and 17th centuries, it is important to note that I am mainly treating the masque as a theatrical phenomenon. Thus, as I am going to explain it in more detail later, I am concentrating on *The Masque of Blackness* as a possible *mise en scène*. Moreover, in my argumentation, I am using Jonson's other masque – *The Masque of Beauty* – as a counterpoint to my main object of study, which is *The Masque of Blackness*, because that later piece seems to represent the "normal" condition of female Jonsonian masquers, that is, non-blackness and beauty.

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The masque, as Graham Parry explains, was primarily a political construct, and it focused on the emblematic celebration of the monarchy.[5] The major spectator of the

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2. D. J. Gordon, *The Renaissance Imagination* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 138–45.

3. Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 120–8.

4. Irena Janicka-Swiderska, *Dance in Drama: Studies in English Renaissance and Modern Theatre* (Lódz: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Lódzkiego, 1992), pp. 72–3.

5. Graham Parry, *The Golden Age Restor'd: The Culture of the Stuart Court 1603–42* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), p. 89.

masque was the King, who did not only have the seat from which he could have the best view of the stage, but at the same time, he was also in the middle of the noble audiences' attention.[6] Boundaries between stage and auditorium were erased, and the King was not only a part of the audience, but also of the spectacle.[7] The auditorium and the arrangement of the seats were just as well-organised as the production itself, and the whole spectacle was composed to be the living emblem of the monarch's eternal grace.[8] This is the case in *The Masque of Blackness*, too. Although James I never played roles in masques, in this one, he was lifted to a superhuman level, which was made clear in the plot as well as by his elevated royal seat in the centre of the space. His role was to overwrite the rules of nature and to make beauty out of blackness, thus solving the conflict of the play.[9] However, besides aiming at staging constant and stable political power, by the political content, the court masque was simultaneously directed to history and time.[10]

When approaching the masque from a theatrical perspective, one finds a similar uncertainty in terms of defining the genre's mutability and permanence. Royal performances used Greek and Roman mythology, well-known Renaissance topoi, and emblem books as well as English folklore, and they were created in a way that the authors counted on the audience's foreknowledge and the classical courtly education. The elaborate scenes and the series of Platonic allegories represented the perfect equilibrium of world harmony, and the function of symbolic scenic effects, stage designs, and the choreography was to strengthen this picture. However, the masque as theatre – just as any other performance – was once-living and mutable by nature. So transmutation and change in the masque were not only indicated by the political content, but also by the very fact that the masque took the form of performance, and the characters were played partly by courtmen, partly by professional players. At the same time, although on the one hand, mythological and allegorical setting empha-

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6. Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theatre in the English Renaissance* (Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1975), p. 14.

7. Gregory A. Wilson, "The Problem in the Middle: Liminality in the Jonsonian Masque," *Limen: Journal for Theory and Practice of Liminal Phenomena* 1 (2001). Retrieved on July 2, 2003. <http://limen.mi2.hr/limen1-2001/gregory_a._wilson.html>.

8. Stephen Kogan, *The Hieroglyphic King: Wisdom and Idolatry in the Seventeenth-Century Masque* (London, Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1986), p. 30.

9. Graham Parry, "The Politics of the Jacobean Masque," in *Theatre and Government Under the Early Stuarts*, eds. J. R. Mulryne and M. Shewring (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 87–117, p. 93.

10. Kogan, p. 30.

sised the immortality of the royals, by being players on the stage, they inevitably became the image of the fallen man disapproved by antitheatricalists.[11]

The opposition of the rigid form and the spectacular stage realisation brings forward the differentiation between the masque-as-literature and the masque-as-performance; or, in more general terms, the separation of drama-as-text and drama-as-performance. In masque criticism, as Stephen Kogan summarises, there is a shift in the 1970s, when monographies on the genre by Roy Strong and Stephen Orgel started to eliminate the former bias against Inigo Jones and the – much more spectacular and theatrical – Caroline masque. He also points out that although the consideration of the genre as spectacle is essential, but "without the masque as literature, there would be no permanent dramatic form and no coherent record of the politics and philosophy beneath the outward show."[12] This argument might be edifying considering any contemporary debate on the superiority of drama and/or performance in theatre and drama studies. So although in this paper, as I mentioned above, the emphasis is on the theatrical representation of the masque, I do not intend to degrade or ignore the literary values of the genre.

On Renaissance private stages, women could only be mute masquers. *The Masque of Blackness* followed this decorum very properly, so they wore masks, carried symbolic properties, and they could only participate in the masquers' dance. The dance at the end was performed as the most important part of the show, and it also involved the courtly audience. Speaking parts were most probably acted out by professional actors, and female speaking parts were played by boy actors. The structure of the court masque was brought to perfection by Jonson, when he included the antimasque with the witches of *The Masque of Queens* (1609) and the satyrs of *Oberon* (1611). The antimasque was performed and danced (contrary to the masquers' ballet, these were highly acrobatic and theatrical dances) by real actors, and it represented the world of misrule and grotesque disorder.[13] It was followed by the

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11. A characteristic example of this is William Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, which is full of ceremonies and spectacles. By introducing a masque in Act I Scene iii, for instance, what is achieved is discomfort and contrast between the sombre atmosphere of the play (*Henry VIII*) and the harmonious pastoral scene. What is more, the king playing a shepherd and wooing Anne might represent a fallible human being instead of a powerful monarch. For more details on *Henry VIII* and the masque, see John D. Cox, "*Henry VIII* and the Masque," *ELH* 45 (1978) 390–409.

12. Kogan, p. 31. For the overview on masque criticism up to the 1970s, see Kogan, pp. 27–31.

13. As Jonson argues, "and because her Majesty, best knowing that a principal part of life in these spectacles lay in their variety, had commanded me to think on some dance or show that

main masque, which did not only emphasise the triumph of the royal masquers upon the monstrous creatures committed to folly and vice, but it also showed the victory of the ideal world of poetry over popular entertainment.[14]

According to the rules of masque making, the place of female performers was in the main masque part. Although in the case of *The Masque of Blackness*, which is an early piece, one cannot talk about the four-part structure that later masques usually have (prologue, antimasque, main masque, revels), the black nymphs carry the characteristics of antimasque figures.[15] In other words, since *Blackness* is admittedly and expressly incomplete in terms of plot, one might argue that it is the antimasque part of a two-part performance, and that the mute female masquers are antimasque characters made very spectacular and conspicuous by the symbolic properties and the costumes designed by Inigo Jones.

So while in 17th-century England – contrary to other European theatrical traditions – women were not allowed to appear on public stages, the first (noble) women performers found the way to get on stage in the court masque. It seems that Queen Anne and other women of the court made use of this willingly. The scripts were written by Ben Jonson, whose enthusiasm towards theatre, however, seems to be questionable at many points. Jonson's ambiguous attachment to theatre in relation to *The Masque of Blackness* will be elaborated in the following section.

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Although before 1660–62, there were no actresses in English public theatres, theatregoers, antitheatrical writers, and dramatists had remarks on foreign female performers, and especially puritan pamphlets attacked those "hog-faced women" from

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might precede hers, and have the place of a foil or false masque . . . and therefore now devised that twelve women in the habit of hags or witches, sustaining the persons of Ignorance, Suspicion, Credulity, etc., the opposites to good Fame, should fill that part, not as a masque but a spectacle of strangeness" (*The Masque of Queens*, 9–17). All parenthesised references to *The Masque of Queens* and *The Masque of Blackness* (hereafter *Blackness*) are from David Lindley ed., *Court Masques: Jacobean and Caroline Entertainments* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). The parenthetic numbers refer to lines.

14. Stephen Orgel, "Introduction," in *Ben Jonson: Selected Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1970), 1–39, p. 3.

15. For more on the structure the court masques, see Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque*, pp. 36–67.

Italy and France who participated in plays and entertainments.[16] Though English theatre fans, actors and dramatists – such as Thomas Heywood – spoke in admiration about Italian and French travelling troupes – including women – whom they could see in England, puritans did not only associate actresses with whores and women of easy moral, but also with the devil.[17]

As Jonas Barish argues, Jonson was also an antitheatricalist in the sense that he treated players and spectacle with bias, and although he wrote for the theatre his whole life, he felt that the mutability of performance – both public and private – threatened his poetic universe.[18] His deep suspicion towards theatricality can be detected both in his plays and masques as well as in his theoretical works. He believed that playgoers visited theatre in order to parade their fine clothes so as to make spectacles and to compete with the play, and as for stagecraft, he was to a great extent against "painting and carpentry."[19] In his *Timber; or Discoveries*, for instance, he announces one of the most typical fears of puritan antitheatricalists; namely that the player cannot rule the roles he plays.

> Every man, forgetfull of himselfe, is in travaile with expression of another. Nay, wee too insist in imitation others, as wee cannot (when it is necessary) returne to ourselves: like Children, that imitate the vices of Stammerers so long, till at last they become such.[20]

Also, in his city comedies, role-playing and disguising usually have negative connotations.[21] Although his plays were realised on stage, he thought of them as literary entities and reading experience rather than theatre. He found the actor's voice and the public's ear unpredictable and untrustworthy elements over which he had too little control. This prejudice against the momentary or mutable nature of the performance is perhaps the most important aspect of Jonson's antitheatrical-

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16. Ann Thomson, "Women / 'Woman' and the Stage," in *Woman and Literature in Britain 1500–1700*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 100–16, p. 104.

17. Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1981), p. 92.

18. Barish, pp. 133–40.

19. Barish, p. 133.

20. Ben Jonson, "Timber; or Discoveries," in *The Entire Works Vol. 8: The Poems, The Prose Works* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1947), 559–649, p. 597.

21. Cf. *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*. More on Jonson's antitheatricalism in his comedies is in Barish, pp. 147–53.

ism, and this ambiguous attitude towards theatre is detectable in his court masques as well.[22]

With the publishing of the masques, Jonson's aim was to fix performances in a literary form, that is to "redeem them as well from Ignorance as Envy, two common evils, the one of censure, the other of oblivion," as he informs the reader in the introduction to *The Masque of Blackness* (11–2). Nevertheless, at the beginning of his career as a writer of masques, he seemed to accept that the masque – or theatre in general – is the result of artistic co-operation, and he admitted that "the honour and splendour of these spectacles was such in the performance" (1–2). However, his later debate with Inigo Jones demonstrates that Jonson could never really reconcile himself to the fact that besides poetry, spectacle and acting are equally integral parts of the performance.

As I mentioned above, for Jonson, the poet-playwright, the masque was fundamentally about the verse, character, and dialogue, while for Jones, the designer, it was about scenery and performance.[23] However, despite his own arguments, as I referred to it earlier, Jonson should not have been against spectacle to the extent as he seems at first sight. Although he made the masque literature, in fact, he could not deny that as a theatrical genre, it originated in various stage entertainments. Moreover, as Jonson himself put it in his first masque, their "honour and splendour" was in the performance. If one considers masque as theatre, it becomes clear that – just like every kind of performance –, on the one hand, it is changeable, unstable, and mutable by nature, and on the other hand, the living experience of it cannot be repeated, reproduced, and documented. Still, what Jonson always intends to achieve by the publishing of the masques – especially as far as the long descriptive passages of stage actions are concerned – is to rule the "physical" part of the masque so as to make it lasting; or so as to make poetry superior to performance. Also, this was his way to fight against Jones, who was not really a man of words.[24]

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22. Barish, pp. 135–40.

23. See the Wilson article mentioned above.

24. Unfortunately, we only know the debate of Jones and Jonson mostly from the Jonsonian side. Jones was primarily a painter and an architect, and he never even wrote a treatise. His *Stone-Heng Restored* (1655) was put together by his student, John Webb about twenty-five years after his death. For more details on this, see John Peacock, *The Stage Designs of Inigo Jones: The European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). For more on the debate of Jones and Jonson, see Parry, pp. 176–80.

The tension between text and spectacle is made very clear with the distinction between the "body" and the "soul" of the masque made by Jonson in the introduction to *Hymenaei* (1606).

> It is a noble and just advantage that the things subjected to understanding have of those which are objected to sense that the one sort are but momentary and merely taking, the other impressing and lasting. Else the glory of all these solemnities had perished like a blaze and gone out in the beholders's eyes. So short lived are the bodies of all things on comparison of their souls. And, though bodies ofttimes have the ill luck to be sensually preferred, they find afterwards the food fortune, when souls live, to be utterly forgotten.[25]

Here, the "bodily part," which is a metaphor of spectacle, theatre, or performance, is told to be "short living" and "sensually preferred," while the "soul" of the masque, which is poetry, is lasting and "subjected to understanding." Thus the body – let that be a reference to spectacle, picture or physical presence – in (private) theatre is, paradoxically, something that Jonson fights against. As Peacock explains, he argues with the support of Protestant iconoclasm behind him, and assumes that the crucial function is language.[26]

> *Poetry*, and *Picture*, are Arts of a like nature; and both are busie about imitation. It was excellently said of *Plutarch*, *Poetry* was a speaking Picture, and *Picture* a mute Poesie. For they both invent, faine, and devise many things, and accomodate all they invent to the use, and service of nature. Yet of the two, the Pen is more noble than the Pencill. For that can speake to the Understanding; the other, but to the Sense.[27]

Additionally, poetry is the art of the soul, while picture is only of the body. Thus, the latter generally acquires negative connotation in the masques, and it is not only a metaphor of theatre and performance, but also, I would say, of Inigo Jones.[28]

This clear-cut distinction between the "body" and the "soul" of the masque is, however, paradoxical if one takes a closer look. Although spectacle is held to be mutable and evanescent by Jonson, on stage, from a theatrical perspective, it is always

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25. Jonson, *Hymanei*, 1–9. All parenthesised references to *Hymanei* are from Stephen Orgel ed., *Ben Jonson: Selected Masques* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970). The parenthetic numbers refer to lines.

26. Peacock, p. 38.

27. Jonson, "Timber; or Discoveries," pp. 609–10.

28. "So much for the bodily part, which was of Master Inigo Jones his design and act" (72–4).

for stressing what the performance has to tell the audience, and for engraving things on their mind. Counting on the spectators' visual memory, the aim of every performance is to provide them with a lasting, memorable experience. In other words, although poets like Jonson might have protested against the metaphoric power of theatre – which is the same prejudice against sight in puritan antitheatrical writings – at the same time, as theatre-makers, they had to admit that spectacle was intended to serve the preservation of the experience or the lasting effect created in the spectator.

An interesting addition to the Jones–Jonson polemic is that Jonson, in a mocking way, frequently associates Jones (and also theatre) with a foreign land, Italy. In one of his epigrams, Jonson calls Jones "th'Italian" who makes his way in the world by miming.[29] Beside that this refers to the fact that Jones learned everything about theatre in Italy, what Jonson's discriminatory attitude recalls is antitheatrical writers on Italian theatre makers.[30]

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The Masque of Blackness and its sequel, *The Masque of Beauty* were the first two productions of Jonson. Though probably the original idea was about staging the metamorphosis from blackness to beauty, the first part, which contained the promise of a second one, was presented in 1605. The continuation was performed only in 1608. As it is documented in the text of the masque, the chief masquer was Queen Anne, and among the dancers, there were the Countess of Bedford, the Countess of Suffolk, Lady Anne Herbert, Lady Susan Herbert, and Mary Wroth (244–55). The plot of *The Masque of Blackness* is quite simple; the daughters of Niger set on a journey with their father in order to find a land the name of which ends with "tania" where the sun is hot and "forms all beauty, with his sight" (171). The reason for the travel is the daughters' sudden awareness that their blackness is ugly. Finally it turns out that they arrived in Britannia, and they are told that this is the land they were

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29. "At every meale, where it doth dine, or sup, / The cloth's no sooner gone, but it gets up / And, shifting of it's faces, doth play more / Parts, than th'Italian could do, with his dore. / Acts old Iniquitie, and in the fit / Of miming, gets th' opinion of a wit" ("On The Townes Honest Man," quoted in Barish, p. 145).

30. A similar attitude of antipathy is detectable in *Volpone* where the corrupt Venice provides ground to the manipulative actions of Volpone and his company. A very characteristic scene of this is Act II Scene ii, in which Volpone is disguised as Scoto of Mantua, an Italian mountebank, in order to try to seduce Celia.

looking for. It is ruled by the Sun, that is King James, "Whose beams shine day and night and are of force, / To blanch and Ethiop and revive a cor'se" (225–6).

The idea of the discontentment with blackness could have come from the emblem called "Impossibile" ("The Impossible") from Alciato's *Emblematum Liber*. The drawing shows two white men washing a black man ("Why do you wash, in vain, the Ethiopian? O forebear: no one can brighten the darkness of black night").[31] This emblem was later taken over by Geffrey Whitney in *A Choice of Emblems* (1586). The drawing remains the same, and the poem emphasises that Nature is of power, and human beings cannot do anything with unchangeable things.

Since there is a reference to the washing of the Ethiopian in the text of the masque – Jonson usually relates his described images to emblems in his text – the symbolism of blackness has a quite clear explanation. James I, the representative of the Sun, who is raised to a supernatural level – which is also symbolised by his elevated seat in the middle of the auditorium – has greater power than nature. Thus, the daughters of Niger get a promise that their blackness is going to be turned to beauty. What is interesting to consider is that, as Jonson explains, "it was her Majesty's will to have them [the courtiers] blackamoors at first" (18).

It was a common Renaissance topos that black women are ugly.[32] On the one hand, being disguised as black people was popular in England at festivals during the preceding decade,[33] and on the other hand, black-moors in public plays – cf. *Titus Andronicus* – were associated with the underworld: devils, beggars, gypsies, and other monstrous creatures, which were also synonyms of the "masterless men," vagabonds, jugglers, and all kinds of public entertainers as well as common players.[34] Thus, besides wanting to enhance the masque with exoticism, Queen Anne's quite

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31. Alciato, *Emblematum Liber: Reprinted from the 1621 Edition*, ed. William Baker, Mark Feltham, and Jean Guthrie (1995). Retrieved on June 15, 2004. <http://www.mun.ca/alciato>.

32. Kim F. Hall, " 'I Rather Would Wish to Be a Black-Moor': Beauty, Race, and Rank in Lady Mary Wroth's Urania," in *Woman, 'Race,' and Writing in Early Modern Period*, ed. M. Hendricks & P. Parker (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), 178–94, p. 192.

33. Marion Wynne-Davies, "The Queen's Masque: Renaissance Woman and the Seventeenth-Century Court Masque," in *Gloriana's Face: Women, Public and Private in the English Renaissance*, ed. S. P. Cerasano & M. Wynne-Davies (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 79–104, p. 89, and Thomson, pp. 104–5.

34. Karen Newman, *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 80–81. For more on 'Egyptians' in 16th- and 17th-century England, see Gãmini Salgãdo, *The Elizabethan Underworld* (Phoenix Mill, Thrupp, Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1992), Chapter 8, "Minions of the Moon."

provocative idea to mask herself and her courtiers as black nymphs might be ascribed to her devotion to theatre and acting.[35]

The Masque of Blackness was a novelty for several reasons. It was only the second occasion that Queen Anne stepped onto the stage – her first appearance was in Samuel Daniel's *Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, where she played Pallas Athena –, and it was Ben Jonson's and Inigo Jones' debut in front of the court. Moreover, as Orgel puts it, the masque's most striking innovation was its theatricality, because it was the first time that the single point perspective, mechanical motion, and other stage effects were applied.[36] The performance evoked strong negative reactions. The most famous one was expressed by Sir Dudley Carleton.

"At night," he wrote, "we had the Queen's Maske in the Banquetting-House, or rather her Pagent."[37] The use of this particular word, 'pageant,' is significant, because since, in 1605, it has theatrical overtones, it seems to be proved that the noble audience could have been impressed by the masque as theatre. Carleton gives a detailed description of the scenery and he does not forget about the female performers. Above all, he finds it out of decorum that all their faces were painted black. It is no wonder that he took it as scandal, since this is said to be the first recorded use of black paint as disguise instead of masks, which was more common in courtly theatre. Face-painting was among the major reasons for attacking players.[38] Carleton reports the following:

> At the further end was a great Shell in form of a Skallop, wherein were four seats; on the lowest sat the Queen with my lady Bedford; on the rest were placed the Ladies Suffolk, Darby, Rich, Effingham, Ann Herbert, Susan Herbert, Elizabeth Howard, Walsingham, and Bevil. Their Apparell was rich but too Curtizan-like for such great ones. Instead of Vizzards, their Faces and Arms up to the Elbows, were painted black, which was Disguise

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35. The same interest of theatre can be mentioned in connection with other female masquers, like Queen Henrietta Maria, who wrote, directed, and played in her own masque in 1626. Also, Lady Mary Wroth, the poet-playwright was influenced by her role in *The Masque of Blackness* to a great extent. For more details, see Michael Sharpio, "Lady Mary Wroth Describes a 'Boy Actress,' " *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 4 (1989) 187–94 and Anita Hagerman, " 'But Worth pretends': Discovering Jonsonian Masque in Lady Mary Wroth's Pamphilia and Amphilantus," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 6. 3 (2001). Retrieved on August 10, 2002. <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/06-3/hagewrot.htm>.

36. Orgel, "Introduction," p. 4.

37. Quoted in Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque*, p. 113.

38. Barish, p.103.

sufficient, for they were hard to be known; but it became nothing so well as their red and white, and you cannot imagine a more ugly Sight, then a troop of lean-cheek'd Moors.[39]

In another letter, he even calls the Queen and her companion "Actors" "strangely attired in Barbaresque mantells."[40]

The noble performers of *The Masque of Blackness*, thus, got a response which was very similar to those of foreign actresses of popular stages, since the performance used images that could be connected to popular actresses and boy-actors. The words of Carleton are very similar to the ones for which William Prynne, the author of *Histrio-Mastix* was deprived of his ears and imprisoned more than twenty years later. Although it is not proved that with "Women-Actors, notorious whores," Prynne reflected to the Queen then, the statement was held to be a deep offence on the royal theatricals.[41]

At this point, let me refer to the issue of acting briefly. Orgel says that in the case of royal performers, "acting was out of question,"[42] because "a lady or gentleman participating in a masque remains a lady or gentleman."[43] In fact, however, actors on public stages also remained *actors* who played parts. Instead, the crucial difference between royal and public players might be that actors surely regarded themselves as actors, while there is no evidence what female masquers regarded themselves to be. Nevertheless, if one takes female performers' theatrical interests into consideration – as I referred to the cases of Lady Mary Wroth and Queen Henrietta Maria earlier – one might consider them as the first women who consciously channelled their creative energies into stage activity.

Defining the "actor" or the "actress" in the 16th and 17th centuries is a controversial issue. As Sandra Richards argues, it is not even clear whether a 16th–17th-century "actress" means the one that spoke dialogues on stage, or simply a woman on stage.[44] What the above mentioned statement of Orgel suggests is that acting is defined by transformation and character impersonation. However, being an actor is not necessarily the question of submerging one's personality into the role, since even today, there are various schools and techniques of acting. Moreover, if one takes

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39. Quoted in Wynne-Davies, p. 88.
40. Wynne-Davies, p. 88.
41. Orgel, *The Illusion of Power*, p. 44.
42. Orgel, "Introduction," p. 3.
43. Orgel, *The Illusion of Power*, p. 39.
44. Richards, p. 3.

acting in the broadest sense – not forgetting about non-European theatrical traditions either – ballet dancers, clowns, acrobats, and the like – in whose cases identification with the role is hardly possible – should have been classified as actors as well. So it seems that being an actor does not depend on the enacted role or the extent of transformation. Rather, actors are those that define themselves as actors and are acknowledged by the spectators as such. This appears to be the case with Queen Anne and her companion if one considers the expostulation of the noble audience. However, self-judgement of these noble players remains a riddle, since they are "mute hieroglyphics" both on- and offstage.

In *The Masque of Blackness*, according to the decorum, professional male actors took the speaking and singing parts, while women could only dance, but one cannot yet detect the four-part structure of later masques. However – as Orgel also refers – since *The Masque of Blackness* in fact represented the quality of blackness as disorder – just as Carleton noticed and observed – it can be taken as an antimasque to *The Masque of Beauty*, in which the ultimate resolution comes. In this way, on the one hand, the black daughters of Niger connote the grotesque figures of the antimasque.[45] As Peacock argues, since the characters of the antimasque were played by professional actors later in the history of the court masque, the designer had more freedom to compose the setting and the costumes of these scenes. Thus, the antimasque was the territory of theatrical diversity.[46] On the other hand, the royal performers in *Blackness* can be associated not only with antimasque creatures, but also with professional actors / boy-actors / actresses. For this reason, Carleton's outcry seems to be even more meaningful and understandable, as well as the self-conscious intention of the queen to play an "antimasque character" – that is to take the masque of a professional player to enact "public theatre" within the masque – even more daring, because the symbolism of blackness, strangeness, ugliness, disorder and acting overlap.[47]

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45. See Francis Bacon's "Of Masques and Triumphs" (1612): "Let anti-masques not be long; they have been commonly of fools, satyrs, baboons, wild men, antics, beasts, spirites, witches, *AEthiopes*, pigmies, turquets, *nymphs*, rustics, Cupids, statuas moving, and the like" (31) (my italics). All parenthesised references are to Francis Bacon, *Bacon's Essays*, ed. F. Storr & C. H. Gibson (New York, Bombay: Longman, Green, and Co., 1898).

46. Peacock, p. 130.

47. To give another characteristic example, one may recall that Mary Wroth was called a "Hirmophradite in show, in deed a monster" by Sir Denny after she published her *Urania* (cf. Wynne-Davies, p. 93). The term "hermaphrodite" was also a common word to boy-actors, moreover, interestingly, it was associated with black people. The Stationer's Register in 1580

The solution of the riddle in the antimasque (*The Masque of Blackness*) gives way to the main masque (*The Masque of Beauty*). The significant action, that is the transformation from blackness to beauty, or, more exactly, the disappearance of blackness, however, takes place between the two masques.[48] In *The Masque of Beauty*, the nymphs are already non-black at their appearance. This unstaged metamorphoses might have been necessary not only because it was the original idea to glorify the King by emphasising the influence of the Sun. Also, the black daughters should have been whitened in a "theatrical" sense, too; they had to be deprived of qualities of strangeness and public performance. This later masque, thus, was decorous and very well received. As the Venetian Ambassador puts it:

> [*The Masque of Beauty* was] worthy of her Majesty's greatness. The apparatus and the cunning of the stage machinery was a miracle, the abundance and beauty of the light immense, the music and the dance most sumptuous. But what beggared all else and possibly exceeded the public expectation was the wealth of pearls and jewels that adorned the Queen and her ladies.[49]

The central scenic image of this masque is the "throne of beautie."[50] Around it, there are the eight elements of Beauty, and on the steps, there are several Cupids. Both the throne with Harmony sitting on it and the steps with the Cupids were moved thus symbolising the universe ruled by harmony, beauty, and love.

The white daughters of Niger, in their dance – which was "full of excellent device and change" and ended in a diamond shape – enact their physical as well as their spiritual beauty. As the first song tells us, the world was "lighted" and moved "out of Chaos." In other words, the world and the characters of the antimasque were replaced by the main masque and the ladies who "were varied in their beauties."[51]

So finally Jonson washed the "Aethiop" white. The foreign black ladies associated with the antimasque, with performance and marked physicality, were turned into white dancers in the main masque. This well-prepared and guided change is, of course, defined as a necessary transformation from the unmanageable, chaotic misrule in antimasques. It could not have been otherwise, since the masque, as a politi-

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had a record about a child, which was said to be a "monster with a black face, the Mouth and Eyes like a Lyon which was both Male and Female" (quoted in Newman, p. 52).

48. Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque*, p. 128.

49. Quoted in Janicka-Swiderska, p. 78.

50. Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Beauty: Reprinted from the 1692 Folio*, ed. Clark J. Holloway. Retrieved on July 12, 2003. <http://www.hollowaypages.com/jonson1692beauty.htm>.

51. Jonson, *The Masque of Beauty*.

cally constructed and controlled genre, should have represented the eternal and stable royal power. The oddity and the glamour of the whole issue is that ambiguity and change is integral in every form of theatre by nature.

Besides the fact that Jonson followed courtly decorum, the metamorphosis of the blackened "antimasquers" into non-black masquers very well represents his vague and contradictory relationship to theatre. Also, it cannot be accidental that this uncertainty is related to the female performers of the masques that remained "mute hieroglyphics" as far as their own intentions are concerned. For this reason – although we may or may not call them the first English actresses – they have quite an undefined position in English Renaissance theatre history.

Gábor Ittzés

Fall and Redemption

Adam and Eve's
Experience of Temporality after the Fall in *Paradise Lost*

The current essay is the third paper in a long drawn-out series that examines the temporality of created beings in *Paradise Lost*. The first paper (*The AnaChronisT* 1996) discussed the pristine condition of humans in an Eden characterised by dynamism rather than stasis. The second article (*The AnaChronisT* 2004) examined the temporality of Milton's angels, both loyal and fallen. The present investigation returns to Adam and Eve but looks at their life in time as we know it. I will show that the first human pair's initial reaction to the altered situation, their perception of time and despair after the fall parallel those of the fallen angels. The destinies of rebel angels and of disobedient humans diverge in that God bestows grace on the latter and reverses their fate, which betokens time's new significance for humanity as the potentiality to be redeemed. As part of the redemptive process, Adam and Eve must come to terms with death, foreknowledge and history. While the 1996 paper mostly concentrated on the paradisal books, and the previous essay on books i–ii and v–vi, I now turn to the last third of the epic. Taken together, the three articles thus provide a sustained reading of the whole poem.

With the fall begins a new era. The fall, angelic and human, marks crucial turning points in the temporal structure of *Paradise Lost*. Satan and his cronies' literal fall comes at the very end of book vi, the structural midpoint of the whole epic by book-count. Chronologically, it introduces a series of three nine-day periods, at the end of which comes the human fall.[1] Cosmically, the next divine action is creation of the

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1. Satan spends nine days in chaos (vi.871), nine in hell (i.50–52), and nine in the cosmos; cf. Albert R. Cirillo, "Noon–Midnight and the Temporal Structure of *Paradise Lost*," *ELH* 29 (1962) 372–95, pp. 366–67, and Elizabeth J. Wood, " 'Improv'd by Tract of Time': Metaphysics and Measurement in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 15 (1981) 43–58. – All parenthesised references are to this edition: John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (1667, 2nd ed. 1674), ed. Alastair

world. Subjectively, as I argued earlier, they fall simultaneously in and out of time.[2] Adam and Eve fall in book ix, which divides the whole work in octave proportion by book-count,[3] and upon their sin follow the cosmological changes of x.668–87, terminating the eternal spring of paradisal time. The tragic event takes place at high noon, a most distinguished temporal locus in Milton's scheme,[4] and, arguably, introduces the last day, in the sense of a twenty-four-hour period, of epic action.[5] Subjectively, with the fall begins time as we know it. It is here that Adam and Eve's experience most closely corresponds to ours. This paper will offer an analysis of that experience against the background of my previous investigations of created temporality in the

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Fowler, 2nd ed. (Harlow etc.: Longman, 1998). Editorial material is quoted as Fowler[2] followed by page number and line reference. Editorial material from the first edition of 1968 will be quoted, from a 1991 reprint that excludes the rest of Milton's poetry, as Fowler[1].

2. See my "Spirits Immortal in and out of Time: The Temporality of Milton's Angels in *Paradise Lost*," *The AnaChronisT* 10 (2004) 1–30. Since I will be building on my analysis in that article, it seems justified to summarise here the relevant points rather than burden this paper with repeated references to the earlier essay. I argued there that Satan and his followers do not lose their immortality, which leads them (and some critics) to think, mistakenly, that uncreation is beyond God's power, and to assume that they are inherently eternal beings. In fact, however, continued existence becomes a means of their punishment in that they now must live in perpetual fallenness. In that sense they are locked up in time. It is no accident that in *Paradise Lost* unfallen time is measured in days, a circular, ever-renewing natural unit, while the fundamental unit of hellish time is the hour, an arbitrary, unstructured yet much more limited measure. Connected to the devils' inability to die is their inability to repent. As a result, their despair, primarily presented through the archfiend, knows no limit, and only renewed obstinacy can provide a(n apparent) way out of it. Time is thus emptied of significance for the devils because no real change can now come to them, either fall or redemption. In that sense they are beyond time. While their fall is a temporally limited, narratively almost point-like, event, Milton also depicts it through its consequences as ever unfolding in time. In their pristine state, creatures are granted foreknowledge on condition of obedience to God. Having forfeited the latter, the rebels also lose the former. Instead, they not only predict a future of their own desire, but also subject their interpretation of the past to that unfounded projection, thereby completely reversing the divinely ordained order and view of past and future. The circularity of their reasoning also images their endlessly fallen state.

3. On the importance of the 1:2 proportion to the structure of *Paradise Lost*, see Fowler[2], p. 29.

4. Cf. Cirillo.

5. Although the matter, like many other points in the chronology of events in *Paradise Lost*, is subject to scholarly debate, the most influential epic chronology dates the expulsion to noon on the day after the fall; cf. Fowler[2], p. 31 and p. 674 (ad xii.588–89).

Miltonic world. I will show that the initial human response to the fall is patterned on that of the disloyal angels, but the reversal of despair betokens the crucial difference in their ultimate destinies: "man . . . shall find grace / The other none" (iii.131–32). God's mercy is pronounced early on in the poem, yet Adam and Eve must first repent and then go through a lengthy educational process before they can appropriate it through a renewed perception of death, a reinstitution of foreknowledge, an understanding of history as comedy and a lesson in typology.

The Fall of Eve and Adam

Having eaten of the forbidden fruit, Eve's first experience is a new attitude towards the past. I have suggested elsewhere that the fruit is nothing in and of itself,[6] it is no more tasty or beautiful *per se* than any other, nor has it any special powers other than by virtue of the prohibition. Yet Eve's experience of it, and the subjectivity is doubly underlined by the bard's "seemed" and "whether true / Or fancied so," is that of novelty in taste. Eve

> Intent now wholly on her taste, naught else
> regarded, such delight till then, as seemed,
> In fruit she never tasted, whether true
> Or fancied so, through expectation high
> Of knowledge, nor was godhead from her thought.
>
> (ix.786–90)

Her expectation and the thought of divinity are directed towards the future, and Milton puts them in instrumental relationship ("through") with the reinterpreted past. That constitutes a structural parallel to the moves of the fallen angels: the past is manipulated in order to justify a conceptually predetermined future. Employed in paradise, this circular approach is no less fallacious than in hell. Eve stuffed herself with the fruit, and the much-appreciated phrase "knew not eating death" (ix.792) in the next line encapsulates, if negatively, the very moment of the fall of her perception of time. A remarkable participial construction, imported from classical usage, it is capable of several different readings as "she did not know death while she ate" or "she knew (read, thought) that she was not eating (instantaneous) death" or "she did not know that she was eating death." But whichever meaning of those four words we

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6. Cf. my " 'Till by Degrees of Merit Raised': The Dynamism of Milton's Edenic Development and Its Theological Context," *The AnaChronisT* 2 (1996) 133–61, p. 153n.

take, eating and knowing, and even death, become simultaneous, yet mutually exclusive because of *not*. Eating and knowing, that is, sinning and knowing, cannot go together.

Eve's ensuing celebration of the tree (ix.795–833) shows her knowledge, including that of present and future, in utter confusion. Characteristically, the speech does not move from somewhere to somewhere else in time. It *revolves* around the issue of what may come. Eve outlines various possibilities, but she can hardly settle for any one of them. The reason is her erroneous understanding of the present, given in the centre of the soliloquy.

> And I perhaps am secret; heaven is high,
> High and remote to see from thence distinct
> Each thing on earth; and other care perhaps
> May have diverted from continual watch
> Our great forbidder, safe with all his spies
> About him.   (ix.811–16)

God's *scientia visionis* has been reduced from a metaphor to mere literalism, the basic mode of satanic discourse. Eve's hope is not only vain but also highly doubtful. It is wishful thinking, to note yet another parallel between her new state and that of the fallen angels. She has violated God's command, and with her disobedience came distrust in, and false knowledge of, the almighty, taking his[7] infinity insincerely. The result could hardly be else than uncertainty and perplexity not least about the future. Having begun her monologue with a (totally deluded) vision of how she shall tend the tree, through a similarly groundless assessment of the present, Eve arrives at the genuine question of what to do. Apparently, she can determine the future, it depends on her decision. However, her vacillation is concluded in one direction because of her ignorance of, and inability to divine, the course events will take. She must settle for the safer resolution. Instead of influencing the future, she is influenced by its unpredictability, yet in turn she does bind its course through the decision she has made in her fear of the unforeseeable. The circularity mirrors again the world of the devils but with an important difference. Eve thinks of death, and now grasps that it means that she "shall be no more" (ix.827).

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7. I adhere to Milton's and the critical guild's convention of using masculine pronouns for God with the understanding that all human language about God is to some extent metaphorical. Masculine pronouns are not meant to entail statements about God's ontological genderedness.

When Adam comes and meets Eve by the tree, she opens the dialogue with a description of the agony she felt in Adam's absence.

> Thee I have missed, and thought it long, deprived
> Thy presence, agony of love till now
> Not felt, nor shall be twice, for never more
> Mean I to try, what rash untried I sought,
> The pain of absence from thy sight.   (ix.857–61)

In one sense it is a flattering lie (another weapon from Satan's linguistic armoury), as is her claim to have sought divinity mainly for Adam's sake (ix.877–78), but in another sense it is true and mirrors her revaluation of the past. This was certainly not the first time she had temporarily parted with Adam (cf. viii.39–63), but in her former paradisal state she cannot have felt the *agony* of love or *pain* of absence. In the act of negation, implicitly suggesting the comparability of the immediate past with earlier occasions, she nonetheless creates a continuity of time under the aegis of fallenness. That marks a new outlook on the past. The other noteworthy characteristic of the speech is that it is aimed at persuading Adam to eat. In other words, the whole text, including its representation of the past, is subjected to a political end to be achieved in the future. That explains Eve's falsified account of history. Eve's perception of time after her fall exhibits, then, the same features as that of the fallen angels.

Adam is in a peculiar situation having heard his wife's story. He is not yet fallen but decides to fall, and a distorted vision of past and future plays a crucial role in his decision. He laments inwardly for Eve in these words.

> How art thou lost, how on a sudden lost,
> Defaced, deflowered, and now to death devote!
> Rather how hast thou yielded to transgress
> The strict forbiddance, how to violate
> The sacred fruit forbidden! Some cursed fraud
> Of enemy hath beguiled thee. . .   (ix.900–05)

The clauses beginning with *rather* show that Adam is still fully aware of the significance of the situation.[8] He knows that the only important point is God's prohibi-

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8. In a different context, John Leonard, *Naming in Paradise: Milton and the Language of Adam and Eve* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), pp. 222–24, has demonstrated that these and the next lines (esp. ix.905) illustrate Adam's insight rather than the lack thereof as suggested by other critics.

tion, no matter what other issues might be involved. While unfallen, Adam's grasp of the past is perfect both factually and analytically. He even conjectures at the future, and the possibility of "another Eve" (ix.911) is certainly a shrewd guess at the faithfulness of God's providence.[9] Where he is mistaken is the presupposition that his subjective history cannot be healed, "yet loss of thee / Would never from my heart" (ix.912–13). That in fact amounts to underestimating God, who might be able to correct the course of events for the future but who is no lord over the past. That limited view leads to Adam's decision to prefer a destiny shared with Eve to God's command.

When, in the second phase of his transition towards the fall, Adam addresses Eve audibly, he repeats the movement from a correct starting point through fallacious argument to a wrong conclusion. The opening line "Bold deed thou hast presumed, adventurous Eve" (ix.921) is surely an adequate assessment of the case rather than an approval of, or praise for, Eve's deed.[10] The truning point comes, again, with his limited view of the past, "But past who can recall, or done undo?" (ix.926). The reader is obviously trapped in the logical necessity implied by Adam's question, but the reader is fallen. Adam is not yet, and he should remember what he has learned from the dialogue with Raphael or indeed his encounter with God himself. He should know that time, as human, albeit prelapsarian, understanding can comprehend it, does not apply to the almighty. By commenting that Adam was "Submitting to what *seemed* remediless" (ix.919, my italics), the bard unmistakeably signals his take on the matter. God's reality is greater than "what created mind can comprehend" (iii.705), even in temporal terms. In any case, whatever the *logic* is, it does not pertain to obedience to God. Adam should bear the prohibition in mind (cf. viii.323–28 and x.12–13). Imitating satanic argumentation, however, he rather chooses to manipulate the past in order to prove the plausibility of a version of the future (Eve not dying) he desires.

Adam mimics devilish reasoning on a further count. He buttresses the wished-for scenario for the future with his interpretation of God's nature, in which the problem of uncreation plays a crucial role. Should the punishment clause of the injunction come true and they die, "God shall uncreate, / Be frustrate, do, undo, and labour loose, / Not well conceived of God" (ix.943–45). He quickly adds, though, that "his power / Creation could repeat, yet [God] would be loath / Us to

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9. Contrast with the closed vision critiqued by ix.919.

10. *Pace* Fowler[2], p. 524 (ad ix.921). Consider other occurrences of *bold* esp. in i.82–83, 127, 470; ii.386; Argument iv, vi.803, viii.235; x.520–21, and note the echo of Eve's dream (v.65–66). Further, the first line's boldly adventurous presumption is connected to "peril great" in the next with *and* – Adam is clear about the negative import of Eve's action.

abolish" (ix.945–47) – for fear of letting the enemy scorn him. Adam is thus not fully subscribing to the satanic legion's view of uncreation, for he does not flatly deny God's power to destroy, yet he does think that the past, creation, puts God under some kind of constraint. That is a fatal misconstrual of his nature. As a result, Adam tragically misunderstands his own options, recall the bard's "s*eemed remediless*" (ix.919, my italics), and settles for a future he himself has projected but which he considers predetermined. Ironically, his last free act is the determination of the future, at least insofar as within his power lies, in conformity with his own projection although the causal relationship is the exact opposite of what he takes it to be. Not until the "completing of the mortal sin / Original" (ix.1003–04) was the future humanly determined.

Having tasted the forbidden fruit, Adam is fallen indeed, and with him his perception of time, which will be depicted through its effects.

> Eve, now I see thou art exact of taste,
> And elegant. . . .
> . . . .
>   I the praise
> Yield thee, so well this day thou hast purveyed.
> Much pleasure we have lost, while we abstained
> From this delightful fruit, nor known till now
> True relish, tasting. . . .
> . . . .
> But come, so well refreshed, now let us play,
> As meet is, after such delicious fare;
> For never did thy beauty since the day
> I saw thee first and wedded thee, adorned
> With all perfections, so inflame my sense
> With ardour to enjoy thee, fairer now
> Than ever, bounty of this virtuous tree.   (ix.1017–33)

I think it emblematic that the first word Adam utters in his fallenness, after naming his wife, is *now*. Thematic fronting puts extra emphasis on the adverb which is then repeated four times in the course of sixteen lines. The present is contrasted with the past and the result is an unfavourable comparison for the latter. Adam reiterates Eve's creation of a single fallen time continuum in retrospect. Memories of paradisal time are lumped together with new experience; there is no sharp dividing line between the two phases. If they discern any momentous change at all, it is for

the better. It is not to be wondered at since there is continuity of perception from their point of view. The very change in that perception, clearly identifiable from an outsider's point of view, cannot be comprehended from within. Its alteration will be grasped over a longer period of time. Angelic and human falls, it seems, are alike to Milton in that they are simultaneously point-like events occurring in a relatively short time and on-going processes endlessly unfolding in time. There is, however, a significant difference not to be overlooked: humans are redeemed.

There is still a long way to go before Adam and Eve can come to repentance. They have just waked from a sleep of "conscious dreams" (ix.1050)[11] and a new feeling surprises them: shame.

> Shame to Milton is something deeper and more sinister in human emotion than simply the instinctive desire to cover the genital organs. It is rather a state of mind which is the state of the fall itself: it might be described as the emotional response to the state of pride.[12]

I would put great emphasis on *human* in Frye's text. The fallen angels persevered in their pride, or to adapt Frye's axiom, they never responded to it emotionally. The hellish conference is in this sense highly unemotional. It is a show of intellectual brilliance, such as the devils still possess. There are emotions involved, of course, but they are pride and hatred: the ones that ruled the rebels during their mutiny against God in heaven. They are still the old ones, not *responses* to them. If there are any new emotions, they are bitterness and spitefulness. Satan and his followers are hardened in their old obstinacy after their fall. Whether in heaven, hell or on earth, they may, in addition, feel jealousy but never shame.

So far I have tried to demonstrate how similar the fallen human state is in its first phase to that of the angels. Shame, however, indicates the first stage where the two begin to diverge.[13] Shame is a newcomer not only to fallen humans but also to the world of *Paradise Lost*. And with it comes a new view of the past. It is no longer superseded by the present, but the latter becomes ashamed of itself when compared

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11. Cf. vi.521.

12. Northrop Frye, *The Return of Eden: Five Essays on Milton's Epics* (1965; Toronto and Buffalo, N.Y.: U of Toronto P, 1975), p. 37.

13. However painful, I here take shame to be an ultimately salutary response. The question is currently debated in psychological literature. For a helpful review, see Teodóra Tomcsányi, "Bűn, bűntudat, szégyen: A delegált bűntudat valláslélektani és lelkigondozói megközelítése családtörténetek kapcsán," in *Valláspszichológiai tanulmányok*, ed. Katalin Horváth-Szabó (Budapest: Akadémiai, 2003), 153–86, esp. pp. 156–67.

to the former. Shame flows from a recognition that the present is emptied of some significance the past still had. In their paradisal state, Adam and Eve had both continual obedience and the breaking of it by an act of disobedience as the potential course of the future. As long as they persevered, that is, actualised the former, both options remained open. In the actualisation of the latter, the richness of that potentiality was forfeited. Once broken, the cycle of obedience lost its potentiality to break. By the time the Son came to judge them, Adam had realised that their new state did not offer one of the two possibilities open in the prelapsarian world, but had not yet comprehended the new potentiality of redemption. This is why he laments his selfish love as misspent on Eve.

> Is this the love, is this the recompense
> Of mine to thee, ingrateful Eve, expressed
> Immutable when thou wert lost, not I,
> Who might have lived and joyed immortal bliss,
> Yet willingly chose rather death with thee. . .   (ix.1163–67)

More than his love, Adam laments in these lines the immutability of the past and hence, apparently, of the present and the future.

Wailing: Between Judgement and Repentance

Following the biblical account (Genesis 3:11–13), Adam pushes the blame on Eve and Eve on the serpent when the deity decends to judge them (x.92–162). God, though not altogether without comment (x.144–56), seems to accept the defensive moves and pronounces his judgements in reversed order, first on the serpent. The significance of that bears strongly on my theme of time. The curse declared on the snake includes a promise for humankind's future (x.175–81), which the bard is quick to interpret for the reader (x.182–90). The latter part of the judgement scene (x.175–208) is closely modelled on Genesis 3:14–19, but this fact should not be overemphasised to the exclusion of Milton's creative genius. As witnessed by the whole epic, Milton felt quite at liberty to enlarge on particular biblical details if he thought fit. His adherence to the words of Genesis is, therefore, an act of equal importance. We can only suppose that Milton deemed the biblical text sufficient to express his poetic meaning. The aspect of Milton's version I wish here to underline is the repetitive structure of the individual judgements pronounced. It is expressly formulated in the serpent's case and Adam's, and is implicit in Eve's. "Because thou hast done this . . . thou shalt. . ." (x.175–77). The judgement is given in view of the crime committed.

The divine determination of the future is appropriated to the human act in the past. In that sense, the future follows from the past. I think that thesis is part of the Son's point in the judgement. It is the reassertion of the right view of past and future. Angels and humans had this cognisance in their prelapsarian state, but it was perverted by the fall.

The same principle explains a crux in Adam's curse.

> In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,
> Till thou return unto the ground, for thou
> Out of the ground wast taken, *know thy birth*,
> For dust thou art, and shalt to dust return.
>
> (x.205–08, my emphasis)

These four lines are an almost verbatim quotation from Genesis 3:19, with the conspicuous insertion of the italicised clause. It sticks out both stylistically and syntactically. Alastair Fowler finds it "puzzling, since Adam has already been told by Raphael that he was formed of 'dust of the ground' (vii 525)."[14] The parenthetical clause is undoubtedly intended for Adam's education, but not in the sense in which Fowler takes it. I suggest it means, "remember whence you came." But it is more than simple remembrance, it ought to be active knowledge of his origins in the widest possible sense. Knowing his birth, Adam should also remember his creator, whom he owes obedience, as well as the creation of his wife, whom it is his duty to govern. Forgetting these obligations proved fatal for Adam.[15] The right knowledge was obscured and shattered by the fall, and the Son now reminds Adam of it. His memory has failed, and now he needs reminding since to be prepared for the future he must be properly aware of the past. The lesson, however, is not easily learned, and Adam commits the same mistake again. His long private lamentation (x.720–844) revolves around the questions of "what comes next?" and "what to do?" Fallen beings are preoccupied with the future, which they innocent selves were not, and to which they have now lost access.

The central issues for Adam in his wailing are his death on that day and the future of his race. When he desires yet fears death, he is haunted by the Hamletian dilemma that "in that sleep of death what dreams may come . . . Must give us pause" (III.i.66–68). This is essentially the same question that the fallen angels faced, but Adam's formulations are more tentative, more searching and less cynical about the

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14. Fowler[1], p. 517 (ad x.203–08).
15. Cf. the divine reprimand in x.144–56.

almighty than those of the devils.[16] The present is miserable because of the broken relationship with God, and to die would mean no relationship – but would it? Whichever way he looks at it, he must conclude hopelessly, "both death and I / Am found eternal" (x.815–16).[17] Neither of them really is, of course, but that is a piece of dramatic irony reserved for the reader at this stage. Adam will have a steep learning curve before recognising the true nature of both his own mortality and that of death. For the time being, he would be content with the former, and his chief lament is that death does not come. He feels cheated because death promised for "that day" delays, "Why am I mocked with death, and lengthened out / To deathless pain?" (x.774–75).

Although I disagree with some of the details, the best analysis I know of the meaning and importance of "day" in the second half of book x is still Fowler's, given in the critical apparatus of his text edition.[18] He identifies three phases of Adam's gradually growing awareness of the true significance of the term. First, the day should end at sunset which is now past, and he is still alive. Second, he then fearfully concludes that God must reckon days from morning to morning. He still expects a literal fulfilment. Third, he finally understands the figurative meaning of both inter-diction and judgement (that days do end at sunset, after all, and the terms are less literal but more mysterious than he first thought). But, so Fowler, Adam now over-looks the fact that the twenty-four hour interval following the fall will not expire without his expulsion from the garden of Eden: "the decrees [of divine justice] are nevertheless eventually accomplished, though in an unexpected way."[19] In the last move, Fowler is pushing details too far in my estimate. After all, a noontime expul-sion may be literally "that day" in the sense of "the same twenty-four hour period," but it is certainly not enough to secure the literal fulfilment of the interdiction. Adam still does not literally die that day. Frye's much less elaborate analysis may get closer to the heart of the matter on this score. "In both oracles [v.603–04 and vii.544] there is a mental reservation in the word 'day' which angels and Adam alike are required to understand. 'This day' to the angels does not mean literal begetting at that moment: 'the day' to Adam does not mean literal death that moment."[20] Notwithstanding these reservations, Fowler is absolutely right in substantiating the thesis that at the

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16. Cf. x.782–816.
17. Cf. x.782–83, 787–88, 808–10.
18. See Fowler[2], p. 542 (ad x.49–53), p. 582 (ad x.773), p. 586 (ad x.854–59), and p. 594 (ad x.1050); cf. pp. 30–31, p. 446 (ad viii.323–33), and p. 674 (ad xii.588–89).
19. Fowler[1], p. 552 (ad x.854–59).
20. Frye, p. 34.

end of each period of "that day," Adam has a new recognition and a firmer grasp of what is entailed in God's judgement.[21]

Contemplating the doom awaiting his yet unborn progeny, Adam also makes important discoveries. His thoughts run ahead into the imagined future and are then turned back to his past. The exercise proves useful because, instead of interpreting the past in the light of a hoped-for future, he recognises the fairness of his present state and future doom with the help of an invented scenario that throws light on his past.

> [W]hat if thy son
> Prove disobedient, and reproved, retort,
> Wherefore didst thou beget me? I sought it not:
> Wouldst thou admit for his contempt of thee
> That proud excuse? Yet him not thy election,
> But natural necessity begot.
> God made thee of choice his own, and of his own
> To serve him, thy reward was of his grace,
> Thy punishment then justly is at his will.
> Be it so, for I submit, his doom is fair,
> That dust I am, and shall to dust return. . .   (x.760–70)

Reflection on the possible future of his progeny has enabled Adam to reassess his own condition, past, present, and future. The passage, however, appears more sober out of context than in situ. On its own, it might sound as if arriving at clear-headed acquiescence in divine judgement and Adam's own deserved mortality, leaving the matter in God's hands. That is not yet the case, however, and Adam, quickly switching over to his other favourite theme, rapidly gives himself up to desolation. "Oh welcome hour whenever!" (x.771), he continues what seemed meek submission to God's verdict of mortality, and his line is certainly not an expression of the Christian's joyous anticipation, but a desperate yet vain cry for annihilation.

By recognising his responsibility for his progeny, that in him "all / Posterity stands cursed" (x.817–18), Adam reaches the deepest point of self-accusation when he identifies himself with Satan although his conclusion about his own doom is over-hasty. He not only identifies his crime with that of Satan, but also unconsciously imitates his utter despair. He finds himself "miserable / Beyond all past example and future," the closed temporal vision should not go unnoticed, "To Satan only like both crime and doom" (x.839–41). The admission is inevitable. Adam is at his wits' end,

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21. Cf. Fowler[2], p. 582 (ad x.773).

and it is a dead end, "O conscience, into what abyss of fears / And horrors hast thou driven me; out of which / I find no way, from deep to deeper plunged!" (x.842–44). The echoes of Satan's Niphates soliloquy are not lost on the reader (iv.76–78): human fallenness parallels Satan's to the lowest point; the difference is in how it is reversed. Milton's explanation is the doctrine of prevenient grace, and there are a few points worth noting in the particulars. Satan is alone, repentance as an option occurs to him quickly, but he soon rejects it simply because he is incapable of it. The reason of his inability is that he *dreads* shame, does not *feel* it (cf. iv.82). Adam, on the other hand, ends his speech with the exclamation cited and lies on the cold ground invoking death. He cannot get past the point on his own. He has, unlike Satan, a companion, and Eve eventually directs him to true repentance.

Eve is instrumental in leading Adam to contrition in more ways than the obvious. She puts forward the very idea of returning to their place of judgement and pray there (x.932–36). Soon afterwards, however, she helps Adam find the right answer indirectly, that is, by advising wrong courses of action. She proposes "wilful barrenness"[22] or suicide (x.979–1006). Adam is already past those arguments and as he now reconsiders them, a new understanding dawns on him. He recognises, though not yet properly, the deeper meaning of the curse pronounced on the serpent. He grasps the significance of a past event which he recalls by his memory and thereby attains to foresight into the future. "[U]nless / Be meant," "I conjecture," and "Would be" (x.1032–36) indicate that the process does not work with prelapsarian certainty, but it does work, and it soon gains momentum. Adam dismisses the ideas advocated by Eve and freely accepts the role assigned to him by his curse. He turns to the past again and apprehending the grace exhibited by their judge, outlines what he believes to be their future of simple work (x.1044–85). His prediction is not wide of the mark, and the paradisal method is again in operation, but since the breach of obedience it has no longer been perfectly reliable for Adam.

More important than the particulars of the civilisation he envisions is Adam's renewed understanding of God, who "Hath unbesought provided" (x.1058), as inclined to pity, willing to sustain, and ready to instruct (x.1061–62, 1081–83). That recognition, and prevenient grace, move him and Eve to return "where he judged them" (x.1099) to "prostrate fall . . . and pardon beg" (x.1087–89). Milton finds a superb narrative solution for this poignant scene. Adam's last speech concludes with a seven-line proposal to offer up penitential prayers (x.1086–92), followed by a four-line encouragement cast in the form of a prediction that God "will relent and turn /

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22. The term is Adam's; cf. x.1042.

From his displeasure" (x.1093–94). Adam's last words quoted in direct speech include divine "favour, grace, and mercy" (x.1096). But the book does not end for another eight lines, which, apart from two short transitional clauses, constitute an almost verbatim reduplication of his proposal, except that the first person and present tense (hortatory) forms are replaced by third person and past tense (descriptive) forms. What was first proposed has now come to pass. The repetition generates a sense of closure, which is skilfully complicated by a sense of suspense. Milton cuts off the last four lines of Adam's text, and thus the whole scene comes to a close on a note of human "sorrow unfeigned, and humiliation meek" (x.1104), leaving God's reaction to the beginning of the next book. A final effect of the arrangement is that the conclusion in its present form harks back to Eve's original suggestion (x.932–33). The echo is muted but not completely drowned out by the much more audible reverberation of Adam's words. Both their pasts are tributary to the event in which their life turns towards a new future.

Redeeming Time, Redeeming Death

God's redemptive plan for humanity is decided upon before the fall and it is announced to Adam and Eve, in the serpent's curse, before themselves are judged for their sin.[23] If its fulfilment falls beyond the concise temporal scope of the epic's first narrative level, it is nevertheless presented in careful detail on the second level. In temporal terms, Michael's pageants are characterised by several paradoxes. The visions' subject matter is human history, yet this section is perhaps farthest from a ticking clock-time in the whole epic. It is generally sensed, though rarely if ever acknowledged, that time feels somehow less real here than in other parts of the poem.[24] The impression is not unfounded. Unlike in previous embedded narratives, of celestial war and of creation, time is here not measured in days, the fundamental time unit in the epic. In fact, it is hardly measured at all. Except for the metaphoric noon at the opening of book xii, Michael and the bard offer practically no temporal clues throughout the whole episode. Yet at the end of the long scene, Adam explicitly claims that the angel's "prediction . . . / *Measured* this transient world, the race of time" (xii.553–4, my italics). If the pun at the end allows the sense "humankind," it is

23. Cf. iii.80–343 and x.163–211.
24. None of the epic chronologies produced for *Paradise Lost* includes the period covered by the pageants although other second-order episodes are usually seen as part of the same timeline as the first-order narrative.

also capable of meaning "history," a more obviously temporal allusion.[25] Time is, then, measured by this most measure-less revelation.

The subject matter of the last two books is not so much human history pure and simple as salvation history, where time is by no means linear but is punctuated by divine interventions. The story on that secondary level, connecting up the events in which God has manifested himself, is far more important than on the level of uniform flow. A final general temporal feature of the revelatory visions is that from the beginning of postlapsarian time down to the end of the ages, six epochs are shown to Adam. The number is traditional,[26] and significant.[27] It corresponds to the six days in which God created the world. The arrangement represents symbolically the fact that history is salvation history. God is re-creating the world in it. And when the end of time comes, the divine act will be complete and the world will enter the eternal Sabbath.

Turning now to Adam's experience, he is granted much more than a simple promise for the future. The pledge is first given him in the serpent's curse, and as it is "Plainlier . . . revealed" (xii.151) in Michael's historical pageants, Adam is vouchsafed comprehensive foreknowledge of the complete course of human history. He is to be pacified and educated by it or, as Michael brings the two purposes together, "to learn / True patience" (xi.360–61). Patience is surely one of the most time-bound virtues. In *Paradise Lost* it is by no means an exclusively human virtue. It was one of the central issues in the war in heaven, which also took place in time. William G. Madsen contends that "the principal lesson of Raphael's narrative is the lesson of patience, the virtue with which the Christian confronts the perplexities of history. It is one of the most difficult virtues to practice, as difficult for Milton as it was for some of the good angels."[28] Madsen adds a couple of pages later,

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25. Cf. *race* as "mankind" (*OED sb*.2 I.5.a.) and "the act of running, a run" (*OED sb*.1 I.1.a), perhaps even as "a contest of speed" (*OED* IV.10.a)

26. Cf. Augustine, *City of God*, xxii.30.

27. That is not to say that further patterns cannot be discovered in the text. Fowler's three-fold division is perceptive (cf. Fowler², pp. 667–68, ad xii.466–67). He punctuates Adam's education by the three drops "from the well of life" (xi.416) and Michael's pauses at xii.2 and xii.466. The result is a tripartite history, with ages of the first Adam (up to Noah), from the flood to the incarnation, and of the second Adam (until doomsday). Cf. Fowler², p. 621 (ad xi.416), pp. 645–46 (ad xii.5) and David Loewenstein, *Milton and the Drama of History: Historical Vision, Iconoclasm, and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1990), pp. 95 and 178n.

28. William G. Madsen, *From Shadowy Types to Truth: Studies in Milton's Symbolism* (New Haven et al.: Yale UP, 1968), p. 111.

Patience is the exercise of saints. Patience is not a kind of spiritual setting-up exercise arbitrarily imposed on us by God. It is necessary because we are creatures living in a world we did not create and immersed in a time process that is the fulfilment of a purpose not our own. We must act, assuredly . . . but we must abide the time.[29]

Humans' immersion in time, which Madsen has earlier declared to be "the condition of [their] salvation,"[30] is considered the essence of history by David Loewenstein. "Nor will history in his [Adam's] case serve, as it so often did in Milton's age, as a refuge from devouring time.[31] Rather for Adam and his race, these trying history lessons mean a painful immersion into time and mortality."[32]

How painful the immersion is is adequately illustrated by the fact that Adam bursts out in tears three times during the first six visions,[33] and by his reluctance to acknowledge his own responsibility for the misery to come. Michael's invitation is plain enough:

> Adam, now ope thine eyes, and first behold
> The effects which thy original crime hath wrought
> In some to spring from thee, who never touched
> The excepted tree, nor with the snake conspired,
> Nor sinned thy sin, yet from that sin derive
> Corruption to bring forth more violent deeds.   (xi.423–28)

Adam and Eve's culpability is maintained throughout by the archangel, not least in reply to Adam's repeated evasions of his accountability.[34] After the fourth vision, he carefully traces back the origins of the sin of those who slay their brothers to that of Cain (xi.675–80). The parallel is obvious and acceptable, yet there is more than the lack of formal resemblance to Adam's exclusion of himself. Similarly, he wonders (I believe, genuinely) at God's forbearance in dwelling with the Israelites, who have

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29. Madsen, p. 113.

30. Madsen, p. 101.

31. Note that in the Miltonic universe it cannot be otherwise, for time is not intrinsically "devouring." It has become so perverted by its alliance with death through sin (cf. ix.70). When it is already "devouring" (cf. x.605–06) history can obviously not serve as a refuge from it since human history is its manifestation.

32. Loewenstein, p. 95.

33. Cf. xi.494–98, 674, 754–58; and see also xi.448–49, 461–65.

34. Cf. xi.475–77, 518–19; xii.83–84; also xi.632–36.

been given many commandments. The contrast is further complicated by the fact that the lines come immediately after the first tentative formulation of the *felix culpa* paradox:[35]

> but now I see
> His day, in whom all nations shall be blest,
> Favour unmerited by me, who sought
> Forbidden knowledge by forbidden means.
> This yet I apprehend not, why to those
> Among whom God will deign to dwell on earth
> So many and so various laws are given;
> So many laws argue so many sins
> Among them; how can God with such reside?   (xii.276–84)

Michael's answer is bluntly to the point. "Doubt not but that sin / Will reign among them, as of thee begot; / And therefore was law given them" (xii.285–87). Adam must learn that his sin has become an integral part of the new world order. More than that, he has to learn how to live with that knowledge. The way out is provided through an ever clearer understanding of sin's ultimate wages.

Death is one of the central themes of the visions. Threatened in the injunction against the tree, Adam and Eve knew about it in paradise but did not know it. In fact, Milton introduces the concept as early as possible, both chronologically and narratively. Adam learns about death on the first day of his life from God in the sole command he has to keep (viii.327–33), and he mentions it in the very first speech we hear from him (iv.425–27). Raphael also reminds him of the threat in case he disobeyed (vii.544), but given the immortality of angels, his warning tale of the war in heaven cannot provide substantial information about the meaning and nature of death. Eve eats death, but still does not know it (ix.792). Adam, mortal after the fall, vainly invokes it, without actually knowing what he is so dreadfully craving for (viii.331). It remains for Michael to educate Adam about death. As the reader witnesses the teaching process, dramatic irony feeds on two sources, textual and extratextual. First, the reader naturally knows what death is. Living towards the end of the long history which is about to be revealed to Adam, she has all too clear a concept of it. Second, she is also aware from God's commission to Michael that death is the "final remedy" (xi.62) against a perpetually fallen existence. Adam must also learn

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35. On this long-debated critical issue, see esp. Dennis R. Danielson, *Milton's Good God: A Study in Literary Theodicy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1982), pp. 202–27.

these lessons. And he had better be a fast learner, for he starts from a rather elementary stage.

When Cain slays Abel in the first scene, Adam promptly grasps the gruesomeness of the situation but not yet its true import (xi.450–52). He needs Michael to point it out to him that he saw Abel die. And his response, "Alas, both for the deed and for the cause! / But have I now seen death? Is this the way / I must return to native dust?" (xi.461–63). There is something deeply ironic in his preoccupation with himself and the eagerness with which he tries to seize the opportunity to turn the discussion to his favourite subject. "The princely hierarch" (xi.220), however, is patient with his student and explains to him,

> Death thou hast seen
> In his first shape on man; but many shapes
> Of death, and many are the ways that lead
> To his grim cave, all dismal; yet to sense
> More terrible at the entrance than within.   (xi.466–70)

Three lessons are offered here as Michael not only satisfies Adam's original enquiry, but takes him a step further. It would be a grave oversimplification to assume that death can be recognised by a single shape. It is not identified by its outward form.[36] More important than the particulars of death's appearance is the fact, Adam's second lesson, that they are "all dismal." Yet, and this is the third point, dying is worse than death. Adam's Hamletian fears are unfounded. This is the first time Michael alludes, ever so remotely, to death as part of God's redemptive plan. But he is a good teacher and knows that the goal cannot be reached so directly. He therefore goes back to Adam's original question. Since the outward appearance of death is not the point, the angel volunteers a quick lesson on the subject so that his student does not get hung up on such inessential a detail. Bodily ailments and disfigured bodies teem in the vision to give Adam a crash course on the variety of ways out of this life. Repeating the cycle of his private wailing, Adam first wishes to reject life altogether, for the non-existence of his posterity seems preferable to their misery if born.[37] He then submits to the justness of God's forsaking the evil generation[38] and, upon being instructed about more temperate ways to exit the world, decides to seek good death, quitting life soon but

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36. Cf. ii.666–67.
37. Cf. x.725–70 and xi.504–06.
38. Cf. x.819–34 and xi.526–29.

painlessly.[39] He is making progress, but he still finds life a "cumbrous charge" (xi.549), to which the archangel responds with the aphoristic instruction, "Nor love thy life, nor hate; but what thou liv'st / Live well, how long or short permit to heaven" (xi.553–54). From a preoccupation with death, whose place in the divine plan is subtly signalled again, Adam's attention is redirected to life and its responsibilities. With that, the first major phase of his education in matters of death is completed.

The rest is less detailed and more implicit, and Adam's interest turns from himself increasingly to his progeny. The fourth pageant (xi.638–73) shows Adam new faces of death and his descendants as "Death's ministers" (xi.676), but it also introduces a new theme in Enoch "Exempt from death" (xi.709). Michael quickly points out the moral of the story, "to show thee what reward / Awaits the good, the rest what punishment" (xi.709–10). This is the first clear hint of an alternative to death's finality. The theme of one just man amid universal corruption is repeated on a larger scale in the next revelation when the entire human race is wiped out by the flood except Noah and his immediate family (xi.712–53). When the covenant with Noah crowns book xi in the last vision (xi.840–67), it shows that God can "raise another world" (xi.877). Not only is the first era of the world thus brought to an end and replaced by a better one to which the promise is given that it will never be destroyed by another flood (xi.892–95), the great turning point from one epoch to the next also foreshadows the final renewal of creation. The covenant of unfailing "Seed-time and harvest, heat and hoary frost" (xi.899) is to stand "till fire purge all things new, / Both heaven and earth, wherein the just shall dwell" (xi.900–01). It is not to be missed that the purging of the earth by fire is presented in this context emphatically not as a threat of the last judgement but as a promise of the new heaven and new earth. Book xi thus concludes with the first glorious announcement of the new home awaiting the righteous beyond the end of this world and thus also beyond death. The covenant of the rainbow rectifies time on yet another level. The seasons are here formally adopted into the divine plan. Climatic change first came into being as a result of sin,[40] but now God renews the cycles of nature as a sign of his steadfastness. They "Shall hold their course" (xi.900), the promise runs. Climatic seasons no longer symbolise instability in their change over against the uniformity of eternal spring, but they come to represent constancy in their never-ending cycles and dependable recurrence.

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39. Cf. x.771–82 and xi.547–52.

40. Cf. x.649–56, 678–79, and my "Milton's Sun in the Zodiac," *Notes and Queries* 250 [n.s. 52] (2005) 307–10.

In book xii, the theme of death recedes into the background only to step mightily forth in Jesus' resurrection in the penultimate scene. Since the Messiah's coming is foretold over and over again,[41] the topic is latent but not absent. Now surge up all previous allusions in their full meaning. The Son "dies, / But soon revives, Death over him no power / Shall long usurp" (xii.419–21). He will pay the "ransom . . . which man from Death redeems," (xii.424) and will destroy the enemy "Defeating Sin and Death, his two main arms" (xii.431). His death will bring "life to all who shall believe / In his redemption" (xii.407–08). For them, the punishment of Adam's race undergoes radical transformation in three steps, by acquiring an adjective, evolving into a simile, and turning into a metaphor. Death's finality is first contained by the critical imposition of "temporal" limitation on it, then it becomes "like sleep," and finally is no more than "A gentle wafting to immortal life" (xii.433–35).[42] That concludes Adam's education on the subject. He has been taught not merely to recognise death in its varied shapes but, chiefly, to understand its true significance not only as punishment for his disobedience but as a gateway to new life. All he now has to see is a glimpse of the "New heavens, new earth, ages of endless date / Founded in righteousness and peace and love, / To bring forth fruits, joy and eternal bliss" (xii.549–51), which is duly granted him at the end of the last pageant.

There is more to Adam's education than a lesson about death. He also has to come to terms with foreknowledge. After the first two distressing pageants, Adam mistakes the third, "the tents / Of wickedness" (xi.607–08), for a pleasant sight and calls Michael "True opener of mine eyes" (xi.598). Nevertheless, after the fifth vision, of the flood, again somewhat misunderstanding what he sees, he dismisses foreknowledge altogether.

> Oh visions ill foreseen! Better had I
> Lived ignorant of future. . .
> . . . .
> Let no man seek
> Henceforth to be foretold what shall befall
> Him or his children, evil he may be sure,

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41. Cf. xii.125–26, 148–51, 232–35, 240–44, 289–96, 310–14, 327–30, and 358–71.

42. There are only two further occurrences of the verb stem in the epic: Satan "Wafts on the calmer wave by dubious light" (ii.1042) towards heaven, and those "Who after came from earth, sailing arrived [there], / Wafted by angels" (iii.521–22). The evidence is scant, but *wafting* seems to be a verb of approaching heaven in the vocabulary of *Paradise Lost*, and, if the reader picks up the echoes, it serves to contrast the divergent destinies of fallen angels and humans.

> Which neither his foreknowing can prevent,
> And he the future evil shall no less
> In apprehension than in substance feel
> Grievous to bear. . .   (xi.763–76)

Adam's education, whose success can be measured by his answers which oscillate between two extremes in book xi, arrives at its first hopeful stage at the close of that book, after the vision of Noah's survival. This time he conjectures rightly and has a shrewd guess as to the meaning of the rainbow. He is rewarded with Michael's compliment, "Dextrously thou aimst" (xi.884). As has been seen in his partial realisation of the significance of the serpent's curse, his intellect has lost some of its prelapsarian strength, but it is still formidable. And the pattern essentially remains the old one with one notable modification. Foreknowledge is still granted on condition of obedience, which is now primarily faith. In paradise before the fall, knowledge was Adam and Eve's decisive relationship to the divine order. In the fallen world, God's presence is veiled, or veiled at least are the powers of the human mind to discern that presence. The noetic effects of sin are permanent, and the place of prelapsarian knowledge is taken by postlapsarian faith, which itself is an act of response if I may so distinguish a complex existential stance that discovers its object in a gesture of trust from the direct and immediate grasp of the intellect in knowledge. What remains the same is that the faithful can infer the future from the past, relying on God's mercy experienced and promises given. Adam now ventures his interpretation of the rainbow immediately after reconsidering the antecedents, that is, the past, of its bestowal.

Teaching Adam to Read History as Comedy

In order to see the course of human history in proper light, Milton's rich concept of a potential sinless edenic development without the fall must be recalled.[43] Humans by long persistence in obedience were to become perfected and raised on a par with the angels, and ultimately God was to be all in all. The achievement of that unity would have been the alternative ending point of history in doomsday's stead. What commences after that point is the same in both cases. What has become different because of the fall is not the purpose but the course of history. What many critics are concerned about is, therefore, precisely the *pattern*s of the alternatives, mainly that of

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43. Cf. Ittzés, "Till by Degrees," esp. pp. 147–49.

actual human history. Northrop Frye contrasts the cyclical view of time with the linear model. After Adam's

> fall, human beings began to experience time in the way that we still do, as a combination of a straight line and a circle. The straight line, where there is no real present and everything is annihilated in the past as we are drawn into an unknown future, is the fallen conception of time. The unfailing cycle of seedtime and harvest, established after the flood, represents the element of promise and hope in time, and imitates in its shape the circling of the spheres.[44]

Much as I agree with his first statement (human experience of time as a combination of linearity and cyclicism), I think Frye is mistaken in associating fallenness with the former, and hope with the latter, element. In his fascinating book on exactly this subject, David Bebbington makes the explicit claim that "such [cyclic] views tend to be pessimistic." Then he goes on to say,

> The second school of though is especially associated with the Judeo-Christian tradition. History is seen not as a cycle, but as a straight line. The historical process begins at a particular point, creation; and it continues under providential guidance to its goal, the last things. In between there are divine interventions, most notably (in the Christian view) in the coming of Christ. The guaranteed future makes this view characteristically optimistic, although not without reservations.[45]

Herschel Baker sees the assertion by early Christians of history's teleological nature, inherently linked with linearity and excluded from circularity, as the beginning of a completely new era in the writing of history: "When the Fathers of the Church declared that just as God had brought the whole creation into being, so He would bring it a close, they made a revolution in historiography."[46] It can be safely assumed, then, that the Christian view of history is linear, and despite Frye's claim hope is not generated by the cyclical element but by God's promise for the future which is thus not (completely) unknown. As we have seen, the hope associated with

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44. Frye, p. 36.

45. David Bebbington, *Patterns in History: A Christian Perspective on Historical Thought*, 2nd ed. (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), p. 18; see also the relevant chapters in their entirety, "2 Cyclical history" (21–42) and "3 Christian history" (43–67).

46. Herschel Baker, *The Race of Time: Three Lectures on Renaissance Historiography* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1967), p. 53.

the first covenant, the rainbow after the flood, is not so much a result of the *circularity* of the natural cycles as of the assurance of their *continuity* till the promised end. It is in this context of God's covenant with humanity that Adam first exhibits progress in his responses to Michael's gradual unfolding of the future. The central theme of book xii, which witnesses and brings about the completion of Adam's education, is a better understanding of the covenants.

Visions are succeeded by pure narrative, or rather, external visions by internal ones,[47] in book xii. Adam's interpositions grow less numerous, Michael's interpretations shorter and more intermingled with the very description of the visions, which simultaneously become longer. Even more important is the variation in the overall structure of the second set of visions. In book xi, the pageants follow a linear pattern. Abel's death is multiplied in the lazar-house, Cain's race dwells in the tents of wickedness and multiplies his sin by waging war against brotherly cities, finally the adulterous generation is wiped out by the flood.[48] Only the last vision, of Noah's survival, tries to balance the picture (xi.840–67). Notwithstanding that Adam mistakes the significance of some visions, the first five are all of wickedness, sin, corruption or their punishment. Abel's saintly sacrifice (xi.436–42), Enoch's bare escape (xi.664–71), and the prophecy of the impending flood (xi.626) only foreshadow things to come. Book xii, on the other hand, exhibits a rather different structure. Its most characteristic feature is the rushing forward to the coming of the Messiah, repeated time and again. It is no longer a linear pattern. Adam is given the foregone conclusion over and over again. Furthermore, the incarnation (that is, the totality of the Messiah's life) is the thematic centre of book xii, and it is antitype and type at the same time. According to C.A. Patrides,

> With the Incarnation, the vision in *Paradise Lost* reaches its climax. Before the coming of Jesus, events have meaning only in so far as they herald his way "by types / And shadows" (XII,232f.). After his advent, all events are likewise related to him by reversion to his Incarnation, which is a historical verity.[49]

The incarnation is foreshadowed in the Old Testament sacrifice of animals (xii.290–306), in Moses' and Joshua's offices (mediator, xii.240–44; leader of the people into the promised land, xii.310–14), but it is itself a type of the final victory to

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47. Cf. Loewenstein, p. 122.
48. Cf. xi.429–47, 477–93, 556–92, 638–73, 712–53.
49. Constantinos A. Patrides, *"The Grand Design of God": The Literary From of the Christian View of History* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 87.

be revealed on judgement day. Thus from the narration of the historical event of the incarnation, the story repeatedly runs forward to that ultimate end.[50]

I have suggested that hope is generated by God's promise to bring human history to the same close as without the fall. Now I must add that hope is maintained by the recurrent depiction of the fulfilment of that promise. The visions in book xii are more hopeful than those in book xi. There are still plenty of reasons to be dejected, from Nimrod's tyranny to Israel's sins, from the Messiah's death to the corruption of the church and much between and beyond.[51] Nor are Michael's summary judgements on the general progress of history any more encouraging: "so shall the world go on, / To good malignant, to bad men benign, / Under her own weight groaning" (xii.537–39).[52] The balance, however, is more carefully provided here than in the previous book, by Abraham's faith, God's presence with Israel, the Messiah's victory over Satan, the church's growth, the perseverance of the righteous and many more details.[53] This paradigm is strengthened by the permeation of history, or rather of Michael's historical narrative, by the assertion of God's fulfilment of his redemptive plan.

Adam's response to these visions does not include sadness. He loathes Nimrod; he is displeased, but he does not sorrow: "O execrable son . . . wretched man!" (xii.64–74). Adam is lauded by Michael for his contempt like he was commended for his interpretation of the rainbow after the flood: "justly thou abhorr'st / That son" (xii.79–80). More often than not, Adam's reaction is jubilation. After the announcement proper of the incarnation, his state is deftly contrasted with his earlier anguish.

> He ceased, discerning Adam with such joy
> Surcharged, as had like grief been dewed in tears,
> Without the vent of words, which these he breathed.
>   O prophet of glad tidings, finisher
> Of utmost hope!   (xii.372–76)[54]

Adam's responses ought not to be automatically considered normative. But Michael, who is reliable, corrects him in book xii far less frequently than in the preced-

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50. Cf. xii.329–30, 369–71, 458–65, 539–51.

51. Cf. xii.24–37, 40–62, 101–09:115–20, 167–68, 176–90, 280–90, 316–18, 335–36, 337–45, 351–56, 356–60, 404–414; 493–94, 507–30, 531–35, 537–41.

52. Cf. xii.105–06, 336.

53. Cf. xii.14–24, 126–34, 195–216, 223–35, 244–60, 261–69, 315–16, 320–34, 346–51, 361–71, 393–404, 420–35; 485–92, 502–04, 536–37.

54. Cf. also xii.273–79, 467–78.

ing book. Lastly, Adam arrives at a balanced reaction of contentment. He is no longer overwhelmed by joy, but departs "Greatly instructed,"

> Greatly in peace of thought, and have my fill
> Of knowledge, what this vessel can contain;
> Beyond which was my folly to aspire.
> Henceforth I learn, that to obey is best,
> And love with fear the only God, to walk
> As in his presence, ever to observe
> His providence, and on him sole depend. . .   (xii.557–64)

Michael terms this "the sum / Of wisdom" (xii.575–76).

David Loewenstein expresses a somewhat different view when summarising Adam's education. He warns against the overstressing of "the progressive typological revelation of Michael's prophecy."[55] He is certainly right to say that

> [i]n a sense, then, Adam learns from Michael's prophecy a difficult historical lesson Milton himself had learned during his many years as a controversial prose writer: postlapsarian history has always been a convoluted and uneven process – neither completely linear, nor completely regressive. Rather world history, like history of Milton's own nation, has tended to vacillate between periods of progress and decline.[56]

Yes, *in a sense*. In the sense that history is not a strictly linear (or, more accurately, monotonous) function of development from good to better. It has ups and downs, local minimums and maximums. But Loewenstein goes, I think, too far when he draws the conclusion, "If Michael's sequence of human history conforms most nearly to any one imaginative shape or modality, it is that of tragedy."[57]

Milton, I have argued, does acknowledge a basic direction in which history is moving, from the predominant despair of book xi to the prevailing hope and joy of book xii; from and through sin and wickedness to the regeneration of the world in both books; "From shadowy types to truth, from flesh to spirit" (xii.303); from the results of the first Adam's disobedience to the reconstitution of the unity of God and humans through the obedience of the latter. "[S]upernal grace contend[s] / With sinfulness of men" (xi.359–60), and, there can be no doubt about it in Michael's nar-

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55. Loewenstein, p. 121.
56. Loewenstein, p. 113.
57. Loewenstein, p. 122.

rative, it overcomes. The very theodical purpose of *Paradise Lost* shows that Milton thought it important to assert providence against the unfulfilled millenarian expectations of his age. The conviction presupposes Milton's belief in heavenly providence, which is the ultimate source of Christian optimism as regards the historical process. In a far more general context, David Bebbington also contrasts Christian confidence in the future with disappointed millenarianism. He approaches the issue from the opposite direction, but his conclusion is essentially the same.

> Millenarianism has in practice fostered confidence in the future . . . among thinkers following in the wake of Joseph Mede. Within Christianity itself, however, Augustine, the classical reformers and many biblical commentators have come to the opinion that there are inadequate grounds for taking the thousand years mentioned in the book of Revelation as a period of blessing before the end of time. . . . The note of hope retains its prominent place in the Christian view, because it is based on confidence in continuing divine control and expectation of ultimate divine victory. The millenarian stimulus to hope, however, appears to have been unjustified.[58]

The underlying pattern of historical change in Michael's representation is comic in the technical sense. Perhaps it is only so from God's point of view, but the angel's narrative is as much a *divine comedy* as Dante's – and it is exactly this perspective that is granted the first man in the final books of *Paradise Lost*. Adam has, then, attained the sum of wisdom when he has seen human history in its entirety, its course finished. Marshall Grossman avers "that narrative is always constituted in an act of reflection – contingent experience becomes meaningful when it is understood as an episode in a completed story."[59] Adam has been granted (fore)knowledge of the end of the narrative, he has been allowed to see the future as present. From now on he can keep it in his memory from where he can recall it: he can recall it as past.

Regina Schwartz's thesis, summed up in the subtitle of her imaginative essay, about "The Unendings of *Paradise Lost*" constitutes a serious challenge to my conclusion. For her, this is precisely

> [t]he temptation . . . for Adam to *possess* that entire story, to "know" his future, rather than to determine it. . . . The temptation is to believe that the

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58. Bebbington, p. 65.

59. Marshall Grossman, "Milton and the Rhetoric of Prophecy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Milton*, ed. Dennis R. Danielson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1989), 167–81, p. 178.

sum of wisdom can be gained from reading – or seeing and hearing – the story Michael unfolds, and that wisdom can be thus summarized.[60]

Two things ought not to go unnoticed. First, if it is indeed the temptation for Adam, he does not fall for it. He decides to "obey," "love," "walk," "observe," "depend" (xii.561–64), that is, to *act*, at least to act in the sense Northrop Frye or Stanley Fish used, following Milton, that verb.[61] Second, there is a crucial yet unannounced shift in the focus of Schwartz's text, from Adam to the reader. The first *temptation* is certainly assigned to Adam, but the parenthesised *seeing and hearing* (applicable to him) shows that the primary subject of *believe* and unparenthesised *reading* (hence, the object of the second temptation), is us. *We* must not think that wisdom can be summed up in a few lines.[62] The second point is indispensable for Schwartz's argument since her thesis of the epic's unendings is only intelligible from the reader's point of view. The unending is (or rather, some unendings are) generated, according to Schwartz, by the embeddedness of narratives and the contrast and disparity between the different levels.

> Why is he [Michael] *pausing* at the great period [cf. xii.466–67], instead of concluding? And why *as* at the world's great period, when Michael is indeed narrating the world's great period? With that *as* Milton draws sudden attention to the fiction within fiction: Michael has reached the end of the world only in *his* story. But Milton will not let that end conclude, and so

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60. Regina Schwartz, "From Shadowy Types to Shadowy Types: The Unendings of *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 24 (1988) 123–39, p. 134.

61. Cf. Frye, p. 21; Stanley E. Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (1967; Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: U of California P, 1971), pp. 195–96; and the *locus classicus* from Milton himself: "They also serve who only stand and wait" ("Sonnet xix").

62. That is Schwartz's warning. The main thrust of her article falls beyond the limits of my present topic, but it seems to me that, whether we like it or not, Milton may well have thought that wisdom *was* possible thus to summarise. For one thing, the core of Adam's summary is "that to obey is best" (xii.561), and obedience is obviously the central issue of *Paradise Lost*. Adam can, and must, recognise its importance because he has become disobedient. His acknowledgement is therefore a return to eden, in his last speech in the poem, after a long spiritual journey – even before he is physically expelled. For another, Michael's long list of what to "only add" to it (xii.581–85) may not be so loose a collection as Schwartz suggests: see 2 Peter 1:5–7 for its biblical subtext, and Fowler[1], pp. 637–38 (ad xii.581–87), who describes them as "constitut[ing] a complete world or microcosm" (p. 638). Finally, Adam's last couple of lines are a confession of his faith in the Son as his redeemer (xii.572–73). This is the first instance of such an avowal from him, but I do not wish to labour the obvious by elaborating on its doctrinal centrality to Milton.

rather brutally recalls us to *his* story, and . . . he brings us back from the end of the biblical time to its beginning.[63]

Schwartz's point, then, depends on the opposite direction of contrasted narratives, each driving from beginning to end. Her general thesis seems to be in some respect an elaborately developed version of Loewenstein's denial of a clearly linear or cyclical pattern, but this time not in Michael's narrative but in the overall design of *Paradise Lost*. With that, she indirectly asserts the forward thrust of the story unfolded by the archangel and admits that it leads up to the conclusion of history. There is, then, a direction in which God guides history, though its progress is certainly not straightforward; there is an end to which God will bring it, though its attainment is certainly not easy. That directionality and the promise of that end generate hope, which is the source of history as divine comedy. That is the lesson Adam has to, and does, learn in the closing books of *Paradise Lost*.

Adam's education curiously resembles the satanic circularity of past and future, but they should not be confused. The future is not wishfully postulated by himself; it is vouchsafed to him by an external power that alone has true prescience. He does not reinterpret his own past in order to prove the plausibility of a wished-for future; but when he sees the future in retrospect, he can realise the significance of certain elements of his past and grasp the full significance of his present condition. The understanding thus gained enables him to freely accept the future. Adam's access to foreknowledge in the form of unparalleled revelation might seem extraordinary at first sight. But in fact it is not. Having come down from the hill of speculation, Adam can only *remember* his vision. Moreover, what he saw was only in part real vision. The larger half of it was narrative: commentary or description. Created beings have never had substantially more knowledge of the future than regenerate humans, of whom Adam is the archetype. God has always *told* them his plans,[64] they could rely on his promises. They know what is going to happen as long as they take God's words seriously. The same option is open to Adam now. The revelation accorded him is essentially the promise of redemption already disclosed in the serpent's curse now made intelligible.

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63. Schwartz, p. 128.

64. See, for example, the old prophecy of creation (i.650–54, ii.345–51, 830–37, iv.937–38, x.481–85), the council in heaven (esp. iii.271–349), the anointing of the Son (v.583–615), God's declaration of creation (esp. vii.139–81), of Adam and Eve's judgement (x.31–62), of the fallen course of history (x.613–40), the heavenly synod (xi.67–125).

Adam's Lesson in Typology

Since, to borrow Herschel Baker's formulation, "history – no longer just a record of events – [has become] a statement of divine intentions as they are manifested in creation,"[65] there is another level to Adam's education by Michael, whose "aim, then, is to offer Adam an introductory course of historical hermeneutics: its subject matter is the drama of the biblical history (though its text is yet to be written), the significance of whose scenes must be carefully scrutinized and interpreted."[66] The method of scrutiny and interpretation is typological. This blanket statement should not obscure the fact that typological patterns discernible at large in *Paradise Lost* are to be carefully distinguished from those available to Adam. Valerie Carnes makes the point clear.

> Thus the Garden was essentially typological, literally teeming with types which . . . anticipated and prefigured a point in future time. Adam and Eve, however, were incapable of recognizing and correctly interpreting this basically symbolic structure. . . . For symbolic apprehension requires a kind of doubleness of perspective which prelapsarian man simply did not possess.[67]

The distinction is all the more important to make because from the reader's point of view Adam himself is part of the typological pattern even in the last two books. Being the type of both Moses and Jesus, he is one corner of a peculiar triangle, while the other two also form a pair, Moses being simultaneously an antitype of Adam and a type of Jesus.

> So law appears imperfect, and but given
> With purpose to resign them in full time
> Up to a better covenant, disciplined
> From shadowy types to truth, from flesh to spirit,
> From imposition of strict laws, to free
> Acceptance of large grace, from servile fear
> To filial, works of law to works of faith.
> And therefore shall not Moses, though of God
> Highly belov'd, being but the minister

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65. Baker, p. 55.
66. Loewenstein, p. 101.
67. Valerie Carnes, "Time and Language in Milton's *Paradise Lost*," *ELH* 37 (1970) 517–39, p. 535.

> Of law, his people into Canaan lead;
> But Joshua whom the gentiles Jesus call,
> His name and office bearing, who shall quell
> The adversary serpent, and bring back
> Through the world's wilderness long wandered man
> Safe to eternal paradise of rest.   (xii.300–14)

Writing of this passage, Jason P. Rosenblatt contends that Adam does realise, at least in part, his typological role.

> In these remarkably concise lines, Adam learns that he, like Moses, is a sinner excluded from sacred ground as a result of his sin, yet granted by God's grace a consolatory vision. At this moment, Adam recognizes his identity with Moses, though of course it is precisely this recognition of shared inadequacy and of the need for a great redemptive force (whose birth is announced less than fifty lines later) that dissolves the relationship.[68]

That Adam *learns* (that is, is told) is obvious enough; that he *recognises* I find more questionable. Adam is being educated in typology, but there is no indication of his progress. This is not to say that the *reader* does not comprehend the pattern either, but that is a different issue altogether.

Readers of *Paradise Lost* are well immersed in time; there has been a long stretch of history before their beginnings. God has acted throughout that history and revealed himself both in the old and in the new covenants. "The meaning of the Old Testament dispensation [was not revealed] until it had been abrogated,"[69] but in the act of its completion it *was* revealed. When the antitypes appeared, the types were also recognised in their full significance. Belated progeny of Adam can be educated in the working of typology by investigating a large body of evidence: types and antitypes disclosed alike. That is not the case with Adam. He is at the very beginning of human history; no types have yet been revealed, let alone fulfilled. Rather, in him and paradise are the first types being revealed, but he needs more. For his education both a text and a vantage point of interpretation must be provided. The text is, of course, the ultimate (biblical) one and so is the position momentarily granted him: looking back from judgement day. And it is Michael's visions that make the provision.

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68. Jason P. Rosenblatt, "Adam's Pisgah Vision: *Paradise Lost*, Books XI and XII," *ELH* 39 (1972) 66–86, p. 70.

69. Madsen, p. 113.

The final vantage point can be of use only if one has learned on the way what to look for once there. So the archangel educates his pupil. Adam is to recognise types and antitypes; he is to learn typology. I believe this instructional design informs the structure of the last books. Book xi is itself the type of book xii, wherein the repetitive pattern is to drive home the point to Adam: the river-dragon Pharaoh as the type of Satan; Moses and Joshua prefiguring Jesus; the forty years in the wilderness fulfilled in human history at large; animal sacrifice as the *figura* of the crucifixion; the law foreshadowing the gospel; the corresponding covenants as well as the incarnation and the last judgement.[70]

> Michael in effect begins to turn his pupil into a kind of semiologist, training him in the art of reading and interpreting God's signs in fallen history and its evil ages, so that in the future Adam will understand the symbolic nature of God's presence and how to trace "the track Divine" (xi.354).[71]

In the historical visions, Adam is given the text he has to learn to decode. He is simultaneously taught the method of interpretation and the right attitude towards both the text (history) and the discovered meaning (redemption) in order to be fully prepared for existence in time as we know it.

Human time is thus redeemed in more ways than one. It is sanctified by God's elevating it, chiefly by the incarnation, to the level of salvation history. This is "objective" time in which not only potential fall but also potential redemption is actualised. For Adam, subjectively, human time has been cleansed through his education. He was created an adult;[72] he had neither adolescent years nor a far-ranging genealogical tree. He had neither private nor "social" or "national" history. This gap is closed when he is given (a) history, when he is given the future as present which then recedes into the past. He is now able to perceive human time as the framework within which God's revelation and deliverance unfold. With this knowledge, however, Adam has become more than a *type* of regenerate humans; he has become a "typical man."[73] He has been prepared for life and history as we know it, but if Milton achieved nothing more than bring Adam to us, he has failed at least by his own standard. Readers and readings of *Paradise Lost*, however, bear witness that Adam was not alone on the way, but we have also completed a cycle of fall and regeneration

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70. Cf. xii.190–92, 231–34, 240–44, 291–92, 300–06, 310–14.
71. Loewenstein, p. 108.
72. Cf. Ittzés, "Till by Degrees," p. 153n.
73. Fowler[1], p. 581 (ad xi.368–69), with a reference to D. H. Burden.

with him. The reader has also been educated in temporality: how to exist in the world as God's regenerate people. She has been taught to interpret the signs of time, to recognise the nature of foreknowledge, to grasp the meaning and place of death in God's plan, to discover his purpose in the course of historical events. In short, she has been taught true patience and confidence in God as lord of time and history. In addition to the skills the reader has acquired and perfected with Adam, two images have been imprinted on her mind to remain with her. On the one hand, the angels' glory and irrevocable fall provide a contrasting parallel against which to measure the fate of humans in order to understand God's mercy aright. On the other, paradisal perfection is held up as an ideal to which to strive with now-renewed powers until God indeed brings history to the promised end.

Paul W. Child

"The CASE of the Author"

George Cheyne's Providential Medical Autobiography

Examining the intersections between medicine and literature in the eighteenth century, this article argues that Scottish physician George Cheyne's celebrated "CASE of the Author" (1733) adopts the literary inheritance of the spiritual autobiography as a means of establishing narrative authority and of structuring the clinical record of one man's experiences in health and illness. In tracing his own "Progress" from physical ruin to "perfect Health," Cheyne invokes the authorities of medical science and clinical objectivity. However, the language, structure, and ethos are those of the spiritual autobiography, in which a reflecting author, looking back upon the apparently random and disconnected events of his past, reads "God's plot" for his life. Reading the symptoms of his own ill health and emergent recovery as symbols provided by "the Author of Nature," the reflecting Cheyne discovers an intelligible providential plot by which to interpret the raw data of his own clinical observations.

George Cheyne (1671?–1743), a Scotsman who migrated to England to practice medicine about 1701, became both a popular practitioner in London and Bath and the bestselling author of some dozen medical treatises addressed variously *ad clerum* and *ad populum*. Although the success of his practice never approached that of contemporaries like Richard Mead or Hans Sloane, he did number Pope, Gay, the Walpoles, and the Countess of Huntingdon among his patients. Fielding knew and admired him, Johnson recommended him to others and cited his medical aphorisms in his *Dictionary*, and his friend and correspondent Samuel Richardson sought both his medical advice and critical opinion. Cheyne became dear to these patients and to the readers of his popular medical works as the "milk-seed Doctor," who preached with evangelical zeal a vegetarian diet as both cure and prophylaxis against chronic illness. He specialized, in fact, in chronic diseases of the kind from which he himself suffered – gout, nervous disorders, and that peculiar complex of gastrointestinal, nervous, and psychological distresses known popularly as "the English malady." As proof of his own sufferings, his celebrated autobiographical medical history, "The

CASE of the Author," which preoccupies the final third of his best-known work, *The English Malady* (1733), narrates in all-too-graphic detail for his readers his own experiences with the "nervousness" and "hypochondriacus morbus" that he treats.

Ostensibly a clinical-scientific case history, "The CASE of the Author" credits exercise and radical vegetarianism for Cheyne's dramatic physical transformation; what the doctor calls his "perfect Recovery" is the profit of a lifetime of medical self-observation and self-experimentation. While Cheyne invokes the authorities of medical science and clinical objectivity in charting his disorders and cures, however, the language, structure, and ethos of "The CASE of the Author" are those of the spiritual autobiography. In this kind of narrative, a reflecting author, looking back upon the apparently random and disconnected events of his past, reads "God's plot" for his life. Reading the symptoms of his own ill health and emergent recovery as symbols provided by "the Author of Nature," the reflecting Cheyne similarly discovers an intelligible providential plot by which to interpret the raw data of his clinical self-observations. Studying his own medical history in terms of a providential physiology, Cheyne thus locates the transformative drama of the spiritual autobiography in his own body.

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Although historians of medicine, most notably Cheyne's recent biographer Anita Guerrini,[1] have traced the details of his case history before, they bear repeating here. In "The CASE of the Author" Cheyne dates the beginning of his severe health problems to the time of his first coming to London in about 1701. He admits that he was "dispos'd to *Corpulence*, by the whole Race of one Side of [his] *Family*" (325),[2] and he was studious and sedentary as a youth. But he became obese when he began to cultivate friendships with the London tavern and coffee house set, among whom the only qualification was "to be able to *Eat* lustily, and swallow down much *Liquor*" (326). He had begun frequenting the gathering houses, he claims, as a means "to force a *Trade*, which Method [he] had observ'd to succeed with some others. . ." (326). Established (and establishing) physicians like Mead regularly held audiences at taverns and coffee houses like Batson's and Child's, where they met with apothecaries and wrote prescriptions for them. Presumably Cheyne did the same. But his too-frequent visits to the gathering houses led to too-frequent overindulgences, which, he claims, soon destroyed his health.

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1. See Anita Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment: The Life and Times of George Cheyne* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2000).

2. All parenthesized references are to this edition: "The CASE of the Author," in *The English Malady* (London and Bath: George Strahan and James Leake, 1733), 325–64.

Naturally Cheyne's social life suffered. The "*Bottle-Companions*" and "*Free-Livers*" "dropt off like autumnal Leaves" at the first signs of his ill health. Cheyne remarks with cheerful irony, "They could not bear, it seems, to see their Companion in such Misery and Distress, but retired to comfort themselves with a *cheer-upping* Cup, leaving me to pass the melancholy Moments with my own *Apprehensions* and *Remorse*" (328). Cheyne was "forc'd to retire into the Country quite alone" (328). There he committed himself to a low regimen, curtailing his intake of animal food and abstaining from liquor. He "took frequent *Vomits*, and gentle *Purges*, try'd *Volatiles, Foetids, Bitters, Chalybeats*, and *Mineral Waters*, and had the Advice of all [his] *Physical Friends*, but with little or no sensible Benefit" (328–29).[3] His sufferings increased rather than abated, and he turned toward more desperate – albeit still conventional – mercurial and narcotic remedies: "I first took 20 Grains of what is call'd the *Princes Powder*, which gave me twelve *Vomits*, and near twice the Number of Stools; and I had certainly perished under the Operation, but for an *Over-dose* of *Laudanum* after it"(320).[4] Cheyne himself was a trained physician; however, the violent results of his self-dosing show the dangers that concerned medical regulators. We hardly know whether most of his subsequent disorders followed from some original illness or from the self-prescribed cures.

> Not one of the faculty ever has try'd
> These excellent waters to cure his own hide;
> Tho' many a skilful and learned physician,
> With candour, good sense and profound erudition
> Obliges the world with the fruits of his brain,
> Their nature and hidden effects to explain.[5]

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3. The rationale behind vomits and purges was that disease is caused by repletion; evacuation was an important first therapeutic measure. Volatiles and foetids, active remedies, "which emit the strongest *Effluvia*," were taken to "divide, break and dissolve the saline, acrid and hard *Concretions*" of salts; astringent bitters and chalybeates taken to "crisp, wind up and contract the *Fibres* of the whole *System*," and mineral waters taken to thin the fluids so that they flowed more easily through the vascular system (*The English Malady*, pp. 139, 113, 114).

4. The "Princes Powder" was an active mercurial preparation; *laudanum* was the generic term for a preparation of opium, and more specifically opium suspended in alcohol.

5. *The New Bath Guide; or, Memoirs of the B – R – D Family. In a Series of Poetical Epistles* (London: J. Dodsley, 1766), Letter VI. For the use of spa waters in medical treatment, see, among others, Christopher Hamlin, "Chemistry, Medicine, and the Legitimization of English

In about 1707, Cheyne "accidentally met with a Clergyman, who told [him] of a wonderful Cure, which Dr. *Taylor* of *Croydon* had wrought on himself in an *Epileptick Case*, by a total *Milk Diet*" (335). Shortly thereafter, in mid-winter, he rode out to consult with this Dr. Taylor, whom he found "at home, at his full Quart of Cow's Milk (which was all his Dinner)" (335). We know nothing of the country practitioner Taylor except what Cheyne himself tells us in "The CASE of the Author" and his other practical treatises.[6] An epileptic, Taylor had sought the advice of the "most eminent *Physicians* of his time about *London*, and had taken all their Medicines, and all he had ever read or heard of..." (335). But after all this, he met "with so little Success" (336) that he frequently suffered *grand mal* fits on the road when traveling on horseback in his practice. Taylor had read Sydenham, who advised a "*total Milk Diet*, as the last and surest Remedy" (335) in epileptic fits, and he gradually abandoned all animal food and lived "intirely on *Cow-Milk*" (336). Within a year or two his fits had ceased. For seventeen years before Cheyne met him, he had enjoyed almost perfect health. "He told me," said Cheyne, "he could then play six Hours at *Cricket* on *Banstead-Down*, without Fatigue or Lowness, and was more *active* and *clear* in his *Faculties and Senses* than ever he had been in his Life before" (336). Taylor recommended an exclusive diet of dairy products as a panacea for "inveterate Distempers" and even barrenness (336–37).

Characteristically, however, Cheyne relapsed. He submitted to "a Craving and insufferable Longing for more Solid and Toothsome Food, and for higher and stronger Liquors," and within a year he was seized with a violent "*depuratory* [putrefying] *Fever*" (340). The fever finally came to a crisis with a profuse sweating brought on, Cheyne claims, by "large Draughts of warm *Barley* Water or small *Sack-Whey*, acidulated with *Gas Sulph.* which was advised by Dr. *Baynard*" (341). Cured with a wine mixture and subsisting on claret and toast for some time after his illness, Cheyne decided that he had been mistaken earlier in undertaking such a radical milk-seed regimen. He began gradually to inure himself to more wine and to lessen

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Spas, 1740–1840," *The Medical History of Waters and Spas, Medical History*, Supplement No. 10, ed. Roy Porter (London: Wellcome Institute, 1990), 67–81.

6. Cheyne cites Taylor's case as a model in at least three of the practical treatises. But he reported to the Countess of Huntingdon that, after twenty-two years of subsisting on his milk diet, Taylor, at last submitting to the urgings of his "brethren, family, and friends, to enter upon another, higher, tho even, temperate diet, brought back the old distemper [epilepsy], and perished miserably under it." *The Letters of Dr. George Cheyne to the Countess of Huntingdon*, ed. Charles F. Mullett (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1940), p. 53. See also *The English Malady*, pp. 253–54.

the quantity of milk and vegetables until at last he was able to return "into common Life, with great *Freedom*, but exact common *Temperance*" (341).

> Gay, Maine, and Cheney, boon companions dear,
> Gay fat, Maine fatter, Cheney huge of size.

> I was not able to walk up above one Pair of Stairs at a Time, without extreme Pain and Blowing, being forced to ride from Door to Door in a Chariot even here at *Bath*; and if I had but an Hundred Paces to walk, was oblig'd to have a Servant following me with a Stool to rest on.   (343)

For another four or five years, in the early 1720s, Cheyne endured miscellaneous physical disorders: ulcerated legs, "*Symptomatick Fever*," gout, and erysipelas (an acute, infectious skin eruption). Worse than the physical maladies were the accompanying symptomatic mental horrors: "A perpetual *Anxiety* and *Inquietude*"; "a *melancholy Fright* and *Pannick*, where [his] Reason was of no Use"; and persistent dread that he would lose his "*Faculties* or *Life*" at any moment (343–47). For these extreme physical and psychological maladies, Cheyne took extreme therapeutic measures, turning again to opiates. Although he recognized that such remedies were "a slow *Poison*" (347), he continued them long enough until he began to fear addiction.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

With what has now become something of a critical truism, Darrell Mansell argues that "[a]ll texts are fact and fiction, but autobiography most of all."[7] As with any autobiographical work, "The CASE of the Author" invites immediate questions about authenticity: How much of the life Cheyne gives us is "real," and by what referential system are we to measure that "reality"? How much is a construction of a literary system? Cheyne, the thorough-going medical and narrative empiricist, substantiates his own claims to historicity by "circumstantiated . . . *Detail*" (362). But there is inevitably selection and organization as the author imposes order on the apparently random events of his life. Mediate text transforms event into art. The chief literary concern, then, is not the extent to which the self Cheyne gives us is real *or* constructed, but the fictional techniques and the narrative inheritances that he uses in creating this self.[8]

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7. "Unsettling the Colonel's Hash: 'Fact' in Autobiography," *Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Norman Sims (New York: Oxford UP, 1990) 261–80, p. 278.

8. The mutual negotiations between autobiography and fiction have excited much critical and theoretical attention over the past thirty years. Among the most illuminating of such

Regarded in narratological terms, the parentheses are a persistent reminder that there are two characters woven into the narrative fabric – Cheyne the experiencing character and Cheyne the authorial character, who serves in the same function as the narrator of a novel. As with any autobiography, there is a dialectical (and ironic) tension between these two personages.[9] Cheyne the actor and empirical test case suffers, stumbles into cures, and continually errs in his progress toward health and medical certainty: "I found I never began to recover fully and lastingly, either first or last, till my Blood had entirely lost its *Size* (which I came to know by an accidental Occasion for opening a Vein). . ." (353). "Upon any Accident, Disorder, or any greater Oppression or Anxiety than ordinary...I found that living even much *lower* under my *Milk* and *Vegetable Diet* for two or three days at least, would always help me out again, and restore me to my usual *Serenity* and *Freedom*. . ." (354). "I soon found my *Error*. . ." (359).

> Truth is, [nervous disease] seldom, and I think never happens or can happen, to any but those of the liveliest and quickest natural Parts, whose Faculties are brightest and most spiritual, and whose Genius is most keen and penetrating, and particularly where there is the most delicate Sensation and Taste, both of Pleasure and Pain. . . . I seldom ever observ'd a *heavy*, *dull*, *earthy*, *clod-pated Clown*, much troubled with nervous Dis-

studies, see Kathleen Ashley *et al.* eds., *Autobiography and Postmodernism* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1994); Elizabeth W. Bruss, *Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1976); Hélène Cixous, *Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (London and New York: Routledge, 1997); John Paul Eakin ed., *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention* (Princeton, Princeton UP, 1985); Paul Jay, "Being in the Text: Autobiography and the Problem of the Subject," *Modern Language Notes* 97 (1982) 1046–63; Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1994); Felicity Nussbaum, *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1989); Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2001); William Spengemann, *The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in a History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1980); and Karl Weintraub, *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978).

9. Michael McKeon calls this sort of relation a "tension between a linear, ongoing present and vertical acts of retrospection" (*The Origins of the English Novel, 1600–1740* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987], p. 98).

orders, or at least not to any eminent Degree; and I scarce believe the Thing possible, from the *animal Oeconomy* and the present Laws of Nature.[10]

In part, this self-characterization is perhaps the plea of a failed poet. Manuscript lines on "Platonick Love" attributed to Cheyne stagger under labored Latinate diction, pedestrian conceits, and an academic Neoplatonic argument.[11] By characterizing himself as a "nervous" individual, he is perhaps consoling himself that he has at least the temperament of the poet, if not the talent or persistence. The self-characterization is, of course, also part of Cheyne's appeal to personal authority as a practitioner and author. Endowed with "the liveliest and quickest natural Parts," he is unquestionably qualified to advise and judge in medical matters.

Constructing himself as two separate characters – one acting, the other reflecting in sound Lockean fashion – Cheyne is able to make his claims for medical authority on two levels. First there is the appeal to experience. The acting character is Cheyne's image of himself as *Fellow-Sufferer*," who has experienced the same maladies as those who come to his practical treatises for help. In this character, we glimpse something of the "empiricist," hazarding guesses as he gropes toward health and making "Tryal" of haphazard remedies, often endorsed only by hearsay. "I had by chance heard of the great Benefit, which one of my particular Acquaintances had

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10. *The English Malady*, p. 262. That Cheyne should have appealed so strongly to contemporary poets, dramatists, and novelists may be explained in part by this notion that nervous disorders are peculiar to men and women of higher sensibilities. This theory, not original to Cheyne, glorified and explained away the neuroses suffered by many such writers. Certainly it appealed to the young Boswell a generation later: His essays (collected under the head *The Hypochondriack*) and his letters reveal a certain smug reveling in the notion that his nervous disorders, real or imagined, mark him as having higher sensibilities than the common crowd. "We *Hypochondriacks*," he says, "may console ourselves in the hour of gloomy distress, by thinking that our sufferings make our superiority." Quoted by W.F. Bynum, *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, ed. Bynum, Roy Porter, and Michael Shepherd (London: Tavistock Publications, 1985), p. 91. Johnson, who applauded Cheyne in most cases and recommended him to Boswell, sternly warned his young disciple to ignore Cheyne's claims that nervous disorders and genius are linked: "[D]o not let him teach you a foolish notion that melancholy is a proof of acuteness." James Boswell, *Life of Johnson* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1924), 2: 63. Cheyne's suggestion that the artistic sensibility is a kind of disease anticipates Freud by a century and a half.

11. For a transcription and brief commentary upon this poem, see Paul W. Child, " 'Platonick Love,' by George Cheyne," *The Scriblerian* 26.1 (Autumn 1993) 1–3.

reap'd from some active *mercurial* Medicines," says Cheyne at one point. "[T]hese I resolv'd to try" (329). The character discovers Taylor's milk diet, we recall, after he "accidentally met with a Clergyman, who told [him] of [the] wonderful Cure" (335). And the milk-seed diet itself is a kind of folk remedy, of the kind John Wesley might recommend to his Methodist flock.[12] Committed to an empirical search for truth, the acting character *tries* to find this experimental validation for his experiences. Having made each new medical test upon his own "crazy Carcase," he sits back to watch the effects, mark the clinical signs, and reflect upon the causes. In the catchwords of induction and the new science, the acting character makes "repeated *Observations*," "reflect[s] upon," and "contemplate[s]" his experiences. But he is still *processing* the experiences, still groping toward a comprehensive explanation for them.

To the iatromechanist like Cheyne, claims to experience by themselves are not enough to legitimate a practitioner – or a medical narrative. Experiential data must be shaped, organized, and interpreted by a comprehensive theory. And it is the authorial character, the *product* of experience, who is able to make sense of the raw empirical data by fitting them into an iatromechanical scheme and thereby to make a second appeal for authority, beyond experience. All the acts of this figure, articulated in the parenthetic asides, are those of mind or utterance: "I say," "I believe," "I think," "I know." What the reflecting persona *knows* that the actor is still groping towards is the overarching theoretical structure for medical experiences that are otherwise apparently connected only by a loose chronology. Aware of the larger iatromechanical scheme, the authorial figure passes judgment on the experiencing character's actions and remarks his errors: "[I]n my greatest Health [I] drank not above a Quart, or three Pints at most, of *Wine* any Day, (which I then absurdly thought necessary in my Bulk and *Stowage*, tho' certainly by far an over *Dose*)..." (342). He finds iatromechanical validation for mercury therapy and the milk-seed regimen, after the fact. The mercurial cures that the acting character experiments with are theoretically (and therefore therapeutically) sound, reasons the reflecting character, because the heavy metal, driven by gravity, forces morbid matter out of the circulation. The milk-seed diet is theoretically sound because dairy foods and vegetables contain fewer of the highly attractive (in the Newtonian sense) "urinous animal salts," of the sort that, according to his iatromechanical explanation, collect in the fluids and form obstructions. For further theoretical validation he invokes the names of Sydenham and his own medical mentor, Archibald Pitcairne. If the acting

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12. See Wesley's *Primitive Physick: Or, An Easy and Natural Method of Curing most Diseases* (London: Thomas Trye, 1747).

character is Cheyne's claim to both higher sensibility and experience, this authorial character is his projected image of himself as the judicious, sober iatromechanist who delimits empiricism with a structuring theory. Through this character, Cheyne appeals to the popular authorities of reason and theory to establish self-legitimacy, as both a practitioner and an author.

* * *

Phyllis Frus argues that

> [b]ecause all narratives have the same status as texts, and because the language structures of formal realism take priority over the reality they produce, "true-life" narratives ought to be judged as fictional ones are: according to their coherence and correspondence to a world we recognize, that is, as they correspond not to the events themselves but to other narratives.[13]

There are few if any precedents for Cheyne's autobiographical case history among English medical writings. There are inheritances from other narrative traditions, however. Cheyne's early fall into high living among the London "*Bottle-Companions*" and "*Free-Livers*" bent on a self-destructive course is a stock episode from cautionary tales, of the kind we find later in Fielding, Goldsmith, and Hogarth.[14] Characteristically in such exempla, a young man is lured into vicious city living, which threatens or destroys his physical, mental, and moral health. Often, as in Cheyne's own case, the character naively rationalizes that his socializing will promote his career ambitions. The plot always punishes the offender, however, and as Cheyne's own career progresses, his health and spirits degenerate. Thus the author ironically subverts his character's notion of worldly "progress."

Cheyne also imposes narrative and epistemological order upon his experiences by adopting and modifying the established genre of the spiritual autobiography. While the term is now used loosely to characterize any narrative that recounts the author's spiritual awakening or journey of self-discovery, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it carried with it more rigorous generic expectations. In this form a reflecting author, looking back on the apparently disconnected experiences of his past, reads "God's plot" for his life. The most popular spiritual autobiographies of

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13. *The Politics and Poetics of Journalistic Narratives: The Timely and the Timeless* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), p. xiv.

14. See, among many other examples of cautionary tales, Fielding's "Wilson's Tale" in *Joseph Andrews* and the story of the "Man of the Hill" in *Tom Jones*; George Primrose's story in Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*; and Hogarth's *The Rake's Progress*.

Cheyne's day were being written by Puritans and Quakers like John Bunyan and Edward Coxere, and by Defoe, whose *Robinson Crusoe* fictionalizes the same pattern of fall and redemption.[15] But Cheyne, an Anglican nurtured in the tradition of episcopacy, would have had the great model of Augustine's *Confessions* before him, even if he were unsympathetic or unfamiliar with the versions of the religious dissenters.

The spiritual autobiography typically begins with the protagonist's fall into sin or waywardness and ends with his spiritual reclamation. Along the way, there are persistent providential warnings to repent and reform – stern fatherly lectures, storms, shipwrecks, imprisonments, illnesses. After failing at first to understand these warnings, or resisting them, the character finally heeds. Usually he must be isolated physically and psychologically from his fellows before learning to read God's plot for his life. Crusoe has his island; Coxere endures enslavement in foreign lands. The spiritual autobiographer often seeks biblical validation in the stories of the fall or the prodigal son. Crusoe, for example, is at one time a restless Adam rejecting his middle-class Eden, at another the prodigal, playing "the young man."[16] Invoking such typology, the reflecting autobiographer interprets all the events of his life symbolically and teleologically, as designed to the end of spiritual reclamation. His story is at once exemplary and confessional, the exemplary tale of one sinner's triumph over viciousness and at the same time, as Michael McKeon observes, "an act of narrative atonement."[17]

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15. John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, ed. Roger Sharrock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); Edward Coxere, *Adventures by Sea of Edward Coxere*, ed. E.H.W. Meyerstein (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945). For other contemporary examples in Britain and America, see Thomas Lurting, *The Fighting Sailor Turn'd Peaceable Christian: Manifested in the Convincement and Conversion of Thomas Lurting. With a Short Relation of Many great Dangers and Wonderful Deliverances He Met Withal* (London: J. Sowle, 1711); Thomas Shepard, *God's Plot: The Paradoxes of Puritan Piety; Being* The Autobiography & Journal of Thomas Shepard, ed. and introd. Michael McGiffert (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1972). For the reading of *Robinson Crusoe* as spiritual autobiography, see among others, George A. Starr, *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1965), and J. Paul Hunter, *The Reluctant Pilgrim: Defoe's Emblematic Method and Quest for Form in Robinson Crusoe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1966). For a useful discussion of the generic expectations of the spiritual autobiography, see Robert Bell, "Metamorphoses of Spiritual Autobiography," *ELH* 44.1 (Spring 1977) 108–26.

16. Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, ed. Angus Ross (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1965), p. 29.

17. McKeon, p. 104.

Anita Guerrini observes that Cheyne's conversion in "The CASE of the Author" "did not commence in a feeling of predestinarian guilt but originated in the body";[18] Cheyne's narrative is specifically a clinical medical history. But as in the spiritual autobiography, rich dramatic irony lies in the failure or refusal of the experiencing protagonist to accept the plan for his life that the percipient authorial figure sees. From the beginning of the plot there are persistent warnings of the punishments Cheyne must suffer for indulging in "*sensual Pleasures* and . . . *Jollity*" (328). Even before he migrates to London he is given physical omens, which he expresses in clinical language:

> [U]pon the slightest *Excesses*, I always found slippery Bowels, or a Spitting to be the *Crise*; whence afterwards, on Reflection, I concluded, that my *Glands* were naturally *lax*, and my *Solids* feeble; in which Opinion I was confirmed by an early *Shakeing* of my *Hands*, and a Disposition to be easily ruffled on a *Surprize*. (325)

Arriving in London, however, Cheyne forgets or ignores these early indicators and falls into a self-destructive course in which he begins to "*Eat* lustily, and swallow down much *Liquor*" (326). Like Crusoe, he "plays the young man." Again he is warned. He suffers a seasonal "fever," which he later interprets as the "first sensible *Shock*" (326) of his overindulgence. But he quickly cures this disorder with the "bark." And trusting to his youthful resilience and his own powers as a medical practitioner, he falls again into his course of high living. He is warned again, repents and reforms temporarily, then characteristically relapses into his old excesses of diet, drink, and inactivity. This cyclical drama, with its inherent lesson about pride, is reenacted nearly a dozen times in "The CASE of the Author."

As the spiritual autobiography presupposes the free will and concomitant moral accountability of the individual, so Cheyne's medical autobiography begins with the premise that an individual is morally responsible for his own health. Cheyne maintains this theme consistently in his literature. He admits that heredity may play a role in a person's physical career; his own protagonist, we recall, is cursed with hereditarily weak nerves and a predisposition toward corpulence. However, he refuses

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18. *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment*, p. 8. In a separate article, Guerrini also situates Cheyne's case study in the tradition of spiritual autobiography. "Case History as Spiritual Autobiography: George Cheyne's 'Case of the Author'," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 19.2 (May 1995) 18–27. For an earlier version of my own argument, see Paul W. Child, "Discourse and Practice in Eighteenth-Century Medical Literature: The Case of George Cheyne," diss. University of Notre Dame, 1992, pp. 247–60.

to accept a blind determinism that would absolve the individual of moral account-ability. Whatever tricks heredity may play upon a person, he or she is still responsi-ble for determining, on an individual basis, God's natural plan for living: "The infinitely wise *Author* of *Nature* has so contrived *Things*, that the most remarkable RULES of preserving LIFE and *HEALTH* are *moral Duties* commanded us, so true it is, that *Godliness has the Promises of this Life, as well as that to come*."[19] Accord-ingly, when he searches after causes of various maladies, Cheyne finds them in self-abusive behavior:

> There is nothing more common, than to hear Men (even those, who, on other Subjects, reason justly and solidly) ascribe their Distempers, *acute* or *chronical*, to a wet Room, damp Sheets, catching Cold, ill or under dress'd Food, or eating too plentifully of this or the other Dish at a certain Time, and to such trivial Circumstances, being unwilling to own the true Cause, to wit, their continu'd Luxury and Laziness. . . .[20]

The individual who fails to recognize his responsibility to health sins against di-vine order and his own nature. When the protagonist of "The CASE of the Author" ignores the early warning signs and throws himself into a course of destructive im-moderation, then, he is flouting God's plan for him, like the hero of the spiritual autobiography. The reflecting Cheyne develops appropriate metaphors of criminality:

> [B]y Degrees [my *Vertigo*] turned to a constant *Head-ach*, *Giddiness*, *Low-ness*, *Anxiety* and *Terror*, so that I went about like a *Malefactor* con-demn'd, or one who expected every Moment to be crushed by a *ponderous* Instrument of Death, hanging over his Head.   (327)

Only when the character isolates himself from his fellows and breaks the cycle of criminally self-destructive behavior can he achieve "*perfect Health*."[21]

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19. *An Essay of Health and Long Life*, p. 5.

20. *The English Malady*, p. 48. Elsewhere in the same text Cheyne remarks, "I daily see many wretched Persons *complaining*, *grumbling*, and inwardly cursing the *Creator* of the *Universe* for their Miseries and Sufferings, who I am *morally* and *medically* certain, bring all their Wretchedness on themselves, by constantly over-loading, bursting and cramming the *poor passive Machine*" (298).

21. Cheyne admits in *The English Malady* that one of "the only material and solid Objec-tions against a *Milk*, *Seed*, and *Vegetable* Diet" is "That it is *particular* and *unsocial*, in a Country where the common Diet is of another Nature" (304). Elsewhere in the same text he defends himself against charges of enthusiasm, or radically divergent opinion.

When Cheyne the percipient author decodes the raw empirical data of his life as a providential plot, he makes explicit the connection between "The CASE of the Author" and spiritual autobiography. Throughout the case history he invokes the paradigm of a *"Divine Order,"* and we accept that there is an abstract reality at play behind the acting character's physical experiences. Early in the narrative, when Cheyne is isolated from his friends in *"melancholy* Retirement" (332), he finds himself, after *"Meditation* and *Reflection,"* "infallibly entering into an *Unknown State of Things"* (330). He begins to consider *"if* there might not be…higher, more noble, and more enlightening *Principles* revealed to Mankind *somewhere…"* (331). It is in the final sentences of his case history, however, that Cheyne explicitly interprets these experiences as the plot for his life written by "the Author of *Nature"*:

> I shall, I hope, go on in the Method now described, and *live*, and I hope, *die* in continual Gratitude to the *Best of Beings*, who, by an over-ruling *Providence*, and, as it were, by meer *casual Hints*, far beyond the Reach of my *Penetration*, has irresistably (as I should almost say, if I felt not my own *Liberty*) directed the great Steps of my *Life* and *Health* hitherto.   (364)

The reading code of spiritual autobiography having been established, the apparently disconnected and random events now fit neatly into the providential scheme. The early hand tremors, the seasonal fever, the asthma, the melancholic fits, and the host of other maladies that follow the experiencing character's excesses are all the physical results of self-abuse or misdiagnosis and mistreatment. But they are also providential warnings to reform and to submit to the authority of God's providence and of nature. Symptomatology thus translates into symbology; the hero's education demands that he learn to read the symbols: "This *Hint* accidentally dropt, wrought so on me, that I began to recollect a great many Things, that before had escaped me without much Reflection" (335). It is by this gathering and reflecting upon past experiences that Cheyne discovers the whole cloth from which the individual events in his life have been cut. As on the literal and scientific level he finds coherence for the disconnected experiences and observations in the all-embracing theory of iatromechanics, so on the symbolic and abstract level, he finds coherence in the providential plot.

Invoking the language and ethos of the spiritual autobiography, Cheyne reinforces his claims to legitimacy, as both a practitioner and an author. The appeal to the authority of providence, of course, would have been among the weightiest of all claims to legitimacy in Cheyne's day. But there is a specific literary appeal also. The spiritual autobiography was an established literary form for an empirical demonstration of the truth of Christian teaching. The protagonist of such narratives – Coxere,

Bunyan, Crusoe – is without exception a learner through experience. Casting himself as such a protagonist, Cheyne validates his own claims to experience. He also validates his own text and claims to authorship.

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Thus the central tension between human waywardness and God's purpose in the spiritual autobiography finds a corresponding tension in "The CASE of the Author" between Cheyne's failure to regulate his health according to a divine plan and his acceptance of the lifesaving milk-seed regimen. Cheyne develops this tension between "perishing" and "perfect Recovery" with persistent images of reanimation. In Taylor's case, we find a pointed example. Taylor, we recall, has suffered from severe epilepsy: "He told me . . . he used frequently to be seized with it on the Road; while he was rideing in the Country about the Business of his Profession, so that dropping from his Horse, he remained senseless, till by the next Waggoner or Passenger he was carried to the nearest House; and that both his *Life* and *Faculties* had been in the utmost Danger by it. . ." (335–36). By use of the balancing conjunction *but* in the same passage, this death image of the cataleptic Taylor is weighed against the image of the athletic middle-aged gentleman who can "play six Hours at *Cricket* on *Banstead-Down*, without Fatigue or Lowness, and [is] more *active* and *clear* in his *Faculties* and *Senses* than ever he [has] been in his Life before" (336).[22] Taylor owes his reanimation to his milk diet.

Clearly Taylor is a figure of Cheyne himself. Like Cheyne, he is a physician; like Cheyne he has consulted "all the most eminent *Physicians* of his Time about *London*" (335) before turning to the saving regimen. To reinforce the typology, Cheyne tells the reader that during the period of his own final recovery, he himself was thrown from his chariot, "and falling on my Head, was taken up dead and senseless" (360–61). This image invokes that of the cataleptic Taylor. But as Taylor is delivered from epilepsy by his saving diet, so Cheyne is delivered from death in this instance by his own milk-seed diet: "[I]n two or three Months [I] recovered to a Miracle, from what would have kill'd another with bad Juices. . ." (361).

The death and reanimation theme is developed elsewhere in *The English Malady*, especially with the curious case of a Colonel Townshend, which Cheyne recounts shortly before his own. Townshend, near death, calls a group of medical practitioners, including Cheyne, Edward Baynard, and the apothecary Skrine, to witness a remarkable phenomenon. "He told us," says Cheyne, "he had sent for us to give him some Account of an *odd Sensation*, he had for some Time observed and felt in himself: which

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22. Cheyne tells us that Taylor has even fathered several children since his cure – the perfect reinforcement of the reanimation theme (*The English Malady*, p. 254).

was, that composing himself, he cou'd *die* or *expire* when he pleas'd, and yet by an *Effort*, or some how, he could come to Life again." "[W]e could hardly believe the *Fact* as he related it," says Cheyne, "much less give any Account of it: unless he should please to make the *Experiment* before us." Townshend offers to demonstrate:

> He compos'd himself on his Back, and lay in a still Posture some time: while *I* held his right Hand, Dr. *Baynard* laid his Hand on his Heart, and Mr. *Skrine* held a clean Looking-glass to his Mouth. I found his *Pulse* sink gradually, till at last I could not feel any, by the most exact and nice Touch. Dr. *Baynard* could not feel the least Motion in his *Heart*, nor Mr. *Skrine* the least Soil of Breath on the bright *Mirror* he held to his Mouth; then each of us by *Turns* examin'd his *Arm*, *Heart* and *Breath*, but could not by the nicest *Scrutiny* discover the least *Symptom* of Life in him. . . . [W]e began to conclude that he had indeed carried the *Experiment* too far, and at last were satisfied he was actually dead, and were just ready to leave him . . . [when] we observ'd some Motion about the Body, and upon Examination, found his *Pulse* and the *Motion* of his *Heart* gradually returning: he began to *breath* gently and speak softly: we were all astonish'd to the last Degree at this unexpected Change. . . .[23]

That evening Townshend dies in fact, and an autopsy performed the next morning reveals what Cheyne diagnoses as "Nephritick Cancer." It is difficult to translate Cheyne's description of his post-mortem findings into modern clinical nomenclature, but Townshend apparently died of what today we would call renal calcification. In such cases, said the late William Ober, a patient may slip in and out of coma during a period of several weeks leading to his or her death. "But it's not an act of will," protests Ober. "That is Cheyne's embroidery."[24]

Townshend's "Nephritick Cancer" is only peripherally a nervous disorder, of the sort that is the subject of *The English Malady*. Thus the case seems anomalous – unless we consider that Cheyne is developing proleptically the reanimation he himself finds through the milk-seed regimen. As Townshend apparently wills himself into and out of coma, so Cheyne, acting of free will, commits himself to a revitalizing regimen. Thus the image of Townshend's revival is an image of Cheyne's own "perfect Recovery." Like Townshend, Cheyne, having found a providential plan for both his bodily and spiritual health, has "come to Life again."

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23. *The English Malady*, pp. 308–10. Looking-glasses and manual measurement of pulse are crude diagnostic measures, of course.

24. William B. Ober, letter to the author, 11 November 1991.

Rita Dózsai

"That Power of Giving Pleasure"

Johnson on Novelty in the *Rambler*

The paper examines Dr. Johnson's concept of novelty as a means to aesthetic pleasure. Undertaking the close reading of *Rambler* 121, an early and decisive paper on literary imitation, I argue that the most important critical principle by which Johnson judges ancient and modern imitations is novelty. In this essay, the Virgilian and the Spenserian imitations illustrate the pressure and the dangers of following models. I also consider the critical vocabulary that provides the context of this concept and, drawing on Wimsatt's method, attempt to reveal the intimate connection between a *Dictionary* entry and a *Rambler* word reflecting upon the possible sources of Johnson's idea of novelty.

There is a consistent view of novelty as a means to aesthetic effect in Johnson's oeuvre. The bi-weekly *Rambler*[1] presents the earliest decisive accounts of this recurring principle. It should be noted that Johnson's other major project, the *Dictionary*,[2] which was simultaneously compiled with the *Rambler*, conspicuously affects the language and style of the periodical essays. To be sure, "what illustrates a word in the *Dictionary*," as W. K. Wimsatt argues, "embellishes an idea in the essays."[3] The influence of the lexicon upon the prose essays has long been recognized,[4] and indeed the parallelisms between the two consciously related exercises have been well established. However, one can still draw productively upon Wimsatt's method of searching for the context of Johnson's "pregnant words," and in the case of our key term,

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1. The *Rambler*, which established Johnson's reputation, ran from March 20, 1750 to March 14, 1752 and contains 208 essays.
2. April 15, 2005 marked the 250th anniversary of the *Dictionary's* publication.
3. W. K. Wimsatt, *Philosophic Words: A Study of Style and Meaning in the Rambler and Dictionary of Samuel Johnon* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1948), p. 72.
4. Archibald Campbell, one of Johnson's contemporary Scottish critics, parodies the interdependence of these works: "He might write his *Rambler*s to make a dictionary necessary and afterwards compile his dictionary to explain his *Rambler*s" (Archibald Campbell, *Lexiphanes* [London, 1767]).

novelty, such a direction can yield new, surprising insights. The purpose of this paper is to examine Johnson's early formulations of the idea of novelty, one of his chief critical principles. To achieve this, therefore, I wish to limit my focus to a *Rambler* essay, in which the concept of novelty prominently figures, by considering the critical vocabulary of this vital concern and its indebtedness to the *Dictionary*. Focusing on an individual essay of the series not only helps us better understand the Johnsonian approach to novelty but may also satisfy the need for discussing the essays "as discrete, self-contained parts within a very loosely organized collection."[5]

The concept of novelty comes into play significantly when Johnson turns to the controversial issues of literary criticism in the essays.[6] These are the problems of imitation, originality, authority, variety and genius; the old watchwords of critical thinking that become popular and dominant in the eighteenth century. Such concerns can be aptly illustrated by *Rambler* 121, an early critical paper, which defines the power of novelty as a source of aesthetic pleasure. Thus in the essay we find an attempt to explain pleasure in novelty embedded in an argumentation about the dangers of imitations, in other words, the dangers of being overwhelmed by "the burden of the past."[7]

Johnson opens *Rambler* 121 with a classical motto, "O imitatores, servum peccus!" – a short quotation taken from Horace's epistle on the ridiculous practice of slavish imitation.[8] Horace, in his imaginary letter addressed to Maecenas, complains about

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5. Leopold Damrosch, "Johnson's Manner of Proceeding in the *Rambler*," *ELH* 40 (1973) 70–89, p. 71. Damrosch emphasised already in 1973 that paragraphs or sentences are constantly quoted from the *Rambler*, but close analysis of individual pieces has received little attention.

6. In *Rambler* 208, Johnson distinguishes four kinds of essays in the *Rambler*: "the idle sports of imagination," "the disquisitions of criticism," "the pictures of life," and "the essays professedly serious" (*The Rambler*, ed. W. J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss in the *Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson* [New Haven: Yale UP, 1969], vol. V, pp. 319–20; all references are to this edition). About one-seventh (31) of the *Ramblers* are concerned with literary criticism, see W. J. Bate, *Samuel Johnson* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), p. 294.

7. Originally, the first part of the essay is entitled "The Dangers of Imitation" and the second is "The Impropriety of Imitating Spenser." Bate's idea of "the burden of the past" refers to the crisis of the mid-eighteenth century, when authors were troubled by the problem of following earlier models. See W. J. Bate, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poets* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971).

8. Horace, *Epistles*, 1.19.19: "O you mimics, you slavish herd!" (Horace, *Satires, Epistles, Ars Poetica* [The Loeb Classical Library]. English translation by H. Rushton Fairclough [London: Heinemann, 1926]).

being criticised for imitating Greek authors. In defending his originality, he exposes the faults of his accusers calling them a servile herd of imitators. Examining the relationship between the Horatian mottos and the essays, Robert C. Olson asserts that "[o]nly rarely does a Johnsonian essay reflect much more of the Epistle from which it is quoted than the lines of the motto itself and perhaps lines adjacent to it."[9] In the case of number 121, we might suspect that Johnson has the unquoted adjacent lines very much in mind, running parallel with and generating his points of attack on servile imitators:

> decipit exemplar vitiis imitabile. . .

> Libera per vacuum posui vestigia princeps,
> non aliena meo pressi pede.[10]

The authority of the *Rambler* is, without doubt, Horace, who is cited more than any other writer and, no less important, the authorizing epigraph of the whole series is drawn from the same Latin poet:

> Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri,
> Quo me cunque rapit tempestas deferor hospes.[11]

In fact, the term "nullius in verba" was adopted as a motto by the Royal Society before it appeared on the title page of the *Rambler*. Thus, it seems that Horace's sense of independence was well suited to both scientific and literary matters. Besides, Johnson's use of classical mottos reveals his conscious effort to follow the opening device of the *Spectator*, the ultimate model of the *Rambler*. It is more important, however, to recognize Johnson's purpose implied in both Horatian quotations: to ramble without any settled, authoritative direction and depart freely from his predecessors, ancient or modern, in the essays. In *Rambler* 121 it is exactly this distancing attitude that is required from authors who tend to follow precedent, the prevailing fashion among the moderns. This issue is not, of course, new with the Augustans, since "an imitation of a classic model is always a reference *to* and only thus a depar-

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9. Robert C. Olson, *Motto, Context, Essay: The Classical Background of Samuel Johnson's Rambler and Adventurer Essays* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984), p. xvi.

10. Horace, *Epistles*, 1.19.7; 21–22: "A pattern with faults easy to copy leads astray. . . . I was the first to plant free footsteps on a virgin soil; I walked not where others trod."

11. Horace, *Epistles*, 1.1.14–15: "I am not bound over to swear as any master dictates; wherever the storm drives me, I turn in for comfort." There are 669 literary allusions or quotations in the *Rambler* of which 406 are from Greek or Latin writers (Horace is cited 103 times). Cf. Bate and Strauss, vol. III, p. xxxii.

ture *from* the model,"[12] but what is interesting is Johnson's primary attack on the model of imitation itself, that is, the classics.

In addition, not only in the original two mottos but also in the revision of their translations we may detect Johnson's departure from authority for the sake of novelty. Studying the complicated textual history of the *Rambler*, Ellen Douglass Leyburn remarks that the idea and the first execution of supplying translations of the mottos to the later issues of the *Rambler* derive from James Elphinston, a Scottish schoolmaster. Johnson, however, substitutes many of the Scottish translations of the Edinburgh edition because he does not find Elphinston's renderings adequate.[13] As a result, the collected London edition contains Johnson's improvements on the Edinburgh *Rambler*. Interestingly enough, the revision of the general epigraph relies neither on Elphinston's translation[14] nor on any other substitution; it remains in Latin on the title page. Perhaps behind the decision to remove Elphinston's rendering of the authorizing epigraph, lies the hope to demonstrate what "*nullius in verba*" precisely indicates: Johnson's decision of depending on the words of no one. Furthermore, the altered phrasing in the motto selected for *Rambler* 121, however minute it may seem, is characteristic on two accounts. The original version runs as follows: "Avaunt, ye imitators, servile herd!" Leyburn rightly points out that "avaunt" is "a word characteristic of Elphinston's inflated style"[15] which simply becomes "away" in the revised translation appearing in later editions. This particular change in wording is in line with a characteristic trait of Johnsonian critical judgement: it suggests Johnson's dislike of anachronism, and of archaic language use, on the one hand, as well as his appeal, on the other, to novelty of expression, essential points of criticism which are some of the most remarkable issues of *Rambler* 121.

After the epigraph, as a conventional procedure, "an authoritative proposition" follows in the opening paragraphs.[16] Johnson cites the opinion of a general-

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12. W. K. Wimsatt, "Imitation as Freedom," *New Literary History* 1 (1970) 215–36, p. 218.

13. Ellen Douglass Leyburn, "The Translations of the Mottoes and Quotations in the *Rambler*," *RES* 62 (1940) 169–76, pp. 169, 172. The original Folio edition (1750–52) is not accompanied by English translations whereas the Edinburgh edition (1750–52) and the collected London edition (1752) are. Not content with Elphinston's translations, Johnson uses twenty-one different sources for renderings of the classical quotations.

14. The general motto is translated by Elphinston in the Edinburgh edition: "Sworn to no master's arbitrary sway, I range where e'er occasion points the way."

15. Leyburn, p. 172.

16. Steven Lynn, "Johnson's *Rambler* and Eighteenth-Century Rhetoric" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 19 (1986) 461–79, p. 467. Lynn convincingly argues for a tendency to authori-

ized authority, a fictitious letter "from one of the universities," which complains about young students who instead of forming their original sentiments, "content with the secondary knowledge . . . adopt the criticisms and remarks, which happen to drop from those, who have risen, by merit or fortune, to reputation and authority."[17] Certainly the key words here are reputation and authority against which Johnson repeatedly warns in his essays regarding them as temporary, uncertain and accidental.[18] Accordingly, as a next measure, he proceeds to develop this insight at greater length by revising the authoritative proposition to formulate his own opinion about following precedent. That he takes into protection "these collectors of fortuitous knowledge" (281) without the required severity[19] is based on two much quoted arguments: i.e., "we are equally indebted to foreign assistance," and "they . . . can seldom add more than some small particle of knowledge, to the hereditary stock devolved from ancient times, the collective labour of a thousand intellects" (282). It is interesting to observe that the opposition of "we" (implying authors) to "they" (referring to students) will of course have a rather different handling in Johnson's later consideration of authorial imitation, which "can boast of very few additions to ancient fable" (283). In reading over the essays, however, we find these arguments and even the phrasing recurring in the problematization of literary independence in very much the same way: "there is a common stock of images, a settled mode of argument, and a beaten track of transition which all authors suppose themselves at liberty to use."[20] As for Johnson's strategy here, he characteristically weighs the simple case of young students against the more complex one of poets in order to pass a riper judgement on the latter's following precedent. Therefore what deserves praise in university students turns to censure with required severity for poets.

Johnson concludes this line of thought with an extended distinction of science and literature, yet another persistent theme of the *Rambler*, to direct the attention specifically on the value of novelty and to prepare the ground for the central issue of

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tative proposition in the opening sentences and distinguishes three kinds of authority: specified, generalized and implied. Although the author observes other patterns of rhetorical arrangement in the "professedly serious" essays, I find his handling of the opening assertion especially applicable to *Rambler* 121, which belongs to the group of literary criticism.

17. Bate and Strauss, vol. IV, pp. 280–281.

18. See also *Rambler* 146, 151, 154.

19. Cf. the original line: "I have no inclination to persecute these collectors of fortuitous knowledge *with the severity required. . .*" (my italics).

20. *Rambler* 143, vol. IV, 394.

the essay that is, the dangers of poetic imitation. According to Johnson, science can offer restricted opportunities, since "being fixed and limited" it entails "the necessity of following the traces of our predecessors." Imagination, on the contrary, furnishes us with new and varied possibilities for originality, therefore, "there appears no reason, why [it] should be subject to the same restraint" (282). Thus novelty and variety, it should be observed, here are regarded merely as a means to independence from authority without being applied to any aesthetic effects. What is also interesting about this passage is Johnson's turning for the first time in the course of the argument to metaphoric language in his contrast of the narrow roads of science to the boundless regions of fiction:

> The roads of science are narrow, so that they who travel them, must either follow or meet one another; but in the boundless regions of possibility, which fiction claims for her dominion, there are surely a thousand recesses unexplored, a thousand flowers unplucked, a thousand fountains unexhausted, combinations of imagery yet unobserved, and races of ideal inhabitants not hitherto described.   (282)

The sudden metaphoric turn of mind, the antiscientific leanings, the topos of the traveller, or the rambler, all signify a new direction carrying the reader to the more specific dominion of literary criticism.

Having argued for unlimited opportunities to exploit new modes and combinations that images and thoughts can offer to authors without treading a beaten path, Johnson reconsiders "the universal and acknowledged practice" of imitating the ancients, (284) and after that the current fashion of Spenserian imitation. In both cases, he focuses on the critical principle of novelty by which the two types of imitation are judged. Yet, Johnson's primary concern is to attack the *model* of imitation, i.e. in the case of the universal practice, the classics. This attitude shows that he finds his place in the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns taking side with the moderns and that, however "tremendous a classicist" Johnson may seem, he "lacked an emotional commitment to the classical past."[21] It is little wonder, therefore, that he challenges the authority of the Roman poets on the ground that their achievement appears to be a refinement on an original. As Bate com-

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21. R. G. Peterson, "Samuel Johnson at War with the Classics," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 9 (1975) 69–86, p. 85. Peterson points out that "Johnson never used the classics but as means to reveal the moral significance of the actual world, and this is why he seems so un-classical." For the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns see Joseph M. Levine, T*he Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991).

ments, "the conscious elegance of Latin literature, which critics of Johnson's own period were always extolling, exacted a price."[22] Thus Johnson's censure "with the severity required" follows:

> The Romans are confessed to have attempted little more than to display in their own tongue the inventions of the Greeks. There is, in all their writings, such a perpetual recurrence of allusions to the tales of the fabulous age, that they must be confessed often to *want that power of giving pleasure which novelty supplies*; nor can we wonder, that *they excelled so much in the graces of diction*, when we consider *how rarely they were employed in search of new thoughts.*   (283, my italics)

The passage expresses a decisive assertion of the principle of novelty as an indispensable means to aesthetic pleasure, a vital factor of Johnsonian criticism. It is clear that Johnson is not considered to be the originator of this notion. Studying the development of this conception, Clarence DeWitt Thorpe maintains that the "recognition of the power of the new and surprising to give artistic pleasure can be traced back at least as far as Aristotle."[23] Although it seems quite difficult to define with certainty from which writers Johnson derives his idea of novelty, if we consult the headword in the *Dictionary*, it can offer some possible sources. In so doing, we find that *novelty* is illustrated by a passage from Robert South:

> As religion entertains our speculations with great objects, so it entertains them with new; and novelty is the great parent of pleasure; upon which account it is that men are so much pleased with variety.[24]

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22. Walter Jackson Bate, *The Achievement of Samuel Johnson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 189.

23. Clarence DeWitt Thorpe, "Addison and Some of His Predecessors on 'Novelty,'" *PMLA* 52 (1937) 1114–29, p. 1114.

24. Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1st ed. (London: W. Strahan, 1755), "novelty." Wimsatt argues that Johnson draws heavily on the sermons of South in the *Dictionary*: "Johnson is known to have admired his work . . . and a copy of his *Sermons* at Litchfield is one of the few surviving which Johnson marked for the *Dictionary*" (Wimsatt, p. 146). From South's sermons Wimsatt chooses twenty-four quotations that illustrate *Rambler* words in the *Dictionary*. It is worth noticing that one of the most important and recurring concepts of the *Rambler* whose philosophic source is South, that is, *novelty*, is *not* among those discussed in Wimsatt's study.

That *variety* is basically regarded as a synonym for novelty is not only evident from the quoted lines above but also from the term's own definition illustrated by another quotation from South: "Variety is nothing else but a continued novelty."[25]

Consequently, the *Rambler's* usage of novelty as a source of aesthetic pleasure corresponds to the lexicographic approach to the same concept. In other words, "what illustrates a word in the *Dictionary* embellishes an idea in the essays."

Conversely, the lack of novelty accounts for the lack of pleasure in imitations of originals. Virgil's following of Homer serves as an example for underlining the dangers of being overwhelmed by powerful models:

> [Virgil] by making his hero both a traveller and a warrior, united the beauties of the Iliad and Odyssey in one composition: yet his judgement was perhaps sometimes *overborn by his avarice of the Homeric treasures;* and, for fear of suffering a sparkling ornament to be lost, he has inserted it where it cannot shine with its original splendor.   (283, my italics)

"A search for pregnant words and the system of ideas attached to them,"[26] a method suggested by Wimsatt, can produce interesting and surprising results in the excerpt concerned. For instance, in his *Dictionary* Johnson draws upon Addison's *Spectator* for the illustration of *overbear*: "The horror or loathsomeness of an object may over-bear the pleasure which results from its greatness, *novelty*, or beauty."[27]

In fact, the source of the pregnant word – *overbear* – is *Spectator* 412, one of the famous essays on the pleasures of the imagination.[28] It is clear from this latter essay that Addison, prior to Johnson, finds novelty, along with greatness and beauty, essential to aesthetic delight. Thorpe in the concluding remarks of his study points out that the relevance of Addison's essay on the imagination lies in its attempt to rationalize the pleasure in novelty and to place this concept "in proper relationship to other aesthetic pleasures."[29] Quoting a punchline from the essay on the imagination under the weighty word *overbear*, Johnson, therefore, seems to derive his idea of novelty indirectly from Addison in a way that illustrates the power of being overwhelmed by a past example. One may even go so far as to apply Johnson's criticism

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25. Johnson, *Dictionary*, "variety."

26. Wimsatt, p. 81.

27. Johnson, *Dictionary*, "to overbear." Johnson does not specify the number of the *Spectator* he uses.

28. Cf. *Spectator* 412. "Overbear" in the sense of *outweigh* is the earliest example in the *OED*.

29. Thorpe, p. 1129.

of Virgil to himself and claim that Johnson's judgment is "overborn by his avarice" of the Addisonian "treasures."[30]

To exhibit the dangers of following models, Johnson singles out Virgil's imitation of the Homeric motif of Ajax's silence in the *Aeneid*.[31] It is certain that when Johnson writes "this passage has always been considered as eminently beautiful," (283) Longinus's famous lines on sublimity as "the echo of a noble mind" are heard in the *Rambler*: "How grand, for instance, is the silence of Ajax in the Summoning of the Ghosts, more sublime than any speech!"[32] In *Tatler* 133 Addison also elaborates on the "Two Instances of Silence in Two greatest Poets," i.e. Ajax's silence in Homer and Dido's silence in Virgil; pointing out that "it would look as ridiculous to many Readers to give Rules and Directions for proper Silences."[33] In making his judgment on Virgilian imitation, it is the propriety of silence that Johnson reconsiders and finds the instance of silence in Dido lacks not only novelty but also propriety, in other words, decorum:

> The lady turns away *like Ajax* in mute disdain. She turns away *like Ajax*, but she resembles him in none of these qualities which give either dignity or *propriety* to silence. She might without any departure from the tenour of her conduct, have burst out *like other injured women* into clamour, reproach, and denunciation; but Virgil had his imagination full of Ajax, and therefore could not prevail on himself to teach Dido any other mode of resentment. (284, my italics)

He even gives directions for three appropriate forms of reactions, such alternatives that, in his judgment, would be more fitting to convey Dido's resentment; clamour, reproach and denunciation. Johnson here characteristically argues for displaying generality in the figure of Dido expecting her to respond "like other injured women." Yet, for Johnson the Virgilian passage exhibits particularity by imitating the silence of Ajax in the silence of Dido, which, according to the Johnsonian standards, results in failure. As a conclusion to the Virgilian imitation and as an in-

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30. Cf. p. 283, quoted above: "yet his [Virgil] judgement was perhaps sometimes overborn by his avarice of the Homeric treasures."

31. Cf. *The Odyssey*, 11.563 and *The Aeneid* 6.450–76.

32. *Treatise on the Sublime*, 9.2. For the vogue of Longinus in the eighteenth century see Samuel H. Monk, *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1935).

33. *The Tatler* 133. *The Tatler*, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), vol. II, pp. 270–271.

troduction to the Spenserian one, he lists different poetic practices regarding them merely as forms of fashion:

> If Virgil could be thus seduced by imitation, there will be little hope, that common wits should escape; and accordingly we find, that besides the universal and acknowledged practice of copying the ancients, there has prevailed in every age a particular species of fiction. At one time all truth was conveyed in allegory; at another, nothing was seen but in a vision; at one period, all the poets followed sheep, and every event produced a pastoral; at another they busied themselves wholly in giving directions to a painter.
>
> (284)

Importantly enough, it is the first time when imitation and copying as technical terms are used in the text. Imitation, as Draper puts it, is interpreted in the sense of copying models, "a common conception that the age gleaned from its dictionaries and rhetorics"[34] regardless of the original Aristotelian sense. Likewise, the definition of imitation in Johnson's *Dictionary* is "the act of copying."[35] The passage also shows Johnson's position on a typical classical genre exposing his readiness to attack pastoral poetry, particularly its fashionable modern imitations, ironically. Philip Smallwood argues that in *Rambler* 121 Johnson recalls his earlier papers on pastoral, and "he applies the same gentle art of sinking used here of the pastoral poem more widely to the history of poetry."[36] The current imitations of pastoral, in short, call forth his sarcasm and denial since they do not produce novelty, variety and originality.

The examples of varying poetic practices – at one time allegory, at another vision and pastoral – lead to the consideration of the prevailing fashion of Spenserian imitation "which, by the influence of some men of learning and genius, seems likely to gain upon the age" (285). Yet, the primary criticism turns to the model of imitation: to Spenser, who is a major figure in the poetic practice of allegory, vision and pastoral. Spenser's handling of allegory and vision appeals to Johnson both as a critic and as an allegorist, but obviously he finds little to praise in his pastorals, the genre that evokes the critic's scorn in many respects. As Jack Lynch points out, John-

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34. Joseph W. Draper, "Aristotelian 'Mimesis' in Eighteenth-Century England," *PMLA* 36 (1921) 372–400, p. 375.

35. Cf. "imitation" in Johnson's *Dictionary*.

36. Philip Smallwood, *Johnson's Critical Presence: Image, History, Judgement* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 19. See *Rambler* 36 and 37 on the defects of pastoral poetry.

son "is more tolerant of allegorical writing" than most of his contemporaries[37] and for this reason the imitation of Spenserian allegory is acceptable for him. That the archaic diction and uniform stanza of the older poet are unpleasing is surely a commonplace censure, however, it throws light on Johnson's principle of novelty:

> To imitate the fictions and sentiments of Spenser can incur no reproach, for allegory is perhaps one of the most pleasing vehicles of instruction. But I am very far from extending the same respect to his diction or his stanza. His stile was in his own time allowed to be *vicious*, so *darkened* with *old words* and *peculiarities* of *phrase*, and so *remote* from common use, that Johnson [*sic*] boldly pronounces him "to have written *no language*."
>
> (285, my italics)

Spenserian archaising is regarded by Johnson as impropriety of language, which cannot account for pleasure because it wants novelty of expression. But Johnson's strictures on Spenser's diction are at the same time reactions against the sixteenth-century poet's practice of imitating the ancients. In this respect the context of Ben Jonson's bold remark is more revealing which is quoted in the *Dictionary* under the key word of *affect* in the sense of "imitating in an unnatural and constrained manner": "Spenser, in affecting the ancients, writ no language; yet I would have him read for his matter, but as Virgil read Ennius."[38] Thus Spenser's impropriety of diction is judged by the neo-classical concept of decorum, and exemplifies the dangers of imitating the classics. Furthermore, Johnson's dislike of archaic language is also evident in his lexicographic approaches to the older poet. Lynch affirms that the lexicographer being compelled to record archaisms in his *Dictionary*, finds Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender*, simply identified as "*Pastorals*," an important source of providing obsolete and rustic words.[39] Now, it is apparent, that Johnson's antagonism to modern pastoral lies in its artificial nature, since pastoral is a typical classical genre employing old and rustic words in a natural way. Johnson particularly finds fault with Spenser's modern pastoral, which, in affecting the ancient genre, results in archaising, impropriety of diction,

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37. Jack Lynch, "Studied Barbarity: Johnson, Spenser, and the Idea of Progress," *The Age of Johnson* 9 (1998) 81–107, p. 93. Lynch emphasises the influence of Spenserian allegory on Johnson's allegorical writings. *The Vision of Theodore*, for example, was influenced by Spenser among others.

38. Johnson, *Dictionary*, "to affect." Cf. George Parafitt ed., *Ben Johnson: The Complete Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1996), p. 428.

39. Lynch, p. 97. Lynch mentions that "the words identified as obsolete provide 37 percent of the *Shepheardes Calender* quotations."

lack of decorum and of novelty. In addition to diction, the Spenserian stanza is also found to be unpleasing and its failure derives from following models:

> His stanza is at once difficult and unpleasing; tiresome to the ear by its uniformity, and to the attention by its length. It was at first formed in imitation of the Italian poets, without due regard to the genius of our language. (285)

In this way, the servile imitators of Spenser necessarily perform a twofold impropriety of diction because they copy the faults of the model by admitting old words instead of new ones. Such currently fashionable imitations provoke Johnson's dismissal and irony suggesting his desire for novelty of expression and antagonism to "easy" archaisms:

> It would indeed be difficult to exclude from a long poem all modern phrases, though it is easy to sprinkle it with gleanings of antiquity. Perhaps, however the stile of Spenser might by long labour be justly copied; but life is surely given us for higher purposes than to gather what our ancestors have wisely thrown away, and to learn what is of no value, but because it has been forgotten. (286)

The conclusion of *Rambler* 121 urges the need for novelty as a cause of literary merit and anticipates the further development of Johnson's judgment on imitation: as he claims in the famous closing lines of *Rambler* 154 "[n]o man ever yet became great by imitation."[40] Perhaps Johnson applies this restriction to his own practice too, since after his *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* he refrains from producing imitations.

Thus, the Horatian mottos, the revision of Elphinston's translations, the case of the young university students, the Virgilian and the Spenserian imitation models all display the dangers of following authoritative directions. The example of Virgil illustrates excellence in diction but failure in new thoughts. Dido's silence bothers Johnson because it lacks generality, novelty, propriety and decorum. Spenser's failure is associated with his archaising which results in impropriety of diction, lack of new words and of decorum. The critical principle by which Johnson judges these imitations is novelty. His insistence on the power of novelty as a means to creating aesthetic pleasure remains a vital concern in his criticism. *Rambler* 121 therefore formulates an early but a decisive statement of the power of novelty, which paves the way for Johnson's more mature critical practice in the *Lives of the Poets*.[41]

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40. Johnson, p. 59.
41. In the *Life of West* Johnson criticises the contemporary fashion of Spenserian imitation. Cf. also the *Life of Gay, Collins, Shenstone, Thomson.*

Anette Bremer

Worthy Objects

Visualising the Self in Elizabeth Macquarie's Journal of her Voyage to New South Wales, 1809

This paper analyses Elizabeth Henrietta Macquarie's little-known 1809 account of her sea voyage to New South Wales, restoring her sea journal to the canon of travel writing. In recent analyses, nineteenth-century travel writing has been shorn of its pretence of disinterestedness, exposing the multiple and various connections between travel writing and imperial ideology, and between travel writing and a partial and deeply motivated language of aesthetics. The paper explores Macquarie's travel writing along these twin axes. This paper argues that the sense of self exposed in Macquarie's sea journal can not be dissociated from her place as a member of the British Protestant elite. Proceeding by way of a close reading of three moments of viewing recorded in the sea journal, the essay asks what formations of class, gender and subjectivity each scene of viewing encloses. The paper concludes by considering a countervailing textual impulse evident towards the end of her sea journal, linking the breakdown in Macquarie's textual command with her imminent arrival at her new colonial home.

Elizabeth Henrietta Macquarie's (1778–1835) place in Australian history rests on more than her vice-regal role as the wife of Lachlan Macquarie, the Governor of New South Wales between 1810 and 1821. Macquarie's reputation has been boosted by her inclusion in Joan Kerr's *The Dictionary of Australian Artists*, ensuring that Elizabeth's contribution to the development of colonial Australian art, whether as a patron or as a practitioner, can no longer be overlooked.[1] While the entry in Kerr mines Macquarie's travel journal for artistic references, it does not consider the writing itself an expression of her aesthetic aspirations. This essay reconsiders Macquarie's artistic achievements, typically confined to the fine arts of architecture, drawing and landscape design, by restoring her travel journal to her artistic oeuvre, and to the canon of Australian travel writing.

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1. Joan Kerr ed., *The Dictionary of Australian Artists* (Melbourne and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Visualising the Self

After almost two months at sea, the *Dromedary*, the ship carrying Elizabeth and Lachlan Macquarie to New South Wales, left the relative safety of the North African coastline to sail across the Atlantic Ocean, its next port of call Rio de Janeiro. A passage in Elizabeth's travel journal captures the loneliness entailed in traversing this immensity of empty sky and sea. "We were," she writes, "deserted by every living creature, & left to navigate an immense Ocean without even a Bird to keep us company[.] [I]t seem'd as if we had the whole world to ourselves."[2] One would expect that this experience of abandonment would occasion a desperate yearning for new faces, novel conversation and fresh sights. But such emotions are tempered in Macquarie's sea journal by a competing feeling, which creeps upon her as the ship sails closer to its first landfall in the southern hemisphere. Notwithstanding the days and days of solitude, there arose "a kind of feeling new to me till that moment, connected with the idea of being totally separated from our Country, & the people belonging to it, seeing that here we were on another quarter of the Globe, with a new Race of beings. . . ." (21).

Here, Macquarie hints at a kind of transformation which was a commonplace in eighteenth-century voyaging literature. One contemporary writer observes that as seafarers ventured from the known world, they not only encountered new races of beings, they hazarded the risk that they themselves might become "a new species of anomalous savages."[3] Jonathan Lamb concludes that in the Enlightenment imagination, sailing away from the known world metaphorises journeying away from familiar forms of the civil self, but at this stage of the journey, Macquarie strenuously denies the possibility of such a corruption of self.[4] The author's joy at the thought of "the sight of human beings again" is mingled with "melancholy," as she "could not help regretting [that they] were not our Own people" (21).

Whatever kind of threat the other poses to Macquarie is checked in this instance by a strict policing of the line between self and other. In her travel tale, apprehension of difference is accompanied by the apprehension of self, so it is possible to suggest that cross-cultural contact becomes as much, if not more so, an encounter with one's

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2. All parenthesised references are to this edition: Elizabeth Henrietta Macquarie, "Journal 15 May – 25 Dec 1809," Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, C126, pp. 19–20.

3. Guillaume Raynal, *A Philosophical and Political History of the East and West Indies* [1783], quoted in Jonathan Lamb, "Eye-witnessing in the South Seas," *The Eighteenth Century* 38 3 (1997), 201–12, p. 206.

4. Lamb, p. 206.

own self. This essay will chart how Macquarie's travel journal attempts to contain and maintain the familiar contours of a British Protestant self through a complex circuit of interlocking visuality and self-definition. In her version of the traveller's gaze, the self is confirmed through observation, entrenching dominant or known forms of selfhood. Through an examination of two key moments in Macquarie's sea journal — an account of viewing a Catholic novice's initiation ceremony and a description of the landscape and harbour of Rio de Janeiro — I will trace a mutually informing relationship between observing the exotic and self-definition. The question asked in this essay is not the reliability of Macquarie as an eyewitness but to what end does her narrative of an observing self work?

If, as I will demonstrate, the above two representations of encounter serve to consolidate Macquarie's elite, self-composed subjectivity, a related textual impulse is apparent in a third moment I will examine in her journal. In the final months of her long sea journey, she imaginatively contrasts her situation with that of a "poor cottager's wife" (77). My concern with this imaginary encounter is threefold: to ask what relations of class and gender it encloses, as well as to consider its double metaphorical significance: why would Macquarie express a desire for the other woman, and why at a particular stage of the journey?

While Macquarie's journal begins and ends in the present tense, long descriptive passages describing her stays at various ports of call *recollect* events, outings, people and sights, suggesting that alongside the extant manuscript, Macquarie kept some other form of diary from which she worked a fair copy. If this is the case, the writing in the extant version is advantaged in two ways. It becomes stylistically tighter, and what it loses in immediacy is more than adequately compensated for by hindsight. But the addition of hindsight significantly alters the shape of the travel narrative. The temporal distance between event and its textual record can readily translate into a revised interpretation of the moment. The passages in which Macquarie elaborates herself as a viewing subject occur when her text pauses and the narrative retrospectively reviews recent events. This essay will explore the relationship between the retrospective glance of Macquarie's pen portrait and its delineation of its object of interest, asking what configurations of authority and selfhood ensue from a hindsighted representation of self and other?

A Theatre of Difference

In June 1809, on route to New South Wales, Elizabeth Macquarie spent over a fortnight in Funchal, the capital of Maderia. Despite the repeated reference to her "bad

state of health" (8), Macquarie's journal records an exhausting round of visits to the island's convents and churches, even though in relation to the latter, her diary betrays a patriotic preference for the "chaste and solid Grandeur of our English churches" (25). Katharine Rogers contends that since the formal dissolution of English convents in 1535, they live on in literature as a potent symbol of Catholic oppression.[5] In the context of Enlightenment thinking, the cloister was emblematic of a reign of irrationality, its ideals of chastity and self-mortification anachronistic in an age celebrating femininity as truly realised in marriage and motherhood.[6] As we shall see, Macquarie affirms her Protestant heritage by considering the convent as a symbol of restriction.

After walking "about the Town a good deal," Macquarie's party "chance[s] into a church where a young woman was taking the veil!" (10), a "sight" Macquarie confesses that "was too much of interest to admit our quitting the spot till the ceremony was over" (10); an interest manifested by her journal devoting four pages to describing it:

> The poor young woman was attended by two noble ladies in full dress, she was also adorn'd with flowers in her head, and etc. She sat on the steps opposite the altar, one of the Ladies on each side of her, who endeavour'd to support her spirits with chearful conversation; she seem'd to do her best to second their efforts, but with a visible struggle I sat or rather crouch'd, very near her — a long time interven'd before the arrival of the Priest; as we waited for him those ladies next to me told me that the Convent to which their poor girl was so soon to belong, was the strictest ever known; something in resemblance to La Trap that it was so poor, that the nuns were obliged to labour very hard for their support, and withall that the situation of the convent was extremely damp & unwholesome, that the nuns died at a very early period. The Lady Abbess at the time being only thirty years of age, a dignity which is never confer'd at so early a period, except from necessity. I felt extremely sorry for the young woman that if it had been possible, I should have most gladly offer'd her my protection if she would have desisted from her dreadful intention – At last the Priest attended by a number of his order arrived; he was a very old man, he went up to the altar, the nuns knelt at his feet, he was so blind that a Friar held a very large heavy candlestick so low, as to enable him to read. . .   (10–11)

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5. Katharine M. Rogers, "Fantasy and Reality in Fictional Convents of the Eighteenth Century," *Comparative Literature Studies* 22.3 (Fall 1985), 297–316, p. 297.

6. Rogers, p. 312.

In his brief discussion of Macquarie's sea journal Alan Atkinson singles out this episode as demonstrating Elizabeth's "high humanity", associating it with a Marianne Dashwood-like sensibility.[7] Atkinson is correct in highlighting the passage's sentimentalism, yet we might ask, is there something further at stake in Macquarie's self-stylising as a woman of heightened sensibility?

By calling the novitiate a "poor young woman," Macquarie's description of the ceremony is compromised by an evaluative vocabulary from its first sentence. With the phrase "dreadful intention," Macquarie evokes a Gothic world and the dramatic stuff of the Radcliffean novel is further conjured in the sentence where the writer imagines herself as would-be rescuer of a helpless and about-to-be incarcerated young woman. Just as in the Gothic novel where the foreign terrain is a topography of oppression, here, in the Catholic cathedral, Macquarie sees Romanism as a mental as well as physical geography of incarceration. For our Protestant observer, it is self-evident that the two ladies were in attendance to "support [the novice's] spirits" which she did "with a visible struggle," as if she were not disposing her person freely and willingly, a supposition furthered in Macquarie's fantasy of rescue.

The lack of punctuation in the lines, "she seem'd to do her best to second her efforts, but with a visible struggle I sat or rather crouch'd, very near her," blur which subject belongs to the adverbial phrase "visible struggle." They can be read as if Macquarie was struggling, her huddled body a reflection of her troubled mind. Feminist critics who celebrate the radical parataxis of women's diaries argue that such loose grammatical constructions are expressive of a relational, inclusive mode of writing.[8] Macquarie's refusal to distinguish grammatically between herself and the object of concern could be read as symptomatic of the fluidity of her sense of self; as if she is equally sharing the bodily plight of the young woman. Yet rather than reading this moment as resisting differentiation between subjectivities, as an instance of feminine writing, I suggest it is self-serving: consolidating the British Protestant female self. If we read the passage otherwise, silently restoring punctuation where it has been omitted, it connotes something altogether different than a moment of cross-cultural identification between women. The sentence tells a story about Macquarie's gaze. It positions her as a viewing subject. The focus of the sentence is her proximity

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7. Atkinson quotes from Jane Austen's description of Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* to explain Macquarie's heightened sensibility: "Her sensibility was potent enough!" Alan Atkinson, *The Europeans in Australia: Volume 1: Beginning* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 319.

8. See, for example, Eleanor Hogan, "Engendered Autobiographies: The Diary as a Feminine Form," *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism* 14 (1991), 95–107.

to the novice, emphasising her unimpeded vision, establishing the traveller as reliable eye-witness. Supplementing Macquarie's clear observation is her canny ability to ferret out the future fate of the young nun; one which, as the ladies in the audience inform her, bodes ill for the novice.

We can now appreciate the adeptness of Macquarie introducing her pen portrait of the initiation ceremony with an expression of pity. If upon entering the cathedral, Macquarie felt a native sorrow for the "poor young woman," this emotion has been strengthened through viewing the ceremony. Now armed with a knowledge about the convent and able clearly to trace fear and foreboding in the initiate's behaviour, Macquarie has scripted herself as a worthy witness. Catholicism is revealed as prejudicial through a circular logic: by observing the religion as acting contrariwise to the well-being of its adherents, the traveller confirms her preconceptions about the faith. What is obscured within Macquarie's denunciation of Catholicism is both the cultural standpoint which fosters such a point of view, Protestantism, and the circularity of the logic invoked.

The remainder of her account of the novitiate continues such a circular authorising of the self. In the above analysis, I have argued that the object of sight was subordinated to how the author positioned herself in relation to what was seen. An unequal relation also marks her depiction of the final ceremony at the convent's door. Macquarie triangulates her account between describing the technicalities of the rite and herself as a woman in whom eye-witnessing exists in a reciprocal relation to heightened sensibility. At the door of the convent, the novitiate and her mother take their "last embrace" (13). "Till that moment the nun supported herself," recalls Macquarie, the scene still vivid in her mind:

> but the sight of her Mother totally overcame her, her head fell on her breast, & she sob'd aloud in an agony of grief; she was then hurried forward, & I saw her walk follow'd by those dreadful looking black Nuns, who threw rose leaves at her — I saw her no more! but understood that her head was immediately to be shaved, she had a great quantity of fine hair, and I saw the dress carried in which she was to change for that she had on, it was an extreme coarse brown heavy stuff, which I suppose she was to wear till she took the black veil. — I cannot say I felt so much distress at the fate of a stranger, as I did on this occasion; the impression was such that I could not hear the subject mention'd without considerable emotion for sometime after. I hope her situation does not *feel* to her, as it *appeared* to me. (13)

Over and above being an account of the details of the ceremony, in this passage Macquarie describes an interlocking circuit of visuality and affect. The sight of the final, dolorous parting of the nun from her mother caused Elizabeth "so much distress" that she could not speak of it. We should ask, does her sensitive vision endow her with moral agency, as is commonly entertained by advocates of sensibility? As the writer herself is aware, the nun remains distanced, an object of sight. On four occasions in this passage Macquarie refers to herself as a viewing subject; she uses the verb "saw" three times and in the final line, speaks of the appearance of the nun's situation.

Having said that the nun is spectacularised in this description, how much more so is Macquarie's own emotion? Macquarie frames her own bodily plight, as a sensitive soul experiencing an emotional drama, in front of and obscuring whatever the nun may be experiencing. The novice is rushed from view but Macquarie's suffering visibly lingers: "the impression was such that I could not hear the subject mention'd without considerable emotion for sometime after." Markman Ellis contends that avowing that one feels more than the sufferer is the "master-stroke of sentimentalism."[9] This conceit becomes even more masterful when social differences divide the observer from sufferer. Under the pretence of cross-cultural sympathy, Macquarie defines her own sensibility as more acute than that possessed by the other woman. Yet, Macquarie raises the stakes further in this imagined semiotic tug-of-war between competing British and Catholic subjectivities by valuing her vision over the other's affect. In a description largely unmarked by traditional aesthetic considerations, the novice becomes a vehicle for refining Macquarie's aesthetic gaze. The "poor young woman" does not constitute anything other than an object in Macquarie's description, confirming the writer as the proper subject — of heightened sensibility, of aesthetic refinement, as well as of the narrative itself — in this story of ostensible sympathy.

Picturesque Visions

A ship is an ideal viewing platform. To the shipboard passenger, abstracted from the shoreline's bustle and confusion, the landscape becomes a passive object of contemplation. This is a position which mimics but does not quite mirror the eighteenth-century notion of the prospect view. In this aesthetic configuration, the observer

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9. Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 106.

commands the landscape, a subject-position derived equally from an elevated perspective and from a stance of implied mastery over the supine land. The aesthetics of separation, abstraction and command have a cognate gender.[10] While to the viewer on board ship, the land is above and around rather than below, I would suggest that a similar aesthetics of distance and mastery is enfolded in a deck-bound gaze.

Macquarie frames her description of the *Dromedary's* arrival at Rio de Janeiro in terms of this classic aesthetic point of view. Commencing her verbal painting with a stock disavowal of being able to capture the scene — "[i]t appears to me that no description can convey to the mind of a person who has not seen this harbour, the wonderful beauty and grandeur of it" — Macquarie nonetheless has faith in her pen:

> The Entrance is I believe the finest of any harbour in the world. . . . It was a fine clear evening. . . & the sun was setting behind the Sugar loaf. . . . The first remarkable object after passing Cape Rio, is a gap or vent in the ridge of mountains which skirt the sea shore. This chasm appears from a distance, like a narrow portal, between two rocks of stone. The rock on the left is of a Sugar-loaf form; a solid mass of hard sparkling granite, 680 feet high above the surface out of which it arises. The opposite rock is of the same material; but had a regular and easy descent to the water's edge. A little Island strongly fortified, just within the entrance, contracts this passage to a width of about three quarters of a mile. Having cleared the channel, one of the most magnificent scenes in nature bursts upon the eye. A sheet of water of immense size running back into the heart of a beautiful country to the distance of about thirty miles where it is bounded by a screen of lofty mountains, expanding from a narrow entrance to the width of twelve or fourteen miles, every where studded with innumerable little islands, in every diversity of Shape – the Shores of these islands fringed with shrubs, some of them cover'd with noble trees, and altogether forming the greatest variety of beauty. (21–23)

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10. The eighteenth-century ideal of the prospect view has been critiqued in terms of its alignment of masculinity and the ideal aesthetic viewer in studies such as Elizabeth Bohls's *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716–1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Jacqueline Labbe's *Romantic Visualities: Landscape, Gender and Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan and New York: St Martin's Press, 1998). The interconnections between prospect view with its conceit of disinterestedness and imperial subjectivity have been interrogated in Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992) and Simon Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers saw Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

As the landscape yields up its charms to Macquarie, she demonstrates a command over both it and landscape aesthetics in a tight description which combines a sensibility for the picturesque with an impulse for accuracy.

Macquarie's depiction of Rio's harbour, while not formally constrained by rigid aesthetic terminology, mobilises commonplace picturesque motifs. She writes of the "diversity" and "variety" afforded by "innumerable little islands" and the differences in vegetation, mentions a "screen of lofty mountains," separates the scene into distinct fore, middle and backgrounds, and contrasts the smooth sheet of water with the rough beauty of the "sparkling granite" portals. On the other hand, Macquarie is not merely content with a vague picturesque vocabulary. Her eye enumerates as much as it evaluates. Whatever awe might be aroused by the magnificent scene is controlled through exact description, which offers grid-like measurements of the harbour.

With this controlling gaze, Macquarie naturalises her perception of land as a picture. In the above passage, she conflates the view from on board with the stationary stance of a landscape appreciator by abjuring reference to the movement of the ship. For example, the phrases, "after passing Cape Rio" and "having cleared the channel," equally describe a mind's eye and the ship's journey through the harbour. Over and above a concern with the materiality of sailing into the harbour, is Macquarie's aesthetic project, made manifest in the effacement of her viewing position on deck on the *Dromedary*. So while she indicates the height of one of the granite portals guarding the entrance to the harbour, the information is registered dispassionately; representational accuracy drives her description. Indeed, apart from the opening sentence, there are no personal references. Simultaneously, Macquarie rewrites an experience of immersion within the landscape as distanced and removed, and divorces the seer from the seen, repeating two fundamental conceits of landscape aesthetics.

Macquarie's description of Rio's harbour repeats the descriptive pattern that Andrew Hassam has traced in the shipboard diaries of emigrants travelling to the Australian colonies. These writings record how, as the ship nears its anchor, wild, uncultivated bush gives way to increasing signs of civilisation until there appears at last the reassuring township. The increasingly "civilised" landscape seems itself to be an inscription of progress.[11] Likewise, Macquarie description moves from describing scenes of wildness to the site of human habitation and industry, manifested in the town of St Sebastian. But if St Sebastian is the reassuring sign that familiar civic life

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11. Andrew Hassam, *Sailing to Australia*: *Shipboard Diaries by Nineteenth-Century Emigrants* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 182.

subsists in far-off lands, Macquarie subordinates a pragmatic, emigrant interest in the foreign land to an aesthetic one:

> The Town of St Sebastian with its numerous Churches & Spires adds greatly to the View, and in every direction from where our Ship lay we saw Convents, and Noblemen's houses scatter'd over the Country, which is also much adorn'd by the number of fortifications & bridges which in several places form communication from one mass of rock to another, which have been separated by some convulsion of nature, & now presents a frightful chasm between so that Rio Janeiro is not only highly favor'd by nature, but also much adorn'd by the Art of Man. . . (23)

The signs of human life are robbed of political, social and cultural purposes in this passage, rendered as pure aesthetic objects which add "greatly to the View."

Just as Macquarie aestheticises convents, that institution which invoked powerful emotions in Madeira, she also reduces to adornments the numerous fortifications defending the harbour, perhaps the most potent symbol of a politically inscribed landscape. What is striking about this textual move is that Macquarie, herself sailing towards a vice-regal appointment, could not be unaware that Rio, although geographically peripheral — "in another quarter of the Globe," as she suggests — had been moved to centre stage of European political, cultural and trade concerns with the relocation of Portugal's crown there the previous year, precipitated by Napoleon's threats to Portuguese sovereignty.

Elizabeth Bohls argues that the picturesque habitually evacuates the "unruly contingency of history" in its depiction of a scene.[12] According to Macquarie, in St Sebastian, it is the landscape alone which has experienced a "convulsion," this tumultuous event resulting in a "frightful chasm." In this picturesque rendering of Rio, it is only geology which harbours a history. It follows that if the impress of history is voided from the face of the country, other marks of contingency in Rio's culture are also effaced. Apart from a reference to a "monkey looking black man" (28), the great social divide of Brazilian society is not acknowledged. While not innocent of contemporary racial thinking, her epithet gives little indication of Macquarie's attitude to a slave-based society. Her silence on the question of slavery becomes more telling when we recall that her sea diary records an encounter with a slave-trader, just three days prior to the *Dromedary* docking at Rio. Infectious fever gripped the trader and to retard a widespread outbreak the crew resorted to "a precaution at which human-

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12. Bohls, p. 103.

ity shudders, namely, that of throwing the unfortunate slaves overboard as soon as they were taken ill. When we heard this we all thought on Mr Wilberforce" (19).

Rather than the trade itself, it seems that it is the violent precautionary measure which shocks Macquarie into invoking the name of the noted abolitionist. Not once in her fourteen page reminiscence on her Brazilian sojourn does she dilate on other actions which might cause humanity to shudder. Having argued that Macquarie's description of Rio's harbour is the triumph of aesthetics over politics, this characterisation can be extended to account for the entire portrait of Brazilian society. The social and political divisions of Portuguese culture are only acknowledged at a temporal and spatial remove. Some two months later, while enjoying British hospitality at the Cape, Macquarie casts back to compare the "wonderfully different" (70) situation of South African and Portuguese chattels. "Indeed," she writes, "all the Slaves I saw at the Cape had every appearance of being well treated, they were respected clothed & look'd well fed, contented" while their Brazilian counterparts were kept in "a miserable state" (69).

What unashamedly interests Elizabeth is the human transformation and taming of Rio's landscape; the fortifications and bridges which make raw rock both useful and beautiful to humankind. Untamed nature does not hold this traveller's attention, a point brought into focus through a comparison of the landscape descriptions found in her journal. Significantly, she silently passes over the mountainous and dramatic landscapes of Madeira and Cape Verde Islands, as if the sublime register is foreign or hostile. Cape Town's Table Mountain might impress — the "appearance of so stupendous a mass of naked Rock as the Table Mountain, strikes the eye with wonder" (78) – but after expressing enthusiasm for this geological formation, Macquarie undermines her expression of naked emotion by chastising Cape Towners for whitewashing their houses. The resultant "glare is extremely prejudicial in so hot a climate..." (79). Appraisal followed rapidly by censure similarly patterns Macquarie's estimation of Rio. After witnessing "grandiest view" (31) at the Gambiers' residence, she restores her equanimity by taking her hosts to task for their garden: "the scent [of the orange grove] is so strong, that it is quite overpowering, & to my taste a grove of Birch would be ten times more preferable" (31).

There is, suggests Kim Michasiw, "a danger" in sublime emotion, and Macquarie's journal can be read as resisting its "seduction": her eye does not "lose itself" and she textually attempts to ward off absorption into the observed.[13] Nor can Mac-

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13. Kim Ian Michasiw, "Nine Revisionist Theses on the Picturesque," *Representations* 38 (Spring 1992), 76–100, p. 84.

quarie's journal be considered as displaying a distinctively female sublime, as traced by Anne Mellor. For women writers whose childhood was spent in the mountainous regions of the British Isles (recollecting for the moment that Macquarie is a Scot), Mellor contends that "sublime landscapes are home scenery, the location of blissful childhood memories. Confronting magnificent mountains . . . their characters experience a heightened sensibility, not of anxiety, but of love, reverence, and mutual relationship."[14]

Mellor's notion of women's emphasis on forging an integrative relationship between landscape and selfhood is advanced by William Snyder in relation to the picturesque. Snyder claims that the picturesque is a conducive aesthetic register for women writers as it allows them "to elevate alternate ideals or patterns they saw implied in natural processes: community, generosity, sympathy, delight, connection and intimacy."[15] Macquarie's aesthetic does not accord with either of these mappings of female landscape aesthetics.

What interests Macquarie is the sweep of a scene, a visual point of view captured in her approving estimation of Cape Town "from where our Ship lay," "we had a fine view of the Town which extends a great way along the Beach, the regularity of the buildings & the handsome appearance of them, being all Built of stone white wash'd, has a fine effect" (79).

This rather nondescript statement paradoxically reveals the focus of Macquarie's aesthetic, which devolves on the picturesque "effect" rather than any nebulous affect of a scene. As I have traced above, such a disembodied appraisal of the landscape is at variance with recent reconsiderations of the relationship between female subjectivity and land, and is more often associated with masculinist aesthetics. Might Macquarie's alignment with the normative gender ascription of landscape aesthetics be linked to her colonial destination?

In recent analyses, the picturesque has been shorn of its pretence of disinterested appreciation; postcolonial studies have demonstrated how it was deployed as a productive tool in colonialism's imaginative arsenal.[16] Not surprisingly, the term has

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14. Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism & Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 97.

15. William C. Snyder, "Mother Nature's Other Natures: Landscape in Women's Writing, 1770–1830," *Women's Studies* 21 (1992), 143–62, p. 145.

16. See for example, Stephen Copley and Peter Garside eds., *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics since 1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Two studies which explore the picturesque as a mode of pictorial colonialism are Ian

widespread currency in colonial Australian landscape descriptions, notwithstanding the "unimproved" nature of the scene. Delys Bird explains colonial Australian women's frequent recourse to a picturesque register in terms of a compensatory gesture: it allows women an imaginative grasp on foreign space in the absence of actual transformative power.[17] But what is occluded in Bird's configuration is the other investments which may accompany an aesthetic connection to landscape. In antipodean invocations of the picturesque there is often a slipperiness between aesthetic and colonialist connotations; an appreciation of a view can readily slide into assessing the land as "ready-made" for occupation; a conceit repeated by Macquarie.[18] At Rio, she meets a group of colonial "Gentlemen" who show her "a number of views" of New South Wales. Her eye is caught by a sketch of Dr Harris's house "which is situated in a park about a mile from Sydney" (43). Her use of the descriptor "park" evidences a slippage between aesthetic and colonial meanings: if unimproved land is "park-like," the landscape at one and the same time mimics and solicits European land use practices.

Macquarie admires the complementary conjunction of artificial and natural effects in Rio's scenery. One cannot help speculating how the harmonious union of nature and labour in Rio may have titillated the Governor's Lady's own aesthetic ambitions for New South Wales. If the Portuguese who reputedly "have a character for great indolence" (24) could so ingenuously work the landscape, what might result when Sydney's labour force is properly harnessed? A small part of her landscape ambitions was realised with the opening of Lady Macquarie's Chair in 1816, a seat offering a panoramic view of the township, harbour and beyond, cut into exposed rock on the small peninsula adjacent to the Government Domain.

With Lady Macquarie's Chair, Elizabeth inscribed an enduring symbol of her aesthetic sensibility onto the landscape, repeating in a material gesture the conceit of command over a landscape embodied in the discourse of landscape aesthetics. How might this position of implied mastery intersect over land with her colonial location? "Many women writers situate themselves *within* the landscape, as a part of it," contends Jacqueline Labbe.[19] Given that women are excluded from the normative masculine subject-position assumed in aesthetic discourse, the female self's immersion

Maclean, *White Aborigines: Identity Politics in Australian Art* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 35, and Ryan, pp. 54–100.

17. Delys Bird, "The Self and the Magic Lantern: Gender and Subjectivity in Australian Colonial Women's Writing," *Australian Literary Studies* 15 3 (May 1992), 123–31, p. 128.

18. Ryan, p. 73.

19. Labbe, p. xiii.

in land offers both a critique and a means to insinuate a place for femininity within that discourse. While the feminist politics of such a position are unassailable, those interested in colonial inscriptions of land might wonder where in this configuration of female subjectivity and land is there room for the other other?

Macquarie's journal exhibits an awareness that others held a primary association with antipodean soil. Midday on Christmas Eve, 1809, the *Dromedary* is twelve miles off the New South Wales's coastline and the traveller "can plainly perceive the smoke of the natives fires" (100). While the extent of Macquarie's ruminations on the existence of Indigenous Australians in her sea journal is limited to this instance, I would suggest we can posit a metaphorical parallel between her awareness of indigenous others and the journal's persistent adoption of a masculinised aesthetic subject-position. Her alignment with the normative gender position of aesthetics can be read as symptomatic of an attempt to differentiate herself from those who are seen (in differing ways) as contiguous with the landscape: in Bohls's words, "women, the labouring classes and non-Europeans."[20] By staking a claim to the high ground in landscape aesthetics's visual economy, Macquarie resists association with marginalised others. Such a textual positioning well may be a strategic technique of self-possession given Macquarie's ultimate destination — the penal colony of New South Wales, a subaltern social geography in conflict with an Aboriginalised terrain.

There is more than a passing resemblance between the two scenes of viewing analysed so far, despite the fact that the first revolves upon a calculus of affect while the latter repudiates such bodily reference. Both delineate an epistemology of the viewing subject, normatively positioned as over and above the object of contemplation. Such an aesthetics of separation is furthered in the third scene of viewing this paper will now analyse, even though it elaborates a unity of female desire.

Desiring the Other

The lineaments of the aesthetic subject are mapped in Macquarie's journal not only through her pronouncements on taste but through a desire for the perfect view. There is another form of desire found in her shipboard writing, revolving around the ideal marital conditions offered by life afloat. On reboarding the *Dromedary* after a fortnight-long sojourn at the Cape, Macquarie eulogises her floating home: "the Ship appearing to me in the place of a house. . . & a very happy one it has been to me" (76). It is more than familiarity which prompts Macquarie into this confession. At an

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20. Bohls, p. 67.

advanced stage of the lengthy journey to New South Wales — Macquarie was at sea for seven months — she records how shipboard life provides ideal conditions for marital happiness:

> I have spent my time in the manner which entirely suits my inclinations, having great comfort of my Husbands company uninterrupted all the morning when we read or write in a social manner, which I shall never enjoy in Shore, as when he has it in his power he shuts himself up alone all the morning to business; but here I am admitted from necessity I have many times thought of the advantage a poor Cottager's wife has over persons *as she may think* in a far happier line of life — she has the satisfaction of inhabiting the same room with her husband and children, she has the objects nearest her heart in her sight at one; a luxury of enjoyment seldom experienced by those she considers above her. (77)

What begins as a meditation on the joys of shipboard life becomes another portrait of the other woman. Macquarie recasts anxieties about her future as envy for the ideal domestic relations enjoyed by the labouring class.

Gender is figured as undercutting class interests in this moment of fantasised universal female desire. The peasant woman and the mistress share a similar want: to be surrounded by their families. Yet the peasant woman is richer than her ostensibly more fortunate mistress; she can enjoy the company of her family as part of her daily routine; for the lady, Macquarie complains, this is the exception. It is "necessity"— limited shipboard space — which forces her husband to share a cabin in the daytime with Elizabeth. Once the *Dromedary* docks at Sydney Cove, Macquarie fears she will be banished from her husband's side. Due to the ideology of separate spheres, her range will be delimited to the private and female sections of Government House — the family rooms and the drawing room — while the Governor will be interred in those parts of the building dedicated to politics and the public.

Macquarie's fantasy is that the cottager's wife already possesses what she desires: being bathed continually in the warm glow of domestic affection. In this bourgeois romance, the ideal of domestic ideology is manifest in the lifestyle of the poor; a conceit which confuses the intermingling of male and female spaces as a desire and not a necessity.[21] What allows Macquarie to imagine the cosiness of cottage life is the

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21. The classic study charting the simultaneous separation of the site of production from the place of domesticity and the relative gendering of each space remains Leonora Davidoff's

ideology of the family's obfuscation of class relations. Hiding its class-bound origin, the bourgeois concept of the family "came to appear above class," allowing its middle-class advocates to project its universal desirability.[22] Macquarie perpetuates a further myth that it is she that is disadvantaged by class. Trapped in bourgeois notions of the gendered spheres of household space, Macquarie can only yearn for what the cottager's wife possesses. Yet another mystification of class relations follows from this one. The peasant woman does not revel in her good fortune. Not realising the value of unrestrained contact with loved ones, instead the poor woman imagines happiness as the right only of "those she considers above her." For Macquarie, the cottager woman's idealisation of her social superiors is false: it is the labouring class who are fortunate, having at their fingertips the source of contentment.

In imagining the cottage as a locus of the good, Macquarie obscures economic relations in another way. Rather than the cottage's actual role as the site of agricultural and cottage-based primary production, in Macquarie's rendering it becomes the site of both production and consumption — under its humble roof model domesticity is produced and consumed. This phantasm of emotional wealth stands in front of and obscures the actual differential in wealth between the gentlewoman and the peasant. Macquarie projects a flow of emotional capital which is contrary to the course of economic wealth; the latter, of course, originates in the peasant woman's labour yet its object is to enhance the mistress's household.

I have traced several obfuscations of class that underpin Macquarie's appeal to a universal female desire, which disguise the vertical divide between women. Why might our traveller conjure up such a fantasy at this stage in her travel? I would argue that Macquarie's foreboding at being banished from her husband's side stands in front of and obscures a less tangible unease: a broader anxiety about social life in the colony. So while Macquarie's image of the ignorant cottager's wife revolves upon the orchestration of recuperative difference, offering a revisionary account on the history of relations between tenant and mistress, what cannot be textually controlled from this vantage point is how her colonial life will unfold. As Louis Mink concludes, "there is no story of the future."[23]

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and Catherine Hall's *Family Fortunes*: *Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 357–96.

22. Catherine Hall, "The Early Formation of Domestic Ideology," *Fit Work for Women*, ed. Sandra Burman (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 15–32, p. 31.

23. Louis O. Mink, "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension," *New Literary History* 1 (1970), 541–58, p. 546.

Worthy Objects

On Christmas Eve 1809, an exasperated Macquarie writes in her journal, "indeed it is full time for our voyage to be over" (99). But, on the other hand, the threat of the unknown looms larger as the miles glide by, for she worried only seven weeks into the journey about being in "another quarter of the Globe, with a new Race of beings." Arrival at Port Jackson's shores marks the end of the journey only in a limited and physical sense; there still remains to be dealt with a complex set of cultural, social and psychic negotiations. According to Hassam, the stages of ocean travel correlate with anthropology's understanding of the rites of passage. Following Victor Turner and Arnold van Gennep, Hassam maps the tripartite structure of the rites of social passage — separation, liminal stage, reaggregation — onto the secular journey.[24] While the in-between stage of liminality has attracted attention in theories of travel writing, the process of the traveller's re-integration within society warrants further investigation. Eric Leed offers some preliminary remarks of the negotiation of arrival, but his gendered model of travel precludes an analysis of women as agents requiring incorporation.[25] Treading a well-worn path, Leed posits "certain realities" in the history of travel — the "sessility of women: the mobility of men" — which restricts his account to considering women as mediums *of* incorporation.[26]

We cannot trace Macquarie's process of integration as her journal stops abruptly on Christmas Day, the ship frustratingly still out at sea. The journal's last pages record feelings of increasing "vexatious[ness]" and "baffle[ment]" (102) and this sense of unease is mirrored in its style. The entries become perfunctory, and the writing deteriorates in mid-December to a digest of daily reckonings on the vessel's progress. The very tool which Macquarie adeptly used to codify and organise her shipboard experience now falls prey to travel's unsettling impulse.

This essay has traced an interconnection between what catches Macquarie's eye and two textual impulses, which I would like to designate as open and closed texts. Paradoxically, the passages which appear to reflect the experience of travel — the extended backward glances, recalling Macquarie's experiences at various ports of call — are those most resistant to its materiality. On these occasions, the journal is gathered in upon itself; its descriptive economy can invoke travel without manifesting its

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24. Hassam, pp. 55–56. See also M. N. Pearson, "Pilgrims, Travellers, Tourists: The Meanings of Journeys," *Australian Cultural History* 10 (1991), 125–34.

25. Eric J. Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilamesh to Global Tourism* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), pp. 111–29.

26. Leed, p. 113.

affects. Macquarie's sea journal tempers the disruptive effect of travel through narrating a circuit of receptivity enclosed by hindsight. It is towards the end of this description of a voyage that Macquarie's writing registers the unsettling impulse of travel, its narrative decay signifying a fracturing of its former enclosed form.

The invocation of the cottager's wife marks the threshold between these two conflicting economies of writing. Anchored in Table Bay, on the verge of the last leg of a long voyage to the "new world," Macquarie casts her eye inwards. Formerly, foreign objects inspired both scrutiny and narrative but now her traveller's eye and her masterful pen shun them. How might we plot the extended descriptions — of the ceremony of initiation and of the harbour of Rio de Janeiro — in this circuit of self and seeing? We can unravel two layers in what has captured Macquarie's travelling eye. Firstly, the objects are worthy insofar as they solicit the power of her pen: they offer a narrative occasion. Secondly, and of greater importance, is that her travel writing elicits a mode of composed self-inscription, indissociable from the description's hindsighted narrative economy. In other words, a dialogic relation subsists between the worthy objects described in Macquarie's travel narrative and her composition of a self-contained subjectivity. In the final pages of her journal, this mutually informing relation deteriorates until the journal falls silent before its end: writing has lost its worth.

Veronika Ruttkay

The Embodiment of Grief

Passion and Rhetoric
in Coleridge and the "New Rhetoricians"

Following recent work by James Engell, this paper sets out to explore points of connection between romantic literary criticism and the "new rhetoric" of the late 18th century. More specifically, it looks at how the earlier concept of the "rhetoric of passion" was taken up by Coleridge in his lectures on Shakespeare, focusing primarily on his treatment of Constance's speech on grief in *King John*. The same passage was evoked and strongly criticised by such "new rhetoricians" as Lord Kames and Joseph Priestley, who claimed that its intricate imagery rendered it unnatural and unsuitable to the expression of profound grief. Coleridge, by refuting these charges, redefines the earlier concept of the "language of passion" and turns it into a more comprehensive critical idea, which is able to accommodate figurative language beyond the rules of classical rhetoric or a rigidly conceived associationist psychology. He is aided in this by two things: first, by his new understanding of reading as on-going experience (as opposed to Kames's method, based on the analysis of a given passage in the light of pre-established rhetorical and psychological rules), and second, by his emphasis on the rhetorical "embodiment" that takes place in the "impassioned" literary text.

In 1802, the young Coleridge made the following observation to Sotheby: "every metaphor, every personification, should have its justifying cause in some *passion* either of the Poet's mind, or of the Characters described by the poet" (*LL* 2:812).[1] The link between passions and figures was not Coleridge's invention: widespread in the 18th century, it was first forged by classical rhetoric, and already then it was some-

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1. The editor of Coleridge's lectures calls this a "commonplace of eighteenth-century criticism," taken over by Wordsworth (in his appendix on "Poetic Diction" to *Lyrical Ballads*) and by Coleridge. See S. T. Coleridge, *Lectures 1808–1819 On Literature*, 2 vols., ed. R. A. Foakes; *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge 5*, gen. ed. Kathleen Coburn (Princeton & London: Princeton UP, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), vol. 1, p. 86n. All parenthesised references in the text are to this edition.

what ambiguous. The orator wanting to raise strong feelings in his audience employed figurative language – and, in turn, such language was interpreted as evidence of his own passionate state. Figures, therefore, could be understood as both causes and effects of passions, leaving open the question of precedence: are passions in some measure effects of rhetoric, or is rhetoric an effect of passion? The fact that neither of these possibilities was discarded resulted in an all-important circularity whereby figures of speech became essential to accounts of the transmission of feeling. Later-18th-century philosophers and rhetoricians still preserved this fruitful ambiguity while rephrasing and extending the traditional view, with the help of the modern doctrine of the association of ideas. The transmission of feeling was no longer regarded as a task pertaining to the orator only; as sympathy, it became the fundamental dynamic of all forms of social behaviour. Earlier concepts of rhetoric – and especially rhetorical figures – were employed to throw light on a range of different areas. Adam Potkay convincingly argues that Hume explained religion on a rhetorical basis in *The Natural History of Religion*, and even his epistemology can be interpreted as a "rhetorical philosophy."[2] While relying on rhetoric, Hume assigned passion a central place in his model of the mind, going as far as asserting that what had previously been called reason was nothing else but "calm passion."

Partly in response to Hume's account of the mind, understanding the mechanism of passions gained new urgency in the second half of the 18th century.[3] Literary criticism – to use a modern term for something much more diffuse – offered a unique opportunity for such investigation. As Lord Kames asserted in his *Elements of Criticism*, studying the principles of art opened "a direct avenue to the heart of man."[4] In analyses of literary texts, both rhetorical and psychological questions could be raised in an immediate way, and the two inquiries could merge in a seamless unity. Drama

2. Adam Potkay, *The Fate of Eloquence in the Age of Hume* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1994), pp. 159–188 (esp. pp. 184–5).

3. Potkay writes, "during the course of the [eighteenth] century the analysis of the passions transcended its practical origins in classical rhetoric, exfoliating into the psychology of the ruling passion (Pope), the associationist analysis of complex passions (Hume, Hartley), the theodicy of the passions (Pope, Akenside), the passional foundation of morality (Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume, Smith), poetic invocations of personified passions (the Wartons, Gray, Collins), and narrative enactment of passional agency (Richardson, Fielding). If, as Hume observed – and everyone else apparently believed – reason was to be the slave of passions, it was important to know our passions reasonably well" (Potkay, p. 163).

4. Henry Home (Lord Kames), *Elements of Criticism*, introd. V. Price (London: Routledge & Thoemmes Press, 1993), vol. 1, p. 33.

proved especially important, since it displayed the workings of the strongest passions, and besides, in the writings of moral philosophers theatre had already served as an influential model for the sympathetic transmission of feeling. Some of the most intriguing criticism of Shakespeare in the second half of the 18th century evolved from these complex concerns, and whether it appeared in rhetorical treatises or in books on "criticism," it had a bearing on wider issues of moral philosophy. Indeed, to a great extent it was the work of moral philosophers whom James Engell also calls the "new rhetoricians."[5] Psychology of the passions and rhetoric go hand in hand in their writing and, although in a more implicit manner, they are still paired in Coleridge's lectures. In the present essay I am going to focus on the relationship of Coleridge's criticism to the "new rhetoric":[6] after a preliminary discussion of Coleridge and Kames (one of the most influential "new rhetoricians"), I shall focus on a passage from Coleridge's lectures which will be understood as a response to Kames and his followers. My assumption is that for Coleridge, similarly to the "new rhetoricians," these two areas (psychology of the passions and rhetoric) are two sides of the same coin; the paper itself is intended to show some of the consequences of this unity in Coleridge's reading of Shakespeare. But let me first describe the relationship between my main concepts: passion, the body, and figures of rhetoric.

I

In his lectures, Coleridge simultaneously paid tribute to Shakespeare and criticised modern poetry on grounds very similar to those of Kames and other "new rhetoricians." As he asserted in 1811, "all deviations from ordinary language must be justified by some passion which renders it natural" (271). Modern poets cannot achieve naturalness because they fail to observe this rule, whereas the earlier English authors were still aware of it. Apart from Shakespeare, Milton too managed to naturalize

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5. Engell lists Adam Smith, George Campbell, Joseph Priestley, Hugh Blair, James Beattie, and – more distantly – Thomas Gibbons, Lord Kames, Thomas Sheridan, and Robert Lowth. James Engell, *Forming the Critical Mind: Dryden to Coleridge* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard UP, 1989), pp. 195–6. See also Engell, "The New Rhetoricians: Psychology, Semiotics, and Critical Theory," in *Psychology and Literature in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Christopher Fox (New York: AMS Press, 1987), 277–302.

6. The connection between romantic theory and "new rhetoric" was proposed by Engell, see esp. his "The New Rhetoric and Romantic Poetics," in *Rhetorical Traditions and British Romantic Literature*, ed. Don H. Bialostosky and Lawrence D. Needham (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1995), 217–232.

"deviations" of rhetoric into fine poetry, since he was willing to observe the "law of passion." This latter phrase of Coleridge's has scientific connotations, some of which were already spelt out by earlier authors who treated the principle of association (underlying the mechanism of passionate language) as corresponding to "laws of nature," like gravitation.[7] At the same time, phrases like "justification" and the "observing" of "laws," so prominent in the "new rhetoricians," evoke a legal discourse. In Coleridge, this can be detected almost everywhere, from his early remark to Sotheby to his 1812 lecture on Milton. Milton, he said,

> subjected his style to the passions – bending and accommodating itself alternately from the slow thinking and reflecting movement, to the hurrying step of revenge, the stately proclamation of pride, and the equal course of immovable courage.   (1:402)

In this passage, the passions are represented as law-givers to which Milton's style is "subjected" – but interestingly, this process also produces the "subjects" of Milton's poem. These poetical subjects are, for Coleridge, themselves passions or states of mind: "revenge," "pride," and "courage," as well as the slow "movement" of thinking and reflection. Interestingly, Coleridge does not name the characters to whom these attributes and actions "belong." Although he is probably referring to Satan, the point is that this reference is obscured, because he describes "the passions" as the real agents represented in Milton's poetry, not only as the forces that govern his style. Indeed, the two aspects are hard to disentangle; Milton's style is subjected to its subject: passion. Coleridge himself participates in the rhetorical "figuring" of passions when he refers to their physical attributes ("hurrying step," "stately proclamation," etc.), in effect personifying the passions. The technique of making passion the subject of poetry, but also making it a "subject" by personifying it, is familiar from the 18th-century poetic tradition, and is the master trope of Collins's ode "The Passions," which had a strong influence on the young Coleridge.[8] The same type of personification was present in

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7. Cf. the ending of Hume's "Dissertation on the Passions": "in the production and conduct of the passions, there is a certain regular mechanism, which is as susceptible of as accurate a disquisition, as the laws of motion, optics, hydrostatics, or any part of natural philosophy" (*The Philosophical Works of David Hume* [Boston: Little, Brown and Company, Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1854], 189–226, p. 226).

8. "The Passions oft; to hear her shell, / Throng'd around her magic cell, / Exulting, trembling, raging, fainting / Possest beyond the Muse's painting" (Collins, "The Passions: An Ode to Music," 3–6). The poem is echoed in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" ("mingled measure," "measure" – "pleasure," etc.).

dramatic criticism before Coleridge, as in Joanna Baillie's " 'Introductory Discourse' to Her *Plays on the Passions*," in which she speaks of the "wild tossings of despair; the gnashing of hatred and revenge; the yearnings of affection, and the softened mien of love."[9] In all these instances what can be witnessed is the intention of depicting "inner" psychological processes, together with the necessity of having recourse to images of the body, of movement and of rhythm, while doing so. Passion is as strongly bound up with the body, as it is with rhetoric.

This conjunction between passion and embodiment can also be detected in Milton's famous dictum that poetry is "simple, sensuous, and passionate," a phrase which in Coleridge's hands was turned into a prescription and a touchstone whenever he spoke of good and bad poetry. In the above-quoted tribute to Milton, for instance, he clearly applied these very criteria to the poetry of their inventor: he emphasised both the "passionate" and the "sensuous" aspect of Milton's style, both essential to what I am going to refer to as the "embodied" aspect of language. On other occasions, he went into more detail about the three adjectives.[10] In 1813, the *Bristol Gazette* reported him saying the following:

> To judge with fairness of an Author's works, we must observe firstly, what is essential, and secondly, what arises from circumstances. – It is essential, as Milton defines it, that poetry be *simple, sensuous*, and *impassionate* – *Simple*, that it may appeal to the elements and the primary laws of our nature: *sensuous*, since it is only by sensuous images that we can elicit truth as at a flash: *impassionate*, since images must be vivid, in order to move our passions and awaken our affections. (1:515)

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9. Joanna Baillie, *A Selection of Plays and Poems*, ed. Amand Gilroy and Keith Hanley (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2002), p. 13.

10. Milton's phrase was cited in lectures of 1808, 1811–12, and 1813 as well as in the essay "On the Principles of Genial Criticism" (1814). A note from 1808 highlights its importance: "Had these three words only been properly understood, and present in the minds of general Readers, not only almost a Library of false Poetry would have been either precluded or stillborn, but what is of more consequence, works truly excellent, and capable of enlarging the understanding, warming & purifying the heart, and placing in the centre of the whole Being the Germs of noble & manlike Actions, would have been the common Diet of the Intellect instead" (1:139). John Dennis in *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (1701) had already adopted Milton's phrase, asserting that "Poetry is Poetry, because it is more Passionate and Sensual than Prose" (quoted in Martin Kallich, *The Association of Ideas and Critical Theory in Eighteenth-Century England: A History of a Psychological Method in English Criticism* [The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1970], p. 41).

Coleridge here defines poetry in a psychological framework, focusing on the psyche of the reader. The aim of poetry is to make readers perceive truth "as at a flash" (i.e. not analytically) and to "move our passions and awaken our affections." Both can be achieved by an appeal to the senses, to the passive and receptive in human nature (in the *Biographia*, the "sensuous" is associated with passivity).[11] Sensuous "vivid images" awaken passions, and themselves may be the products of passion, as 18th-century moral philosophy asserted. 18th-century "new rhetoric," in turn, claimed that the power of creating "vivid images" in language belongs to rhetoric.[12] Their stance, however, had its own ambivalence, since their endeavour sprang from a need to move beyond traditional rules and concepts of rhetoric. As noted by literary historians, their work fits into a larger pattern of moving away from rhetoric towards poetics, even in their very attempt to "justify" rhetorical figures on a psychological basis.[13] As I would like to show, Coleridge's criticism is one step further away from the framework of classical rhetoric, but he does not efface rhetoric altogether. His attitude might be described in the words of J. Douglas Kneale as that of "romantic aversion": a simultaneous turning away from and turning towards rhetoric, in order to make it work in new ways.[14] Coleridge's extensive reliance on Milton's three words from "Of Education" is significant in this context too: in the treatise, Milton proposes poetry to be the final, crowning achievement of education, preceded only by the study of rhetoric (as the easier subject), "[t]o which Poetry would be made subse-

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11. Coleridge discusses "sensuous" as opposed to "sensual," "sensitive," and "sensible" in *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and Walter Jackson Bate; *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge 7* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983), vol. 1, pp. 171–2.

12. Joseph Priestley for instance "argues that since vividness and strong emotions are tied throughout life to reality, the associated idea of reality should recur when the mind is stimulated artificially by such devices as vivid representation, ideal presence, or use of the present tense" (Priestley, *A Course of Lectures on Oratory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent M. Bevilacqua and Richard Murphy, Introduction by David Potter [Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965], p. xxxix).

13. Ian Thomson diagnoses "a confusion between rhetoric and poetic" in their work. Cf. Thomson, "Rhetoric and the Passions, 1760–1800," in *Rhetoric Revalued: Papers from the International Society for the History of Rhetoric*, ed. Brian Vickers, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies 19 (Binghamton, New York: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982), p. 145. Cf. also Neil Rhodes, "From Rhetoric to Criticism," in *The Scottish Invention of English Literature*, ed. Robert Crawford (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 22–36.

14. For Kneale, "the 'other' that Romanticism at once turns to and away from is . . . the classical rhetorical tradition" (J. Douglas Kneale, *Romantic Aversion: Aftermaths of Classicism in Wordsworth and Coleridge* [Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1999], p. 4).

quent, or indeed rather precedent, as being lesse suttle and fine, but more simple, sensuous and passionate."[15] On the one hand, Milton here clearly states the worth of poetry in comparison with the "suttle and fine" (i.e., *thin*) rhetoric: poetry is of a higher value because it is fuller, one might say, more embodied. On the other hand, however, he asserts that its teaching must rely on the previous knowledge of rhetoric, hence the hesitation between "subsequent" and "precedent." As I would like to show, Coleridge inherits from Milton not only the privileging of poetry but also the reliance on rhetoric in his lectures. He transforms or even displaces rhetoric, but its traces are preserved throughout his criticism.

"New rhetoricians" like Kames and Priestley examined Shakespeare's style according to a "rhetoric of passion." The plays offered almost infinite opportunities to study psychology in relation to rhetoric: to trace the workings of the stronger passions together with their (adequate or faulty) expression. In my interpretation, one of Coleridge's aims in his lectures was to take up these investigations and to rephrase them in terms of his own "philosophical criticism." Importantly, the term "philosophical criticism" had been used earlier by Priestley to refer to his own work; what is more, evidence suggests that it was associated with a whole brand of criticism, which seems more or less to cover the work of Engell's "new rhetoricians."[16] In the work of Lord Kames, as well as in that of several other "new rhetoricians," we find a treatment of rhetorical figures one by one (e.g. metaphor, simile, etc.), defining the conditions of their appropriate usage, and discussing examples of each – very often from Shakespeare. Coleridge frequently does the reverse: he discusses a play, and stops in order to call attention to a characteristic figure – and, to use a Coleridgean phrase, to "philosophize" it. He intends "not to pass any of the important conceits in Shakespeare" (1:312). But sometimes a particular figure is associated by him not only with a state of passion, but also with a figure in the sense of "character." Moreover, it seems as if these figures were "figuring" some fundamental questions or dilemmas related to the "language of passion." One of these is the figure of Grief represented by Constance in Shakespeare's *King John* – the rhetorical figure related to her is personification which, as I have already intimated, has a special relevance to discussions

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15. John Milton, "Of Education," in *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Ernest Sirluck (New Haven & London: Yale UP & Oxford UP, 1959), vol. 2, 362–415, p. 403.

16. Priestley refers to his "Lectures on Philosophical Criticism" in *An Examination of Dr. Reid's Inquiry into the Human Mind* (1775); quoted in Kallich, 224. Vicesimus Knox in an essay ("On Philosophical Criticism and the little Assistance it gives to Genius") associates "philosophical criticism" with "writers of North Britain," i.e. with the Scottish critics. Quoted in Kallich, 220.

of the passions. The question posed by her speech for the "new rhetoricians" as well as for Coleridge concerns the limits of expression: are there any passions beyond expression? And, more generally, what is the relationship between passion and expression?

II

"Strong Passions commend figurative Language & act as stimulants" (1:86), wrote Coleridge in 1808. At this point in his notes, we find a series of epigrammatic statements about criticism and poetic language, all of which will be developed later on in the lectures. Following the quoted remark, there is a reminder: "German bad Tragedies ridiculed – in which the Dramatist becomes a Novellist *in his directions to the actors*, & degrades Tragedy to Pantomime" (1:86). The link with the preceding note is, very probably, that in bad tragedies (e.g. in Kotzebue), the strong passions are not expressed through adequate figurative language, the dramatist instead – in the manner of the sentimental novels – "tells" the actors how they are supposed to feel, so the actors, through lack of any other means, convey the feeling through movements. These are the plays Coleridge ridicules in 1811, which are "so well acted & so ill written that if the auditor could have produced an artificial deafness he would have been much pleased with the performance as a pantomime" (1:351). This is clearly sarcastic, but remarks made elsewhere reveal that Coleridge accepted the possibility that movement – and especially dance – can produce the highest pleasure and *move* the spectator (to echo the rhetorical term, *movere*). Discussing different degrees of stage illusion, he mentions the "mere dance at an Opera which is yet capable of giving us the highest pleasure, & which, with music & harmonious motions of the body, can, by thus explaining some tale, deeply affect and delight an audience" (1:227). In this respect Coleridge goes along with the spirit of the age in which such non-verbal forms as the pantomime, the ballet, or the melodrama (initially, musical drama with little or no speech) rose to prominence in the theatres.[17] Nevertheless, he believed that the artistry of the poet requires that he be able to re-create such "movements" in language, through the dance of figures of speech. The rules of the figures are provided by the "strong Passions," which are here (as often elsewhere) regarded as a cause of sorts, though not necessarily a sufficient cause: they simply "commend" the use of figurative language. But the nature of this causation is made a bit more prob-

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17. Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770–1840* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), pp. 79–80.

lematic by Coleridge's other word, "stimulants" – a stronger metaphor, gesturing towards physiology. It suggests that passions enhance mechanisms that had been there all the while, like figurativity in language.[18] Moreover, its effects are "bodily," not under conscious command or "commendation." The metaphor therefore evokes medical descriptions, like that of Dr Brown in *The Elements of Medicine*, or the one Dr Baillie gave of the "unruly inmates" dramatized in his sister's *Plays on the Passions*.[19] Coleridge's approach to the poetic uses of passion wavers between these two alternatives: passionate language as a result of conscious artistic choice, and as an involuntary, visceral reaction.

In the 18th century throughout various discursive fields (that of theatre, medicine, moral philosophy, rhetoric), there seems to have been a consensus that passions "stimulate" the body simultaneously with the mind. This is why passions were essential to a number of accounts problematizing the relationship between the two. According to one of the most influential theories, they triggered strong trains of association, which, among other things, offered a new explanation of why figures of rhetoric (based on similarity or contiguity, also major "laws" of association) were more likely to appear in passionate states. A related notion I have already alluded to was that passions were "contagious": that they circulated between different experiencing subjects by means of sympathy. Coleridge's lectures attest that passion and sympathy have a central place in his theories of criticism. In the 1808 notes, for instance, just before writing about "stimulation" he is concerned with the reader and with criticism: "Judging of Books by books, instead of referring what we read to our own Experience or making it a motive for Observation – one great use of Books" (86). For Coleridge, books should be tested against the reader's own experience, most of all, against the very experience of reading the book. The question he repeatedly asks is what mental "faculties" and passions are evoked by a given text.[20] In the

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18. Cf. Coleridge's later criticism of Wordsworth in the *Biographia* where he writes about passion as "unusual stimulation": "For the property of passion is not to *create*; but to set in increased activity" (*Biographia*, 2:57). A discussion of this section can be found in David Vallins, *Coleridge and the Psychology of Romanticism: Feeling and Thought* (London & New York: Macmillan & St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp. 32–33.

19. Brown's significance for Coleridge is noted by Foakes, vol. 1, p. 222n. For Baillie, see Alan Richarson, *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), p. 77.

20. For example, in 1811: We have to "determine ~~how~~ what rank, what <comparative> estimation, we ought to give to this part of our nature – whether it is one of those which tho' permanent in itself is perpetually varying the Objects that gratify it – such as Curiosity ~~or~~

opening lecture of the 1811–12 series, he returned to this theme in a broader survey of the "Causes of false criticism," a discussion of primary importance, offering a convenient starting point for a comparison of his general critical stance with that of Kames. Coleridge here employs the vocabulary of affect when he speaks of the "enormous *stimulant* power of Events making the *desire* to be strongly *stimulated* almost an *appetite*" (1:186, my italics) – an "appetite" being a passion which precedes its object, and, consequently, is in constant need of new objects.[21] Also, recent events and "the unexampled Influence of Opinion" "have made us a World of Readers": all men are "*anxious* to know what is going on in the world" (1:186). Coleridge here formulates the radical effects of the emergence of print culture, his language suggesting how the "World of Readers" is "reading" a new world into existence – importantly, driven by another passion, the anxiety to know. He also (somewhat ironically, for a lecturer) mentions the "passion of public Speaking," and refers to novels – the ubiquitous theme of 18th-century discussions of the often "dangerous" encounter between text and feeling. It seems, then, that the "false criticism" of the age is at least in part describable as a confusion or dysfunction of affects.

Coleridge's proposed remedy is to make readers reflect on their "own inward experiences," which would, he hoped, result in a more conscious, and we might say, more rational approach to reading (as opposed to a taste for reading which he termed an unreflecting "appetite"). But Coleridge does not want to eschew feeling altogether, far from it.[22] He wants to ground rational critical response in "proper" feeling – in both senses of the word. On the one hand, reading that is worthy of its name evokes feeling that is not an improper "base passion" but part of "our nobler

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which turns with the disgust of Satiety from the former to pass from a dainty into a nuisance – or a base passion, such as Envy & its Mask, Scorn – or whether they are indeed the worthy & constituent Powers of our nobler Nature, not only permanent in themselves but always & solely to be gratified by the same outward excellencies, the same in essence, tho' infinitely varying in form, subject, and degree – Such are our Imagination, our Delight from the clear Perception of Truth, and our moral Sense" etc. (1:185)

21. At least according to Kames: "And there is a material difference between appetites and passions, which makes it proper to distinguish them by different names: the latter have no existence till a proper object be presented; whereas the former exist first, and then are directed to an object: a passion comes after its object; an appetite goes before it, which is obvious in the appetites of hunger, thirst, and animal love, and is the same in the other appetites above mentioned" (Kames, vol. 1, p. 44).

22. Cf. "The view that thought must satisfy an emotional condition, and that meaning consists in an expressive purpose rather than mere logical relations was among Coleridge's most enduring opinions" (Vallins, p. 34).

Nature."[23] On the other hand, this feeling should be proper to the reader, that is, it should coincide with his or her "inward experiences." Typically of Coleridge, qualities of the reading text and of the reading experience are inextricably linked: he proposes a way to discriminate between good and bad books and between good and bad reading simultaneously. The discrimination on both counts requires a constant and fastidious care; in fact Coleridge believes it even painful initially, so much so that he is ready to count this difficulty among the permanent causes of false criticism:

> The effort & at first the very painful Effort of really *thinking* – really referring to our own inward experiences – & the ease with which we accept as a substitute for this, which can alone operate a true conviction, the opinions of those about us – which we have heard or been accustomed to take for granted &c – Shakespeare's Constance/ & a Mother in real life – yet how many have declared the first unnatural – & admired the remote Silence of a German Tragedy, consisting of directions to the *actors*. . .   (1:187)

From this passage it seems that one of the permanent causes of false criticism is the paradoxical nature of criticism itself. Criticism as an activity is, or can be, a "painful Effort," but criticism as tradition, as a body of knowledge handed down to us, can be even worse: unreliable, misleading, or, quite simply, false. Coleridge implies that this is so not only because previous critics happened to make the wrong kinds of judgements, but because criticism conceived as the institution of making judgements on behalf of someone else, of pre-empting reader response, is erroneous. By re-imagining criticism as a process rather than a product, Coleridge makes it approximate reading itself, understood as a self-reflexive activity. In fact it is arguable that in the lectures generally he fashions himself as a reader, rather than a critic.[24] In the passage above, he announces his difference from (false) criticism, and rejects its authority as a finished product for the sake of the process of reflection on readerly

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23. Here is another point of similarity with Kames who writes: "The science of rational criticism tends to improve the heart no less than the understanding. It tends, in the first place, to moderate the selfish affections: by sweetening and harmonizing the temper, it is a strong antidote to the turbulence of passion and violence of pursuit" (Kames, vol. 1, p. 9).

24. For example, in his 1808 notes: "I have never had any strong ambition of publishing, ~~as~~ or being known as an author – and yet, if with the consciousness of many infirmities I may have palliate[d] them by some better qualities, from activity of mind, & a passionate desire of attaining & communicating truth . . . I have passed the far greater part of my life and employed almost all the powers which Providence has entrusted to me, in ~~the acquirement of knowledge from Books~~ reading & in conversation" (*LL* 1:125).

experience. Ironically enough, though, this gesture of rejection has itself become part of the critical tradition by Coleridge's time. Grounding criticism in experience rather than authority is the primary aim of most thinkers in the Enlightenment tradition, and is also at the heart of Lord Kames's critical project. In his introduction to *Elements of Criticism*, Kames writes about the progress of philosophy and criticism in terms that are remarkably similar to those of Coleridge:

> In later times, happily, reason hath obtained the ascendant: men now assert their native privilege of thinking for themselves; and disdain to be ranked in any sect, whatever be the science. I am forc'd to except criticism, which, by what fatality I know not, continues to be no less slavish in its principles nor less submissive to authority, than it was originally.[25]

Kames shares with Coleridge the Enlightenment prerogative of *sapere aude*. At the same time he admits that criticism resists this burden of freedom, and continues to be "slavish" and "submissive." What he terms a mysterious "fatality" (the obscurity in criticism that resists Enlightenment) is what Coleridge analyses as "Causes of False Criticism." We can conclude that Coleridge's analysis is more subversive because, as we have seen, it implies a more fundamental critique of criticism itself. But if we turn to the practical solutions offered by the two theorists, we find that the one suggested by Kames is quite close to that of Coleridge: both aim to ground criticism in introspection, in conscious reflection on experience.

Kames's work can be viewed as an attempt to establish universal principles of human nature primarily through introspection, that is, through a reflection on the workings of the psyche, and to develop a "rational criticism" based on these principles.[26] Criticism, therefore, involves a rational reflection on what is, to a large extent, non-rational: the workings of the mind, in which (as in Hume's scheme) passions play a central role. Kames devotes the first chapters of *Elements of Criticism* to such fundamentals as the principles of association, emotion and passion, which he expounds mainly from practical examples taken from individual literary

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25. Kames, vol. 1, p. 12.

26. Cf. B. I. Manolescu: "The practice of criticism in *Elements*, in contrast, involves making arguments based upon so-called universal principles of human nature . . . these principles validate critical judgement. One would only need an acquaintance with the principles of human nature to practice this criticism. Given that for Kames these principles are discovered primarily through introspection, one may need not go far to acquire the requisite knowledge" ("Traditions of Rhetoric, Criticism, and Argument in Kames's *Elements of Criticism*," *Rhetoric Review* 22:3 [2003] 225–242, p. 236).

texts. Moreover, he continues to elaborate on the universals of "human nature with reference to the fine arts" in several other chapters (like "On Beauty"), before he turns his attention to practical criticism. Needless to say, Coleridge would not have subscribed to some of Kames's "universals," most of all, to his strongly empiricist concept of mind. Nevertheless he follows a similar critical route when – from his first 1808 series to at least 1814 – he designs his opening lecture(s) to establish the principles of criticism based on introspection, and usually examines the critical vocabulary ("taste" and "beauty," among others) in this light.[27] But if Kames's method was reflexive, then that of Coleridge is doubly so for, importantly, he regards introspection as a guide in practical criticism as well. The reader should "measure" the text against his/her actual inner experience, not only against principles derived and generalised from a philosophical analysis of such inner experience. This is a major difference from Kames, and therefore it is not surprising to find Coleridge arguing with the critical tradition of Kames exactly at this point. His arguments are spelt out around the problem of passion and expression, figured by Constance in Shakespeare's *King John*.

III

The argument in its fullest form can be found in Collier's notes of the 1811 lecture. According to this, when complaining of people who "did not exert their own abilities" but "took for granted the opinions of others," Coleridge offered the following anecdote:

> This had been the case with a friend of his who observed ~~to him~~ that he did not think Shakespeare had made Constance in King John speak the language of nature where she said on the loss of Prince Arthur
>
> > Grief fills the room [up] of my absent child
> > Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me
> > Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words
> > Remembers me of all his gracious parts

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27. Later (in 1818) he very self-consciously chooses a different method – that of historical investigation – instead of "the proof from an analysis of the human mind in itself, in its component forms and faculties," which he nevertheless calls "the only strictly scientific" one (2:47). We can easily identify this with the Kantian "*a priori*" method (and the historical one, perhaps, as Hegelian), but we might add that the Kantian method is, in this respect, similar to that of Kames.

> Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form;
> Then have I reason to be fond of grief?

> Within three months after he had made this remark the friend died. Coleridge went to see his mother an ignorant tho' amiable woman who had scarcely heard the name of Shakespeare much less read him. Coleridge like King Philip in the Play alluded to, attempted to Console her & in reply in the bitter anguish of her grief she uttered almost a parody on the language of Shakespeare employing the same thoughts & a little varied in the phrazeology. (1:192–3)

In order to see the full import of this strange story, we need to know that Constance's speech (*King John*, 3.4.93ff) had been a matter of critical debate for decades. In *Elements of Criticism*, Kames found it especially artificial – and therefore faulty. Like a passage in *Richard III* (4.4.9ff), it was "undoubtedly in a bad taste." In both cases, "[i]magery and figurative expression are discordant, in the highest degree, with the agony of a mother"; they employ "language too light or airy for a severe passion." However, it is difficult to say whether Coleridge is actually referring to Kames's "false" opinion, or to other people influenced by him – and there were plenty of them, given the popularity of his work.[28] Someone close to the young Coleridge was Joseph Priestley who in his *Lectures on Oratory and Criticism* (1777) reiterated several of Kames's points, and repeated many of his examples. His main criterion of judgement was also the adequacy of passionate language:

> Writers not really feeling the passions they describe, and not being masters of the natural expression of them, are apt, without their being aware of it, to make persons under the influence of a strong emotion or passion, speak in a manner that is very unsuitable to it. Sometimes, for instance, they seem rather to be describing the *passion of another*, than expressing their own.[29]

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28. In the 1797 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article on the "Passions," partly based on Kames, Constance was cited in connection with Grief (XIV 13 B). Cf. *Shorter Works and Fragments*, ed. H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J. Jackson, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge 11* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995), vol. 2, p. 1451n.

29. Lecture XIV ("Of the Influence of the Passions on each other, and other Circumstances relating to strong Emotions of Mind"); see Priestley, p. 103.

The "impropriety," as Priestley calls it, of describing passion instead of expressing it, is most characteristic of French dramatists. Yet,

> Even our Shakespeare himself, though no writer whatever hath succeeded so well in the language of the passions, is sometimes deserving of censure in this respect; as when Constance, in King John, says to the messenger that brought her a piece of disagreeable news,
>
>> Fellow, be gone, I cannot brook thy sight:
>> This news hath made thee a most ugly man.
>
> The sentiment and expression in the former line is perfectly natural, but that in the latter resembles too much the comment of a cool observer. Of the same kind, but much more extravagant, is the following passage, which is part of the speech of Constance, giving her reasons why she indulged her grief for the loss of her son.[30]

And Priestley goes on to quote the same lines as Kames, and Coleridge in his lecture.

Given the popularity of the argument and the example, it is uncertain whether Coleridge was thinking of Priestley, Kames, or someone influenced by Kames. But he repudiated their critical mistake in an odd manner, by offering the anecdote about the dead friend. Did he expect his audience to really believe it? Or was it a cautionary fable, devised to illustrate the fate of "false criticism" which involved nothing less than the death of its practitioner? At any rate, it offers a rhetorical solution to a theoretical problem: Coleridge strengthens his point by telling a story, supposedly from real life (the speaker personally involved in the events), with a strong emotional impact. This is an acceptable, even advisable means of persuasion. However, it is notable that Coleridge usually reverts to such solutions, and especially to stories about some "Friend," when he has reasoned himself into a paradoxical position. The most famous example is the letter in Chapter 13 of the *Biographia*, but there are other instances as well.[31] In this early case too, the "friend" is a figure covering but also calling attention to contradictory tendencies in Coleridge's critical discourse. The main question here is: on what authority can the reader decide whether a specific passage is the "true" language of passion or not?

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30. Priestley, p. 104.

31. In *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, there are more than one "friends" representing different critical stances to the Bible, which are all important for Coleridge for some reason, but from all of which he wants to distance himself.

Very crudely, Kames's method was first to define the main characteristics of the passions (through introspection), then the main features of each major rhetorical figure, and then to compare the two in a given passage to see whether they coincide or not. As opposed to this, Coleridge suggests a more direct method: readers should be "really *thinking* – really referring to [their] own inward experiences." This approach is much more flexible: it enables the reader to differentiate between infinitely subtle "shades" of feeling, while Kames's method required him to focus on a few major types of passion (grief, terror, etc.) which gain a specific colouring in each passage. Coleridge does not set up rules of passion or of rhetoric in advance; instead, he recasts the reader not only as a critic who "understands" but also as someone who "experiences": each passage evokes a subjective response simultaneously with the unfolding of its verbal structure. This makes the question of critical judgement so straightforward that it becomes almost superfluous. The reader's sympathetic response and subsequent recognition that it coincides with his or her "proper feelings," is enough to prove that the text in question manifests the true "language of passion." This is another way to say what has been known for a long time, that "sympathetic criticism" comes much more naturally to Coleridge than the censorious "beauties and faults" approach of earlier critics like Kames. He allows little recourse to Kames's pre-established categories.

What appears as a straightforward and consistent critical strategy, however, starts to emerge as much more problematic if we consider how direct "inward experience" can be used in making public critical judgements, for instance, in the lecture theatre. In the very passage where Coleridge recommends grounding criticism in interiority, he offers as evidence an anecdote which is nothing if not external. Instead of referring to his own *inward* experience, he provides a story of a supposedly real mother in real grief, who repeats Constance's words. Through this fiction, Coleridge revives Constance to make her bear witness to Shakespeare's mastery, as if in an imagined courtroom. My argument is that this rhetorical "trick" is inevitable. It is the same strategy that we have witnessed in Coleridge's praise for Milton: in order to speak of passion as a principle that "governs" language, he needs to personify it, to clothe it in flesh and blood, which is the work of rhetoric. The moment Constance is effaced and substituted for an impersonal force in language, a second "Constance" must appear to utter her words. "Passion is speaking," this prosopopeia lurks behind the criticism of the "new rhetoricians,"

making it (to use a term revived by recent criticism), a *pathopoeia*.[32] And the same figure becomes even more powerful in some of Coleridge's readings of Shakespeare when – as we shall see – he acknowledges the voice of passion even where earlier critics had considered it silent.

IV

Kames's rhetorical system contained an inherent contradiction, characteristic of late-eighteenth-century rhetoric in general. It is summed up conveniently by Ian Thomson in his "Rhetoric and the Passions, 1760–1800": "rhetoric is, according to one major definition, the art of persuasion, and one of its resources is to move its audience, and figurative speech assists this end: on the other hand, genuine passion is supposed *not* to resort to figures, which are now seen as artifice."[33] The artificial status of rhetoric is going to haunt Romantic thinking – Wordsworth condemns it as "poetic diction" but in the Preface he also admits that figures can be the natural expression of passions.[34] Coleridge in the lectures seems to be more firmly on rhetoric's side, but he needs a system of rhetoric – and a psychology – more flexible than that of Kames. One thing that Kames and several of his contemporaries take for granted is that there are two main kinds of passion: those that are favourable to (figurative) expression, and those that are not. In other words, there is a natural rule or limit, determining what feelings can and what feelings cannot be expressed. The terrain of inexpressible emotion is reigned over by the passion of grief. As Kames writes in the opening of his chapter entitled "Language of Passion": "A man immoderately grieved seeks to afflict himself, rejecting all consolation: immoderate grief accordingly is mute" (494). But grief is not alone a mute emotion. "Surprise and terror are silent passions for a different reason: they agitate the mind so violently as for a time to suspend the exercise of its faculties, and among others the faculty of speech." After all, it seems that Kames considers all of the most intense passions as tongue-tied: "Love and revenge, when immoderate, are not more loquacious than immoderate grief" (495). But not quite. The dividing line is drawn according to the strength of the passion ("immoderate"), but also according to its general tendency, whether it is a

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32. Adam Potkay revives the 16th-century rhetorical term *pathopoeia* ("whereby the passions of the mind . . . are personified") to describe Hume's strategy in the *Natural History of Religion* (Potkay, p. 174).

33. Thomson, p. 144.

34. Cf. Kneale, pp. 50–1.

positive or a negative feeling (attraction or repulsion, grounded in pleasure or pain). The two criteria are not entirely separate, for a passion that is too strong is bound to be unpleasant according to Kames. Therefore, "figures are not equally the language of every passion: pleasant emotions, which elevate or swell the mind, vent themselves in strong epithets and figurative expression; but humbling and dispiriting passions affect to speak plain" (497). And again, figurative language "cannot be the language of anguish and distress" (498).

The reasons for this asymmetry lie in the tradition of moral philosophy. Seventy years before Kames, in 1692, John Dennis had already claimed that "no sort of imagery can be the language of Grief."[35] As Martin Kallich explains, "Grief constricts the mind and fixes it upon a single object; therefore figures of speech would be entirely unnatural because they show the mind in motion."[36] Hobbes in his "Preface to the *Passion of Byblis*" rejects more specifically simile as the natural expression of distress, and Kallich suggests that Dennis borrowed the idea from him. "Where there is leisure for fiction there is little grief," Doctor Johnson wrote, dismissing the sincerity of *Lycidas*.[37] Kames and Priestley still consider simile, like allegory, unnatural in the highest states of passion, for the same reasons outlined by Hobbes. That is,

> allegories, in common with comparisons, imply a considerable excursion of the mind from the principal object of its thoughts; and therefore, though a man in the greatest agitation of mind would not refuse a metaphor, he may easily be supposed to have his thoughts so much engaged as not to be at liberty to attend so particularly to a foreign object, as is necessary in order to note *many points of resemblance*, and make an allegory. Allegories, therefore, as well as comparisons, are the language of men tolerably composed, or only moderately elevated.[38]

Priestley here is more generous than Dennis, allowing metaphor to "slip by" as natural to states of the highest passions. We may suspect (and it can be supported) that by this time figurativity was sometimes considered to be a fundamental property of language, not an external ornament.[39] But we can also see why Constance's speech

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35. Quoted in Kallich, p. 38.

36. Kallich, p. 38. (He also notes that the idea is present in Dryden and Boileau, among others).

37. Quoted by Kneale, p. 42.

38. Priestley, *Lectures*, p. 195.

39. Evidence for a changing attitude towards figures in the work of Priestley and Blair is discussed by Thomson, pp. 146–7.

on Grief was doomed to be considered a "blemish" even by the "new rhetoricians." It contains an extended metaphor, that is, an allegory, in which "many points of resemblance" are indeed established between Grief and Constance's dead son. Moreover, it is based on a personification, and according to "new rhetorical" rules, this figure can only qualify as the language of strong passion if it is "serious," that is, if the speaker is so deluded as really to believe that (s)he is talking about something animate. Otherwise personification can only occur as "the exercise, or rather the *play*, of a mind at ease."[40] But beyond these reasons (and any of these would be enough for Kames or Priestley to condemn Constance's speech as "unnatural") there is the deeply-rooted conviction that grief involves stasis in the mind and silence in language. In those moments, association stops. The only language of grief is silence.

When Coleridge proposes in his lecture that Constance's speech is "natural," he pushes back the limits of rhetoric and revises earlier psychology at the same time. Both acts are based on a conviction that language and mind permeate each other thoroughly. Passion cannot exist without some kind of expression, since it reveals itself only through its effects: symptoms of the body, the mind, or of language. It follows that passion cannot result in absolute stasis, even in the most extreme states. Coleridge was perhaps encouraged to make these revisions to earlier theory by Wordsworth, who, as a poet, had comparable aims. In the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* he writes that his intention was "tracing" intense emotions like "the maternal passion through many of its more subtle windings, as in the poems of the IDIOT BOY and the MAD MOTHER," or "the last struggles of a human being, at the approach of death, cleaving in solitude to life and society, as in the Poem of the FORSAKEN INDIAN."[41] Kames would have considered such feelings excessive and too painful, and therefore necessarily mute, or at least only appropriately represented in a language free from figures. For Coleridge, by contrast, the "Mad Mother" was the best modern example of "the blending, *fusing* power of Imagination and Passion." Behind this difference, there is Coleridge's changed concept of passion. Whereas in earlier associationist thought the strongest passions were considered unable to "focus" on anything external to themselves, Coleridge shows that in fact they make everything internal. As he writes about the "Mad Mother," "the alien object to which [the attention] had been so abruptly diverted, no longer an alien but an ally and an inmate."[42]

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40. Priestley, p. 254.

41. *Wordsworth's Literary Criticism*, ed. W. J. B. Owen (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 72.

42. Coleridge, *Biographia*, 2:150–1 (Ch 22).

In his lecture of 1812 he quotes a favourite couplet from the "Mad Mother" ("The Breeze I see is in yon tree / It comes to cool my babe & me") with its subtle personification of the wind, and asks, perhaps with a final sense of triumph over Kames: "This was an instance of that abruptness of thought so natural to grief and if it be admired in images can we say that it is unnatural in words which are in fact a part of our life and existence?" (1:380).

V

In summary, Coleridge by re-considering the "language of grief" in Constance's speech, lifts a ban that had been unreasonably placed on the expression of states of strong passion. Meanwhile, a more general insight can also be discerned from, or rather *in*, his critical discourse. It is that passion is inseparable from rhetoric because it needs a body to show forth, which only rhetoric can lend it. While in medicine, or in the theatre, passions were observed through their physical symptoms, in poetry they could only be traced in figures of language, which was itself, for Coleridge, an "organ" and a "body" for thought. As a final comment, let me add two examples, each of which throws a different light on this structure (one medical, the other poetical) and opens it to further investigations. In the fragment of an essay of 1828, "On the Passions," Coleridge attempts to delineate a theory of the passions which reconciles the materialist and idealist poles and – in the words of Alan Richarson – "works towards a physiological psychology that gives primacy to mind and makes the body its expression."[43] He assigns each appetite and each passion an organ appropriate to it: the "chief Organ" of Grief, like that of Hunger, is the stomach. In spite of its medical and anthropological orientation, however, the essay ends up looking very much like lectures on literature, especially when it comes to the "figure" of Grief:

> The *wanting*, the *craving* of Grief (Here quote from Shakespeare's Constance in King John, and from the Greek Tragedians – & in all the passions I purpose to make free use of illustration from the Poets, especially Dante, Chaucer, Shakespear and Ben Johnson) the characteristic Supersession of the Appetite of Hunger – the equally characteristic wasting and marasmus of Grief – all these & there are many more, prove Grief to be a Hunger of the Soul.[44]

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43. Richarson, p. 43.
44. Coleridge, *Shorter Works*, 2:1451.

Grief, here, is literally embodied: it inhabits the body as much as hunger does, which it displaces.[45] Nevertheless, it does not cease to be elusive. It is accessible in no other way than through a train of symptoms, such as tears (Coleridge raises the question whether they might not be analogous to the watering of the mouth when we are hungry), or the best in literature.

My other example is from Shakespeare, who addresses the question of the "language of grief" in several of his plays.[46] In *Richard II*, there is a scene in which the Queen is grieving for her departed husband, and has an inexplicable presentiment. Here grief is figured again as a child; it is not an absent son, as for Constance, but an unborn child. The Queen says: "Some unborn sorrow ripe in Fortune's womb / Is coming towards me, and my inward soul / With nothing trembles; at some thing it grieves, / More than with parting from my lord the king." Bushy tries to soothe her by saying: " 'Tis nothing but conceit, my gracious lady." The Queen's reply takes up the themes of grief, figurative language and silence in a way that must have been instructive for Coleridge:

> 'Tis nothing less: conceit is still deriv'd
> From some forefather grief; mine is not so,
> For nothing hath begot my something grief,
> Or something hath the nothing that I grieve –
> 'Tis in reversion that I do possess –
> But what it is that is not yet known what,
> I cannot name: 'tis nameless woe, I wot.   (2.2.34–40)

An implication of this passage is that the Queen's grief is nothing more – but also nothing less – than conceit, both in the sense that it is fiction or fancy, and that it is a "figure of speech." The self-reflexive conceit she devises plays on the analogy between "conceit" and "conception"; her unborn grief is like a child of nothing – like a figure of speech. There is nothing substantial in it, but this "nothing" is strangely

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45. Cf. Richardson on "[m]aterialist, naturalistic, and embodied notions of the psyche" which were present in Coleridge's thinking "throughout his career, particularly in regard to his speculation on the emotions and the unconscious" (p. 41).

46. On Renaissance views about the rhetoric of passion cf. Jacqueline T. Miller, "The Passion Signified: Imitation and the Construction of Emotions in Sidney and Wroth," *Criticism* (Fall, 2001) 407–42. Also, Brian Vickers, "On the Practicalities of Renaissance Rhetoric," in *Rhetoric Revalued*, 133–141; Vickers, " 'The Power of Persuasion': Images of the Orator Elyot to Shakespeare," in *Renaissance Eloquence*, ed. James J. Murphy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 411–435.

substantial. In this respect it is exactly like Constance's grief, which is embodied by its very negativity, mere absence stuffing out "his vacant garments with his form." These two passages present the same account of passion and rhetoric that I have traced in Coleridge's criticism, and undoubtedly, he drew the strongest inspiration to rethink rhetorical and psychological traditions from them. Passion "shows forth" in language as a figure of rhetoric, but this does not mean that it is empty, "mere words." The negativity of rhetoric is the only means to point to a psychological region beyond representation. As if to acknowledge this region, Coleridge commented on the scene I have just quoted from *Richard II*: "Terra incognita of the Human Mind" (2:287). The "rhetoric of passion" has become, for him, the dialect of this unknown country.

Bénédicte Coste

"From Dreamlight to Daylight"

Pater's Medievalism

This article examines William Morris's medievalism according to Walter Pater's "Poems of W. Morris" (1868). Conversely to many Victorian writers, Pater does not see the Middle Ages as a mere historical period but as a personal experience whose aim is to make the subject come to terms with the Real. As an ontological moment, the Middle Ages should be linked to Pater's vision of Hellenism and of the Renaissance as it deploys itself in "Winckelmann." Pater's revision of history leads to a reappraisal of the notion of subjectivity.

Because of the title of his first published book, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, Pater is often linked to the Renaissance. His views of "that complex, many-sided movement"[1] mainly focus on the 15th and 16th centuries in Italy and France. Devoting chapters to medieval texts, Italian sculpture, and painting and French poetry, Pater intended to "giv[e] [the Renaissance] a much wider scope than was intended by those who originally used it to denote only that revival of classical antiquity in the fifteenth century which was but one of many results of a general excitement and enlightening of the human mind."[2] Defined as an "outbreak of the human spirit,"[3] the Renaissance ceased to be a historical period and became a personal and collective experience that was bound to occur time and again.

The Paterian Renaissance amounts to what Heideggerian philosophy has described as a presencing, to what psychoanalysis would describe as a (partial) easing of repression that allows the subject of the unconscious to emerge, through an aesthetic experience:

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1. Walter Pater, "Preface," in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, The 1893 Text, ed. Donald L. Hill (Berkeley: U of California P, 1980), i–xxv, p. xxii.
2. Pater, "Preface," p. xxii.
3. Pater, "Preface," p. xxii.

On a sudden the imagination feels itself free. How facile and direct, it seems to say, is this life of the senses and the understanding, when once we have apprehended it! Here, surely, is the more liberal life we have been seeking so long, so near to us all the while. How mistaken and roundabout have been our efforts to reach it by mystic passion, and monastic reverie; how they have deflowered the flesh; how little they have emancipated us! Hermione melts from her stony posture, and the lost proportions of life right themselves.[4]

The Paterian Renaissance is a return towards the signifying dimension of being, as opposed to the purely intellectual and ideal world in which many medieval or later artists and many Paterian heros have shut up. As my definition makes clear, this study partly relies on Freudian and Lacanian concepts: however it is not applied psychoanalysis but an attempt at shedding light on Pater's rigorous vision using some of those concepts[5] and underlining the similarity of the subjective logic in both thinkers.

Although he mainly dealt with Greco-Roman, Renaissance and modern art, Pater kept a long-lasting interest for the Middle Ages: in his texts on Greek sculpture, he underlined the similarities between archaic Greek art and medieval pieces.[6] His

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4. Walter Pater, "Winckelmann," in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, pp. 146–7.

5. The topic of Pater's historical vision has been fully discussed. For his debt to Hegel, see Antony Ward, *Walter Pater: The Idea in Nature* (London: Macgibbon and Kee, 1968). A. Ward sees Pater approaching nature with Hegelian tools. Also see William Shutter, "The History as Palingenesis in Pater and Hegel," *PLMA* 86 (1971) 411–21, for a detailed study of Pater's debt to Hegel which he often tried to rescue against itself. Wolfgang Iser nevertheless stresses the differences between Hegel and Pater's historical visions and emphasizes the absence of eschatological fulfilment or teleogy in history for Pater. See Walter Pater, *The Aesthetic Moment* (1957; Cambridge: CUP, 1987). In *Transfigured World: Walter Pater's Aesthetic Historicism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1990), Carolyn Williams sees "Pater's history [a]s thoroughly dialectical and genealogical" (p. 60). Williams is right to point out that Pater's artistic genealogies centre round a diffracted and reassembled unity whose centre is Hellenic times.

6. "In what Cicero calls 'rigidity' of Canachus, combined with what we seem to see of his poetry of conception, his freshness, his solemnity, we may understand no really repellent hardness, but only that earnest patience of labour, the expression of which is constant in all the best work of an early time, in the *David* of Verrocchio, for instance, and in the early Flemish painters, as it is natural and becoming in youth itself" (Pater, "The Beginnings of Greek Sculpture II: The Age of Graven Images," *Greek Studies* [1895; London: Macmillan, 1931], p. 250).

last published texts[7] focus on medieval architecture seen as a means to bring about a sense of community or individuality.[8] *The Renaissance* devotes a whole chapter to the Middle Ages, "this earlier Renaissance within the middle age itself,"[9] as Pater explains that the Renaissance "may be traced far into the middle age itself, with its qualities already clearly pronounced, the care for physical beauty, the worship of the body, the breaking down of those limits which the religious system of the middle age imposed on the heart and the imagination."[10] The medieval Renaissance is a renaissance in itself, focusing on sensuousness and in tension with religious constraints. Such a vision was in itself heterodox as Pater's predecessors and contemporaries (Scott, Carlyle, Ruskin to name but the most famous) tended to emphasize the order and natural hierarchy of medieval times. However, Michelet and Renan[11] had discussed a French medieval cultural and political renaissance on which Pater could rely as a starting ground for his personal views.

In *The Renaissance*, the Middle Ages are characterized as a transition between sweetness and strength which Pater locates "in Pointed architecture, in the doctrines of romantic love, in the poetry of Provence, [where] the rude strength of the middle

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7. Walter Pater, "Vézelay," in *Miscellaneous Studies* (1895; London: Macmillan, 1931), 106–120 and "Notre-Dame d'Amiens," in *Miscellaneous Studies*, 91–105.

8. In "Notre-Dame d'Amiens" Pater contrasts Roman and Gothic architecture to underline their different aims: "Notre-Dame d'Amiens is the church of a commune. In that century of Saint Francis, of Saint Louis, they were still religious. But over against monastic interests, as identified with a central authority – king, emperor, or pope – they pushed forward the local, and, so to call it, secular authority of their bishops, the flower of the 'secular clergy' in all its mundane astuteness, ready enough to make their way as the natural Protectors of such townships. The people of Amiens, for instance, under a powerful episcopal patron, invested their civic pride in a vast cathedral, outrivalling neighbours, as being in effect their parochial church, and promoted there the new, revolutionary, Gothic manner, at the expense of the derivative and traditional, Roman or Romanesque, style, the imperial style, of the great monastic churches. Nay, those grand and beautiful *people's* churches of the thirteenth century, churches pre-eminently of 'Our Lady,' concurred also with certain novel humanistic movements of religion itself at that period, above all with the expansion of what is reassuring and popular in the worship of Mary, as a tender and accessible, though almost irresistible, intercessor with her severe and awful Son" ("Notre-Dame d'Amiens," pp. 109–10).

9. Pater, "Preface," p. xxii.

10. Pater, "Preface," p. xxii.

11. Hill mentions Michelet, *Histoire de France*, vol. VII (1855) and Renan "L'art du moyenâge et les causes de sa décadence," *Revue des Deux-Mondes* xl, 1 July 1862, p. 203. See Hill, p. 304.

age turns to sweetness"; adding that it cannot be dissociated from the Renaissance which was to supersede it as

> the taste for sweetness generated there becomes the seed of the classical revival in it, prompting it constantly to seek after the springs of perfect sweetness in the Hellenic world. And coming after a long period in which this instinct had been crushed, that true "dark age," in which so many sources of intellectual and imaginative enjoyment had actually disappeared, this outbreak is rightly called a Renaissance, a revival.[12]

The Renaissance is a transition leading to a return of the Hellenic culture that had been repressed.

In this historical scheme, the Middle Ages herald the Renaissance with Pater going as far as to write that the Renaissance was "an uninterrupted effort of the middle age, that it was ever taking place"[13] in the sense that the return of the repressed became more conspicuous. At the same time, the Middle Ages also harked back to the Hellenic past which was to play a central part in Pater's historical and aesthetic vision. The Middle Ages appear as the beginning of the Renaissance,[14] Pater almost reversing the usual temporal scheme by what amounts to the dissolution of periodization, as J.-B. Bullen has noticed.[15] Such a dissolution manifests itself rhetorically in Pater's series of parallels between times and artists that confuse the reader's sense of history, so that the Renaissance appears diffracted in a multiplicity of works and artists. It is no longer a historical moment but a psychical experience.

However, and Pater was always adamant on this point: there can be no unmediated approach of the past for the modern Victorian reader. It comes wrapped in the mists of reconstitution (this is what medievalism is about) and it is the nature of this

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12. Walter Pater, "Two Early French Stories," *The Renaissance*, p. 2.

13. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 180.

14. "And the Renaissance, in France at least, is said to be the autumn of medieval times: "the Renaissance thus putting forth in France an aftermath, a wonderful later growth, the products of which have to the full that subtle and delicate sweetness which belongs to a refined and comely decadence; just as its earliest phases have the freshness which belongs to all periods of growth in art, the charm of *ascesis*, of the austere and serious girding of the loins in youth" ("Preface," p. xxiii).

15. "[C]hronological sequence is replaced by a series of affinities. Periodization is dissolved" (J. B. Bullen, "The Historiography of *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*," in *Pater in the 1990's*, ed. Laurel Brake and Ian Small, [Greensboro, NC: U of North Carolina P, 1991], p. 159).

"mist" that I propose to discuss. Medievalism is another means of discussing the troubled relation between reality and its representation, the status of remembrance and the ontological foundations of the subject.

In fact, Pater had already used the above-described scheme to characterize the Middle Ages as a period of yearning and rediscovery bound to lead to the Renaissance, in one of his first published essays in 1868, a review of William Morris's poetry,[16] which he republished in 1889 in the first edition of *Appreciations* under the title "Aesthetic Poetry." However, there can be no question that it contains Pater's already full-fledged theses on the Middle Ages,[17] including one of Pater's first definitions of the Renaissance, in its relation to the Middle Ages and Hellenism, since there can be no understanding of his theses without these concepts.

I have chosen to discuss Pater's definition of the Middle Ages, thus ignoring Morris's poetic vision.[18] Like many of his contemporaries or immediate predecessors, Morris engaged in medievalism understood as a discursive construct running

16. "The Poems of W. Morris," *Westminster Review* xxxiv ns (October 1868) 300–12. The last six paragraphs of the text became the "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance*. Although Pater changed the original title, he kept the original date of publication. However, in the second edition of *Appreciations*, "Aesthetic Poetry" was replaced with "Feuillet's *La Morte*" a somewhat straightforward reading of the French writer lately deceased. It seems that Pater had grown dissatisfied with the views expressed as they had been better expressed in *The Renaissance*. The term "aesthetic" did not appear in the 1868 text. In her article, L. Brake reminds us that the medieval times were a fashionable topic in the 1860's which was also the heyday of the Gothic revival. See Laurel Brake, "The 'wicked *Westminster*,' the *Fortnightly*, and Walter Pater's *Renaissance*," in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-century British publishing and reading practices*, ed. John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 289–305. H. Sussman, who has read Pater's essay in relation to masculinity, underlines that the 1868 version, praising homoeroticism, became more muted in 1889. See Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995).

17. In *The Sensible Spirit: Walter Pater and the Modernist Paradigm* (Tampa: U of South Florida P, 1986), F. C. McGrath noticed that this essay was a turning-point in Pater's writings: "from the Morris essay on, Pater's formulation of the unified sensibility migrated persistently, if not consistently, in the direction of idealism of various sorts" (p. 173). Pater emphazised the primacy of the senses before qualifying it, a process that found its achievement when he bridged the gap between the sensual and the intelligible with an implicit theory of the signifier.

18. One may still read Alice Chandler's fine study on Morris in *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971).

throughout the nineteenth century and having various political or aesthetic uses. But unlike them, he was one of the first to question it as a mythic time of joy and order,[19] promoting a non-Christian medievalism, a choice which may account for Pater's interest. His focus on Morris's poetry rather than on his work as an artist shows Pater's will to discuss representation rather than objects, relation to time and language rather than resemblance of the medieval original and its modern copy. His vision is linked to the central concept of Hellenism, which I shall try to define in relation to Heideggerian philosophy and through "Winckelmann," the other seminal essay on the Paterian renaissance. Pater's vision of historical change should also be linked to Heideggerian historiality where history is a continuous un/veiling, un/concealing of Being.[20]

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Pater defines the aesthetic poetry of which Morris is a main proponent, as an idealisation of the ideal:

> Greek poetry, medieval or modern poetry, projects, above the realities of its time, a world in which the forms of things are transfigured. Of that transfigured world this new poetry takes possession, and sublimates beyond it another still fainter and more spectral, which is literally an artificial or "earthly paradise." It is a finer ideal, extracted from what in relation to any actual world is already an ideal.[21]

Aesthetic poetry is the sublimation of the transfigured world, that is, the representation of the so-called reality, "twice removed from the actual world: it abstracts from an already existent idealized abstraction of the world" as F. C. McGrath contends,[22] before underlining Pater's "rarefied sensibility"[23] when he chose to accentuate the

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19. See A. Chandler: "although almost completely medieval in content, [the Defence of Guenevere] is far from presenting the Middle Ages as an ideal. Several of his poems imitate Browning, most show a conscious mingling of beauty and anguish" (Chandler, *A Dream of Order*, p. 214).

20. Heidegger defines historial *epoche* in his essay "On Time and Being" (1962); see *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1972) for a definition of *epoche* as a halt in which the dedication of Being and time is being perceptible.

21. Walter Pater, "Aesthetic Poetry," *Appreciations* (London: Macmillan, 1889). All references are to this edition.

22. McGrath, *The Sensible Spirit*, pp. 174–5. McGrath notices that the same abstraction process is used in the portrait of the "Lady Lisa," in *The Renaissance*.

23. McGrath, *The Sensible Spirit*, p. 174.

representative function of language which the poets take as the starting ground for a new poetics, something we need to remember when discussing the nature of medievalism, which cannot be anything else than a representational recreation. Aesthetic poetry does not amount to a revival: "Like some strange flowering after date, it renews on a more delicate type the poetry of a past age, but must not be confounded with it" (214). As C. Williams has argued, aesthetic poetry is also a "double movement of transfiguration [that] marks a poetry that specifically incorporates and transforms the poetry of an earlier historical period"[24] in a movement similar to an Hegelian *Aufhebung*.

Reading Morris's poetry as the outgrowth of 19th-century Romanticism, Pater points out that medievalism ("things medieval," 214), understood as a discursive return towards a forgotten past, was concomitant with a return to Hellenism, both being part of "a reaction against [the] outworn classicism" of the 18th century (214). Leaving aside the return to Hellenism, he traces the various steps of that return which started with Goethe's *Goetz von Berlichingen* (1771), examplifying a "superficial, or at least external" (214) type of medievalism centering on "[a]dventure, romance in the frankest sense, grotesque individualism" (214) of which Goethe and Scott are the true instances.[25] Relying on the traits of what they surmised the Middle Ages must have been, neither writer seems to have reached the deeper spirit of the Middle Ages based on the tension between religion and passion: "its mystic religion at its apex in Dante and Saint-Louis, and its mystic passion, passing here and there into the great romantic loves of rebellious flesh, of Lancelot and Abelard" (214). Scott's superficial approach to the Middle Ages contrasts with another, inner way of re-discovering it: "That stricter, imaginative medievalism which recreates the mind of the Middle Age, so that the form, the presentment grows outward from within, [which] came later with Victor Hugo in France, with Heine in Germany" (214-5). These writers seem to have experienced something which allows them to write perfect, balanced works where form and content are fused.

It is this type of medievalism, focused more on what Pater terms the "spirit" (that is, on an attitude towards the past and temporality) than on any outward manifestations (*signs* of medievalism) that Morris has taken to refine,[26] thus demonstrating the inferiority of mere reconstitution. Paradoxically, this type of medie-

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24. Williams, *Transfigured World*, p. 5.

25. In fact, as A. Chandler reminds us, Scott had given a free translation of Goethe's 1771 drama in 1799.

26. "[A] refinement upon the later, profounder medievalism" (p. 215).

valism allows one to understand what the Middle Age was, as Morris's poetry focuses on the choice between reason and passion, in an echo of "the strange suggestion of a deliberate choice between Christ and a rival lover" (215), that is, between the two main elements of the medieval spirit (religion and passion) as they are put into tension.

Like Rousseau's writings, Morris's vision echoes and thus validates Pater's conception of the medieval temper in which religion was sensually expressed[27] and love whose "highest expression [was] the Provençal poetry" (215), before it became "a rival religion with a new rival *cultus*" (215-6). Under the influence of religion, poetry starts to confine itself to castles and to the kind of fantaisies that are bound to happen there: "Hereon, as before in the cloister, so now in the *château*, the reign of reverie sets in" (216). The Middle Ages may be one of the first instances of the idealization of the idealized reality, borrowing its dominant trend from religion and, so to speak, laicizing it or transfering it into the personal sphere where "the mood of the cloister" (216) becomes a lay cult whose object is "absent or veiled" (216). This is exemplified by the courtly poetry of the Troubadours, or Morris's works, both mirroring each other, but more importantly, accounting for each other as they partake of the same spirit.

The spirit of the Middle Ages can be defined as a time of *rêverie* synonymous with an idealization of the ideal, which is bound to end up and which accounts for Morris's poetic changes. "Reverie, illusion, delirium: they are the three stages of a fatal descent both in the religion and the loves of the Middle Age" (217). Ascent and descent: like most of the mid-Victorians, Pater seems to espouse the view that all things wax and wane, thus following a universal law of development which he had discussed in "Coleridge's Writings" in 1866.[28] However, what disappears is not suppressed: history is a permanent rediscovery,[29] as shown by the surprising example of

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27. "[T]he Latin hymn-writers, who for one moral or spiritual sentiment have a hundred sensuous images" (p. 215).

28. "Nature, which by one law of development evolves ideas, hypotheses, modes of inward life, and represses them in turn, has in this way provided that the earlier growth should propel its fibres into the later, and so transmit the whole of its forces in an unbroken continuity of life" (Walter Pater, "Coleridge," in *Appreciations* [1890; London: Macmillan, 1931], p. 64, all references are to this edition).

29. "But the suspicion of a mind latent in nature, struggling for release, and intercourse with the intellect of man through true ideas, has never ceased to haunt a certain class of minds. Started again and again in successive periods by enthusiasts on the antique pattern, in each case the thought may have seemed paler and more fantastic amid the growing consis-

that decline where heated passion and the religion of love end up in delirium: "No-where has the impression of this delirium been better conveyed by Victor Hugo in *Notre Dame de Paris*" (217). Once again the past is only fully understood by the present, especially when modern artists have found the spirit rather than the signs of medieval times. Morris's poetry achieves the quintessence of the (re-created) Middle Ages in "King Arthur's Tomb," "Galahad: a Mystery" and the "Blue Closet"[30] all the more so as he is given to understand how the decline occured. The Victorian artist explains and instantiates the law of ascent and descent used by Pater to account for historical, aesthetic and ontological change.

"Surely, such loves were too fragile and adventurous to last more than for a moment" (217): some excess in tenuity seems to have been reached there. What Morris exemplifies is that "passion of which the outlets are sealed, [and which] begets a tension of nerve, in which the sensible world comes to one with a reinforced brilliancy and relief – all redness is turned into blood, all water in tears" (218): it is out of surfeit that things decline and degenerate. It is because there is no outlet that the surfeit occurs, thus leading to illusion and delirium, i.e., an exaggerated idealization of the ideal which eventually loses sight of reality.

Such a collective historical movement in the Middle Ages is echoed on the personal aesthetic level when Pater discusses the changes in Morris's poetry:

> *The Defence of Genevere* was published in 1858; the *Life and Death of Jason* in 1867; to be followed by *The Earthly Paradise*; and the change of manner wrought in the interval, entire, almost a revolt, is characteristic of æsthetic poetry. Here there is no delirium or illusion, no experiences of mere soul while the body and the bodily senses sleep, or wake with con-

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tency and sharpness of outline of other and more positive forms of knowledge. Still, wherever the speculative instinct has been united with a certain poetic inwardness of temperament, as in Bruno, in Schelling, there that old Greek conception, like some seed floating in the air, has taken root and sprung up anew" (Pater, "Coleridge," p. 77).

30. "[Morris] has diffused through *King Arthur's Tomb* the maddening white glare of the sun, and tyranny of the moon, not tender and far-off, but close down – the sorcerer's moon, large and feverish. The colouring is intricate and delirious, as of 'scarlet lilies.' The influence of summer is like a poison in one's blood, with a sudden bewildered sickening of life and all things. In *Galahad: a Mystery*, the frost of Christmas night on the chapel stones acts as a strong narcotic: a sudden shrill ringing pierces through the numbness: a voice proclaims that the Grail has gone forth through the great forest. It is in the *Blue Closet* that this delirium reaches its height with a singular beauty, reserved perhaps for the enjoyment of the few" (p. 216).

> vulsed intensity at the prompting of imaginative love; but rather the great
> primary passions under broad daylight as of the pagan Veronese.　　(221)

The medieval spirit had lost touch with reality, now is the time to go back to it, that is, to reclaim the sensible world: "a better daylight, but earthly, open only to the senses" (222). In a seeming contradiction with its previous definition, æsthetic poetry is now seen as a return to reality, but both estrangement and return characterize the transitional aspect of Pater's vision of the medieval times and spirit.

In fact the recreated experience of the poet allows us to understand that idealizing the ideal is bound to end up:

> Complex and subtle interests, which the mind spins for itself may occupy
> art and poetry or our own spirits for a time; but sooner or later they come
> back with a sharp rebound to the simple elementary passions – anger, de-
> sire, regret, pity, and fear: and what corresponds to them in the sensuous
> world – bare, abstract fire, water, air, tears, sleep, silence, and what De
> Quincey has called the "glory of motion."　　(222)

What the monk or the poet had wished for and divined[31] must become realized in the first sense of the word as one finds the way back to reality (to things as they are, as Arnold[32] would contend), to an originary dimension that has been smothered. Moreover, this evolution obeys a simple "law of the life of the human spirit, and of which what we call the Renaissance is only a supreme instance" (224). The personal and the collective echo each other, both on a historical and an ontological plane. The Renaissance comes to stand as a return to reality – a thesis which was imported to the "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance* – or to what Pater summarizes as a "reaction from dreamlight to daylight" (222). This return which is also a rediscovery of the originary sensuous dimension of the human subject manifests itself as an interest for morning lights as shown by Morris mainly dealing with "morning and things of the morning" (222). The dreams he presents are "dreams, not like Galahad's or Guenevere's, but full of happy, childish wonder as in the ear-

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31. "Just so the monk in his cloister, through the 'open vision,' open only to the spirit, divined, aspired to, and at last apprehended, a better daylight, but earthly, open only to the senses" (p. 222).

32. "[T]o see the object as in itself it really is" (M. Arnold, "On Translating Homer," *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. Robert H. Super [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan P, 1960], vol. I, p. 40).

lier world," (222) as opposed to the nocturnes of delirious nights. Such a Baudelairean "vie antérieure" is in fact a return to an originary dimension that has been repressed, including that of the sensuous or imaginary world:

> It is a world in which the centaur and the ram with the fleece of gold are conceivable. The song sung always claims to be sung for the first time. There are hints at a language common to birds and beasts and men. Everywhere there is an impression of surprise, as of people first waking from the golden age, at fire, snow, wine, the touch of water as one swims, the salt taste of the sea. (222)

The subjects of poetry experience the world anew, as if the renaissance, clearly understood as a psychic moment, sent everyone back to one's origins. Morris has found again what characterizes in fact the Middle Ages according to Pater, "that earliest return from the overwrought spiritualities of the Middle Ages to the earlier, more ancient life of the senses" (224) on which *The Renaissance* will focus more explicitly, linking the senses with the return towards Hellenism understood as the origin of the subject.

Morris's medievalism, which Pater opposes to "vain antiquarianism" (223), cannot be reduced to or conflated with a mere revival of the Middle Ages. The poet has embraced a true renaissance of the spirit, which Pater defined more fully in 1873, as an awakening, through all the artists he portraitured. Revival and renaissance are in fact two different or even opposed concepts: revival being predicated on imitation and signs, renaissance on elements which function as signifiers. For Pater, the subject has access to the past as the "composite experience of all the ages is part of us" (223). But, against Ranke's "wie es eigentlich gewesen sei," not as a reality, which would amount to "com[ing] face to face with the people of a past age, as if the Middle Age, the Renaissance, the eighteenth century had not been" (223). The past is experienced as "the element it has contributed to our own culture" (224), i.e., as a series of signifiers from which it is "possible to isolate such a phase, to throw it into relief, to be divided against ourselves in zeal for it, as we hark back to some choice space of our own individual life" (224). The Paterian subject has the capacity to divide itself between past and present (and we might add with Pater, also between the present and the future) because these temporal dimensions are predicated on a signifying order which divides the subject. The most famous example is that of Winckelmann, first described in 1867 and developed in 1873. Echoing Morris's experience,

Winckelmann "reproduces" the "sentiment" of the Renaissance, not the Renaissance itself[33] by his rediscovery of the past.

The collective past, or what Pater calls "the general history of culture"[34] in "Winckelmann" and the history of individual – the "solitary man of genius"[35] – are organized along the same signifying order and the subject can but find signifiers instead of the image or the representation of the past functioning as a sign.[36] Pater's implicit theory of the signifier accounts thus for two types of remembrance: signifying remembrance and revival of signs as in Goethe and Scott, and two types of medievalism, one dealing with its signifying legacies ("the element it has contributed to our own culture") and one dealing with "superficial" or "external" tokens. Hence the distinction Pater makes between the revival and the Renaissance, the first being a mere repetition, the second amounting to Platonician "reminiscence" as described through the case of Winckelmann, or to Kierkegaard's repetition defined as what "is recollected forwards" as opposed to recollection – what is recollected is repeated backwards.[37] Kierkegaardian repetition is not a retrospective movement, but foremost an anticipation, it has an anticipatory dimension, as shown by the art historian who "seems to realise that fancy of the reminiscence of a forgotten knowledge hidden for a time in the mind itself; as if the mind of one, lover and philosopher at once in some phase of pre-existence . . . fallen into a new cycle were beginning its intellectual career over again, yet with a certain power of anticipating its results."[38] There is knowledge within the subject, in the Lacanian sense of the term where it designates the play of signifiers arising to constitute the discourse of the subject of the unconscious, and one may say that the Renaissance is but the experience of that repressed knowledge suddenly coming to light, triggered, in the case of Winckelmann, by the sensible or aesthetic experience of the discovery of Greek relics.[39] Paterian Renais-

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33. "Winckelmann here reproduces for us the earlier sentiment of the Renaissance" (Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 146).

34. "Winckelmann," p. 155.

35. "Winckelmann," p. 146.

36. C. Williams rightly sees in Pater's analogy between the collective and the individual planes "the beginnings of a theory of the unconscious." See C. Williams, p. 76.

37. Kierkegaard, *Repetition*, trans. Walter Lowrie (1842; London: OUP, 1942), pp. 3–4. Kierkegaard adds: "repetition is a decisive expression for what 'recollection' was for the Greeks."

38. "Winckelmann," p. 155.

39. F. C. McGrath aptly describes Pater not as a proponent of the sensual but as "devotee and master of the sensuous response to intellectual stimuli, complex stimuli that involve both intellect and sense, but often more intellect than sense" (McGrath, p. 178).

sance does not praise remembrance for its own sake but within the present, the return of something which leads towards or remains open to the future. Moreover, if anticipation was not included from the beginning within repetition, the latter would remain a mere recollection of things past, precluding any sense of history. As Pater explained, the Renaissance was not "merely the discovery of old and forgotten sources of enjoyment but [led] to divine new sources of its, new experiences, new subjects of poetry, new forms of art."[40] If the artists of any given period did not look for what was to come, if they were not "curious" (in the Paterian sense[41]) art would remain a mere celebration of the past, with no sense of the future and in fact, there would be no history but only a mere chronology. The Renaissance can be described as the experience of tridimensional time which is usually veiled, as we do not need to permanently ground our relation to temporality.

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Morris is said to be exemplifying the first type of medievalism which is akin to the "Hellenism of Chaucer" (224), a laconic pronouncement in need of explanation as Pater returns to what is, according to him, the other element of 19th-century Romanticism. Firstly, Morris's Hellenism is defined as "the Hellenism of the Middle Ages, or rather of that exquisite first period of the Renaissance within it" (224). The poet exemplifies the Middle Ages as the beginning of the Renaissance, which, like all things subjected to the law of evolution, "becomes exaggerated or facile" (224). Medievalism thus refers to a way of experiencing the past, and all temporal dimensions. It is no longer a reconstitution serving various agendas and predicated on images and representation but the experience of the nexus between the subject and temporality, hence the definition of the medieval renaissance as anticipating its fifteenth-century aftergrowth. The renaissance is not only a return to the past but also an anticipation[42] of what is to come; it is the empty locus where the dimensions of time deploy

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40. Pater, "Preface," p. xxii.

41. "What we have to do is to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions" (Pater, "Conclusion," p. 189).

42. In "Duke Carl of Rosenmold," Pater mentions the "forecast of capacity," experienced by the proponents of the Enlightment "[a]s precursors Goethe gratefully recognised them, and understood that there had been a thousand others, looking forward to a new era in German literature with the desire which is in some sort a 'forecast of capacity,' awakening each other to the permanent reality of a poetic ideal in human life, slowly forming that public consciousness to which Goethe actually addressed himself" (Walter Pater, "Duke Carl of Rosenmold," in *Imaginary Portraits* [1887; London: Macmillan, 1931], p. 152).

themselves, the articulation between temporal dimensions. However Pater does not reduce the last to the common tridimensionality (past, present and future) but goes further to locate a more originary time whose finest image is that of ancient Greece.

Medievalism appears as a remembrance of past signifiers leading to a real experience of the un/veiling of Being, whose Paterian favorite image is that of the ray of light or dawn: "when [the monk] escapes from the sombre atmosphere of his cloister to natural light" (225). In *The Renaissance*, the same image is used to describe the awakening of Winckelmann's Hellenism.[43] A light which could be linked to Heidegger's *Lichtung*, or clearing, defined in "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking" as "the open region for everything that becomes present and absent," "the opening of presence concealing itself, the opening of a self-concealing sheltering."

What one may find is but the second moment (not the original Hellenic time but its first aftergrowth, as the Hellenic times are defined as escaping all representation, the real originary moment in "Winckelmann" on which I am going to concentrate to discuss Pater's Hellenism. He first defined it in Arnoldian terms as "the principle pre-eminently of intellectual light (our modern culture may have more colour, the medieval spirit greater heat and profundity, but Hellenism is pre-eminent for light)."[44] But he gave a deeper meaning to Arnold's simple and efficient dichotomies by transforming them in what amounts to a real historial scheme linking Hellenism, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance, which allowed him to account for both the individual and the collective levels. Winckelmann is another subject, Pater's Arch-subject, we could say, experiencing a personal renaissance similar to that of "the Renaissance, [when] in the midst of a frozen world, the buried fire of ancient art rose up from under the soil."[45] However, Winckelmann's Hellenism develops more fully what Pater means by Morris's Chaucerian Hellenism. Hellenism is a truly singular signifier in Pater's conception, which he develops to account for the structure of the individual and collective mind.

It is in "the collection of antiquities at Dresden" that the German professor woke up to Greek art and poetry: "handled the words only of Greek poetry, stirred indeed and roused by them, yet divining beyond the words an unexpressed pulsation of sensuous life. Suddenly he is in contact with that life, still fervent in the relics of plastic

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43. "Hellenism . . . has always been most effectively conceived by those who have crept into it out of an intellectual world in which the sombre elements predominate. So it had been in the ages of the Renaissance" (Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 151).

44. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 146.

45. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 146.

art,"[46] which acts as an *agent provocateur* of his reminiscence and discovery of the Greek art. Winckelmann then goes to Rome where his situation "present[s] all the elements of an intellectual situation of the highest interest. The beating of the intellect against its bars, the sombre aspect, the alien traditions, the still barbarous literature of Germany, are afar off; before him are adequate conditions of culture, the sacred soil itself, the first tokens of the advent of the new German literature, with its broad horizons, its boundless intellectual promise."[47] Like the monk in the cloister, Winckelmann experiences a passion whose outlets are sealed and which is going to generate a change and awaken his Hellenism especially defined as an easing of repression: "This repression, removed at last, gave force and glow to Winckelmann's native affinity to the Hellenic spirit."[48] In contact with the relics of the past, Winckelmann reenacts the experience of the Renaissance. To account for this, Pater develops his vision of the beginnnings of culture as an historical process mirrored in the individual.

Indeed, what one may experience as the past does not radically disappear but remains as a more or less explicit tradition: "The spiritual forces of the past, which have prompted and informed the culture of a succeeding age, live, indeed, within that culture, but with an absorbed, underground life. The Hellenic element alone has not been so absorbed, or content with this underground life; from time to time it has started to the surface; culture has been drawn back to its sources to be clarified and corrected" (158). The Paterian culture is seen as a process of return and rediscovery, a real *Schritt zurück* towards the legacy of the Greeks: "Hellenism is not merely an absorbed element in our intellectual life; it is a conscious tradition in it."[49] Culture appears as a retrospective process whereby one gets back to one's origin to find it

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46. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 146.

47. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 151.

48. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 151. Interestingly, "repression" was translated as "refoulement" in the only French translation of *The Renaissance*, a term which has also been used to translate Freud's *Verdrängung*. See F. Roger-Cornaz, *La Renaissance* (Paris: Payot, 1917).

49. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 158. "[C]onscious" seems quite ambiguous: Pater's explanation of Hellenism points to its capacity to appear from time to time, to be, in orthodox Freudian terms, preconscious. At the same time it may refer to the excess of Greek knowledge pervading Victorian times as he implies: "Of the Greeks as they really were, of their difference from ourselves, of the aspects of their outward life, we know far more than Botticelli, or his most learned contemporaries; but for us long familiarity has taken off the edge of the lesson, and we are hardly conscious of what we owe to the Hellenic spirit" ("Sandro Botticelli," *The Renaissance*, p. 46).

structured by "an element of permanence, a 'Standard of Taste' " which "takes its rise in Greece, at a definite historical period. A tradition for all succeeding generations, it originates in a spontaneous growth out of the influences of Greek society."[50] Hellenism does not disappear but is repressed, to return at various epochs, binding the ages to each other by the way each of them connects to it, reviews and appropriates it. It therefore functions as a primary signifier, as the signifier of the origin everyone has met and which has defined one's relation to time. Hume's "Standard of Taste" is something Pater does not motivate, but which motivates culture as a compulsive *Schritt zurück* towards an origin escaping representation.

Pater also defines Hellenism as a by-product of "that Hellenic ideal, in which man is at unity with himself, with his physical nature, with the outward world,"[51] i.e., a mythic time of harmony between the senses and the intellect, the subject and the world, inner and outer dimensions,[52] which has passed away, never to be recovered in full or as such, only to be fantazised or to be what Pater termed "the Sangrail" of the human quest.[53] In fact it appears as a mythical moment of poise or, as Pater writes, a "delicate pause in Greek reflexion":[54] the Greek pause is the real matrix of those later moments that art has the power to conjure up, but which must also undergo the movement of ascent and descent described in relation to Morris and the Middle Ages. "But if [man] was to be saved from the *ennui* which ever attaches itself to realisation, even the realisation of perfection, it was necessary that a conflict should come, and some sharper note grieve the perfect harmony, to the end that the spirit chafed by it might beat out at last a larger and profounder music."[55] Again, Pater does not motivate the necessity of a conflict, positing it as the cause for further changes and thus inscribing Hellenism in a human temporality.

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50. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 156.

51. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 177.

52. "In Greek thought the 'lordship of the soul' is recognised; that lordship gives authority and divinity to human eyes and hands and feet; inanimate nature is thrown into the background. But there Greek thought finds its happy limit; it has not yet become too inward; the mind has not begun to boast of its independence of the flesh; the spirit has not yet absorbed everything with its emotions, nor reflected its own colour everywhere" (Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 164).

53. "[T]he Greek spirit, with its engaging naturalness, simple, chastened, debonair . . . is itself the *Sangrail* of an endless pilgrimage" (Pater, "Coleridge," p. 106).

54. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 158.

55. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 177.

To account for this first decline, Pater gives the example of Greek tragedy and of Theocritus's poetry:

> In Greek tragedy this conflict has begun; man finds himself face to face with rival claims. Greek tragedy shows how such a conflict may be treated with serenity, how the evolution of it may be a spectacle of the dignity, not of the impotence, of the human spirit. But it is not only in tragedy that the Greek spirit showed itself capable of thus winning joy out of matter in itself full of discouragements. Theocritus, too, often strikes a note of romantic sadness.[56]

What Hellenism stands for functions as an originary moment which has been repressed to reappear at different times under different guises. In Pater's account of collective and individual history, it functions as Freud's originary repression, which establishes the mechanism of repression and manifests itself as a return. To account for secondary repression, Freud posits an originary repression establishing the potentiality of the psychic apparatus.[57] The originary repression consists in the repression of what Freud calls the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* which, according to the psychoanalyst H. Rey-Flaud, is the originary subjective representation whose radical disappeareance establishes the play of secondary representations (or signifiers) constituting the discourse of the subject.[58] Again, I would like to emphasize that Pater does not announce the Freudian discovery but both thinkers account for the birth of the subject by the same logic predicated on something radically missing, a blank within the representational system that establishes it as the play of signifiers.

Defined as the originary repressed representation, Pater's Hellenism is similar in its effects to Freud's *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, manifesting its effects in Chris-

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56. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 178.

57. See Freud, "Repression," (1915), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth P, 1974), vol. 14. The originary repression is a concept used to theorize the distance implied by language which Lacan has conceptualized as symbolical castration supported by the Phallus.

58. "[L]a notion d'une *Urverdrängung*, qui . . . postul[e] au principe du système représentatif la valence d'une représentation singulière, originairement refoulée (donc irréductible à toute prise en charge par la conscience) pour 'fixer' la pulsion. Cette représentation, Freud l'appelle le 'représentant de la pulsion' (*Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*). C'est elle qui, arrimant la chaîne signifiante *par son défaut même*, va permettre le déploiement de ladite chaîne, c'est-à-dire tout le jeu de la combinatoire des représentations secondaires qui adviendront, à leur tour, dans l'espace du discours effectivement tenu par le sujet, comme autant de représentations du 'représentant de la représentation' " (Henri Rey-Flaud, *L'Eloge du rien* [Paris: Seuil, 1996], p. 18).

tian times characterized as times of guilt. He does not innovate when he sees a real difference between paganism and Christianity, the first being characterized by innocence, the second by guilt, but more importantly by the impossibility of complete fulfilment or jouissance: "I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and lo, I must die!"[59] Pater's quotations may be rewritings and misquotations but they are never insignificant and this one (I Samuel 14: 43) echoes Lacan's version of the Symbolic Law that turns every subject into a sinner and forecloses any complete enjoyment of the Thing.[60] Christianity is as an era where man is fully aware of mortality, in contrast with the alleged Greek ignorance. It is in such a world that Hellenism appears as an aftergrowth, especially in the Middle Ages, in a Christian world haunted by guilt which "discrediting the slightest touch of sense, has from time to time provoked into strong emphasis the contrast or antagonism to itself, of the artistic life, with its inevitable sensuousness."[61] Because of the prevalence of ascetism, the Middle Ages has also allowed the return of the Hellenic spirit. First as a longing: "an aspiration towards that lost antique art, some relics of which Christian art had buried in itself, ready to work wonders when their day came," then as a re-discovery which at the same time allows one to understand the necessity of the disappearance of the Hellenic spirit so that it may come back anew: "And now it was seen that the medieval spirit too had done something for the destiny of the antique. By hastening the decline of art, by withdrawing interest from it, and yet keeping unbroken the thread of its traditions, it had suffered the human mind to repose that it might awake when day came, with eyes refreshed, to those antique forms."[62] The originary repression of Hellenism also generates the medieval ascetic spirit which, in turn, allows it to reappear before succumbing to Pater's renaissance as a contagion: "When the actual relics of the antique were restored to the world, in the view of the Christian ascetic it was as if an ancient plague-pit had been opened: all the world took the contagion of the life of nature and of the senses."[63] There is a dual movement of dis/apparition[64] as

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59. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 177.
60. Jacques Lacan, *Seminar VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, trans. D. Potter (London: Routledge, 1992). Lacan shows in this Seminar that the institution of language allowing all symbolic exhange entails the barrier to the Thing or the Supreme Good. Desire is in speech; the subject takes form in language, paying the price of a prohibited jouissance.
61. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 177.
62. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 180.
63. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 177.

Paterian history becomes the tension (not the opposition as in Arnold) between ascetism and sensuousness, paganism and Christianity, a tension that inscribes it into a permanent becoming.

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Hellenism appears as a moment of poise that was bound to end, as an Ur-time which, because it has ceased, has paved the way for human time. On a personal level, as Winckelmann is proof, it is also a mythical moment every subject has to undergo in order to get inscribed within the temporal scheme and thus experience the Paterian personal renaissance: "This key to the understanding of the Greek spirit, Winckelmann possessed in his own nature, itself like a relic of classical antiquity, laid open by accident to our alien modern atmosphere":[65] the recurrent comparison to ancient relics makes it clear that the subject possesses a locus where Pater's "Greek spirit" survives as unconscious knowledge.[66]

Indeed, and this remains Pater's most controversial statement at the time, the Greeks were already subject to a sense of mortality and to time: "There is even a sort of preparation for the romantic temper within the limits of the Greek ideal itself," Pater writes, relying on Hegel's distinction between classical and romantic art, "For Greek religion has not merely its mournful mysteries of Adonis, of Hyacinthus, of Demeter, but it is conscious also of the fall of earlier divine dynasties. Hyperion gives way to Apollo, Oceanus to Poseidon. Around the feet of that tranquil Olympian fam-

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64. Amounting to what the French philosopher H. Maldiney describes as "systole/diastole." See H. Maldiney, *L'Art, l'éclair de l'être* (Seyssel: Comp'Act, 1993).

65. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 175. However, and this is a shortcoming, Winckelmann failed to perceive that the Greek spirit was already subject to mortality: "Into this stage of Greek achievement Winckelmann did not enter. Supreme as he is where his true interest lay, his insight into the typical unity and repose of the highest sort of sculpture seems to have involved limitation in another direction. His conception of art excludes that bolder type of it which deals confidently and serenely with life, conflict, evil" (p. 178).

66. The same image will be used in "Denys l'Auxerrois" in 1886: "As the most skillful of the band of carvers worked there one day . . . a finely-sculptured Greek coffin of stone, which had been made to serve for some later Roman funeral, was unearthed by the masons. . . . Within the coffin lay an object of a fresh and brilliant clearness among the ashes of the dead – a flask of lively green glass, like a great emerald. It might have been 'the wondrous vessel of the Grail.' Only, this object seemed to bring back no ineffable purity, but rather the riotous and earthy heat of old paganism itself. Coated within, and, as some were persuaded, still redolent with the tawny sediment of the Roman wine it had held so long ago, it was set aside for use at the supper which was shortly to celebrate the completion of the masons' work" (Pater, "Denys l'Auxerrois," p. 56).

ily still crowd the weary shadows of an earlier, more formless, divine world. Even their still minds are troubled with thoughts of a limit to duration, of inevitable decay, of dispossession. Again, the supreme and colourless abstraction of those divine forms, which is the secret of their repose, is also a premonition of the fleshless, consumptive refinements of the pale medieval artists. That high indifference to the outward, that impassivity, has already a touch of the corpse in it; we see already Angelico and the Master of the Passion in the artistic future. The crushing of the sensuous, the shutting of the door upon it, the ascetic interest, is already traceable. Those abstracted gods, 'ready to melt out their essence fine into the winds,' who can fold up their flesh as a garment, and still remain themselves, seem already to feel that bleak air, in which, like Helen of Troy, they wander as the spectres of the middle age."[67] Not only are the Olympians the descendants of "earlier divine dynasties" but they also herald "the fleshless, consumptive refinements of the pale medieval artists." Against Ruskin's pronouncements in *The Queen of the Air* (1869) on the Greeks never having "ugly dreams," against what Pater sees as Newman's "gracious polytheism"[68] (understood as a happy state, ignorant of mortality), what Greece stands for appears fully temporalized. It functions both as an originary time and as a locus of the tridimensional temporality, two dimensions that are often conflated in Pater, thus generating some misunderstanding.

It is the Hellenic origin that returned during the Middle Ages and later at the Renaissance. On the individual basis, this very return of the repressed structures Morris's poetic career, from the ideal of monastic *rêverie* to reality, from the sublimation of signifying reality to the (re)discovery not so much of reality as that of the Lacanian Real defined as the impossible, beyond the Symbolic order and representation, confronting the subject of the unconscious to its fundamental lack.[69] Morris's poetry makes the reader experience the renaissance which is but the first return of the repressed Hellenic spirit which, for its part, Winckelmann had reproduced in the

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67. Pater, "Winckelmann," pp. 178–9.

68. Pater refers to J. H. Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London, 1845), p. 209. See Hill, p. 428.

69. The Real should not be confused with phantasmatic reality. It is neither Symbolic nor Imaginary, but foreclosed of the analytic experience. From the beginning of his teaching, Lacan sees it in terms of constancy: "the real is that which returns to the same place" before it became that before which the subject falters, that which is refractory. "The Real is the impossible" means that it may be approached but never grasped, Lacan contends in the 1970s. See Lacan, *RSI* (1974–5, unpublished seminar) The Real is what the Symbolical order turns into the impossible for the subject of the unconscious.

eighteenth century. Hellenism is thus linked to what could be called Morris's ecclectic medievalism which Pater defines by referring to "Jason" and the "Earthly Paradise," with "their medievalisms, delicate inconsistencies, which, coming into a poem of Greek subject, bring into this white dawn thoughts of the delirious night just over" (225). Medievalism imports "morsels" of what amounts to a genuine return of the repressed in a given poem, and makes one undergo the poetic experience of the Paterian renaissance which weaves together medieval *rêverie* and return to reality, which is in fact an articulation, a transition.

What may be construed as "delicate inconsistencies" (225), such as the shift between times and places (Iolchos and a pageant of the Middle Ages, the "nymph in furred raiment who seduces Hylas [being] conceived frankly in the spirit of Teutonic romance," or "Medea herself ha[ving] a hundred touches of the medieval sorceress," 225–6), are instances of this eclectic medievalism which echoes and links both the Middle Ages and the Hellenic times. This poetry deploys itself as arising from some unrepresentable origin and as the remembrance and experience of the first return of that origin: "a reserved fragment of Greece, which by some divine good fortune lingers on in the western sea into the Middle Age. And now it is below the very coast of France, through the fleet of Edward the Third, among the gaily painted medieval sails, that we pass to a reserved fragment of Greece, which by some divine good fortune lingers on in the western sea into the Middle Age. There the stories of *The Earthly Paradise* are told" (226). Both dimensions are put into tension through the discrepancy between Hellenism and asceticism, joy and sorrow: "this grace of Hellenism relieved against the sorrow of the Middle Age" (226). Hellenic sensuousness and the Middle Ages are "two threads of sentiment [which] are here interwoven and contrasted" (226), "Greek story and romantic alternating" (226), to appear at the level of what amounts to re-presentation, contrasting with a mere imaginary reconstitution.

By being a consummate practioner of ecclectic medievalism, Morris also allows his reader to experience paganism defined as one of the main ingredients of the Hellenic spirit. Paganism is for Pater, partly "the continual suggestion, pensive or passionate, of the shortness of life" or "the sense of death" (229) which the subject has to face. In *The Renaissance*, he will be more explicit, defining paganism as the originary relationship of the subject to life and death, i.e., to the Lacanian cut: "a universal pagan sentiment, a paganism which existed before the Greek religion, and has lingered far onward into the Christian world, ineradicable, like some persistent vegetable growth, because its seed is an element of the very soil out of which it springs. This pagan sentiment measures the sadness with which the human mind is filled, whenever its thoughts wander far from what is here, and now. It is beset by notions of irresistible natural powers, for the most

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part ranged against man, but the secret also of his fortune, making the earth golden and the grape fiery for him."[70] Pagan sentiment is a way of apprehending one's place in the universe, that is, one's mortality, foreclosing one's imaginary might to replace it with Symbolic castration. Paterian paganism is one's castration which has been originally repressed to be offset by religion defined as an "anodyne," making one's mortality tolerable.[71] Like all repressed elements, it reappeared in the Renaissance of the Middle Ages and in Morris's poems where it is met with religion: "com[ing] across the sins of the earlier world with the sign of the cross" (226). However, religion is but one solution as Morris's poetic activity testifies: "One characteristic of the pagan spirit the æsthetic poetry has, which is on its surface – the continual suggestion, pensive or passionate, of the shortness of life. This is contrasted with the bloom of the world, and gives new seduction to it – the sense of death and the desire of beauty: the desire of beauty quickened by the sense of death." (226). Medievalism as a way of experiencing the past can finally be defined as a return to one's origin which confronts the subject with its mortality. Returning to the light of day, to pursue Pater's metaphor, is but the experience of castration and it is precisely that mere rapport that Morris typifies by his poetical activity. This time however, putting one face to face with one's castration gives rise to "the desire of beauty" as an antidote, instead of religion. The opposition between beauty and death is the deepest in Pater's polarized thought, and it should come as no surprise that he excerpted the last paragraphs of the 1868 essay to form the "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance*, whose aim was in part to propose the replacement of religion by beauty. The vicissitudes of this attempt have been well discussed and documented. Pater qualified the 1873 version mentioning "the love of art for art's sake,"[72] but he never recanted: art functions as "an *epoche* of castration . . . aiming at discharging men of their mortality,"[73] as H. Rey-Flaud contends after Freud and Lacan. Along with religion, although in a different way, it makes the subject experience what founds it: its relation to the cut.

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70. Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 160.

71. "This pagan worship, in spite of local variations, essentially one, is an element in all religions. It is the anodyne which the religious principle, like one administering opiates to the incurable, has added to the law which makes life sombre for the vast majority of mankind" (Pater, "Winckelmann," p. 160).

72. Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (London: Macmillan, 1873), p. 213.

73. "L'œuvre d'art réalise une époché de la castration . . . visant . . . à décharger l'homme de son destin mortel" ("Les Fondements métapsychologiques de *Malaise dans la culture*," in "Autour du *Malaise dans la culture* de Freud," *Perspectives germaniques* [Paris: PUF, 1998], p. 16, my translation).

Tamás Ivor Battai

Getting at "The Figure in the Carpet"

According to Wolfgang Iser, "The Figure in the Carpet" by Henry James is concerned with questions of the nature of literary meaning. In Iser's paradigmatic interpretation James's story juxtaposes two radically different conceptions of meaning: according to one, meaning is something to be found in the text itself and the critic's job is precisely to "dig up" that meaning. According to the other, meaning is only structured, but not contained, by the text: meaning comes into being in the very process of reading, as reader and text interact with each other. Iser thinks it is this second view of literary meaning James subscribes to. As opposed to Iser, I place the interpretation of James's story in the context of Romanticism. In this reading, it is not two different conceptions of meaning that James juxtaposes, but two different modes of reading. One, exemplified by the narrator of the story, is superficial, journalistic, and platitudinous; the other, represented by Corvick and Gwendolyn, is passionate and profound and reflects James's own Romantic theory of reading. I also analyze a number of different theoretical texts by James, thus attempting to work out a more convincing hermeneutic fore-structure for interpreting the story than that of Iser's.

> The path of things is silent. Will they suffer a speaker to go with them? A spy they will not suffer; a lover, a poet, is the transcendency of their own nature, – him they will suffer.
>
> <div align="right">(Emerson, "The Poet")</div>
>
> One must be an inventor to read well.
>
> <div align="right">(Emerson, "The American Scholar")</div>
>
> And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.
>
> <div align="right">(*The Revelation of Saint John*)</div>

In his Preface to the New York edition of "The Figure in the Carpet," Henry James said he

> came to Hugh Vereker . . . by this travelled road of a generalization; the habit of having noted for many years how strangely and helplessly, among

us all, what we call criticism . . . is apt to stand off from the intended sense of things.[1]

Ironically enough, it is very much this "standing off from the intended sense" that has characterized the reception of "The Figure in the Carpet."[2] Wolfgang Iser's interpretation in his *Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, which Mihály Szegedy-Maszák has called "the most important to date,"[3] is a case in point.[4]

According to Iser "The Figure in the Carpet" "can be considered as a prognosis for . . . that form of interpretation which is concerned first and foremost with the meaning of a literary work," insofar as it "directly anticipates [the] demise" of that type of criticism (3).[5] James, says Iser, "has given a very clear account of two totally

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1. Henry James, *Literary Criticism: French Writers; Other European Writers; The Prefaces to the New York Edition*, ed. Leon Edel and Mark Wilson (New York: Library of America, 1984), p. 1235.

2. This is, of course, not to say that the critic's job would be to discover the author's intentions before or during writing. If "[t]here are no interpretations but only misinterpretations" (Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd ed. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1997], p. 95), then the question is not whether one's reading approximates the "true meaning" of the text, but whether one's misinterpretation is, in Bloom's terminology, weak or strong, dull or imaginative, dead or alive. By "standing off from the intended sense of things" James does not mean "missing the author's consciously intended meaning," as if he thought there is one correct meaning of a work of literature; he means failing to read literature redemptively in general. For in James's mind, as I attempt to show in this paper, imaginative literature is meant to work out its own salvation in the reader. For James it is literature itself that has a "religious" intention, and it is missing this intention, as opposed to some psychological state of the author, that he sees as the greatest mistake a reader (a critic) can make.

3. Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, "Henry James and Reader-Response Criticism (*The Figure in the Carpet*)," *Neohelicon* XXVII/1 (2000) 61–67, p. 62.

4. Although in my paper I do raise some questions concerning Iser's theory of aesthetic response (at least as it was originally put forward in his *Act of Reading*), my primary concern is not with his theory, but only with his interpretation of "The Figure in the Carpet." Accordingly, what I am arguing against is not Iser's theory of reading – which in it self is not contradictory to James's views – but what I deem to be his weak misreading of James's story. For a concise reception-history of the story see Szegedy-Maszák, "Henry James and Reader-Response Criticism."

5. All parenthesized references are to this edition: Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1978).

different approaches to the fictional text": One, according to which "meaning is . . . an object to be defined," and the other, according to which it is "an effect to be experienced" (10). In other words, James's story does not only anticipate the demise of the type of criticism whose foremost question is "What does this story mean?" (a question then answered by a proposition), but it also anticipates Iser's theory of aesthetic response put forward in his *Act of Reading*.

"At the very beginning of the story," Iser starts his analysis,

> the narrator – whom we shall call the critic – boasts that in his review he has revealed the hidden meaning of Vereker's latest novel, and he now wonders how the writer will react to the "loss of his mystery." If interpretation consists in forcing the hidden meaning from a text, then it is only logical to construe the process as resulting in a loss for the author.　　(4)

As we can see, the narrator-critic's views in Iser's interpretation come to represent the type of criticism of which Iser disapproves; Vereker, on the other hand, "denounces both the archeological ('digging for meaning') approach and the assumption that meaning is a thing" (5): When he approves of the narrator's suggestion that perhaps the meaning of his novels is like a figure in a Persian carpet, he gives evidence of his understanding of meaning as something that is "imagistic in character" (8), and is "the product of an interaction between textual signals and the reader's acts of comprehension" (9). It is obvious that Iser considers Vereker's view to be an anticipation of his own theory of aesthetic response.[6]

Iser, of course, does not say that the meaning of "The Figure in the Carpet" is that "meaning in literature is non-propositional;" that would obviously be a paradoxical proposition. He nevertheless unequivocally declares that James's story is "a very clear account of two totally different approaches to the fictional text" (10). In light of Iser's dictum, according to which the critic's job should be "not to explain a work, but to reveal the conditions that bring about its various possible effects" (18),

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6. While Iser does not think that James's purpose in writing "The Figure in the Carpet" was "to make a forecast about the future of literary criticism" (p. 3), Mihály Szegedy-Maszák goes much further than him when, citing James's Preface to *Roderick Hudson* in the New York edition, he says: "Other texts by James could also be cited to disprove Iser's claim that *The Figure in the Carpet* represents an 'unconscious' anticipation of certain interpretative strategies" (p. 64). Though Szegedy-Maszák – as opposed to Iser – makes a point of incorporating his interpretation into the whole of James's oeuvre, he never refers to James's Preface to "The Figure in the Carpet," a text I consider to be of central importance to its interpretation.

when he says "clear account," he cannot mean that this "clear account" would constitute the "meaning," or "message," of the text, but rather that it is part of its " 'performing' structure" that initiates a "performance of meaning" in the reader (27), which in this case would be an experience of him "becoming aware of his own prejudices," most of all that "meaning is a message or a philosophy of life" (8).

This raises the question whether Iser's implicit claim to have revealed the "performing structure" of James's story is valid, and whether this "performing structure" (going along with Iser, for now, let us not call it an interpretation yet) he assumes to be there in the text is, to paraphrase Heidegger's famous words, worked out in terms of James's art itself (195).[7]

The Hermeneutic Situation

Iser's concept of the "implied reader" works both as a safeguard against arbitrary interpretation, and as an element that liberates reading from the obsessing quest after the "true" meaning. Texts contain "intersubjectively verifiable instructions for meaning-production" (25), instructions that prestructure "the role to be assumed" by the reader: "The concept of the implied reader is therefore a textual structure anticipating the presence of a recipient without necessarily defining him" (34).

From a hermeneutic perspective the first question this naturally raises is how one can separate what is merely "structure," and "instruction" – or, in other words, what is really there in the text – from the performance of the reader who assumes the role offered him by the text, if this "structure" cannot be accessed apart from a concrete act of reading. For the understanding of even a single word in a text, according to the Heideggerian (i.e. temporal, existential, and non-essentialist) conception of the hermeneutic circle,

> is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented[8] to us. If, when one is engaged in a particular concrete kind of interpretation, in the sense of exact textual Interpretation, one likes to appeal [beruft] to what 'stands there,' then one finds that what 'stands there' in the first instance is nothing other than the obvious undiscussed assumption [Vormeinung] of the person who does the interpreting. In an interpretative approach there

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7. All parenthesized references are to this edition: Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962).

8. In the German "eines Vorgegebenen," i.e. "of a fore-given," a meaning that is already there before our act of interpretation, waiting to be understood.

lies such an assumption, as that which has been 'taken for granted' [gesetzt] with the interpretation as such – that is to say, as that which has been presented[9] in our fore-having, our fore-sight, and our fore-conception.

(191–192)

Heidegger denies that texts (objects) have an essentia, an intrinsic nature, an essential meaning, that we (subjects) are to grasp in an act of interpretation: Meaning is never "fore-given" in the text. Nevertheless, he does not think that the hermeneutic circle is a vicious circle, in which case all interpretations would have to be accepted as equally valid (or equally invalid), since everyone would be equally and eternally entrapped in their prejudices. For sure, there is no way out of the circle, but "[w]hat is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way" (195). Heidegger's hermeneutic circle is *temporal* – as opposed to it being spatial, in which case it indeed would be like a prison – therefore, even though understanding is never a presuppositionless grasping of bare facts, we can nevertheless – indeed we must – again and again re-evaluate our interpretation of things with the emergence of what Richard Rorty calls new vocabularies that seem to be more suitable for our purposes.[10] Heidegger put it this way:

> This circle of understanding is not an orbit in which any random kind of knowledge may move . . . our first, last, and constant task is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves.
>
> (195)

Iser's implicit claim to have only been revealing the "performing structure" of "The Figure in the Carpet" instead of telling us what the story means is therefore highly problematic, since our "recognition" of a structure in the text is always derived from our understanding of that text, and never vice versa.[11] When Iser asks the critic "not to explain a work, but to reveal the conditions that bring about its various possible effects" (18), what he is really asking is that the critic keep her interpretation of

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9. Again "vorgegeben ist," i.e. "that which is fore-given."

10. See Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 3–22.

11. For example: "interpretation is grounded existentially in understanding; the latter does not arise from the former" (Heidegger, p. 188); "Any interpretation which is to contribute understanding, must already have understood what is to be interpreted" (194).

the text to herself, and present the text's "performing structure" as arising *ex nihilo*, when in reality this "performing structure" is derived from the very act of interpretation she is not supposed to get enmeshed in.

A comparison of Iser's and Szegedy-Maszák's texts will amply illustrate this point. The narrator of James's story reports that Corvick, his friend, himself a critic, claims to have found the "figure" in Vereker's work; Corvick's claim is later also confirmed by Gwendolen, his wife. Iser thinks that Corvick, as opposed to the narrator, realizes that by "figure" Vereker meant "image," thus he comes to understand that "meaning is imagistic in character" (8). It is indeed because of this imagistic nature of his finding that "he cannot explain or convey the meaning [he has found] as the [narrator] seeks to do" (10). Szegedy-Maszák, on the other hand – though he is otherwise sympathetic to Iser's interpretation – is convinced that Corvick's claim to have found the figure "can be dismissed as unjustifiable":

> The fact that Corvick believes that he has acquired "the final knowledge" and so appropriation is a finite process proves that he is even less qualified to understand Vereker's novels than the narrator, who records his confession of failure, candidly admitting that he is unable "to trace the figure in the carpet through every convolution, to reproduce it in every tint."[12]

In Szegedy-Maszák's understanding, James's "use of the word 'figure,' meaning both 'character' and 'figure of speech,' leads to the suggestion that meaning is either undecided or absent."[13] Thus in his view the quest was doomed to failure from the start, since the "figure" is not something that can actually be found.[14]

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12. Szegedy-Maszák, p. 67.

13. Szegedy-Maszák, p. 64.

14. Szegedy-Maszák's interpretation is a lot more consistent than Iser's, since it does not require of him to lean over backwards to explain the contradiction that even though what the critics are looking for should not be something that can be "found" Corvick apparently does find it. According to Iser, as we have seen, Corvick does find the "meaning" of Vereker's novels, but because of its nature (non-propositional, imagistic), he "cannot explain or convey" it to the narrator. This explanation is unconvincing. There is nothing in the story that would suggest that the "thing" Corvick has "found" is something that cannot be put into words – that is exactly what makes the narrator's situation so maddening: He knows that Corvick knows, Gwendolen makes it absolutely clear that she "heard everything" (Henry James, "The Figure in the Carpet," *Selected Tales*, ed. John Lyon [London and New York: Penguin, 2001], 284–313, p. 306; all parenthesized references are to this text, which is reprinted from the New York edition), and still he is denied knowledge. In Szegedy-Maszák's interpretation the contradiction disappears, since Corvick, and Gwendolen after

Do we have a disagreement here on the level of the authors giving an account of the "performing structure" of the text or on the level of the "performance of meaning" this structure has initiated in them? This is the wrong question to ask, because the intersubjectively given "performing structure" of the text should *by definition* be the same for all of us. The difference then must necessarily be due to the fact that the authors in their discourses on the text have already passed way beyond a mere disclosure of its "performing structure" into the realm of "performance" itself – if a "beyond" would have any meaning here. It should be clear then that Iser, in talking about "The Figure in the Carpet," has long left the ivory tower of pure theory and, to paraphrase Macbeth, is in the "blood" of everyday interpretation "stept in so far that, should" he "wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o're."[15]

And this leads to our second question: If Iser's discourse on "The Figure in the Carpet" is nothing else but a good old interpretation grounded in a fore-structure of understanding, is this fore-structure worked out in terms of James's art? What does Heidegger mean by "working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves" anyway? He certainly does not work out a *method* of interpretation; the reason for this, however, is not at all that the working out of such a method is outside the interests of *Being and Time*, but that according to Heidegger's understanding of the hermeneutic circle such a method *in principle* cannot be worked out:

> Because understanding, in accordance with its existential meaning, is Dasein's own potentiality-for-Being, the ontological presuppositions of historiological knowledge transcend in principle the idea of rigour held in the most exact sciences. (195)

Working out such a method would really be only a misguided attempt at avoiding the hermeneutic circle itself, an attempt at securing a meaning thought to be really there in the object of inquiry. But understanding, for Heidegger, is not a reaching

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him, belong to the same old meaning hunter group of critics the narrator belongs to, only even worse, because they – unlike the narrator – actually believe they have found the "meaning" of Vereker's work. On the other hand, if we assume, as I do, that what Vereker wants the critics to "find" is indeed something that can be "found" and put into words, and Corvick indeed "finds" it and tells it to Gwendolen, there is no contradiction to explain to begin with.

15. See *Macbeth* 3.4.135–137.

out of a subject towards an object[16] in order to find its meaning, but a mode of our being in the world:

> Meaning is an *existentiale* of Dasein, not a property attaching to entities, ly-ing 'behind' them, or floating somewhere as an 'intermediate domain.' Dasein only 'has' meaning, so far as the disclosedness of Being-in-the-world can be 'filled in' by entities discoverable in that disclosedness. *Hence only Dasein can be meaningful. . .* (193)

What are we to do then? How are we to work "out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves"? Certainly not by working out a method of interpretation. What Heidegger rather means is that we are "to recognize beforehand the essential conditions under which [interpretation] can be performed" (195); i.e. we are to see that the study of literature is not an exact science, and what is at stake is never whether an interpretation agrees with the correct meaning "attaching" to the text:

> In interpreting, we do not, so to speak, throw a 'signification' over some na-ked thing which is present-at-hand, we do not stick a value on it; but when something within-the-world is encountered as such, the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world, and this involvement is one which gets laid out by the interpretation. (190–191)

Since the "involvements" of texts must necessarily change in time, interpretation is a never-ending process. In our case it makes a world of a difference whether we have read James's Preface to "The Figure in the Carpet," or some of his other essays on criticism – not because such texts naturally reveal their author's intentions in writing his fictional works, but simply because – at least in James' case – of their explanatory power. Of course, part of this power is derived from our knowledge of the fact of their being written by the same natural person. But it does not follow from this that therefore all such comparative readings are the products of a naïve herme-neutics that takes an author's comments on his own work to be transparent pro-nouncements made by a speaking subject. James has been dead for nearly a century

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16. "But no sooner was the 'phenomenon of knowing the world' grasped than it got inter-preted in a 'superficial,' formal manner. The evidence for this is the procedure (still customary today) of setting up knowing as a 'relation between subject and Object' – a procedure in which there lurks as much 'truth' as vacuity. But subject and Object do not coincide with Dasein and the world" (Heidegger, pp. 86–87).

– all we have now is texts he has left behind.[17] Whether any of these can reveal their author, Henry James Jr., is from a pragmatic point of view an indifferent, if not meaningless, question since *none* of his texts is accessible apart from an act of interpretation; in other words the theoretical texts do not, and cannot, offer us pronouncements from outside the Hermeneutic Circle. If anything actually amounts to an attempt at escaping the Hermeneutic Circle, it is the theoretical decision to shut everything out but the "text proper" of our interpretation. For our knowledge of the fact that "The Art of Fiction" and "The Figure in the Carpet" are texts written by the same natural person, Henry James Jr., should in no way be construed as knowledge that is extraneous to our understanding of these texts – no knowledge constitutes any such things as facts preceding understanding, and therefore being outside the Hermeneutic Circle.

Understanding is a temporal process, and it is this temporal dimension of understanding that makes it possible for us to be able to revise our interpretations. What Heidegger means then by not allowing the fore-structures of our understanding "to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves" (195) is that we must always keep on scrutinizing the "involvements" of our interpretation, lest they prove to be mere "fancies," and thus we must always remain open to the possibility of recognizing our views as – to use a pragmatist, non-essentialist vocabulary – no longer expedient. As William James emphatically put it: "[W]e have to live to-day by what truth we can get to-day, and be ready to-morrow to call it falsehood."[18]

Iser's interpretation of "The Figure in the Carpet" is then not "incorrect" in the sense of it not being in agreement with the true meaning of the text – we have deemed the use of the term "true meaning" no longer worth using[19] – but unconvincing. Under a scrutiny of its "involvements" Iser's interpretation turns out to be not so much an interpretation *of* "The Figure in the Carpet," but more like an amplification of Iser's own theory of aesthetic response *by* "The Figure in the Carpet": The fore-structures of Iser's interpretation are not worked out in terms of James's art; upon a

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17. What his comments were if he was alive is a question obviously beyond the interests of this paper.

18. *The Writings of William James*, ed. John D. McDermott (New York: The Modern Library, 1968), p. 438.

19. I am paraphrasing Rorty here: "the term 'intrinsic nature' is one which it would pay us not to use, an expression which has caused more trouble that it has been worth" (*Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 8).

close reading of "The Figure in the Carpet" in the context of James's Preface to it in the New York edition as well as some of his other texts written on the subject of criticism, another picture emerges, one quite different from Iser's.[20]

James and Criticism

According to Iser's interpretation the "focal point of *The Figure in the Carpet* is the meaning of Vereker's last novel" (3):

> At the very beginning of the story, the narrator – whom we shall call the critic – boasts that in his review he has revealed the hidden meaning of Vereker's latest novel, and he now wonders how the writer will react to the "loss of his mystery." If interpretation consists in forcing the hidden meaning from a text, then it is only logical to construe the process as resulting in a loss for the author. (4)

The "conflict" then evolves from the narrator-critic accidentally overhearing Vereker's dismissing remark about how the reviewer of his novel "[d]oesn't see anything" (288).

If we now make an attempt at clearing our mind of the dichotomy of meaning as proposition versus meaning as experience, a very different pattern comes to the surface. First of all, the narrator-critic is initially in no search of a "hidden meaning" of Vereker's last novel at all; on the contrary, it is Vereker himself who plants the idea in his mind that there *is* something to be sought for in his work. Secondly, the narrator does not wonder, "how the writer will react to the 'loss of his mystery.'" What Iser misses seeing is that the sentence "We had found out at last how clever he was, and he had had to make the best of the loss of his mystery" (286) should be read not as one expressing the narrator's view, but as one reporting Vereker's – highly ironic – words. In order to see this, the full paragraph must be quoted:

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20. I must press the point that by saying that "the fore-structures of Iser's interpretation are not worked out in terms of James's art" I do not mean to say that Iser's interpretation is alien to the "true nature" of James's art, as I do not want to say anything about things such as the "true nature" of James's art. What I mean is that the *vocabulary* – in Rorty's sense – Iser uses in *The Act of Reading* is less convincing than the vocabulary I am offering in my present paper to interpret James's story. I believe that if one adopts my vocabulary, she will be in a better position to make sense of not only "The Figure in the Carpet," but many of James's other writings as well. My paper is meant to be a better *tool* for reading James than that of Iser's.

When afterwards, in the course of our gregarious walk, I found myself for half an hour, not perhaps without another manoeuvre, at the great man's side, the result of his affability was a still livelier desire that he shouldn't remain in ignorance of the peculiar justice I had done him. It wasn't that he seemed to thirst for justice; on the contrary I hadn't yet caught in his talk the faintest grunt of a grudge – a note for which my young experience had already given me an ear. Of late he had had more recognition, and it was pleasant, as we used to say in *The Middle*, to see how it drew him out. He wasn't of course popular, but I judged one of the sources of his good humour to be precisely that his success was independent of that. He had none the less become in a manner the fashion; the critics at least had put on a spurt and caught up with him. We had found out at last how clever he was, and he had had to make the best of the loss of his mystery. I was strongly tempted, as I walked beside him, to let him know how much of that unveiling was my act; and there was a moment when I probably should have done so had not one of the ladies of our party, snatching a place at his other elbow, just then appealed to him in a spirit comparatively selfish. It was very discouraging: I almost felt the liberty had been taken with myself.   (286)

Vereker talks with the happy resignation of the misunderstood author who has given up on trying to explain things to an uncomprehending public; reveling in irony, what he is really saying (in my paraphrase) is that the narrator and other critics like him have not even begun to understand his work: "Well, now that you've found out what makes my work tick, I think I'll just have to make the best of the loss of my mystery" meaning "Ah, forget it! I can't even start to explain it to you, you're all a bunch of dilettanti!" – to which the narrator's naive reaction is (to quote James's text now): "I was strongly tempted, as I walked beside him, to let him know how much of that unveiling was my act." Now that the narrator is looking back at the event he is fully aware of the fact that Vereker took him for a fool, which makes this recollection of his past reaction to Vereker's words self-mockingly ironic as well.

Such ironies are of course only detectable after at least two readings when we are fully aware of the fact that the person narrating the story is someone who has not only failed to discover Vereker's secret, but has virtually gone mad in the search. The narrator now (half crazily) smiles at his earlier smugness when not only did he fail to see anything, but did not even realize that there *was* anything to be seen.

For he is actually first convinced that "Vereker had made a fool" of him and that the "buried treasure was a bad joke, the general intention a monstrous *pose*" (293).

That the idea of Vereker's work having a "general intention" does not come from him is further confirmed by a mirror scene at the end of the story, in which he tries to find out what Vereker's "general intention" was from Drayton Deane, the last person alive that could possibly know it. But Deane looks into his face uncomprehendingly: " 'Vereker's books had a general intention?' I stared in my turn. 'You don't mean to say you don't know it?' I thought for a moment he was playing with me" (311).

And the narrator's revenge, for all the madness he has gone through in not being able to find out what Vereker's "general intention" is, is doing the same thing to Deane Vereker did to him: Setting him out on what he believes to be a maddeningly hopeless search.

> I saw the immediate shock throb away little by little and then gather again into waves of wonder and curiosity – waves that promised, I could perfectly judge, to break in the end with the fury of my own highest tides. I may say that to-day as victims of unappeased desire there isn't a pin to choose between us. The poor man's state is almost my consolation; there are really moments when I feel it to be quite my revenge.   (312–313)

What the narrator is initially proud of, then, is "the peculiar justice [he] had done" Vereker (286); i.e. (this is what the reader is to think about the kind of review whose main characteristic is that it "does justice" to an author) he has written a dilettantish, superficial "panegyric" (287). As the narrator is an inexperienced, "aspiring young analyst,"[21] it is not without good reasons that Corvick has his doubts when asking him to help him out, hoping he would not be "silly" in his review:

> "Silly – about Vereker! Why what do I ever find him but awfully clever?"
> "Well, what's that but silly? What on earth does 'awfully clever' mean? For God's sake try to get *at* him. Don't let him suffer by our arrangement. Speak of him, you know, if you can, as *I* should have spoken of him."
> I wondered an instant. "You mean as far and away the biggest of the lot – that sort of thing?"
> Corvick almost groaned. "Oh you know, I don't put them back to back that way; it's the infancy of art!   (285)

But Corvick's fears materialize, and the narrator with his review does prove himself to be still in the infancy of the art of criticism; Corvick is dissatisfied with it (285), Vereker calls it "the usual twaddle," and, ironically, "a charming article" (287).

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21. James, *Literary Criticism*, p. 1235.

What is wrong with his review is not that he has dug up a bunch of propositional meaning, as Iser thinks; he has actually – though not of any propositional meaning – "dug up" too little:

> What he [Corvick] would have said, had he reviewed the new book, was that there was evidently in the writer's inmost art something to *be* understood. I hadn't so much as hinted at that: no wonder the writer hadn't been flattered! I asked Corvick what he really considered he meant by his own supersubtlety, and, unmistakably kindled, he replied: "It isn't for the vulgar – it isn't for the vulgar!" (293)

The narrator could not "get at" Vereker, as Corvick wanted him to, because he has failed to read his work passionately. His review is, as Vereker says, written in "cheap journalese" (291): It is a collection of vulgar clichés, it is cheap journalism. James's comment in his Preface speaks for itself:

> I to *this* extent recover the acute impression that may have given birth to "The Figure in the Carpet," that no truce, in English-speaking air, had ever seemed to me really struck, or even approximately strikeable, with our so marked collective mistrust of anything like close or analytic appreciation. . .[22]

James, like Vereker, was dissatisfied with contemporary English criticism's "curiosity never emerging from the limp state"; he perceived in it an "odd numbness of . . . sensibility," the result of which he called "stand[ing] off from the intended sense of things."[23] In a short essay, entitled "The Science of Criticism," published in 1891, just five years before "The Figure in the Carpet," James complained of the "vulgarity, the crudity, the stupidity . . . [of] the offhand review" that "has nothing in common with the art of criticism."[24] But his problem with the "offhand review" is not that its author has the mistaken idea of meaning being a thing to be extracted from the text. James even says that the result of quality criticism is that the original work of art is "preserved by translation," and that the critic "has to understand for others, to answer for them." His problem is with the type of criticism that fails to bring literature alive, because it does not originate in a profound reading experience. For in James's mind the only real difference between the work of the novelist and the work of the

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22. James, *Literary Criticism*, p. 1234.
23. James, *Literary Criticism*, p. 1235.
24. Henry James, "The Science of Criticism," in *Literary Criticism*, 95–99, pp. 96, 95.

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critic is that the critic "deals with life at second-hand as well as at first; that is, he deals with the experience of others, which he resolves into his own." When a critic writes about works of literature, he "has to make them as vivid and as free as the novelist makes *his* puppets."[25] In this view, then, criticism is not a science, but as Harold Bloom puts it, "either part of literature or nothing at all";[26] it either inscribes itself into the very history of imaginative literature in the manner of Longinus, Dr. Johnson, or William Hazlitt, or is nothing but journalism doomed to be discarded the moment it is put on paper.

James held criticism and the critic in extremely high esteem, so when Iser says that the "exalted position of the critic . . . [as] formulated by Carlyle . . . for James, just fifty years later, has already become a historic and invalid norm" (6), he is clearly mistaken, as the following passage from "The Science of Criticism" should amply demonstrate:

> The critical sense is so far from frequent that it is absolutely rare, and the possession of the cluster of qualities that minister to it is one of the highest distinctions. It is a gift inestimably precious and beautiful . . . not only do I not question in literature the high utility of criticism, but I should be tempted to say that the part it plays may be the supremely beneficent one when it proceeds from deep sources, from the efficient combination of experience and perception. In this light one sees the critic as the real helper of the artist, a torch-bearing outrider, the interpreter, the brother. . . . [W]hen one considers the noble figure completely equipped – armed *cap-à-pie* in curiosity and sympathy – one falls in love with the apparition. It certainly represents the knight who has knelt through his long vigil and who has the piety of his office. For there is something sacrificial in his function, inasmuch as he offers himself as a general touchstone. . . . His life, at this rate, is heroic, for it is immensely vicarious. He has to understand for others, to answer for them; he is always under arms.[27]

To be sure, we do not find sentences in James such as Carlyle's "the true Literary Man . . . is the light of the world; the world's Priest: – guiding it, like a sacred Pillar of Fire, in its dark pilgrimage through the waste of Time,"[28] but the differ-

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25. James, "The Science of Criticism," p. 99.
26. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, p. xix.
27. James, "The Science of Criticism," pp. 98–99.
28. Quoted in Iser, p. 6.

ence is only one of diction: For a full appreciation of "The Figure in the Carpet" it is also crucial for us to see that James is a true heir to British and American Romanticism.

James, Romanticism, and the Revelation of the Figure

In his *Psychological Novel* James biographer, Leon Edel, remarked that "the novel of subjectivity represents historically a return to romanticism";[29] a reading together of Wordsworth's "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*" and James' "The Art of Fiction" should make it clear that what James says of prose fiction is basically the same thing Wordsworth says of poetry.

The objective of Wordsworth's poetry in *Lyrical Ballads* was "to choose incidents and situations from common life" and "throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way" (*WP*, 595).[30] Therefore, though the raw material of poetry is "common life," the result is not meant to be a "realistic" depiction of an outside reality for its own sake; Art is seen not as a mirror held up to Nature, but as an expression of the artists experience of life: "For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (*WP*, 596).[31] As an effect of this kind of poetry, Wordsworth

29. Leon Edel, *The Psychological Novel: 1900–1950* (London: Hart-Davis, 1955), p. 140. Apart from this comment, Edel does not make out a case for James's Romanticism. Works that do make out a case for James's Romanticism include Daniel Mark Fogel's *Henry James and the Structure of the Romantic Imagination* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), and Charles Schug's *The Romantic Genesis of the Modern Novel* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979).

30. All parenthesized references are to this edition: William Wordsworth, "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802)," in *Romantic Poetry and Prose*, ed. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 594–611.

31. Romantic art posits itself as "the external manifestation of an ideal content which is itself an interiorized experience, the recollected emotion of a bygone perception" (Paul de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996], p. 100). Cf.: "While many major poems by Wordsworth and Coleridge – and to a great extent by Shelley and Keats – set out from and return to an aspect or change of aspect in the landscape, the outer scene is not presented for its own sake, but only as a stimulus for the poet to engage in the most characteristic human activity, that of thinking. The important romantic poems are in fact poems of feelingful meditation which, though often stimulated by a natural phenomenon, are concerned with central human problems. Wordsworth asserted that it is 'the Mind of Man' which is 'my haunt, and the main region of my song'" (M. H. Abrams, *A*

says, "the understanding of the [reader] . . . must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affections ameliorated" (*WP*, 597); indeed, for Wordsworth, "to endeavour to produce or enlarge this capability [of being excited by common life] is one of the best services in which . . . a writer can be engaged" (*WP*, 598).[32] For the Romantics poetry is thus seen, to use M. H. Abrams's term, as a means to the "apocalypse of imagination."[33]

James, like Wordsworth before him, is not a "aesthete" (i.e. he does not think that the relationship between art and reality is unimportant): The "only reason for the existence of a novel," he says, "is that it does attempt to represent life" (*AF*, 46).[34] This is of course not to say that Jonathan Freedman is not justified in calling James "a professionalized exponent of a purified form of aestheticism"[35] who helped "transform the volatile and unstable example of aestheticism in England into that more austere form of aestheticism we call modernism."[36] But what divides James from fin de siècle aestheticism – his rejection of the idea that art must be subservient to morality while still believing that it can be morally beneficial – is precisely what unites him with the High Romantics. When Shelley says "Didactic

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Glossary of Literary Terms, 5th ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988, p. 116). "Wordsworth's Copernican revolution in poetry is marked by the evanescence of any subject but subjectivity, the loss of what a poem is 'about' " (Harold Bloom, "The Internalization of Quest-Romance," in *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom [New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1970], 3–24, p. 8). The basic work on the subject is still M. H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

32. Coleridge's wording is even more emphatic: "Mr. Wordsworth . . . was to purpose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand" (S. T. Coleridge, "Biographia Literaria," in *Romantic Poetry and Prose*, 634–654, p. 645).

33. M. H. Abrams, "English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age," in *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*, 91–119, p. 107.

34. All parenthesized references are to this edition: Henry James, "The Art of Fiction," in *Literary Criticism*, 44–65.

35. Jonathan Freedman, *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism, and Commodity Culture* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 182.

36. Jonathan Freedman, p. xxvii.

poetry is my abhorrence,"[37] he speaks for all the Romantics, who – in that sense – can surely all be called "aesthetes"; but as M. H. Abrams has show in the last chapter of *The Mirror and the Lamp*, the High Romantics also believed in the self-bettering power of poetry. It is therefore important to differentiate between Romantic aestheticism – something James endorsed – and fin de siècle aestheticism – which James rejected.[38]

But neither is James a "realist" (i.e. he does not think that art should be a faithful and objective representation of some singular reality),[39] for when he says a "novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life" (*AF*, 50), the emphasis is on "personal," and "impression." Since James's famous "definition" cries out for citation, it is often read without its context to the possible effect of it being understood as if it said "a novel is a slice of life, a direct presentation of reality itself," which is just about the direct opposite of what James really means to say. What James is saying is that a novel's possible ways of interesting its readers

> are as various as the temperament of man, and they are successful in proportion as they reveal a particular mind, different from others. A novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life: that, to begin with, constitutes its value, which is greater or less according to the intensity of the impression. (*AF*, 49–50)

37. Percy Bysshe Shelly, "Prometheus Unbound: Preface," in *Romantic Poetry and Prose*, 422–425, p. 424.

38. "Aestheticism here [*The Portrait of a Lady*] is represented as a species of malevolence, indeed, as central to a hyperbolically understood form of evil. In the malevolent Gilbert Osmond, James creates a figure so spectacularly pestiferous as to have defined the lineaments of the aesthete for the next 50 years. . ." James's goal in *The Portrait of a Lady* "is ultimately to perform the discrimination of aestheticisms we have seen his earlier fiction aspiring to achieve: to assert or define through the vehicle of Isabel Archer a stance in which aestheticism might be understood as being a positive, even redemptive model for the fictional act – a solution to the problems posed by aestheticism that his subsequent writings both build upon and critique" (Jonathan Freedman, pp. 145–146).

39. This of course does not mean that a work like *The Bostonians* is not *stylistically* realistic. But James – even in his stylistically most realistic work – is never interested in showing us how things "really are" (see his letter to H. G. Wells cited bellow), nor does he think that it is deliberately selecting the commonplace aspects of reality that makes a novel realistic. Thus he rejects as "little to the point" the romance-novel distinction as well ("Art of Fiction," p. 54–55).

What makes a novel realistic, then, according to James, is precisely the fact that while reading it we are experiencing someone else's experience of life – provided that it is intense enough.[40] James makes this point even clearer in another essay published in 1883, a year before "The Art of Fiction":

> The success of a work of art, to my mind, may be measured by the degree to which it produces a certain illusion; that illusion makes it appear to us for the time that we have lived another life – that we have had a miraculous enlargement of experience. The greater the art the greater the miracle . . . I am perfectly aware that to say the object of a novel is to represent life does not bring the question to a point so fine as to be uncomfortable for any one. . . . For, after all, may not people differ infinitely as to what constitutes life – what constitutes representation?[41]

His argument against H. G. Wells's charge of aestheticism is the same:

> Of course for myself I live, live intensely and am fed by life, and my value, whatever it be, is in my own kind of expression of that. Therefore I am pulled up to wonder by the fact that for you my kind (my sort of sense of expression and sort of sense of life alike) doesn't exist; and that wonder is, I admit, a disconcerting comment on my idea of the various appreciability of our addiction to the novel and of all the personal and intellectual history, sympathy and curiosity, behind the given example of it. It is when that history and curiosity have been determined in the way most different from my own that I want to get at them – precisely *for* the extension of life, which is the novel's best gift.[42]

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40. James's emphasis on intensity speaks of another way he is indebted to the Romantics: See e.g. Keats's famous letter on "Negative Capability": "the excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty & Truth" ("To George and Tom Keats, December 21, 27 [?], 1817," in *Romantic Poetry and Prose*, 767–768, p. 767), or Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*: "A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively . . . . The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause" ("A Defence of Poetry," in *Romantic Poetry and Prose*, 746–762, p. 750). On "intensity" in Romantic theory see also M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, pp. 132–138.

41. Henry James, "Alphonse Daudet," in *Literary Criticism*, 223–249, p. 242.

42. Henry James, "Henry James to H. G. Wells July 10, 1915," in *The Portable Henry James*, ed. Morton Dauwen Zabel (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 483–485, p. 484.

When James says, therefore, that the novel's business is "to represent life," he means life as "it resides in the strong consciousness of [the artist] seeing all for himself"; for James the artist is "the modern alchemist" in whom his craft "renews . . . something like the old secret of life."[43] Like Wordsworth's, James's theory of art is essentially an expressive, i.e. Romantic, theory of art, according to which "the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer. In proportion as that intelligence is fine will the novel, the picture, the statue partake of the substance of beauty and truth" (*AF*, 64). These are words any of the High Romantics could have written, and if James's vocabulary sounds irredeemably old-fashioned to one's ear, that just shows how far she is removed from early nineteenth century Romantic rhetoric, and in turn, how close James still is to it. Attempts have been made to update James's Romantic vocabulary. Paul B. Armstrong, for example, has argued that James's "perspective is essentially phenomenological,"[44] and has given an explanation of how James relates art and morality using the vocabulary of phenomenology:

> Just as James argues that the morality and truth of a novel depend at bottom on how the artist knows the world, so phenomenology finds that morality and truth in general can claim no other foundation than lived experience. . . . [According to James] even the most mimetic art is an expression of the artist's way of being-in-the-world, a reflection not of the "real" pure and simple but of the unique and individual reality created when the artist engages the world according to his temperament and position.[45]

This kind of vocabulary updating is necessary for the apologist who believes that the old vocabulary is unsalvageable, and Armstrong's attempt is essentially apologetic. I certainly agree with him that James, with the benefit of hindsight, can be read as an exponent of ideas carrying germs of phenomenology. But I am wondering if James really is in need of such an apology.[46] We certainly would not say

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43. Henry James, "The Spoils of Poynton, A London Life, The Chaperon," in *Literary Criticism*, 1138–1155, p. 1141.

44. Paul B. Armstrong, *The Phenomenology of Henry James* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), p. VII.

45. Armstrong, pp. 5, 51.

46. Not to mention that, like Rorty says, from a Pragmatist point of view "both analytic philosophy and phenomenology were throwbacks to a pre-Hegelian, more or less Kantian, way of thinking – attempts to preserve what I am calling 'metaphysics' by making it the study of the 'conditions of possibility' of a medium (consciousness, language)," (Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 79n).

today that works of art "partake of the substance of beauty and truth," because it would sound like an endorsement of the existence of Platonic Forms. But if we reread this quotation from James again: "the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer. In proportion as that intelligence is fine will the novel, the picture, the statue partake of the substance of beauty and truth," we cannot but see that the emphasis is not at all on substances that exist independently of the human mind; the emphasis is precisely on the human mind that produces a work of art. The rest of the statement, today, reads more like rhetorical flourish; but even if we read it as if it was written by the Shelley of *A Defence of Poetry*, or the Emerson of "The Poet," still we should not fail to see how radical this Romantic vocabulary is on its way to proposing that "truth" is not something to be found "out there," but is to be created by us, humans. When the Romantics found that through acts of imagination they were capable of re-enchanting a mechanical world of dead atoms, the result was (and still is) so spectacular that they could not but believe that they had gotten in touch with a Higher Reality. But everything they said can today be reread as saying that it is actually the re-descriptive power of imaginative language that creates truth for us, as opposed to it having an existence independent of the human mind. For the twenty-first-century Pragmatist the language of the Romantics is in no way a dead language; it is an archaic, but still clearly understandable version of her own language.

James's idea about the potential effects of literature on the reader is also Wordsworthian. Wordsworth believed that "the power of the human imagination is sufficient to produce such changes even in our physical nature as might almost appear miraculous" (*WP*, 609); James says reading an intense representation of an artist's impression of life produces "a miraculous enlargement of experience."[47] In other words James, in accord with the Romantics, still believed in the redemptive power of art for the individual reader, though not for society.[48] But with this we are back at "The Figure in the Carpet," because in this reading the story is concerned not with two different understandings of the nature of meaning, but with two different ways of relating to imaginative literature.

"What I most remember of my proper process," writes James in his Preface to "The Figure in the Carpet," "is the lively impulse, at the root of it, to reinstate analytic

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47. James, "Alphonse Daudet," p. 242.

48. For a transference of hope for social renovation to individual renovation in the Romantic period, see M. H. Abrams' "English Romanticism."

appreciation, by some ironic or fantastic stroke, so far as possible, in its virtually forfeited rights and dignities."[49] Rather than showing something negative then, like the ultimate uncertainty of all meaning, or the impossibility of translating literary meaning into propositions, James's objective is primarily positive: it is to show a certain way of reading literary works of art to be "the Beautiful Gate itself of enjoyment."[50] This way of reading is represented in the story both by the way Corvick and Gwendolen read literature, and, symbolically, by their love for each other.

For Corvick and Gwendolen "literature was a game of skill, and skill meant courage, and courage meant honour, and honour meant passion, meant life" (299). Their passion for reading is absolutely enormous; James's "fantastic stroke" is really a hyperbolic metaphor: He understands deep reading – "analytic appreciation" – as a passionate love affair between the reader and the literary work of art. When the narrator tells Vereker about Corvick and Gwendolen being in love, and how they are trying to get at Vereker's "general intention" together, "Vereker seemed struck with this. 'Do you mean they're to be married?' 'I dare say that's what it will come to.' 'That may help them,' he conceded, 'but we must give them time!' " (295); and later the narrator remarks that Corvick and Gwendolen "would scarce have got so wound up . . . if they hadn't been in love: poor Vereker's inner meaning gave them endless occasion to put and to keep their young heads together" (296). Then Corvick leaves for India – he does not even have to take Vereker's books with him anymore, because by this time, just like Gwendolen, "he knows every page . . . by heart" (300) – where, as in a revelation, the figure "sprung out at him like a tigress out of the jungle" (300);[51] however, upon his return to England he refuses to share his secret with Gwendolen until they are married. Indeed, it seems, they actually put their engagement on hold in the first place because Corvick felt he needed a change of scenery in order to solve Vereker's puzzle, and then the reason he withholds his knowledge from Gwendolen after his return to England is that he knows that this will make her desperate enough to stand up to her mother, who is reluctant to give her consent to their marriage. Their love for imaginative literature – as well as their love for each other – finally consummates, the narrator is convinced, on their wedding night: "For what

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49. James, *Literary Criticism*, p. 1235.

50. James, *Literary Criticism*, p. 1235.

51. Harold Bloom, a critic admittedly in the Longinian-Romantic tradition, says: "Whitman demands, and rewards, preternaturally close reading, the kind that I believe is allied to possession-by-memory. You have to know his major poems intimately to render them justice, or for them to alter you, at least as a reader" ("Introduction," in *Walt Whitman: Selected Poems*, ed. Harold Bloom [New York: The Library of America, 2003]).

else but that ceremony [of revealing the figure] had the nuptials taken place?" (305). For Corvick "analytic appreciation," quite literally, becomes "the Beautiful Gate of enjoyment." Thus in James's story love and its consummation in marriage are meant to be flawless symbols of passionate reading and "the apocalypse of imagination," respectively.

What is it then that Corvick discovers? What is it that a critic is to discover? For James the work of the critic is analogous to the work of the writer, the only difference there being between the art of fiction and that of criticism is that while the former is "a direct impression of life" (*AF*, 50) – proceeding from a relationship between Author and Life – the latter is of "life at second-hand"[52] – proceeding from a relationship between Reader (Critic) and Work. The key term for both Author and Critic is "life." Just as a good novel will be an intense representation of its author's impression of life, good criticism will be an intense representation of the critic's impression of the literary work of art, "life at second-hand":

> Any vocation has its hours of intensity that is so closely connected with life. That of the critic, in literature, is connected doubly, for he deals with life at second-hand as well as at first; that is, he deals with the experience of others, which he resolves into his own. . . . He has to make them as vivid and as free as the novelist makes *his* puppets. . .[53]

This is exactly what Vereker says to the uncomprehending narrator who, the embodiment of the non-Romantic critic, tries to find out whether the secret is to do with form or content: "Well, you've got a heart in your body. Is that an element of form or an element of feeling? What I contend that nobody has ever mentioned in my work is the organ of life" (291). In "The Art of Fiction" James said "the only classification of the novel that I can understand is into that which has life and that which has not" (*AF*, 55); he found this formula applicable to criticism as well: "And it is with the kinds of criticism exactly as it is with the kinds of art – the best kind, the only kind worth speaking of, is the kind that springs from the liveliest experience."[54] A work of criticism must be alive, have a life of its own; as the novelist "converts the very pulses of the air into revelations" (*AF*, 52) so should the critic, having as a reader experienced an "apocalypse of imagination," convert his experience into a revelatory reading that, as Harold Bloom put it, "will matter to others

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52. James, "The Science of Criticism," p. 99.
53. James, "The Science of Criticism," p. 99.
54. James, "The Science of Criticism," pp. 98–99.

as well as to himself."[55] For James the novel, if it is alive, offers a vicarious experience of a life, a view on the world we could not have experienced otherwise, and the job of criticism is to produce readings that will help us live that life of the work of art – at least while we are reading. Corvick is a critic capable of producing a reading of Vereker's novels that Gwendolyn can call her "life" (307) – Corvick's reading is not *about* life:[56] It *is* life.

Our narrator, however, fails. As we have seen James said that his story is an "ironic stroke," and "The Figure in the Carpet" is indeed a textbook example of the type of structural irony where the reader is to gain an insight into the very thing the narrator fails to see by recognizing the blindness of the point of view that is being offered to him. The reason the narrator cannot see is not that he has the wrong idea of what literary meaning is, as this is not an issue either for him or for James, but that he is a bad reader. For James, as we have seen, a good reader is a passionate lover whose love affair with his beloved, the literary work of art, culminates in an apocalyptic marriage between the reader's imagination and the "life" that is offered to him in that work. Our narrator, however, lacks the passion one needs to read well. He spends only a very short period of time actually reading Vereker's novels:

> Returning to town I feverishly collected them [Vereker's novels] all; I picked out each in its order and held it up to the light. This gave me *a maddening month*, in the course of which several things took place. One of these, the last, I may as well immediately mention, was that I acted on Vereker's advice: I renounced my ridiculous attempt.   (292, my emphasis)

It is not long before both Vereker and his novels are "spoiled" for him, though he confesses, "I had taken to the man still more than I had ever taken to the books" (298). Having himself now completely given up the arduous work of close reading, he passively waits for Corvick to "unveil the idol" (305); when that plan is frustrated by Corvick's untimely death, he tries to get the secret out of Gwendolen – but he is flatly refused. Ironically, he comes closer to the solution than he realizes when at one point he says: "Was the figure in the carpet traceable or describable only for husbands and wives – for lovers supremely united?" (306); but then he bears witness to a complete lack of awareness of what he has just said: "There might be little in it, but there was enough to make me wonder if I should have to marry Mrs. Corvick to get what I wanted (307); for lover (poet/reader) he is not, but an illegal "spy" – as Emer-

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55. Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 3.
56. See James, "The Figure in the Carpet," p. 291.

son would have called him – desperate to pry into a holy communion from which he is excluded forever.

James ends his Preface to "The Figure in the Carpet" with the following words:

> [T]he question that . . . comes up, the issue of the affair, can be but whether the very secret of perception hasn't been lost. That is the situation, and "The Figure in the Carpet" exhibits a small group of well-meaning persons engaged in a test. The reader is, on the evidence, left to conclude.[57]

These words are not without a dark potential, for in reading "The Figure in the Carpet" we too might easily end up "as victims of unappeased desire" (313) caught up forever in a search for something that eludes us again and again; the narrator has then taken his revenge on us too: Where there should be meaning, we can only see undecidability. What James, with Emerson, would then say to us, is that "the ruin or the blank, that we see . . . is in our own eye."[58]

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57. James, *Literary Criticism*, pp. 1235–1236.

58. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays and Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte (New York: Library of America, 1983), p. 47.

Imola Bülgözdi

"We Looked like Salt and Pepper"

Children's Perception of Race
in Short Stories by Southern Women Writers

The aim of this essay is to explore one of the most controversial issues of American literature, a problem that has been haunting especially the authors of the American South since the days of slavery. The chosen perspective, namely the attitude of children, is doubly rewarding due to the opportunity to investigate different forms of prejudice and their internalisation with an eye to the psychological background, while the keen eye of women writers to victimisation and the children's need to conform to the expectations of the community is foregrounded. The short stories by various African American and white authors highlight diverse aspects of and sometimes the surprising lack of prejudice in a racist environment, and their main interest lies in the realistic representation of the personal dimension of these phenomena, which are incomprehensible for children in their abstract form. Nevertheless, by addressing the consequences of children's sensitivity to social hierarchy and their reaction to its inherent values and practices which come under the term of Foucauldian disciplinary discourses, these stories are part of a larger social reality.

The child is father of the man – is that so when it comes to the most pressing and debated issue of the American South? Race relations, overtly or covertly, have been part of the literature of the region since the earliest times and the 20th century saw changes that brought a significant number of African Americans in a much closer contact with whites than ever before. Prejudice and racism have been a constant focus for sociological research but quantitative data, on the one hand, was found to vary depending on the formulation of the question or the interviewer's race[1] and on the other hand, does not highlight or convey the subtle nuances of everyday encounters. The difficulty of conducting research on children's racial attitudes and the prob-

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1. G. D. Jaynes & R. M. Williams, Jr. eds., *A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society* (Washington, D. C.: National Academy Press, 1989).

lematic interpretation of the results just add to the complications when trying to explore the scientific background to an ever-present concern of Southern life, documented by a number of Southern women writers, both white and black.

> As historians have established, prior to the civil rights movement (under Jim Crow in the South and de facto segregation in the North), there existed an elaborate code of conduct for relations between whites and blacks. Eye contact, pedestrian behavior, and forms of address were all strictly regulated in order to reinforce white supremacy and black submission.[2]

Consequently, growing up in the segregated South meant learning a double set of standards of behaviour for children of both races and the need to conform to expectations shaped by decades of prejudice and the doctrine of the inherent superiority of the white people. Sadly enough, the discourse of race is still a powerful disciplinary discourse, and as "discipline produces subjects by categorizing and naming them in a hierarchical order, through a rationality of efficiency, productivity and 'normalization,' "[3] identity-formation at that time inevitably entailed a coming-to-terms with these restrictions. In Southern society the Foucauldian 'dividing practices' that in any society separate, for example, the insane from the sane, acquired a very prominent position among the disciplinary discourses, as they used to form the basis for interracial conduct and covertly influenced many other social practices of both parties.

> Where the relations between groups are the subject of strong feelings, or where they are regulated by widely-held values and norms, or where they are institutionalized in compulsory segregation, there would we expect the relevant attribute (like 'race' or 'religion') to enter most strongly into people's identities.[4]

By substituting the 'ors' with 'ands' in Milner's observation, we get an adequate description of the attitudes of the region, which is corroborated by Morland's findings in 1966 that "Southern white children had a significantly greater ability to make

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2. Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, "How to Behave Sensitively: Prescriptions for Interracial Conduct from the 1960s to the 1990s," *Journal of Social History* (Winter, 1999). Retrieved on May 18, 2005. <http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2005/is_2_33/ai_58675452>.

3. Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003), p. 230.

4. David Milner, *Children and Race* (London: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 49.

racial distinctions [based on appearance] than did Northern whites or Negroes."[5] However, this is not to say that they were more prejudiced as well, it was rather the result of exposure to situations when the identification of race was expected from them.

But how does such an attribute as race enter "into people's identities?" Nash claims that "when you look at the so-called races, the categories crumble. . . . Race is a myth . . . it has been socially constructed and historically shaped rather than biologically determined."[6] This aspect could not be more clearly illustrated than by Zora Neale Hurston's 1928 essay in which she describes

> the very day that I became colored. Up to my thirteenth year I lived in the little Negro town of Eatonville, Florida. . . . During this period, white people differed from colored to me only in that they rode through town and never lived there. . . . But changes came . . . and I was sent to school in Jacksonville. I left Eatonville . . . as *Zora*. When I disembarked from the river-boat in Jacksonville, she was no more. . . . I was not Zora of the Orange County any more, I was now *a little colored girl*. I found it out in certain ways. In my heart as well as in the mirror, I became a [color]fast brown—warranted not to rub nor run.[7]

The fact that trend studies embracing the period between the 1940s and 1980s still report that "whites living in the North have been and remain more pro equal treatment than those living in the South"[8] also justifies the social construction of race. Prejudice and racist attitudes in the South are the legacy of complex historical and socio-economic factors, which naturalised white supremacy long ago, and therefore, the children's adoption of such views and the process of incorporating them can be regarded as similar to the way they relate to gender and associated roles. Aboud's detailed description of the types of questions and more sophisticated tests used for measuring ethnic awareness and prejudice points out that they focus on the same aspect of child psychology: correct or incorrect identification with own group, identi-

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5. Milner, p. 49.

6. George Nash, *Forbidden Love* (New York: Henry Holt and Co. 1999), p. viii, as quoted in J. Sexton, "The Consequence of Race Mixture: Racialised Barriers and the Politics of Desire," *Social Identities* 9:2 (2003) 241–275.

7. Zora Neale Hurston, "How It Feels to Be Colored Me," in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co. 1994), vol. 2, 1008–11, pp. 1008–9 (my italics).

8. *A Common Destiny*, p. 117.

fication of groups different from one's own and the perception of group constancy,[9] the only difference being the definition of the groups: male/female or black/white/Chinese/Native American. Evidence shows that in both cases children perceive the groups in terms of power relations as well, which means that gender- and race-related behaviour and concepts are learned in similar ways: by socialisation to a hierarchical organisation. Due to the fact that girls brought up in the conservative segregated South, regardless of being white or African American, were expected, even forced to identify with 'the losers' in the male-female power relations, I believe that the women writers of the region are capable of giving a more sensitive account of children's perception of race.

The subordinate position occupied by women in relation to men is a constant reminder of childhood dependency and it was race and not gender that secured white women a position superior to that of African Americans. The South's leading social theorist, George Fitzhugh made it clear in 1854 that "women, like children, have but one right, and that is the right to protection" which "involved the obligation to obey. . . . If she be obedient, she stands little danger of maltreatment."[10] With little variation, we can find the consequences of the profound division between the genders as late as 1930 in the manifesto of the Nashville Agrarians, in John Crowe Ransom's essay, "Reconstructed but Unregenerate": "the feminine form is likewise hallowed among us under the name of Service. The term has many meanings, but we come finally to the one which is critical for the moderns; service means the function of Eve."[11] Consequently, white women experienced race and gender relations in a more problematic way than white males in the South, whose position was uncontested: even as late as 1965 the Southern writer, Lillian Smith claimed that "there's a male and female South, which are two different entities. Then there's a black South and a white South, which are two more cleavages. [...] The South has usually meant the male, white South."[12] I suppose the involvement and sensitivity of African American women in questions regarding race need not be detailed.

Eugene D. Genovese's meticulous research covering almost all aspects of slave life deals with race relations among children, as well. This topic has a long history,

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9. Frances Aboud, *Children and Prejudice* (Oxford & New York: Blackwell, 1988).

10. Cited in Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), p. 145.

11. Twelve Southerners, *I'll Take My Stand* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), p. 10.

12. Will Brantley, *Feminine Sense in Southern Memoir: Smith, Glasgow, Welty, Hellman, Porter and Hurston* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), p. 14.

documented by anxious planters' diaries, who usually tried to protect their children from the "corrupting influence" of the slave children, "but such rules usually proved unenforceable, for the white children eagerly sought the companionship of the black children their own age." What is more, "some ex-slaves tell of white children who, in a variety of ways, protected their black friends from punishment by white adults or slipped food to hungry playmates" and some also taught them to read and write.[13] In one of the most famous slave narratives, Frederick Douglass describes a similar relationship from a purely practical point of view, which emphasises the everyday concerns of an orphan, who suffered from hunger and cold: "My connection with Master Daniel was of some advantage to me. He became quite attached to me, and was a sort of protector of me. He would not allow the older boys to impose upon me, and would divide his cakes with me."[14] Later, when he moves to Baltimore, he adopts the strategy of making friends with as many little white boys as possible and learns to read with their help. This could work only with children who were too small to have fully comprehended and internalised the restrictions imposed by slavery.

Another deprivation that made Douglass suffer all his life was the fact that he had no information concerning his age. "By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant. . . . The white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege."[15] This was beyond Miss Sophia Jane Gay as well, who at the age of ten chose a date at random, and "made an entry of Nannie's birth-date in the family Bible, inserting it just below her own. 'Nannie Gay' she wrote, in stiff careful letters, '(black),' "[16] unconsciously presenting her with a bit of the personal history slaves lacked and made considerable efforts to reconstruct after the Civil War, for example, in their choice of family names.

The first meeting of the spoilt five-year-old little miss and the younger "scrawny, half-naked black child with . . . a potbelly" and arms "like sticks from wrist to shoulder" was typical of their station: "'I want the little monkey,' said Sophia Jane to her

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13. Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1975), pp. 515–6.

14. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an African Slave. The Classic Slave Narratives*, ed. H. L. Gates, Jr. (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 270.

15. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass,* p. 255.

16. Katherine Anne Porter, "The Old Order," in *The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter* (San Diego & New York & London: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1979), 321–68, pp. 328–9.

father . . . 'I want that one to play with.' "[17] There was no hint that a relationship similar to symbiosis would develop between the two children and would last all their lives. Sophia Jane's unusually strong childhood attachment to Nannie continued in adulthood: when the latter, who had previously acted as a wet-nurse for her mistress, almost died of puerperal fever, to the consternation of all the family, the white lady decided to nurse not only her own baby but her slave's as well. However, Katherine Anne Porter makes it clear that Nannie's blind devotion extends as far as the person of Sophia Jane, after whose death she stops working in the big house and moves into a hut by herself. She is not the stereotypical, loyal servant of sentimental plantation novels, who would sacrifice her life for her white family. She is a person in her own right and it is the special bond with the white lady that makes her stay after the emancipation and, bearing in mind the written and unwritten laws of slave-holding, such a bond cannot have been formed but in early childhood.

This is not to say that young children are not prejudiced, as their cruelty and ability to ostracise are well-known. "Social-cognitive developmental theories claim that prejudice is inevitable in young children because of their cognitive limitations"[18] but it is necessary to distinguish between the reasons that dominate certain age-groups' attitudes. The prejudice of four to seven-year-olds is determined on the one hand, by their emotions and by need satisfactions, and on the other hand, by their perception of dissimilarity, whereas their self-centred understanding of the world prevents them from clearly grasping the basis of ethnicity or focusing on other individuals.[19] Therefore, white children's assertion of their superiority was mostly based on the hierarchical structure of the family and servants and its manifestations learned from their elders, as shown by Porter's autobiographical heroine, Miranda's way of talking back to her black nurse: "Oh, hush up, Dicey. . . . I don't have to mind *you*," or "you don't know what you're talking about."[20]

The closeness of the antebellum 'black and white family' was a prerequisite for such a relationship as Sophia Jane's and Nannie's, and the disappearance of this way of life brought about significant changes. Fear and suspicion dominated the period of Reconstruction, then segregation tried to minimise the contact between the two groups, the legacy of which is still clearly detectable in the results of trend studies (1940s through 80s): "whites are more accepting of equal treatment with regard to

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17. Porter, p. 330.
18. Aboud, p. 27.
19. Aboud, pp. 22–24.
20. Porter, p. 347.

the public domains of life than private domains of life, and they are especially accepting of relations involving transitory forms of contact."[21] Such arrangements did not facilitate interracial contact, especially in conservative rural white communities, among the descendants of people who could never afford slaves and later considered the African American workforce as competition for the few jobs available. Olsen's article on the extent of slave ownership draws our attention to the far-reaching economic effects in the post-bellum period: "white racism was, of course, essential to the existence and preservation of this economic opportunity for whites, and it is important to recognize just how many southern whites had an economic interest in the development, propagation, and acceptance of racism within the South."[22] Consequently, it was not only in the slave-owners' interest to keep down the wages of ex-slaves, but discrimination also helped the poor whites to gain influence. This socio-economic factor, which percolated through all the white social layers, is another proof of the social construction of race.

In "The Artificial Nigger" Flannery O'Connor describes Nelson's first encounter with black people on his trip to the city, where he is taken by his grandfather so that he stops wishing for a life different from their simple countryside existence. The main issue for both of them is the presence of African Americans who, naturally, evoke the curiosity of the ten-year-old, as "there hasn't been a nigger in this county since we run that one out twelve years ago and that was before you were born."[23] The reader finds out immediately the attitude of the community and Nelson's reaction is strongly influenced by the grandfather's way of asserting his authority concerning this topic. When derided because unable to identify light-skinned African Americans, he does not turn against his grandfather, instead "he felt that the Negro had deliberately walked down the aisle in order to make a fool of him and he hated him with a fierce raw fresh hate; and also, he understood now why his grandfather disliked them."[24]

O'Connor's short story presents a scenario that was confirmed by psychological research, namely the effect of authoritarian child-rearing practices combined with ethnocentrism. Due to the former, children above seven suffer from a certain amount of hostility towards parents that they cannot express, while the parents' prejudice

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21. *A Common Destiny*, p. 117.

22. Otto H. Olsen, "Historians and the Extent of Slave Ownership in the Southern United States," *Civil War History* 50:4 (2004) 401–17.

23. Flannery O'Connor, "The Artificial Nigger," in *The Complete Stories* (London: Faber & Faber, 1990), 249–7, p. 252.

24. O'Connor, pp. 255–6.

singles out 'bad' people who are appropriate targets of anger,[25] making a scapegoat of African Americans in this case. Nelson is old enough to interpret the moods and understand the way of thinking of the grandfather who brought him up on his own, thereby demonstrating that his views are based on thinking as well, rather than emotions only. His reaction comes under the concept of prejudice proper, as the hateful negative evaluation "is elicited by the person's ethnicity and not only by the unique, personal qualities of the individual" whom he saw only for a moment. The later developments also show the boy's "consistent tendency to respond in a negative way,"[26] which is the third criterion: when wandering lost in a district inhabited by black people they both begin to sweat and Nelson is "afraid of the colored men and he didn't want to be laughed at by the colored children."[27] The only exception is the huge black woman who makes an ambiguous impression on the boy, who "stood drinking in every detail of her" and "would have collapsed at her feet if Mr. Head had not pulled him roughly away." His reaction is partly that of the child and partly that of the man:

> He suddenly wanted her to reach down and pick him up and draw him against her and then he wanted to feel her breath on her face. He wanted to look down and down into her eyes while she held him tighter and tighter. He had never had such a feeling before. He felt as if he were reeling down through a pitchblack tunnel.[28]

Is this archetypal female figure the Mammy or the black lover, or possibly both? Nelson's feelings and the accompanying shame are those of the Southern white male, attraction and guilt haunting him since the days of slavery. As the boy had had no previous contact whatsoever on which such intimate feelings could be based, his reaction might be O'Connor's ironic stab at white men's well-known but shunned traditional preference for African American women, which went against their racism and their justification of segregation.

This aspect of Southern life was political dynamite as well, but children were more likely to grasp the personal side of miscegenation. As late as 1988, in *Sex and Racism in America* Hernton states that "there is no doubt that the sexual aspect is as much a 'thorn in the side' to blacks as it is to whites. Both groups, for their own spe-

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25. Aboud, pp. 90–91.
26. Aboud, pp. 5–6.
27. O'Connor, p. 261.
28. O'Connor, p. 262.

cial reasons, are hideously concerned about it."[29] The majority of the records inform us about many mulatto slave children who suffered at the hand of the mistress for the sin committed by the master or were sold not to offend her. However, some slave-owners were decent enough to free their own children, which meant a huge improvement in their fortunes. As the ban on interracial marriages was invalidated by the Supreme Court only in 1968, previously all such relationships were considered illicit affairs in the South, which usually entailed that the African American party was at the mercy of the white. Alice Walker's tragic story, "The Child Who Favored Daughter" describes the anguish of the younger brother, still a child, whose favourite lovely sister "had chosen to give her love to the very man in whose cruel, hot, and lonely fields he, her brother, worked. Not treated as a man, scarcely as well as a poor man treats his beast."[30] She comes home ill, humiliated and not in her right mind, stamping the hatred on her brother's mind so much so that he later cripples his wife to prevent her from taking the imaginary white lover and cruelly mutilates his beautiful daughter, who has a love affair with a married white man.

In this story, as well as in "How Did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy," the difference between the races is mostly illustrated by the huge gap in the financial situation and the disapproval of the family is directed against the disloyal daughter who does not consider all the insults their people had to put up with. The fourteen-year-old protagonist is raped by a married lawyer, who bribes her into continuing the relationship with presents, money and the promise of sending her to college. Her hatred and distaste succumb to their appeal, as she has no other chance to leave the slums, and even if not in love, the girl appreciates this.

> I thought he *loved* me. That *meant* something to me. What did I know about 'equal rights'? What did I care about 'integration'? . . . I wanted somebody to tell me I was pretty, and he was telling me that all the time. . . . History? What did I know about History?[31]

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29. Charles Hernton, *Sex and Racism in America* (New York: Grove Press, 1988), p. 2, as quoted in Sexton.

30. Alice Walker, "The Child Who Favored Daughter," *In Love and Trouble* (London: The Women's Press, 1984), 35–46, p. 38.

31. Walker, "How Did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy," in *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* (London: The Women's Press, 1982), 21–26, pp. 24–5.

Both stories describe a way of resisting male white power and remaining loyal to one's race. The former leads to tragedy due to the brother's self-destructive attitude, while the latter ends on a less sordid note, at least from the African American girl's point of view. After her mother's death, when she becomes old enough to realise she has been cheated and humiliated, on a sudden impulse she kills the lawyer and takes the money from the safe, empowering herself, if not politically, at least financially. Given the problematic nature of such relationships and the following pain and resentment, it is not so surprising that in the 1979–80 National Survey of Black Americans 39 percent of the respondents still agreed that "black women should not date white men" and the figure for black men and white women was 31 percent,[32] that is roughly every third person disapproved of interracial dating.

Luckily, there were many exceptions to the rule, when the relationship of black or white children and an adult of the other race was characterised by real affection on both sides. In Caroline Gordon's short stories "The Burning Eyes" and "The Long Day" the little white boys are great friends with the African American tenants, who take them hunting and fishing. These stories are not at all nostalgic recollections of the past and 'happy Negroes,' as in both cases their relationship is not idealised. The children are aware of the differences but are not offhand; in fact they consider these trips real treats and treasure the unusual experiences. The explanation Gordon covertly furnishes has to do with the children's inability to grasp the ideology that influences the attitude of their elders. While O'Connor's Nelson, lacking any positive experience, has no difficulty lining up with his grandfather's prejudiced views, in "The Long Day" Henry shows much more sympathy for the black woman, their field hand's wife, than his mother, the perfect lady in the big house. Her harsh "I hope he beat her within an inch of her life"[33] is in strong contrast with her son's thoughts upon hearing Sarah cry, "not a loud crying like a grown person's, but a tiny, low moaning, almost like a little baby's. She must be feeling pretty bad to be crying like that."[34]

In Carson McCullers's "Untitled Piece" the typical middle-class household arrangement is recreated, with the black domestic servant, who also acts as a surrogate mother for the three orphans. Vitalis is twelve years Andrew's senior and becomes his close friend in the lonely house; her kitchen is "warm and full of good smells and

32. *A Common Destiny*, pp. 199–200.

33. Caroline Gordon, "The Long Day," in *The Collected Stories of Caroline Gordon* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981), 76–81, p. 76.

34. Gordon, p. 78.

life. . . . She knew about the lonesome feeling and was good to him."[35] Her nurturing role goes far beyond providing food for the always hungry adolescent, "it was for words like this that he was always going in to Vitalis . . . It wasn't only for warmed up food and coffee she would give him," as she "was good and there wasn't anybody else like her."[36] Throughout the story her African American physical characteristics, like her thick lips, her plaited hair shiny with oil or her way of walking, are present and once she is described as listening intently, "as a savage rapt in prayer." Nevertheless, she is 'domesticated' to a certain extent and everything connected with her and black people is the source of pleasant emotions for Andrew, who feels at 'home' in the colored section of the town, which is not at all true of the poor whites' district.

The only time he finds this part of town strange and disturbing is late at night, when sounds of lovemaking float in the air, which he cannot consciously interpret but show his subconscious attraction to Vitalis. Three years later, at the age of seventeen he finds her alone by chance and "it was then that the thing happened that he had expected without knowing in his mind." There is no temptress and there is no rape either, as one would expect based on the traditional scenario.

> It wasn't him and it wasn't her. It was the thing in both of them. . . . It was the dim room and the quietness. And all the afternoons he had spent with her in the kitchen. And all his hunger and the times when he had been alone.[37]

The drive is neither the white male's lust, nor the black woman's mercenary attitude but mutual desire for the other person, which is impossible without close contact and an accepting atmosphere. This is another instance of affection transcending Southern prejudice, as Vitalis's race is never foregrounded in a way that would single her out and represent her as a sub-human being.

In "A Sudden Trip Home in the Spring" by Alice Walker, very similar physical characteristics make scholarship-winner Sarah the exotic beauty of the art school in the north, where the other girls admire the "proud gazelle" and tactlessly parade her for friends and relatives to see. "She was interesting, 'beautiful,' only because they had no idea what made her, charming only because they had no idea from where she came."[38] Their fascination stems from curiosity, as they do not know that in Georgia

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35. Carson McCullers, "Untitled Piece," *Collected Stories of Carson McCullers* (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 80–103, p. 90.

36. McCullers, pp. 98–99.

37. McCullers, pp. 100–1.

38. Walker, "A Sudden Trip Home in the Spring," in *You Can't Keep*, 124–137, p. 130.

"she would be another ordinarily attractive *colored* girl"[39] and before meeting Sarah they had never talked to a black person. In spite of all the fuss they make around her she feels invisible, like the little girl in a poster, whose face is hidden. Even though this attitude to race is qualitatively different and the African American girl is an embodiment of a stereotype based on preconceptions not on prejudice, her schoolmates are unable to relate to her as if she were a real flesh-and-blood person. From this point of view, Sarah's position is not much better than poor Uncle Albert's, the ex-slave's, who ended up literally as a *stuffed dummy* in the shop window of the plantation owner's grandson in Walker's other shocking story, entitled "Elethia."

Before the integration of schools, few black children had the chance to meet white kids on equal terms in the South and Toni Morrison's "Recitatif" describes an unusual situation: Twyla and Roberta, aged eight, are both taken to a shelter, with an irresponsible and a sick mother in the background, respectively. Realising they are to stay in the same room, the white girl is overwhelmed by negative feelings instilled by her mother's racist comments: "The minute I walked in and the Big Bozo introduced us, I got sick to my stomach. It was one thing to be taken out of your own bed early in the morning—it was something else to be stuck in a strange place with a girl from a whole other race."[40] Nevertheless, she is touched by Roberta's tactfulness and the girls become as thick as thieves, called salt and pepper by the other kids, and are also bound by their status in the community: they are the only ones who "weren't real orphans with beautiful dead parents in the sky. We were dumped. Even the New York City Puerto Ricans and the upstate Indians ignored us."[41]

The formative experience of the few months spent together is contrasted with short encounters paced at several years' distance, which enable the reader to follow how their attitudes change. As they grow older, the question of race is more and more intertwined with civil rights and politics, consequently, their meeting during the protests following the integration of schools takes on a hostile tint on Roberta's part and Twyla takes up the challenge just to prove her friend is wrong. Interestingly, Morrison hit the nail on the head, as their attitude is in line with the findings of surveys conducted in the 1980s: whites tend to view discrimination "as a problem created and maintained by prejudiced individuals," whereas for blacks it is "a result of

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39. Walker, "A Sudden Trip Home in the Spring," p. 127.

40. Toni Morrison, "Recitatif," in *The Oxford Book of Women's Writing in the United States*, eds. L. Wagner-Martin & C. N. Davidson (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 159–175, pp. 159–60.

41. Morrison, p. 160.

both prejudiced individuals and broader social processes."[42] This short story is also a proof of the different way children think about race and emphasises the importance of personal contact that can modify the prejudiced views of their surroundings. However, the pressure exerted by the family, community and society at large cannot be ignored. The child is father of the man and mother of the woman up to a certain extent, since prejudice and racism are incorporated in a subtle way, sometimes unconsciously, in a process that is rarely under a child's or adolescent's control. Nevertheless, not all the white children and adolescents in the stories respect the 'dividing practices' as an omnipotent regulatory power in the discourse of race, thereby creating new, less rigidly defined subject positions both for themselves and their African-American friends. It is clear that the construction of African-American and white identities is intertwined, and the other Foucauldian disciplinary discourse, namely "the technologies of the self, whereby individuals turn themselves into subjects"[43] does not always take the easy way by accepting the ready-made subject positions of racist discourse on either side. Some of the children are able to modify these subject positions when they establish interracial contact on equal terms, while others fight violently for a new articulation of the self, even by eliminating the white male figure who confers the traditional subordinated identities on all the rest of the Southern society.

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42. *A Common Destiny,* p. 151.
43. Barker, p. 229.

Balázs Csizmadia

"The Tale"

A Self-conscious Fictional Artifice*

This paper presents a narratological reading of Joseph Conrad's last short story, "The Tale." Its aims are twofold. First, relying on Gérard Genette's narrative theory, it argues that "The Tale" is a text that thematises its own fictionality. Secondly, the present study is understood as a critical test of Genette's system, a test that should highlight some of its fortes and deficiencies. In accordance with the method used here, the analysis focuses on the intricate web of tales observable in the text, the main character's act of narration, the problem of ambiguity and interpretation, as well as how the general theme of narration runs through "The Tale." One manifestation of the latter is that the seven tales within the text all have slightly different implications, which seem to be carried already by the generic title of the short story. Drawing on the *OED* definitions of the word 'tale,' I suggest that all of these implications interact in the text to foreground the problem of narration and interpretation, of telling and listening, of objectivity and subjectivity.

1 Introduction

While "The Tale" (1917) may not be Joseph Conrad's finest short story, it undoubtedly ranks among his most perplexing ones. The fact alone that for late Conrad, it is also exceptionally sophisticated in execution, does not suffice to account for the attention it has received in literary criticism. Indeed, "The Tale," with a length of around 6,700 words only, has been a favourite for more than two decades with Conradians exploring the writer's short fiction. There are various reasons for this, most notably a high level of ambiguity and openness. Also, it is Conrad's last short story,

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and the only one dealing explicitly with the First World War.[1] Critics have read it as a psychocultural text, have placed it in the context of Modernism and modern wars. However, given the story's narrative complexity, it is little wonder that narratological approaches predominate.[2] The approach adopted in this paper belongs to the latter category as well – more specifically, Gérard Genette's narrative theory will serve as the basis of analysis. Nevertheless, this does not mean that I simply wish to offer yet another narratological reading of the story, (mis)interpreting and extending earlier criticism. The aims of this essay are twofold. First and foremost, as indicated by the argumentative and possibly provocative title, "The Tale" is seen here as a text that thematises its own fictionality and deals with the problem of narration and interpretation, of telling and listening, as well as with the impossibility of tales being completely objective and credible.[3] This is what I will argue for throughout this paper, drawing on Genette as a means of showing *how* the text succeeds in shaping the thematics through the use of certain narrative devices. Thus, it is my declared wish to combine structuralist textual analysis with interpretation, in the hope that both can contribute to supporting as well as questioning some of the implications of the other. Secondly, then, the present study is also thought of as a critical test of Genette's system, a test that should highlight some of its fortes and deficiencies, revealing how this specific narrative theory can add to the understanding of "The Tale."

2 Method

Before setting about the in-depth analysis and interpretation of the text, it seems necessary to comment more extensively on the method to be used here. The idea of making use of Genette's theoretical framework in an analysis of Conrad's works and indeed of this very short story is not new. Admittedly, I was a little disappointed to learn this since I had already decided on my approach and feared that it would thus

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1. Owen Knowles and Gene M. Moore, *Oxford Reader's Companion to Conrad* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), p. 364.

2. Knowles and Moore, p. 364.

3. The idea of interpreting "The Tale" in this vein came to me when I was reading Keith Carabine's introduction to *Joseph Conrad: Selected Short Stories* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1997), pp. xxiii–xxiv. Carabine notes that "as its generic title spotlights, ['The Tale'] is a self-conscious artifice" (xxiii). Yet, since none of the detailed studies I was able to consult treat the story exactly in this way, and because Carabine's brief, introductory remarks could only serve as a hint, it seemed worthwhile to follow and develop this thread, using, as I had long before decided upon, Genette's system of narrative analysis.

be very difficult to discover new aspects of the narrative. It is, however, not at all surprising that Conrad studies and narratology should cooperate productively. The significance of narrative technique in Conrad, a writer whose association with Modernism is inseparable from his experimenting with the various possibilities of presenting a narrative, is hardly disputable. The decision on the critic's part to adopt Genette's and not any other theory of narrative need not confound us either since his is still the most comprehensive one. Genette's contribution to narratology is immense, therefore we can safely say that no one interested in this field of study can afford unfamiliarity with his influential works.[4] Indeed, several studies following Genette's approach were written on individual Conrad texts.[5] For the present discussion, the most important ones are obviously those that deal with "The Tale," which is, as was mentioned above, a story that lends itself especially well to a narratological reading due to its form as well as content. Jakob Lothe and Jeremy Hawthorn both explore the Chinese-box structure of "The Tale," and they both acknowledge the importance of Genette to their own analyses.[6] However, as I noticed with some astonishment, they are reluctant to use the Genettean terminology and to explore the

4. These are "Discours du récit," *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972) and *Nouveau discours du récit* (Paris: Seuil, 1983). The English translations I will refer to throughout this paper are Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1995) and Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1990).

5. From among those whose subject is not "The Tale," the *Oxford Reader's Companion to Conrad* refers to the following (p. 238): Mary Sullivan, "Conrad's Paralipses in the Narration of *Lord Jim*," *Conradiana* 10 (1978) 123–140; Ian Watt, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1980), p. 295 – he adopts Genette's analepsis and prolepsis in a discussion of time in *Lord Jim*; Linda M. Shires supplements Watt's discussion in "The 'Privileged' Reader and Narrative Methodology in *Lord Jim*," *Conradiana* 17 (1985) 19–30; Allan H. Simmons applies Genette's concept of focalization in " 'Conflicting Impulses': Focalization and the Presentation of Culture in *Almayer's Folly*," *Conradiana* 29 (1997) 163–172.

6. The relevant studies, which I will refer to in this essay, are the following: Jakob Lothe, *Conrad's Narrative Method* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) and Jeremy Hawthorn, *Joseph Conrad: Narrative Technique and Ideological Commitment* (1990. London: Arnold, 1992). It has to be mentioned that obviously Lothe and Hawthorn examine other Conrad works as well, but they both give a detailed reading of "The Tale" in an entire chapter each. Unfortunately, two other examples of a narratological approach to this short story were not available in the libraries of Hungary; these are: the relevant chapter in William W. Bonney, *Thorns & Arabesques: Contexts for Conrad's Fiction* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1980) and Vivienne Rundle, " 'The Tale' and the Ethics of Interpretation," *The Conradian* 17/1 (1992) 17–36.

possibilities inherent in his system. All I can do is to make conjectures about the causes of this reluctance. First of all, Genette's terms can indeed seem opaque and even frightening to those who are not familiar with them, probably because a number of these are derived from Greek roots – and the general reader of a study on Conrad may very well be unaware of important publications in the field of narrative theory. This is precisely the reason why the present study contains a glossary of the Genettean terms that are used here. Moreover, clinging to Genette's approach may result in an analysis that some (or many) would consider too technical and 'dry.' Yet, this does not necessarily have to be the case. By combining structuralist textual analysis with interpretative comments an equilibrium can be achieved between scholarly precision on the one hand and critical enthusiasm and inventiveness on the other. Also, I share Genette's conviction that it is not always possible and desirable to force a coherent reading at all costs.[7] Thus, I do not claim that Conrad's last short story is exclusively a tale about tales, but here I would like to read it as such while integrating some other aspects as well.

As regards the problem of terminology, one may have serious doubts as to whether studies devoted to Conrad's narrative technique can sacrifice precision on the altar of better intelligibility. It seems a paradoxical method to draw on Genette and at the same time use some of the very terms he discarded because of their theoretical invalidity. Is it, for instance, justified that Lothe continues to commit the pre-Genettean sin of distinguishing between 'authorial' and 'personal' narrators, or that he uses the expression nonfocalized narrative synonymously with 'authorial narrative'?[8] To conclude the methodological discussion, I still have to motivate the decision to apply Genette's system. The general benefits of familiarity with this specific narrative theory for analysts of fiction are brought to the point by Jonathan Culler's foreword to *Narrative Discourse*:

> As the most thorough attempt we have to identify, name, and illustrate the basic constituents and techniques of narrative, it [*Narrative Discourse*] will prove indispensable to students of fiction, who not only will find in it terms

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7. In the afterword to *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (p. 155), Genette reacts to criticism he received for his rejection of a synthesis of the categories of tense, mood and voice – a rejection he "justified as a refusal to unify Proust's work artificially. I still feel as much repugnance toward those impositions of 'coherence' that interpretative criticism carries off so glibly."

8. It is true that Lothe himself is aware of the problems these simplifications involve (see *Conrad's Narrative Method*, pp. 11 and 13). The more paradoxical, however, his method appears to be.

to describe what they have perceived in novels but will also be alerted to the existence of fictional devices which they had previously failed to notice and whose implications they had never been able to consider. Every reader of Genette will find that he becomes a more acute and perceptive analyst of fiction than before.[9]

In addition, I hope to be able to demonstrate that working within Genette's theoretical framework has not insignificant advantages for our present discussion of "The Tale." Notably, Genette's system should help us shed light on the status of the various tales in the story, and prove very useful in determining what the functions of the commanding officer as narrator are and how he manipulates his narrative according to his own taste.

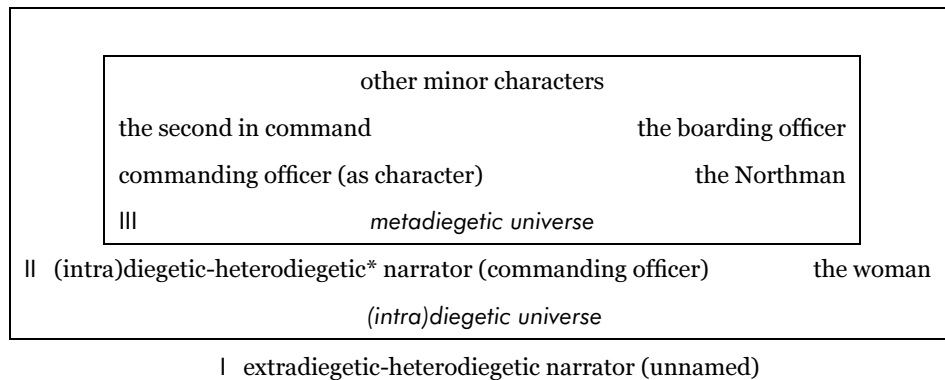## 3 Discussion of "The Tale"

3.1 Tales within "The Tale"

The title of this subsection may at first sight seem to involve a clumsy repetition of the word 'tale,' yet the repetition is not only necessary but also suggestive. It is necessary because to replace 'tale' with a set theoretical term such as 'narrative' would run counter to our adopted theoretical framework and blur the very distinction to be made here between the status of the different tales. On the other hand, the repetition is suggestive because it is only made possible by the generic title of the short story which bears thematic importance as well. This question will be examined later, but now we should turn our attention to the tales. The Genettean category of voice allows us to describe the narrating acts and the corresponding narrative levels in "The Tale." The unnamed frame narrator who speaks first and introduces the reader to the narrative setting is extradiegetic and heterodiegetic – he (or she?) does not inhabit the diegetic universe in any form, not even as a character. However, this is not enough to explain why he never uses the first person singular pronoun to refer to himself. The fact that he does not also means that he never designates himself as narrator and keeps a distance to the events told, which will require further comment at a later stage of this essay. Lothe's use of 'authorial' instead of our 'extradiegetic-

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9. Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, p. 7. Culler is also right to make clear that *Narrative Discourse* does not merely attest to a "Gallic delight in the adventures of thought" but is also a "broadly based theoretical study" (p. 8).

heterodiegetic' attribute is thus especially misleading since 'authorial' may be associated with a narrator who sometimes interrupts his narrative with 'author's intrusions,' and narrators who do so often refer to themselves, which they can only do in the first person singular. The commanding officer in his function as narrator in the second degree, together with the woman who is his listener, is part of the diegesis: in Genette's terms, he is (intra)diegetic. His act of narrating opens up a further narrative level, a metadiegetic universe in which all the characters of the commander's tale are situated – most notably he himself as protagonist. Nonetheless, because he does not admit until the end that he *is* the commanding officer, he has to be described formally as a heterodiegetic narrator. If he were completely honest, he would feel obliged to use the first person to designate himself as a character in his tale; we know he does not, which is a narrative trick whose implications will be dealt with later in detail. As opposed to the extra- and heterodiegetic narrator, however, he often refers to himself as 'I' in his function *as narrator*. Again, we can see clearly that the presence of the first person singular can be indicative of "two very different situations."[10]

The following chart should help illuminate and offer a visual overview of the narrating acts and narrative levels in "The Tale":

other minor characters	
the second in command	the boarding officer
commanding officer (as character)	the Northman
III *metadiegetic universe*	

II (intra)diegetic-heterodiegetic* narrator (commanding officer)　　　the woman

(intra)diegetic universe

I extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator (unnamed)

As we can see, the other attribute used to characterise the intradiegetic narrator, 'heterodiegetic,' is marked with an asterisk – this is to indicate that, as was mentioned above, it is only from a formal aspect that the term applies to him. But for the narrative trick the commanding officer uses, he would not only be a homodiegetic but also an autodiegetic narrator, one who is the protagonist of his own story. At this

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10. See Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, p. 244.

point, it has to be stressed that the Chinese boxes above cannot represent all the tales in "The Tale." The reader may have noticed that here the word 'tale' is to be used in a very broad and non-technical sense so as to designate far more than the structurally representable narratives.[11] Genette's system allows us, namely, to pinpoint only two 'full-status' narrators and two corresponding narratives.[12] Yet, there seem to be several other tales that cannot be called narratives in the Genettean terminology but which will take on thematic importance as well. They all contribute significantly to our perception that "The Tale" is indeed a self-conscious fictional artifice, a story that thematises the problem of narration and interpretation. Lothe criticises Bonney's equation of four concentric tales in the text: "the all-encompassing authorial narrative, the commander's story to his mistress . . . the Northman's story which the commander does not believe" and the "grave murmur in the depth of his [the commanding officer's] very own self."[13] Lothe quite rightly points out that while Bonney is justified in claiming that the first three tales are embedded in one another, that is, are concentric, there is a considerable difference between them and the commanding officer's inward voice (the "grave murmur") because the latter is not "manifestly part of the narrative structure."[14] However, it appears that even the distinction Lothe drew needs further refinement, and that there are still more tales in the story which must not be ignored. Firstly, we have two structurally representable narratives, the intra- and the metadiegetic ones, or what Lothe refers to as the authorial narrative and the commander's story respectively. Secondly, it is true that the third tale, the Northman's, is manifestly present as well, yet it most probably cannot be granted the status of a narrative level. Such is the case with the boarding officer's

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11. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. J. A. Simpson & E. S. C. Weiner, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press & Clarendon Press, 1989) enumerates, among others, the following meanings of the word 'tale': "3.a. That which one tells; the relation of a series of events; a narrative, statement, information. . . . c. pl. Things told so as to violate confidence or secrecy; reports of private matters not proper to be divulged; idle or mischievous gossip. . . . 4. A story or narrative, true or fictitious, drawn up so as to interest or amuse, or to preserve the history of a fact or incident; a literary composition cast in narrative form. 5.a. A mere story, as opposed to a narrative of fact; a fiction, an idle tale; a falsehood. . . . c. A thing now existing only in story; a mere matter of history or tradition; a thing of the past."

12. The fact that there are three narrative levels (extra-, intra-, and metadiegetic, all represented with Roman numerals in the chart) is not significant in this context because the extradiegetic level is not a narrative recounted, and thus not a tale, but itself a narrating act that produces the (intra)diegetic narrative.

13. Lothe, pp. 73–74.

14. Lothe, p. 74.

tale (or report) to the commander,[15] as well as with the latter's tale (or lie) to the Northman when he gives him a false course.[16] Nor should I neglect to mention that the commanding officer tells the Northman what he and his crew saw during their voyage (above all, the suspicious object) and the conclusions he has come to about it. Generally, it can be said that the four tales of this second category are not narrative levels, while they are characterised by the condition of being at least partly presented in direct speech, as well as by being specified in their contents. Thirdly and finally, there is the "grave murmur in the depth of his very own self, telling another tale" (73),[17] which the intradiegetic narrator describes as an inward voice the commander (that is, he himself) was hearing while the Northman was speaking to him. This tale is not manifest at all. It is mysterious and vague, its content is not specified, only one sentence refers to it, which is spoken by the intradiegetic narrator in narratized speech, and it is included in the category of tales mainly because he explicitly calls it a "tale" (73). What could be added is that this tale has its antecedents in the suspicions the commander harbours during his voyage, and that it keeps developing or growing within him while he is conversing with the Northman. The tale the commander relates to the latter about the voyage and the suspicious object is, as far as its status is concerned, not far from this inward voice and thus on the borderline between two categories. The reasons why I decided to put it into the second and not the third category are the following: Even if direct speech is used here only as a preparation for the narrative to follow, it is a sign that the tale is *uttered by someone* (77), unlike the inward voice. Furthermore, even if we cannot be absolutely sure that the commander reported to the Northman what he as intradiegetic narrator now tells his narratee (the woman) and us, there is no sound reason to assume that he should have lied about his experiences – these experiences, after all, are the very source of his suspicions, and he does not conceal his dislike for the Northman when speaking

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15. This tale is, to complicate things further, only a recounting of the tale the Northman told the boarding officer. However, as there seems to be no reason to doubt the honesty of the latter, we have to assume that his report is a faithful account of what he heard, all the more so as the Northman later tells the commanding officer the same story.

16. Carabine notes that the false information the commanding officer gives to the Northman can be regarded as another tale (see the introduction to *Selected Short Stories*, p. xxiv). It should be added that this tale is most probably not narrative in nature, the commander does not tell what happened but what the Northman should do.

17. Henceforth, all parenthesised references in the main body of the text are to this edition of "The Tale": Joseph Conrad, *Tales of Hearsay* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1925).

to him personally. The inward (and hence silent) voice, in contrast, is only heard by the commanding officer, and neither the narratee nor the reader are informed of its content.

Admittedly, the boarding officer's report and the account the commander gives the Northman of his experiences at sea are thematically not as significant as the other tales. They are not directly connected with the problem of interpretation since they do not appear to be of questionable credibility. Yet, they too play a part in making the text the intricate web of tales it is. Everything considered, and probably stretching the definition of the word 'tale' to the extreme, we get a total of seven tales, which certainly is an impressive number in such a short text as this. Given the focus of this study, it seemed necessary and legitimate to devote that much space to determining their status. The functions of the more important ones, as well as their interrelations will be discussed later, but before doing so, I will direct some (hopefully) constructive criticism at Genette's system of narrative analysis on the basis of the conclusions I arrived at above. There is one very important question that inevitably arises when attempting to categorise the tales in "The Tale," and to which there seems to be no answer in either of Genette's two narratological studies: What exactly are the defining qualities of a 'full-status' narrator? Or, phrasing the question differently and more precisely with the help of Genette's terminological arsenal, we have to ask: What are the defining qualities of a narrator whose narrating act produces a narrative that is "*at a diegetic level immediately higher*" than the level at which this act is placed?[18] A satisfactory answer would help us distinguish more clearly between these tales in terms of their status, at least between those belonging to the first and the second category. Indeed, classifying the seven tales mentioned was a challenging task, and the classification is certainly not incontestable. For want of an objective categorisation principle, I have to try to come up with an answer, if only a vague one. As was indicated above, all the tales except for the commander's inward voice are felt to be manifestly part of the narrative structure, but only those that have been called the intra- and the metadiegetic narratives are also regarded as narrative levels. However, this is not much more than a sensation, which originates in the observation that the narrators *in* the metadiegesis (the Northman, the boarding officer and the commanding officer as a character in his own story) talk so little that the reader is always perfectly aware that all they say is presented to us by the intradiegetic narrator. Thus, it would seem that whether or not a new narrative level is produced depends at least in part on quantitative criteria, which are of necessity arbitrary in nature. This

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18. See Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, p. 228.

may be the very reason why Genette does not delve deeper into this problem himself. In one instance, his comments on narrative level are even puzzling. In connection with *Lord Jim*, he talks of narratives in the third degree, that is, meta-metadiegetic narratives which are recounted by the intradiegetic narrator (Marlow).[19] Paradoxically, what Genette seems to be saying is that in *Lord Jim*, there are only two narrators (extra- and intradiegetic), but at the same time narratives at three different levels (intra-, meta-, and meta-metadiegetic). More generally, this amounts to claiming that narratives at different levels may be recounted by one and the same narrator. In "The Tale," the situation seems to be somewhat similar to that in *Lord Jim*. Nonetheless, our chart above does not contain a meta-metadiegetic universe, for three reasons. First of all, Genette's remarks on narrative level (in one instance) appear to be paradoxical. Secondly, in *Lord Jim*, the narratives which Genette places at a meta-metadiegetic level are longer than the four tales of our second category in "The Tale" – long enough that one may temporarily forget that it is Marlow who recounts them. As we have seen, this possibility does not hold in "The Tale" because the intradiegetic narrator never really "gives the floor to" the Northman and the boarding officer, and indeed not even to himself in his function as character.[20] Finally, our classification may be defended by the argument that roughly the same spatio-temporal criteria apply to all our narrators in the metadiegetic universe as to the characters *in* their tales; that is, to bring it to the point in a non-technical manner, their tales do not guide us into 'another,' different world.

3.2 The Commanding Officer as Narrator

In the present subsection, interrelated questions will be examined concerning the commanding officer as (intradiegetic) narrator: the narrating situation in which he tells his tale and his motives for narrating, the techniques he applies to manipulate his narrative, as well as the functions he performs. The short story opens with the description of a gloomy room: a man and a woman remain silent for a moment after what Erdinast-Vulcan describes as a bedroom scene which is "curiously passionless, devoid of erotic suggestion, almost lifeless."[21] The woman finally breaks the silence with the somewhat unusual request: "Tell me something" (59). This utterance is the

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19. See Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, pp. 94–95.

20. The expression in quotation marks is used more than once by Jane E. Lewin in her translation of Genette's *Narrative Discourse*.

21. Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan, *The Strange Short Fiction of Joseph Conrad: Writing, Culture, and Subjectivity* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), p. 172.

immediate cause of his act of narrating, yet the air of casualness he assumes is misleading. The fact that it does not take him long to fulfil her wish does not primarily testify to his gentlemanly nature. Much rather, he must have been looking forward to the opportunity to tell not simply 'a tale' but the very tale of his guilt which he probably never had the courage to talk about to anyone. For the moment, suffice it to say that given the psychological state of the commanding officer, he could not possibly have made up and related any other tale than this one. Covert references to this in his own discourse will be analysed in subsection 3.4. Since it is likely that the woman asks the man to tell her a story in order simply to pass the time, we may be led to believe that the function of his narrative is what Genette refers to as a distractive one. However, as the tale unfolds, it becomes more and more transparent that the commanding officer's involvement with the events recounted is too personal. It appears that in reality, his narrative is a confession, even though he does not acknowledge openly until the end that it is one of *his* past crimes. The act of narrating is extremely important psychologically as it helps him ease his guilty conscience. This interpretation no doubt comes close to what Kingsbury seems to suggest by pointing out that the officer "tells the tale, perhaps hoping in that way to achieve the private absolution he has not yet felt. . ."[22] Yet, I do not agree with her view that at the beginning, the commander does not even admit to his actions and evades or denies responsibility.[23] Indeed, he does seek understanding, but his narrative is at no point devoid of self-criticism. When he says early in the story that the word duty contains an "infinity of absolution" (61), we should read it as a hint about his awareness that attributing his crime only to duty and necessity is a feeble excuse, and while this excuse might be acceptable from a professional point of view, he cannot suppress the voice of conscience.

One may wonder why the intradiegetic narrator's tale should be a confession from the outset when he postpones the all-important revelation of his identity with the commanding officer until the very end. There are two points to be made in connection with this objection. First of all and strictly speaking, we have to distinguish between two entities: the commander *as narrator* and the commander *as character* in his own story. The German terms *erzählendes Ich* (the narrating I) and *erzähltes Ich* (the narrated I),[24] which are well-established in narratology, could be used to

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22. Celia M. Kingsbury, " 'Infinities of Absolution': Reason, Rumor, and Duty in Joseph Conrad's 'The Tale,' " *Modern Fiction Studies* 44 (1998) 715–729, p. 728.

23. Kingsbury, p. 723.

24. These terms were coined by Leo Spitzer. See how Genette integrates and applies them in *Narrative Discourse*, pp. 252–254.

designate the first and the second entity respectively. The narrating I, as in most traditional narratives in autobiographical form, is critical of the narrated I's conduct, even if the latter is disguised here under the generic name "a Commanding Officer" (61). Secondly, it is not at all difficult to guess why the man chooses to tell his tale as if he were talking about someone else. Speaking in one's own defence is less convincing, it is much easier and much more comfortable for a narrator to evoke sympathy for a third person because the relative distance from the events told makes him appear more objective in the listener's eyes. Lothe points out that the commanding officer's refusal to refer to himself in the first person singular provides an example of ellipsis, which is supplemented by two distancing devices: "the commander's use of the conventional fairy-tale opening 'once upon a time' and his claim that the actors of his story had no proper names."[25] Yet, provided that we stick to Genette's terminology, what we have here comes closer to a paralipsis than to an ellipsis: the intradiegetic narrator (consciously) neglects to mention that he is identical with the commander in his tale, simply sidestepping a very important element without breaking the narrative continuity – the result is similar to a heterodiegetic autobiography. Paralipsis, then, is a narrative trick for which 'lie' would be too strong a word. The man's use of the indefinite personal pronouns *one* and *you* is another device to exert influence on the narratee's interpretation of his tale. In an iterative passage, he starts talking in general about the commander's duties at sea: "He used to be sent out with her [his ship] along certain coasts to see – what he could see. Just that. And sometimes he had some preliminary information to help him, and sometimes he had not" (63). The passage then passes over into the present tense, thus becoming an even more general description of the difficulties and anxieties experienced by sailors during what is almost certainly the First World War. It is in this context that the indefinite personal pronouns *one* and *you* are used: "Then *you* begin to believe. Henceforth *you* go out for the work to see what *you* can see, and *you* keep on at it with the conviction that some day *you* will die from something *you* have not seen. *One* envies the soldiers at the end of the day. . . . *One* does, really" (64; my italics). By using the pronoun *you*, the intradiegetic narrator includes the narratee in the group of people who, in the given situation, (would) feel and behave as he describes – a group that he probably means to include every human being. In this way, he attempts to foster understanding for his immoral conduct in advance, stressing that the war situation inevitably creates a feeling of uncertainty and mistrust in everyone, especially at sea. *One* has a similar effect, but the emphasis here is on the speaker

25. Lothe, p. 77.

himself: he is also one of those who envy the soldiers. At this point, it is worth calling to mind that Genette associates the use of the present tense not only with atemporality but also with "a touch of homodiegeticity."[26] In other words, the commander's generalisations in the present tense also suggest his involvement in the events recounted.

That the intradiegetic narrator does not admit openly until the end that he *is* the commanding officer of his tale is indisputable. However, it is not that obvious when and how the reader and the narratee can guess his identity. Lothe is right to point out, as I have done implicitly, that there are unmistakable signs which indicate that the commander's central dilemma "is a real one"; also, he very aptly says that this is "one of the pivots on which the dramatic tension and suspense of the story depend."[27] He continues to argue that "the changing pronominal references to the commander seem to imply, even on a first reading, that the narrating 'I' and the 'he' whose story is to be related are in fact identical."[28] Yet, in the paragraphs he talks of, and, in fact, in the whole text until the very end, it appears a difficult task to detect changing pronominal references to the commanding officer as character in the tale:

> "Yes. What else could you expect from sending a man made of *our* common, tormented clay on a voyage of discovery? What else could *he* find? What else could you understand or care for, or feel the existence of even? There was comedy in it, and slaughter."
>
> "Always like the earth," she murmured.
>
> "Always. And since *I* could find in the universe only what was deeply rooted in the fibres of *my* being there was love in it, too. But *we* won't talk of that." (61–62; my italics)

Not all the words italicised in the passage above may be taken to refer to the commander. The possessive adjective *our* can probably be related to a certain group or kind of people, and the personal pronouns *he* and *we* no doubt stand for the man "made of *our* common, tormented clay" and the two characters in the diegesis (the intradiegetic narrator and the narratee) respectively. Only *I* and *my* seem to be worth serious thought: they may indeed be interpreted as implying the identity of the narrator with the commander. Before plunging into such an interpretation, however, it may be helpful to remember that the presence of the first person singular can sim-

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26. Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, p. 82.
27. Lothe, p. 76.
28. Lothe, p. 77.

ply mean that the narrator designates himself as such. As was hinted at above, all of the intradiegetic narrator's uses of *I* before the revelation of his identity with the commanding officer will be treated here as references to himself as narrator, not as character in the metadiegesis. The expression "in the fibres of *my* being" in the quoted passage above induces Schwarz to go even further than Lothe by claiming that it is "transparently clear that the woman realises, as we do, that the speaker is the officer."[29] Two remarks have to be made concerning this judgment. Firstly, it is true that the careful reader recognises – especially on a second reading – the signs implying that the intradiegetic narrator *is* the commander of his tale. Nonetheless, using Coleridge's well-known phrase, we can say that such a reader is not exempt from "that willing suspension of disbelief" either. Narrators enjoy something like the benefit of the doubt: narratees and readers want to, and indeed have to, believe them by convention. Secondly, if the narrating situation were "transparently clear," the story would lose some of "the dramatic tension and suspense" which Lothe rightly sees in it. I will come back to quotations from "The Tale" such as the above in subsection 3.4, where they will be examined in a different light.

The last question to be addressed in this subsection is what functions the commanding officer as narrator performs. Relying on Genette's terminology, we can attribute at least three different functions to him: the narrative function, the testimonial function and the function of communication. That he takes on the narrative function is self-evident since this is what makes him a narrator. The two others are more important thematically, and they have already been touched upon. To say that the commander performs a testimonial function is essentially a repetition of the idea expressed above that his narrative is a confession. Whether or not the reader guesses that intradiegetic narrator and commanding officer are the two selves of the same person, the final revelation throws light on the testimonial aspect of the narrating:

> He abandoned all pretence.
> "Yes, *I* gave that course to him. It seemed to me a supreme test. *I* believe – no, *I* don't believe. *I* don't know. At the time *I* was certain. They all went down; and *I* don't know whether *I* have done stern retribution – or murder; whether *I* have added to the corpses that litter the bed of the unreadable sea the bodies of men completely innocent or basely guilty. *I* don't know. *I* shall never know." (80; my italics)

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29. Daniel R. Schwarz, *Conrad: The Later Fiction* (1982. London: Macmillan Press, 1983), p. 103.

The several instances of the first person singular pronoun *I* point to the fact that this passage is very emotional: the transition from *he* to *I* is painful and frightening because as soon as someone else has knowledge of the commander's guilt it moves from the realm of subjectivity into objective reality. He cannot foresee the reaction of the woman, he cannot be certain of having earned her sympathy even though he has constructed his narrative in such a manner as to prepare for the revelation. It is part of this construction that he has so far consciously failed to supply the missing element of the testimony. Only now that his narrative has reached its climax is the commander ready and indeed compelled to "abandon all pretence." It should also be noted that the extradiegetic and the intradiegetic narrator are in complicity with each other in the sense that the former does not give the game away by revealing the identity of the latter with the commander in the metadiegetic universe. Obviously, this was very much in Conrad's interest as well because he must have aimed at keeping the readers in suspense, making them want to know how the short story would end. The third function, that of communication, is especially marked in the intradiegetic narrator's case, and it is in close connection with the idea that "The Tale" is a text that thematises the problem of narration and interpretation. This aspect will be explored in subsection 3.4, but now I again have to refer back to a point already thrown into the discussion earlier, namely that the commanding officer often uses the first person to designate himself as (intradiegetic) narrator. By doing so and by addressing the narratee, he maintains contact with her, and communication is an attempt to make her accept his perspective and interpretation of the tale. Not surprisingly, internal focalization in his narrative is fixed: we see the events mainly through the eyes of his narrated I, the commander in the metadiegesis. In addition, there are some passages in external focalization and zero focalization; to the latter category belongs the one in the present tense quoted above, which is also an example of author's intrusions. Yet, communication is also necessitated by the woman's several interruptions of his story – her request for a tale is, as was mentioned, the immediate cause of his act of narrating, but she hardly lets him sink into the world of which he tells.

3.3 The Problem of Ambiguity and Interpretation

It is no novelty to say that "The Tale" is highly ambiguous, yet since ambiguity itself is a constitutive element of the story's thematic and narrative structure, every critic needs to re-examine what it consists of. Ambiguity is present at different levels, and I will start with the frame or (intra)diegetic narrative and the instance that produces it, that is, the unnamed extradiegetic narrator; then, the analysis will proceed to the

centre of the concentric circles or tales. It has already been observed that the extra-diegetic narrator never designates himself as such and keeps a distance to the events told. The almost total absence of comment on his part has at least two important consequences. First, it leaves room for ambiguity in the narrative setting and, as Hawthorn correctly points out, in the relationship between the commanding officer and the woman.[30] That she has a liaison with him can only be guessed, and the nature of their feelings remains obscure. Erdinast-Vulcan establishes an interesting parallel by saying that the initial bedroom scene is "a visual echo of the drowning which concludes the tale."[31] Nevertheless, this too is only one possible interpretation. Secondly, it seems that the extradiegetic narrator's distanced attitude is a means of appearing objective in the presentation of his narrative. At one point he readily admits the restriction of his information although otherwise his utterances demonstrate his knowledge of the thoughts of both characters:[32] " 'No. We won't,' she said, in a neutral tone which concealed perfectly her relief – *or her disappointment*" (62; my italics). Thus, he may be regarded as an authoritative voice who is all the more credible as he does not pretend to possess 'omniscience' but fulfils the ideological function almost unnoticeably. However, this should not lead the reader to forget that he and the intradiegetic narrator are in complicity with each other. Also, it is worth noting that internal focalization is almost fixed in the frame narrative as well: clearly, the commander's perspective is adopted, we are let to know mainly his thoughts and perceptions, only rarely the woman's. Moreover, it was merely for the sake of precision that I allowed for the possibility that the extradiegetic narrator may be a woman as well; yet, the few comments he makes all betray a male view of certain female traits:

> These words came with a slight petulance, the hint of a loved woman's capricious will, which is capricious only because it feels itself to be a law, embarrassing sometimes and always difficult to elude. . . . [T]hat feminine mobility that slips out of an emotion as easily as out of a splendid gown. . . . For there's nothing more unswerving in the world than a woman's caprice.
>
> (60)

Without exaggeration, it can be said that an atmosphere of uncertainty and mistrust pervade the metadiegetic narrative, and that the given situation is a breeding-

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30. Hawthorn, p. 262.
31. Erdinast-Vulcan, p. 180.
32. Cf. Lothe, p. 78.

ground of ambiguity. The wartime setting is undoubtedly one of the principal reasons for this. Kingsbury emphasises that the "peculiar sanity of war" is responsible for transforming the commander, "normally a fair-minded man," into someone capable of committing the crime he is guilty of.[33] However, there is no compelling evidence to suggest that he is otherwise fair-minded, nor that he carried the seeds of neurosis within himself. The theme of war, in addition, lends further weight to the idea that the credibility of tales is often questionable and that it is sometimes next to impossible to interpret them 'correctly.' Lothe argues that above all, "The Tale" dramatises epistemological uncertainty,[34] and it is mainly in the interpretation of signs and tales that uncertainty becomes manifest. When the second in command spots an object on the water and tells the commanding officer about it, the metadiegetic narrative provides the first concrete example of an epistemological dilemma. At first, it is the younger second officer who openly assumes the worst and thus nurtures the commander's suspicions: " 'Well, it's evidence. That's what this is. Evidence of what we were pretty certain of before. And plain, too' " (66). As Schwarz notes, the roles are then reversed and "the man who should be the voice of maturity" expresses his vaguest fears, while the second in command becomes the "moderating influence."[35] Nonetheless, his attempts are bound to fail because the commander is now "in revolt against the murderous stealthiness of methods and the atrocious callousness of complicities" (67). The discovery of another ship in the cove which did not signal its presence only strengthens his conviction that there are neutrals in their vicinity who are replenishing the stores of enemy submarines. What is more, when the boarding officer returns from the Northman's ship he tells a complicated story of engine troubles which seems too plausible to the commander to be true. He is unwilling to consider evidence to the contrary; in vain does the second officer explain to him that if the object of the Northman were to sneak out unnoticed he could have done so earlier. Instead, the commander makes the serious accusation that this very ship may be the one that has been feeding enemy submarines, and decides to go on board himself in spite of the second in command's warning that he will not even be able to make a case for reasonable suspicion. By now, however, it is apparent that he is looking frantically for proof of the Northman and his crew's guilt. In his function as intradiegetic narrator he himself admits that although at that time unaware of it, what he expected to find there was in reality "the atmosphere of gratuitous treach-

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33. Kingsbury, pp. 715–716.
34. Lothe, pp. 72–86.
35. Schwarz, p. 101.

ery" (71) – not a very professional attitude for the commander of an English warship. He has already decided that they are guilty, that is, he wants to put only one interpretation on the signs he is faced with. As Hawthorn formulates it very aptly, he is "unwilling to accept incertitude as a condition of living" and "demands to be possessed of a certainty beyond doubt and suspicion."[36]

The Northman's tale and the commander's inward voice have already been categorised in terms of their status, but at this point they deserve some comment from a different angle. It is evident that the Englishman does not believe the other's story, yet what is more interesting is that he does not want to believe it. His antipathy for individuals who feign neutrality and at the same time profit from illegal trade with the enemy grows into personal dislike for the Northman. Basically everything the latter says or does is interpreted by the commander as a sign of his wicked intentions or guilty conscience. However, it is also conspicuous – and Hawthorn has drawn attention to it before[37] – that the Northman is very inept at dispelling the Englishman's suspicions, especially when he says that he would "either go crazy from anxiety" or "take to drink" when engaging in illegal trade (79). After all, there is tangible evidence that he *does* drink regularly. The indications the commander finds are contradictory, but as was mentioned, he only takes into account those which strengthen his conviction. While listening to the Northman's story, which is the same that was told to the boarding officer earlier, he pays more attention to his sceptical inward voice that tells an alternative tale, one that is in accordance with his conspiracy theory. The man who so much detests lies feels himself confronted with one, but the short story's conclusion rather suggests that the Northman was telling the truth, at least as far as his disorientation is concerned. Paradoxically, the only character in "The Tale" who lies without any doubt is the commanding officer himself. Hawthorn holds that he does so on two occasions: he tells the Northman that he has no suspicions although it seems obvious that he has a lot; secondly, he tells his officers that he let the neutral ship go instead of admitting that in actual fact he ordered the Northman to leave the cove.[38] Yet, it should not escape our attention that the third and most unspeakable lie, which led to terrible consequences, is that the commander

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36. Hawthorn, p. 265.

37. Hawthorn, pp. 265–266.

38. Hawthorn, p. 263. He also notes that the commander may have believed that he had no suspicions because he was certain of the Northman's guilt, but this is a "weak defence against the charge of dishonesty on his part" (p. 263). Indeed, he made the Northman conclude that he did not even suspect him of anything so that he could speak his mind without fear. See pp. 77–78 of "The Tale."

gave the Northman a false course, saying: " 'Steer south-by-east-half-east for about four miles and then you will be clear to haul to the eastward for your port' " (79). The Northman could not help following his orders and probably did not even suspect the Englishman of a lie; there was no room for a different interpretation of the latter's tale which may have saved his life.

Patently, it was the commanding officer who committed the greatest sin: he let the Northman and his whole crew – all of them potentially innocent people – die as their ship ran on a ledge of rock. As narrator he says that this seemed to him "a supreme test" (80) – a test that must appear completely absurd to a sane mind. If the Northman is lying and knows where he is he will get away, at least temporarily. If he tells the truth and is most probably innocent he will die. The commander did not hesitate to put the life of a whole crew at risk in order to bring an end to his epistemological uncertainty, to get to know whether or not the Northman had been lying. Hawthorn points out that "when the commanding officer sets his trap, he is neurotically in the grip of his suspicions, rather than concerned to exercise justice or committed to sincerity and frankness."[39] However, this seems to be the only certainty, with not enough textual evidence to decide what he really believed to be doing or whether he indeed had a neurotic disposition. The scope of the present analysis excludes moral and psychological issues, therefore these observations become only meaningful when contrasted with the commander's narrative reliability. It is necessary, namely, to make a clear distinction between his lies and what has been termed above as paralipsis. The latter is certainly not dishonest in the same way as a lie which is usually not intended to be unveiled as such at any time; the function of a narrative trick like paralipsis is to mislead the narratee temporarily in order to achieve a certain goal, in this case to facilitate the commander's task of telling his tale by choosing the moment of revelation well. It may be a failure to take this very distinction seriously that leads some critics to form a rather different judgment about the commanding officer's conduct as narrator. While Erdinast-Vulcan and Kingsbury argue that he does not accept his responsibility at the beginning of the story but ultimately (and unsuccessfully) seeks absolution for his guilt by telling the narrative, Schwarz even claims that he "never admits that his paranoia *created* the reality he perceived."[40] Lothe, on the other hand, takes a view which comes closer to that put forward in this paper, saying that the commander's "growing awareness of the moral complications of his decision increases rather than reduces his narrative reliabil-

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39. Hawthorn, p. 264.
40. See Erdinast-Vulcan, pp. 183-184; Kingsbury, pp. 723, 728; Schwarz, p. 101.

ity."[41] It seems to me that he should not be reproached for failing to state openly at the outset of his story that he is the protagonist. His tale, just like "The Tale," is a literary composition: when he started it, he must already have been aware that at its end the woman would discover the painful truth about him. The commander is by no means a completely unreliable narrator, and the inferred author – that is, the idea of the real author produced by the narrative text – is one who shows understanding towards his past and present actions. This is also reflected in the extradiegetic narrator's as well as the narratee's sympathetic attitude towards the commanding officer. As regards Hawthorn's comment that the woman is "morally crazy" to express sympathy only for him and not the crew members who died,[42] it is worth considering that only he is in her microcosm, all the others are far removed from her by a temporal, spatial and emotional distance. It is only natural that her first reaction is to comfort the man she loves (or at least likes). Also, there appears to be some element of contradiction in Hawthorn's reading of the text: he holds that the extradiegetic narrator's statement about the woman at the end of the story – "She knew his passion for truth, his horror of deceit, his humanity" (81) – is heavily ironic, while at the same time stressing the ambiguity in "The Tale," the impossibility of deciding whether the Northman was supplying enemy submarines or whether the commander is insane or not.[43] Adding to what seems to me a paradox, Hawthorn himself points out that "the reader is yoked into moral complicity with the main personified narrator" because we also try to reveal truths which the text does not allow us to reveal; thus, he argues, the story "forces us to become aware of the potentiality in us for the same sort of neurotic reaching after certainty that we witness in the commanding officer."[44] These are very apt remarks, but the fact remains that there are several conflicting interpretative possibilities, and it is not a serious distortion of the truth to say that this is the only point on which all critics agree. In addition, it looks as though analysts of "The Tale" (including myself) cannot be certain of avoiding paradoxes such as that in Hawthorn's reading, which lends further justification to regarding this short story as one that thematises the problems inherent in narration and interpretation.

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41. Lothe, p. 85.

42. Hawthorn, p. 264.

43. See Hawthorn, p. 263, pp. 266–268. It should be mentioned that Lothe (pp. 85–86) and Schwarz (p. 102) do not read the passage quoted above as ironic. Neither do I; what Hawthorn says about the ambiguity of the story, however, fits in very well with my interpretation of "The Tale."

44. Hawthorn, pp. 267–268.

3.4 Narration Thematised

The last issue that remains to be examined is at the same time probably the most important one for the purposes of this paper: how the general theme of narration runs through "The Tale." It is to be demonstrated that this aspect, just like the others already explored, is significant in its own right. However, it would perhaps be better to talk of an integration and culmination of the earlier discussion than of an entirely new aspect. Some manifestations of this general theme have been touched upon, and the goals of this subsection also include highlighting the links between these and the present object of analysis. First of all, some attention should be devoted to the title of the short story because, as was mentioned above, it bears thematic importance. According to Lothe, Conrad uses the commander's tale – that is, the metadiegetic narrative – as the story's title which "economically enhances [his] centrality, as the other tales of the text are inseparable from the one he relates."[45] Yet, although the commander is undeniably the main character, the generic nature of the title suggests that the reader should also look on it as being representative of tales as such and of those in "The Tale." The Oxford English Dictionary lists various definitions of the word 'tale' (see note 11), of which at least the following three are relevant here: "the relation of a series of events; a narrative, statement, information"; "a story or narrative, true or fictitious, drawn up so as to interest or amuse, or to preserve the history of a fact or incident; a literary composition cast in narrative form"; "a mere story, as opposed to a narrative of fact; a fiction, an idle tale; a falsehood." The first definition is general and could encompass all the seven tales; the second is noteworthy because the intradiegetic narrator's tale is seemingly "drawn up so as to interest or amuse," but in fact it has a different function and is indeed "a literary composition cast in narrative form," with the accent being on "composition." This meaning of the word could apply to "The Tale" as a short story too, as well as to the intradiegetic or first narrative. The boarding officer's report, the account the commander gives the Northman of his experiences at sea and the Northman's tale could be seen as simply preserving "the history of a fact or incident"; however, the latter's story *might* be of questionable credibility and hence rather "a fiction, an idle tale; a falsehood." This third definition may also include the inward voice, but what it undoubtedly serves well to describe is the commanding officer's lie when he gives the Northman a false course. Since "The Tale" carries all these implications, it would possibly be wrong to maintain that Conrad explicitly uses the commander's tale as the short story's title. At this point, the collection containing "The Tale" requires

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45. Lothe, p. 73.

consideration as well: *Tales of Hearsay.* Kingsbury argues that the story fits this title in two ways: "the tale itself . . . is one that Conrad heard, one of the exaggerated or apocryphal stories of the kind Fussell, Hemingway, and Wells describe. But hearsay also works within this story in the shape of the rumors that inform the commanding officer's actions."[46] Thus, because of reinforcing our perception that the reliability of information transmitted through narratives is sometimes doubtful, the title of the collection certainly adds an extra dimension to the general theme of narration.

In subsection 3.2, I have already drawn attention to the fact that the utterance "Tell me something" (59) is the immediate cause of the commander's narrating act. Even though it has been demonstrated that his narrative does not in reality fulfil a distractive function, the woman's request and his casual and ironic reactions foreground and, indeed, almost parody the construction and artificiality of tales. Let us remember her attempts to set the parameters of the story she would like to hear:

> "You used to tell – your – your simple and – and professional – tales very well at one time. Or well enough to interest me. You had a – a sort of art – in the days – the days before the war."
>
> "Really?" he said, with involuntary gloom. "But now, you see, the war is going on," he continued. . . .
>
> "It could be a tale not of this world," she explained.
>
> "You want a tale of the other, the better world?" he asked, with a matter-of-fact surprise. "You must evoke for that task those who have already gone there."
>
> "No. I don't mean that. I mean another – some other – world. In the universe – not in heaven." (60–61)

It is as if she were ordering a dish in a restaurant but describing only some of its ingredients and shifting the burden of the concrete choice onto the cook. The commander bears this burden rather well and does not hesitate long to begin his tale; yet, how reliable and faithful to reality can a narrative be which seems to be constructed in the process of its telling, and which starts with the all too conventional fairy-tale opening "once upon a time" (61)? In general, the answer would be "not very much," but as was mentioned, the commanding officer did not have to make up this story because it must have been on his mind for a long time. He uses these distancing devices to divert attention from his real motives while the woman, for the moment at least, mistakenly believes to be able to influence the tale. In spite of soon realising

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46. Kingsbury, p. 727.

that nothing she says can lead him to change his story, she keeps interrupting him. She does so eight times, with expressions of dissatisfaction, remarks and questions. Because the reader is constantly alerted to her presence, she is plainly not the typical Conradian narratee who, according to Lothe, "tends to preserve a meditative silence."[47] Thus, set against the background of the whole Conrad canon, the woman's interruptions in "The Tale" become even more marked. Lothe is justified in claiming that they are to remind the reader of the frame narrative, just as the "intrusive authorial comment" which comes after the commander has finished his tale:[48] "The narrator bent forward towards the couch, where no movement betrayed the presence of a living person" (80). However, it seems to me that above that, all these interruptions – including those of the extradiegetic narrator which introduce the narratee's utterances – serve to spotlight the fact that narration is going on, with all the implications it carries. The narrating act in "The Tale" becomes as important as the actual narrative; by facing and reliving his guilt in the process of telling of it, the commander seeks absolution. Accordingly, I cannot agree with Graver's view that the conversation between the man and the woman is merely a "byplay."[49]

The intradiegetic narrator's reactions to the narratee's interruptions are worthy of consideration because, as was pointed out above, they can be seen as attempts to make her accept his perspective and interpretation of the tale; furthermore, one can find in them covert references to the fact that he could not possibly have made up and related any other story than this one. On page 11 of the present essay, a portion of dialogue was quoted which offers an example of all this. The man defends his "decision" to tell her a tale of this world and not, as she wishes, of another one by suggesting that he basically cannot help recounting something that is psychologically important to him, something that he "understand[s] or care[s] for, or feel[s] the existence of" (61). Yet, he does not reveal that the tale is specifically about him or his past crimes. By extension, these covert references could also be read as focusing attention on the limitations of a writer in general. Although supposedly authors can write about what they want, in actual fact their works are largely determined by their own experiences, preoccupations, concerns and abilities, or by what is "deeply rooted in the fibres of [their] being[s]" (62). Let me also highlight the remarkable consonance between five utterances at two different levels of the story which all prepare for the

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47. Lothe, p. 14.
48. Lothe, pp. 78, 82.
49. Lawrence Graver, *Conrad's Short Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 195.

act of narrating and accentuate the information that is to follow. The first three of these are spoken by the intradiegetic narrator who addresses the narratee, emphasising his control over the narrative information: "So I'll just *tell* you that the ship was of a very ornamental sort once. . ." (63); "At night the commanding officer could let his thoughts get away – I won't *tell* you where" (64); "I may *tell* you at once that the object was not dangerous in itself" (65). The other two utterances are made, respectively, by the Northman and the commander as character in the metadiegesis: " 'I will *tell* you how it was' " (73); " 'And I'll *tell* you what we have seen and the conclusion I've come to about it' " (77; my italics in all the five quotations above). Altogether, the verb 'tell' appears eighteen times in the story, of which fifteen are used in the meaning "to make something known in words (to someone)." Moreover, there are ten occurrences of the word 'tale' (including the one in the title), six of 'story,' five of 'lie,' meaning "(to make) an untrue statement," and two of 'narrator.' Lothe has drawn attention to the extensive use of the verbs 'to see' and 'to seem' in "The Tale," arguing that they are both closely related to the commander's epistemological uncertainty.[50] While I do not attach too great a significance to a formalistic counting of words, it is certainly no coincidence that in such a short text as this, there is a marked presence of words that can be associated with narration or the problems inherent in it.

4 Conclusion

In the introduction, I indicated that the aims of this essay are twofold. Not only have I hoped to make a small contribution to Conrad studies with a perspective on "The Tale" that has so far been insufficiently explored, but also to reveal some of the fortes and deficiencies of the method used here by subjecting it to a critical test. The analysis is thought to have been carried out in accordance with Genette's "open structuralism"[51] – an openness that, in my interpretation, admits the duality of combining an arguably postmodernist interpretative undertaking with structuralist textual analysis. Even more importantly, my method seems to be justified by a distinctive quality of Conrad's fiction, which is that in Conrad, thematic aspects are closely connected, not to say inextricably intertwined, with the narrative technique he employs. With its

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50. Lothe, pp. 72–86.

51. In *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, Genette refuses to call the position he takes poststructuralist and, instead, recommends the expression "open structuralism"; however, he does not elucidate the term (p. 151).

several little tales and its generic title, "The Tale" forcefully demonstrates the validity of this statement, perhaps better than any other of Conrad's short stories. "The Tale" is a prime example of the openness and indeterminacy inherent in much of the writer's modernist fiction. At this point, it must be noted that Conrad did continue writing after the publication of "The Tale," and it seems that he did not even plan this one to be the last piece of his short fiction.[52] Yet, it is very fitting that he should have finished his restless experimentation with the genre of the short story with a text in which he apparently reflects on his own activity as a writer. Indeed, this self-conscious fictional artifice thematises its own (and other tales') coming-into-being and spotlights both the problems inherent in narration and the power of narrative.

Appendix: Glossary of Genette's Terminology

Page numbers in the glossary refer to either *Narrative Discourse* (abbreviated as *ND*) or *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (abbreviated as *NDR*); the definitions below are largely based on these two works.

analepsis Any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment (*ND*, 40).

author's intrusions The narrator's commentarial excursuses in the present tense; the term is not Genette's coinage, it has been used since Blin and Brombert (*ND*, 94n).

autodiegetic Type of narrative where the narrator is the hero of the story he tells; a variety (or the strong degree) of the *homodiegetic* (*ND*, 244–45).

diegesis The universe of the first narrative or (intra)diegetic narrative (*ND*, 228n), *diegetic universe*; more generally, it means the universe in which a story takes place – and not the story itself (*diégèse* in French); unfortunately, this single English word also corresponds to the French term *diégésis*, meaning pure narrative (without dialogue), in contrast to the *mimésis* of dramatic representation (*NDR*, 17–18); in the present study, however, *diegesis* is always used in the same way as *diégèse* is in French.

diegetic Adjective derived from *diegesis* (*diégèse* in French) (*NDR*, 18); see *intra-diegetic*.

diegetic universe See *diegesis* (*diégèse* in French).

distractive Function of the second or *metadiegetic* narrative, with no thematic relation to the *diegesis* ("So tell us a story while we're waiting for the rain to stop"; *NDR*, 93–94).

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52. See Knowles and Moore, pp. 364–365.

ellipsis Elision of a diachronic section, a leap forward in time; the narrative skips over a moment of time so that a nonexistent section of narrative corresponds to some duration of story (*ND*, 43; 51–52; 93).

erzählendes Ich The *narrating I*; one of the two actants of the hero of a narrative in autobiographical form; the narrating I is separated from the *narrated I* (*erzähltes Ich*) by a difference in age and experience that usually authorises the former to treat the latter with a sort of condescending or ironic superiority; the terms *erzählendes Ich* and *erzähltes Ich* are not Genette's but Leo Spitzer's coinage (*ND*, 252).

erzähltes Ich The *narrated I*; one of the two actants of the hero of a narrative in autobiographical form (*ND*, 252); see *erzählendes Ich*.

external focalization Type of *focalization* where the narrator says less than the character knows; typical in "behaviorist" narrative (*ND*, 189); in external focalization, the focus is situated at a point in the diegetic universe chosen by the narrator, outside every character (*NDR*, 75).

extradiegetic Refers to the first narrative level at which the extradiegetic narrator's act of narrating is carried out (*ND*, 228–29); extradiegetic narrators are outside the *diegesis* and thus on an exactly equal footing with the extradiegetic (real) public (*NDR*, 84–85).

focalization A selection of narrative information with respect to what was traditionally called omniscience (*NDR*, 74); point of view that orients the narrative perspective; there are three basic types of focalization: *external*, *internal* and *zero focalization* (or *nonfocalized* narrative; *ND*, 186–189).

function of communication One of the possible functions of the narrator which concerns his orientation towards the narratee, his care in establishing or maintaining with the narratee a contact, indeed, a dialogue (*ND*, 255–59).

heterodiegetic Type of narrative where the narrator is absent from the story he tells (*ND*, 244–45).

heterodiegetic autobiography Narrative where we know or guess that the hero "is" the author, but the type of narrating that has been adopted pretends that the narrator is not the hero (*NDR*, 106–7).

homodiegetic Type of narrative where the narrator is present as a character in the story he tells (*ND*, 244–45).

ideological function One of the possible functions of the narrator which concerns his interventions, direct or indirect, with regard to the story and takes the didactic form of an authorized commentary on the action (*ND*, 255–59).

inferred author Everything the text lets us know about the real author; a certain idea of the author beyond the narrator, produced by the narrative text by various

pinpointed or global signs; not a narrative agent; also called implied author (*NDR*, 135–54).

internal focalization Type of *focalization* where the narrator says only what a given character knows; the focus coincides with a character; internal focalization can be *fixed* (the point of view of one and the same character is adopted throughout), *variable* (there is more than one focal character) or *multiple* (the same event is evoked several times according to the point of view of different characters; *ND*, 189–90; *NDR*, 74–75).

intradiegetic The same as *diegetic*, meaning "in the diegesis"; it refers to the second narrative level, produced by the *extradiegetic* narrator's act of narrating, and to every event in the world of this first narrative, including the narrating act of the intradiegetic narrator (provided that there is such); thus, intradiegetic universe means the same as *diegetic universe* (*ND*, 228–29).

iterative narrative Type of narrative where a single narrative utterance takes upon itself several occurrences together of the same event; narrating one time (or at one time) what happened *n* times (*ND*, 114–17).

metadiegesis Universe of the second or metadiegetic narrative; *metadiegetic universe* (*ND*, 228n).

metadiegetic Refers to the third narrative level, produced by the *intradiegetic* narrator's act of narrating, and to every event in the world of this second narrative, including the narrating act of the metadiegetic narrator (provided that there is such; *ND*, 228–29).

metadiegetic universe See *metadiegesis*.

meta-metadiegetic Refers to the fourth narrative level, produced by the *metadiegetic* narrator's act of narrating, and to every event in the world of this third narrative, including the narrating act of the meta-metadiegetic narrator (provided that there is such; *ND*, 228n).

meta-metadiegetic universe Universe of the third or *meta-metadiegetic* narrative; also called meta-metadiegesis (*ND*, 228n).

mood Regulation of narrative information, the two chief modalities of which are *narrative distance* and *focalization* (*ND*, 161–211).

narrated I See *erzähltes Ich*.

narratee The receiver of the narrative; like the narrator, the narratee is one of the elements in the narrating situation, and he or she is necessarily located at the same diegetic level, that is, does not merge a priori with the reader (*ND*, 215n, 259–62).

narrating The producing narrative action and the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place (*ND*, 27).

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narrating I See *erzählendes Ich*.

narrative The term refers to the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself; there are first, second, third etc. narratives, all of which are placed at a separate narrative level (*ND*, 27, 228–29).

narrative distance One of the two chief modalities of *mood*, the quantitative modulation ("how much?") of narrative information; in the narrative of words, it depends on the degree of literalness in the reproduction of speeches; in the narrative of events, it depends on the degree to which certain features are present that generate the mimetic illusion (see *diegesis*; *ND*, 162; *NDR*, 43–46).

narrative function One of the functions of the narrator, that of the actual narrating; this is the only function that no narrator can turn away from without at the same time losing his status as narrator (*ND*, 255–59).

narratized speech The most distant and generally the most reduced type of representation of characters' speech (uttered or "inner"); discourse taken on by the narrator himself (e.g. "I informed my mother of my decision to marry Albertine"); also called narrated speech (*ND*, 170–71).

nonfocalized Type of *focalization* where the narrator says more than any of the characters knows; nonfocalized narrative is also called narrative with *zero focalization* (*ND*, 189); the focus is placed at a point so indefinite, or so remote, with so panoramic a field that it cannot coincide with any character (*NDR*, 73).

paralipsis A narrative trope; a gap of a less strictly temporal kind, created by the omission of one of the constituent elements of a situation in a period that the narrative does generally cover; the narrative sidesteps a given element (*ND*, 51–52).

prolepsis Any narrative manoeuvre that consists in narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later (*ND*, 40).

tense A class of determinations dealing with temporal relations between *narrative* and story ('story' here means the signified or narrative content; *ND*, 27, 30–32).

testimonial function One of the possible functions of the narrator, brought about by the narrator's orientation towards himself; it may take the form of an attestation, as when the narrator indicates the source of his information, or the degree of precision of his own memories, or the feelings which one or another episode awakens in him; also called function of attestation (*ND*, 255–59).

voice A class of determinations dealing with the way in which the *narrating* itself is implicated in the *narrative*; refers to a mode of action in its relations with the subject of the enunciating (*ND*, 31–32).

zero focalization See *nonfocalized*.

Ferenc Takács

'anythongue athall'

The Metathematisation of Language Identity in *Finnegans Wake*

This paper describes the ways *Finnegans Wake* impresses on its readers both the freedom and the necessity of multiple-language contextualisation of its linguistic items as a way to maximising meaning. As a consequence, this throws into doubt the routine assumption, made as a prerequisite for any act of reading or understanding any text, that the text in question is in a given language, or, in other words, that as an initial move in an act of reading the reader routinely assigns a language identity to the text. Thus *Finnegans Wake* problematises the language identity of its text as well as the routine assignment of a language identity to any text by its reader. In the act of reading *Finnegans Wake*, however, this foregrounding or thematisation gives rise to a concurrent higher-order act of metathematisation, where thematisation itself is thematised, with the result that, alongside specific assumptions about the language identity of a specific text as well as about the routine assignment of such an identity, more general or higher-order assumptions underlying the very notion of language identity are foregrounded and thus problematised. Through the radical "deviancy" of its text, *Finnegans Wake* is essentially "about" its own reading and, through meta-thematisation, it is also "about" reading, or the interpretative process, in general. The latter will be shown to involve the problematisation of several of our most general assumptions about language and literature we routinely and tacitly make whenever we embark on an act of reading, or interpretation, of any "normal" or "ordinary" text.

Every act of reading is conditional on a number of preliminary choices that concern certain basic assumptions about the nature of the projected object of reading. Logically as well as temporally, the first of these is what I call here the "language assumption": we can read whatever we set out to read only by choosing to treat the piece of language in question as being that, a piece of language. Obviously, this involves an act of identification: we check whether the object of our act of reading satisfies our usual criteria of what language is and what language does. On the procedural side,

this is done by the basic hermeneutic operation: we ascertain the language nature of the object in question by assuming that it is, in fact, language, and on this assumption we check whether it can be made to do what language usually does. Most generally and fundamentally this is, of course, signification signification or meaning: language, as we all know, is a collection of signifiers that stand for a collection of signifieds. Accordingly, we assume, for the purpose of identification, that the graphic shapes and patterns we have in front of us (whether on the walls of Egyptian pyramids, on shepherd's sticks, on runic stones or on pieces of paper) *are* signifiers, and if, on this assumption, we are able to match them with signifieds we conclude that what we have here is language. (Of course, language in this form we call writing, and it is in this form I am concerned with language here. Naturally, the same holds true for speech: we assume that the sounds a person is making are signifiers, and if we are able to match them with signifieds to a satisfactory degree we conclude that what we hear is indeed speech.)

Thus, any act of reading is predicated on the assumption, tacitly made by the agent of the act, that the object of his act is something "in language," or is a piece of language. This may sound obvious to the point of banality, and as in the overwhelming majority of cases the choice is made by the reader automatically (that is, without any consciousness of effort on his part) it goes totally unnoticed, so much so that people would deny that the choice is actually made, or that there is any choice involved. If, however, we glance at some cases where routinely assuming the language or sign nature of whatever is to be read is far from the obvious move, where serious doubts arise whether this assumption could or should be made at all, by doing so we can usefully "foreground" both the fact and the function of the language assumption. For instance, whenever we encounter for the first time a form of writing, or script, which is totally unlike the script or scripts we are familiar with, the encounter makes us aware of the fact that we are actually making a choice as we either assume or, alternately, refuse to assume that the thing in question is writing (and not, for example, an instance of some decorative art form). Champollion was able to go on and decipher the hieroglyphic writing on the Rosetta Stone because he boldly assumed that those strange little representations of celestial bodies, household objects, agricultural implements, animals and people were in fact writing. The opposite happens when, on encountering alien speech, people choose not to assume that the sounds these strangers make are in fact speech, that is, language, even if an unintelligible sort. The common Slavonic word meaning "German," which is also the source of Hungarian *német*, derives from the adjective немъ meaning "mute," a person who is "unable to speak" (cf. Russian немой, Hungarian *néma*). Apparently, those early

Slavs chose not to make the assumption that their Western neighbours had the gift of language, that the strange noises they made was actually speech, however unlike their own. These examples, random and anecdotal as they are, all show that making the language assumption is indeed the precondition of the act of reading (or, in the case of speech, of comprehension). Also, they show that the choice involved is a choice in the full philosophical and logical sense of the word: like all choices, it is ultimately an arbitrary one depending on an act of will. This means that you are as free to choose to make the language assumption as not to make it in a given situation of reading or interpretation, quite independently of the specifics of the situation. Still, your choice of making or not making it can be an unreasonable or aberrant one, if, for example, you refuse to accord language status to something that is routinely and safely identified as language by most other people. Conversely, your choice is eminently sane and reasonable if you refuse to make the language assumption *vis-à-vis* something that can only doubtfully and problematically be identified, if at all, as language, or something that normally would not be identified as language.

For some people, James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* comes under the latter heading. Confronted with the text, they refuse to make the language assumption on *prima facie* evidence, and conclude that *Finnegans Wake* is not language at all, that its text is in fact a non-text. Their attempt at an act of reading stops here; surely there is no point in trying to read something that is not writing. Make no mistake: their choice is a perfectly reasonable and sane one. Assumptions are based on the normal, or normative case, and there exists a degree of deviation from normality and the norm where refusal to make the routine assumption is the intuitively right choice. And by all count *Finnegans Wake* possesses deviation from normality to this degree.

Now, while a considerably larger number of readers would see no insurmountable obstacle to deter them from assuming that *Finnegans Wake* is language, they would have some trouble making a corollary assumption, the one I would want to call "the language-identity assumption." Making it is, logically speaking, the second precondition of the act of reading: as language, in the normal or typical case, is always a particular language, we establish the language of that piece of language we set out to read by assuming a language identity for it, and check whether our competence of the language so assumed can make reasonably good sense of the piece of language in question. What we base our choice on is partly *prima facie* evidence: glancing at the text we note that a convincingly large number of words are, say, English words, the text "looks very much like" an English text, so we start reading it "in English," that is, on the assumption that the language identity of the text is that of the English language. If on this assumption we can make reasonably good sense of

the text, the rightness of our choice is confirmed, and we can safely conclude that it is an English text we are concerned with. In normal cases, evidence is also largely contextual in a very basic way: for instance, reading a Hungarian-language newspaper, you reasonably expect every article in the paper to be in Hungarian and you stick, all throughout, to your initial choice of contextualising the text in Hungarian.

There are, however, cases when *prima facie* evidence is radically ambiguous as to the probable language identity of the text and, furthermore, no context is there (or if there is, it is insufficient) to help us in our choice of language for the text. Again, *Finnegans Wake* is a case in point, and that is why its readers have trouble with its language identity. Now, precisely in what ways it is a case in point is something I want to introduce by quoting and commenting on a piece of language somewhat closer to home for most of us here.

In one of his witty newspaper sketches, the Hungarian author Frigyes Karinthy, a distinguished satirist of the mid-war period, discussed a curious phrase of his own coining:

eleven embercomb[1]

This little joke is a perfect illustration of my point. On *prima facie* evidence, you cannot assign unambiguous language identity to the passage: the words, in their written forms, make equally good sense whether they are assumed to be Hungarian or English words. Semantics is no great help either, since "tizenegy zsarátnokfésű" ("eleven embercomb") is as absurd, or as surreally poetic, in English as "eleven embercomb" ("live human thigh") is in Hungarian. Also, as context, whether of the internal kind (the immediate textual environment) or of the external sort (the broader linguistic and cultural environment) is missing, nothing really tilts the balance of language-identity ambiguity either way. (The missing plural form is, in itself, not strong enough to do this either.)

At the same time, Karinthy's joke underscores, and rather neatly at that, what I noted earlier about the ultimate arbitrariness of the choice involved in making this or that assumption. Ultimately, the meaning of the passage depends on your arbitrary choice: if you decide that it means "eleven embercomb" in Hungarian, then it means "eleven embercomb"; if you decide that it means "tizenegy zsarátnokfésű" ("eleven embercomb" in English), then it means "tizenegy zsarátnokfésű." Or you can say that it means both of these things at the same time, and you can add that it can mean

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1. Frigyes Karinthy, "Szavak," in *Följelentem az emberiséget* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1967), Vol. 2, p. 218.

both of these things at the same time because it is in two distinct languages at the same time. But saying this will, of course, immediately land you in deep trouble about the very concept of language identity.

Or in that deep trouble commonly known as *Finnegans Wake*. Consider, for instance, what happens to language identity while you are reading, that is, trying to make the maximum sense of, this short passage:

> *takes a szumbath for his weekend and a wassarnap for his refreskment*
> (129.28–29)[2]

As there is no immediate external context present and internal context (immediate textual environment) is as ambiguous as the "text," that is, the passage in focus, all we have to go on is *prima facie* evidence. On this sort of evidence, as nine words out of the twelve lexical items the passage contains are English words with their standard spelling, and they constitute a perfectly ordinary and familiar English grammatical construction, a variant of the set verbal expression *to take something for something*, one is prompted to assume English language identity for the passage. By doing so, we get a frame, an internal context which is in Standard English both in its spelling and grammatical form, and we can now use this context to help us in making sense of the remaining three ambiguous lexical items. We do this by assuming that these are also English words except they are spelt, for some reason, in a patently non-standard way, and we go on to find English words with standard spelling, which are close enough in spelling, and also, in the kind of meaning the context can be taken to obviate, to the forms we actually have. Then we substitute the standard or normal forms, or, in other words, we standardise or "normalise" these nonstandard forms to their most probable (that is, nearest) standard forms by what is in effect a form of "editing" or "emending": *szumbath* becomes *sunbath*, *wassarnap waternap*, and *refreskment refreshment* This yields the perfectly intelligible, though pleasingly absurd and comic, sentence or clause: *takes a sunbath for his weekend and a waternap for his refreshment*. And with this, our act of reading is successfully completed.

But this, of course, leaves much unexplained. If these are words of Standard English with their standard dictionary meanings, then why are they spelled in this non-standard way? In other words: what is the point of this whole exercise the text is putting the reader through while he is trying to make sense of the passage? Anyway, there can be no logical objection to his assumption of alternative language identities

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2. All parenthesized references to *Finnegans Wake* are to the following edition: James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975).

for the text, prompted by the ambiguity of non-standard spelling: this will be another, more or less arbitrary choice, in principle as arbitrary as our opting for English. Also, if contextualisation in English yielded this amount of meaning, recontextualisation of the passage in other languages can be expected to yield even more meanings, and this, the maximisation of meaning, is after all both the primary goal and basic motive of reading or interpretation.

Now, if we assume Hungarian language identity for *szumbath* we will find that the most likely (that is, spelling-wise closest) standard Hungarian form *szombat*, meaning "Saturday," is actually closer to the original ambiguous lexical item than English *sunbath*; *szumbath* needs less "editing" or "emendation" in quantitative terms if, instead of English *sunbath*, Hungarian *szombat* is assumed as the standard or normal target form. Similarly, with some encouragement from *szombat*, we standardise, or "normalise," *wassarnap* as Hungarian *vasárnap*, meaning Sunday. The result, if recast in English, is *takes a Saturday for his weekend and a Sunday for his refreshment*. An interesting variation on the previously attained meaning, it also paraphrases itself as *weekend*, of course, equals *Saturday* and *Sunday*. *Szombat* is a component part of Szombathely, the name of the place where Leopold Bloom's Jewish father, Virág Rudolf was born; and an observant Jew always *takes a Saturday for his weekend* as *szombat* is his Sabbath day, not *vasárnap* or Sunday, as with Christians, who attain their refreshment or become again *frisky*, that is lively, fresh and playful on that latter day. Or they experience their weekly coming to life again, their cyclic resurrection (theologically, Sunday commemorates the Resurrection; and this is, incidentally, the literal, or basic meaning of воскресенье, the Russian word for "Sunday").[3]

At this point, we realise that the text delivers a kind of universal enfranchisement: any language contextualisation that maximises meaning is legitimate. The *fresk* element in *refreskment* is, apart from being a reminder of the Scandinavian themes of *Finnegans Wake*, a nod to Norway and Ibsen, the literary idol of Joyce's youth: *frisk* in Norwegian means "fresh" and, also, "healthy." "Sunbath" and "waternap" have, of course, something to do with both freshness and health. Standardised in German, *Wassarnap* yields *Wassernapf*, "water basin," of the smaller kind you

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3. Compare the blasphemous passage on Easter Week: "*Loonacied! Marterdyed!! Madwakemiherculossed!!! Judascessed!!!! Pairaskivvymenassed!!!!! Luredogged!!!!!! And, needatellye, faulscrescendied!!!!!!!*" (492.05–7). Cf. Petr Škrabánek's commentary on the passage and, particularly, on *faulscrescendied* as воскресенье, in both of its meanings "Sunday" and "Resurrection" (Petr Škrabánek, *Night Joyce of a Thousand Tiers: Studies in* Finnegans Wake [Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2002], pp. 76–7 and 87).

wash your face and hand in. If for *szumbath* you take English *sunbath* and for *was-sarnap*, *Wassernapf*, you can discover an interesting semantic symmetry in *-bath* and *-napf*. And, as László Moholy-Nagy pointed it out, if you replace *szumbath* with English *sunbath* and *wassarnap* with the English-Hungarian hybrid *waternap*, you get a kind of chiasmic structure of interlingual meaning

<div align="center">

sun*bath*

X

*water***nap**

</div>

where *nap* is the Hungarian equivalent of English *sun* while it also reproduces, through English *sun*, its own polysemy of *nap* as "day" and *Nap* as "the Sun."[4] In a cryptic form, this figure hints at one of those basic symbolic oppositions by which one can make sense of *Finnegans Wake*: we have the Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy, the Sun, the daylight of reason and form, on the one hand, and water as dissolution and fluidity, the medium of night and dreaming, on the other.

So, in the interest of maximising meaning, even multiple-language contextualisation and hybrid-language contextualisation are endorsed by the permissive "openness" or indeterminacy of the Joycean text. By the same token, meaning in the reading of *Finnegans Wake* can be indefinitely maximised, and, in principle, in a theoretically unlimited number of ways; that is why it is impossible, by the nature of the case, to have even the most elementary agreement in answering questions like what "happens" in *Finnegans Wake*, or what it is "about," or what it "means." Ideally, *Finnegans Wake* can mean anything we want it to mean.

This holds true, *a fortiori*, for the more specific questions relating to my present topic. Questions like what language *Finnegans Wake* is in, or how many languages it is in are unanswerable for precisely the same reason: *Finnegans Wake* is in the language, or languages, we want it to be in.

On the other hand, this is something it positively "means." It makes its reader realise that this is in fact what he is doing: by forcing its reader into assuming a language identity for the text and, simultaneously, resisting and frustrating this attempt, it foregrounds the fact and makes the reader explicitly aware that every act of reading involves making this assumption as a precondition of the act of reading. Or, in other words, the kind of reading *Finnegans Wake* both insists on and allows thematises the presence of the language identity assumption in all acts of reading, and,

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4. László Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1946), p. 349.

also, that actually there is such an assumption. This also entails the undermining or subverting of the essentialist or reificatory notion that the language identity of a text is something "objectively" given, that language is the property of the text since the reader is made aware that the language identity of the text is ultimately the product of his own agency operating through his choice, will and act.

Furthermore, this thematisation itself is thematised: by the thematisation of the language identity assumption the underlying notion of language identity is metathematised. This takes the form of problematisation. In working with the *szumbath/wassarnap* passage we found it useful to assume, whether successively or simultaneously, several language identities for the text in question. This kind of procedure implicitly destabilises the notion that texts possess, of necessity and by nature, singular language identities. Consequently, the language of *Finnegans Wake* offers itself as a language which can be only tentatively and conditionally assumed to be English. As a further, "subversive" consequence of this, the language of the book undermines the authority of Standard English as it de-authorises or disenfranchises Standard English as the normative authority over itself. This de-authorisation, in turn, authorises or empowers the reader to consider "likely" items, qualities or aspects of the text as being in languages other than English and assign alternative language identities to these items. In theory, the range of assignable language identities is theoretically unlimited; indeed, the language of a word or passage in *Finnegans Wake* can be "*anythongue athall*" (117.16).

By implication, this destabilises, or subverts the very notion of language identity, too. If you can standardise or "normalise" *wassarnap* in at least three different languages at the same time, if it is possible to have a language whose components can function by virtue of simultaneously belonging to a number of different languages, then the very idea of language identity, elusive enough for the linguist or socio-linguist, evaporates.[5] By its deviancy and aberration *Finnegans Wake*, which, in symbolic terms, is both all-language and no-language, demonstrates that what the "naïve" view of the matter, the Husserlian "natural disposition" or *natürliche Einstellung*, supported by "normal" texts and their "normal" reading, regards as an "objective" entity and self-evident notion, is in fact a fully dissoluble ideological construct, possessing only relative and strictly conditional usefulness, if at all.

As a corollary, *Finnegans Wake* delivers a more general challenge to the "naïve" view of meaning and understanding. On this view, meaning is conventionally as-

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5. Cf. László Kálmán and Ádám Nádasdy, *Hárompercesek a nyelvről* (Budapest: Osiris, 1999), p. 142.

sumed to pre-exist the act of reading and, also, to exist independently of any act of reading. It is regarded as an entity of sorts, essentially linked with, or even "objectively" residing in, the sound or script it is the meaning of. Consequently, reading or interpretation equals the interpreter's "finding" a meaning which is somehow already "there." Now, in foregrounding or thematising the language-identity assumption as something the making of which is both a prerequisite for and a source of possible meaning, *Finnegans Wake* also highlights, in a general way, the fact that the meaning of a particular language unit is always something *produced* by its interpreter. It is his choice of a language identity that he assigns to the language unit in question that determines the kind of meaning it will have, just as, more generally, it is his choice of making or not making the language assumption that determines whether there will be a meaning (or, generally, meaning) at all.

All this has profound metaphysical implications. Inasmuch as meaning is shown to be dependent on the choice of the interpreter to produce it (and, logically, on the free will of the agent involved in this choice), *Finnegans Wake* presents meaning (and, in symbolic terms, the entirety of Being) as the productive activity of the free human agent. In this, it is significantly analogous to radically "non-reifying" or "anti-reifying" descriptions, whether in mysticism, philosophy, sociology or aesthetics, which present Being as the ongoing creative process of the metaphysical subject. These include visions of *unio mystica*, philosophies prioritising *Werden* over *Sein* (or Becoming over Being) and various "*energeia*" or "process" descriptions of the world ranging from Heraclitean "flux" to the Marx of *Ökonomisch-Philosophische Manuskripten*, the Lukács of *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* and Bakhtin's "carnival."

Finnegans Wake does all this by being *about* the kind of reading, or interpretation, it elicits from its enterprising reader. In this sense, the very point of *Finnegans Wake* is that it makes its reader aware of those interpretative procedures (and the assumptions underlying these procedures *and* the arbitrary nature of these assumptions), which he would "normally" use automatically, in an unreflected way. Or to put this in the form of apparent tautology: the reading of *Finnegans Wake* is its reading.

Éva Antal

The Ironical Allegory of Remembrance and Oblivion

(In Memory of Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida)*

Paul de Man, in *Allegories of Reading*, refers to irony as the key rhetorical and linguistic figure of his allegorical readings. It looks as if everything/it was *turned* upon by irony: the figure is shown as the trope of tropes, the essence of rhetoric. The surprising and effective ending can also be read as the beginning of another story which would be about the understanding of the relation between irony and allegory. "I have never known how to tell a story," Derrida says in the opening of his lecture-series, *Mémoires*, dedicated to his friend de Man's memory. This story of remembrance introduced by an ironical and self-reflective statement, which can be taken as the mirror-image of the de Manian closing, is speaking about the allegorical reading, or rather unreadability of irony. In this particular story, embedded in the context of allegory and irony, such flowers of rhetoric flourish as Mnemosyne, Lethe, Psyche or Narcissus. In my text I am trying to interpret these rhetorical figures in these two thinkers' works, while the recurrent 'narcissus' becomes the rhetorical flower of (my) reading.

> Of the two springs called Mnemosyne and
> Lethe, which is the right one for Narcissus?
> The other.
>
> *(Jacques Derrida)*

In his *Allegories of Reading* – in its concluding and rather 'telling' chapter titled "Excuses" – Paul de Man refers to irony as the key rhetorical and linguistic figure of his allegorical readings: "Irony is no longer a trope but the undoing of the deconstructive allegory of all tropological cognitions, the systematic undoing, in other

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words, of understanding. As such, far from closing off the tropological system, irony enforces the repetition of its aberration."[1] While the first sentence of the quotation dreadfully questions the seemingly 'closing off' readings of the previous chapters, in the second the proliferation of other possible readings is promised. It looks as if it/everything was *turned* upon by irony: the figure is shown as the trope of tropes, the essence of rhetoric. The surprising and effective ending can also be read as the beginning of another story which would be about the understanding of the relation between irony and allegory.

Now it is appropriate to quote another statement: "I have never known how to tell a story," as Derrida says in the opening of the very first part of his lecture series, *Mémoires*, dedicated to de Man's memory.[2] This story of remembrance introduced by an ironical and self-reflective statement, which can be taken as the mirror-image of the de Manian closing, is speaking about the allegorical reading/unreadability of irony. Derrida also claims that he "love[s] nothing better than remembering and Memory itself";[3] thus, his strange confession about his 'inability felt as a sad infirmity' can be connected with the possibility (or impossibility) of *my own* story-telling. In this particular story, embedded in the context of allegory and irony, such flowers of rhetoric flourish as Mnemosyne, Lethe, Psyche or Narcissus. In my text I am trying to interpret these rhetorical figures in the above-mentioned two thinkers' works, while the recurrent 'Narcissus' becomes the rhetorical flower of (my) reading.

In one of his early writings, in the essay titled "The Rhetoric of Temporality" (in *Blindness and Insight*), de Man regards allegory together with irony as the key rhetorical tropes of our (textual) understanding. Although both show the discontinuous relationship between sign and meaning, and are characterised by temporality, the experience of time in the case of allegory means a diachronic (narrative), while in irony a synchronic (momentary) structure: "Essentially the mode of the present, [irony] knows neither memory nor prefigurative duration, whereas allegory exists entirely within an ideal time that is never here and now but always a past or an endless future. . . . Yet the two modes, for all their profound distinctions in mood and structure, are the two faces of the same fundamental experience of time."[4] According

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1. Paul de Man, "Excuses," in *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1979), 278–301, p. 301.

2. Jacques Derrida, *Mémoires for Paul de Man*, trans. C. Lindsay, J. Culler, E. Cadava (New York: Columbia UP, 1986), p. 3.

3. Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 3.

4. Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *Blindness and Insight* (London: Routledge, 1993), 187–228, p. 226.

to de Man, allegory is in charge of the individual narratives while irony with its sudden interference interrupts, then restarts the interpretative activity. In the essay, de Man's famous example is William Wordsworth's poem titled "A slumber did my spirit seal,"[5] in which the persona's previous death and life-forgetting slumber is counterbalanced by his wise insight about the death of the beloved. Instead of this 'being counterbalanced,' I would rather say 'being ironised' but de Man claims that the poem is not ironic at all, and he tries to write the speaker's allegorical story referring to the phases as error-death-recognition-wisdom.

It can be accepted that the poem is basically allegorical but in the de Manian temporal scheme the moment of retrospection – in the twinkling of an eye/I – is assured by irony. The illusion of the allegorical timeless recollection in the first stanza is broken by the intrusion of the momentary ironical reminiscence, which makes not only the present of the second stanza, but also the past of the first stanza, 'real,' emphasising temporality. Whereas de Man speaks about "a stance of wisdom" that "is no longer vulnerable to irony";[6] that is, he does not realise that the co-operation of the two figures and their infinite playing gives the unique temporality of the poem. Nevertheless, he remarks that "[t]he structure of irony, however, is the reversed mirror-image of this [allegorical] form."[7] Since the mirror-reflection of a 'thing' is a reversed image, the reversal of the reversed can be thought of as re-establishing the real 'thing' – similarly to how the positive affirmative of double negation does. This scheme can be used in the poem as in the previous reflection of the lover's allegorical, imagined narration, the dead beloved seemed immortal and now she is really dead; that is, the allegory of remembering is reversed by the ironical insight of temporality. However, the story obviously does not end here because the work of recollection can be started any time, so that it should be reversed by irony – recollecting the previous ironically reversed recollections as well. Consequently, we cannot speak about tautology and one single chiastic transformation, but the relation between the two figures is unfolded in an 'infinite' number of chiasms. Since both of

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5. "A slumber did my spirit seal; / I had no human fears; / She seemed a thing that could not feel / The touch of earthly years. // No motion has she now, no force; / She neither hears nor sees; / Rolled round in earth's diurnal course, / With rocks, and stones, and trees" (William Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958], p. 79).

6. De Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," p. 224. See more about it in my paper titled "The 'Thing' Betwixt and Between: Irony and Allegory in Wordsworth's 'A slumber did my spirit seal,' " in *HUSSE Papers 2003* (University of Debrecen, 2004), 7–15.

7. De Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," p. 225.

them function as a swinging mirror, playing them off[8] and turning them against each other, the two mirrors will reflect each other *ad infinitum*. At this point we can remember the early romantic German critic and essayist, Friedrich Schlegel, whom de Man heartily and frequently quotes in his works, and his 116th *Athenaeum*-fragment, where he describes the romantic-poetic working process (cf. the new poesy) claiming that "on the wings of poetic reflection [one can] raise to higher and higher powers and multiply it, as it were, in an endless array of mirrors."[9] Being the motto of the so-called Jena Romantic School, this fragment shows/displays the progressiveness and infinity of the creative work, where the significance of irony is emphasised and allegory is neglected. The irony of the romantically poetical life-work is expressed in the artist's reflexivity and in the recognition of his own reflexivity, which, accepting the rhetoricity of language, we can read as the presentation of textual understanding itself.

But let me refer to a more puzzling statement taken from Walter Benjamin's *Das Passagen-Werk* on mirroring mirrors, which takes us closer to the story of allegory and irony: "If two mirrors behold each other, Satan plays his most favourite trick and, in his own way, opens up the perspective into infinity (just like his partner, in the other way, does it in the lovers' glance)."[10] In my paper, several times I will refer to Benjamin's images: the dull reflecting surface and the mirror of the eye. Right now the interpretation of these would lead us far away, but with the help of the quotation we can turn back to the reflection of allegory and irony. In the conclusion of "The Rhetoric of Temporality" showing the possible combination of allegory and irony, de Man also refers to a love-story in Stendhal's *Chartreuse de Parme* as an example. The novel tells the story of two unfortunate lovers, who cannot be together, thus, their allegory recalls the myth of Eros and Psyche. In the mythical narrative, Psyche cannot see her lover and should not look for his identity, and when the truth comes to light only after rough trials, only in her death – that is, in immortality – does she

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8. De Man mentions in the same article that in the question of irony vs. allegory, "[o]ne is tempted to play them off against each other and to attach value judgments to each, as if one were intrinsically superior to the other." See "The Rhetoric of Temporality," p. 226.

9. Quoted in Ernst Behler, "The Theory of Irony in German Romanticism," in *Romantic Irony*, ed. Frederick Garber (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988), 43–81, p. 58.

10. "Blicken zwei Spiegel einander an, so spielt der Satan seinen liebsten Trick und öffnet auf seine Weise (wie sein Partner in den Blicken der Liebenden tut) die Perspektive ins Unendliche" (Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* [Frankfurt an Main: Suhrkamp, 1982], vol. 5, p. 1049, my translation).

'really' become her beloved's true partner.[11] In de Man's reading, Psyche's story as "the myth of the unovercomable distance"[12] thematises not only the disruption in understanding that separates individuals (or Stendhal's pseudonymous and nominal selves), but also the breaks in our reading of a text – that is, the ironical reversal/twisting of the allegorical narrative/myth.

In his lecture, "Psyche: Inventions of the Other" ("Psyche: Invention de l'autre"), Derrida also speaks of Amor and Psyche's story (*fable*) given in Apuleius's work and hints at de Man's above mentioned interpretation of the myth. But beforehand, in his lecture, he dedicates the reading of Francis Ponge's poem titled "Fable" to his (dead) friend. For Derrida, this short text recalls the memory of the three thinkers' relationship and it also speaks of the interrelation between allegory and irony. So the *fable* reads:

> *By the word by commences then this text*
> *Of which the first line states the truth*
> *But this silvering under the one and other*
> *Can it be tolerated?*
> *Dear reader already you judge*
> *There as to our difficulties. . .*

then the six italicised lines are followed by the last two put in brackets:

> (AFTER seven years of misfortune
> She broke her mirror.)[13]

The 'fable' is telling the story of its own story-telling, that is, it 'creates' itself starting the endless mirroring of the written words. In this play, however, the text "presents itself ironically as an allegory 'of which the first line states the truth': truth

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11. See in Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, trans. Robert Graves (Penguin Books, 1950).

12. De Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," p. 228.

13. Jacques Derrida, "Psyche: Inventions of the Other," trans. by Catherine Porter, in *Reading de Man Reading*, ed. Lindsay Waters and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 25–65, p. 30. In the original, the *fable* of "Fable" runs: "*Par le mot* par *commence donc ce texte / Dont la première ligne dit la vérité / Mais ce tain sous l'une et l'autre / Peut-il être toléré? / Cher lecteur déjà tu juges / Là de nos difficultés. . .* (APRÈS sept ans de malheurs / Elle brisa son miroir)" (p. 30). Cf. Jacques Derrida, "Psyché: Invention de l'autre," in *Psyché* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), 11–61, p. 19. Writing my paper I used both the original essay and the English translation.

of allegory and allegory of truth, truth as allegory."[14] We cannot overstep the relation of the two figures and words, we cannot cross over to the other side of the mirror as we cannot go beyond 'ourselves' and language, and 'our selves' in language. In the last lines of the poem, there is only one possible way of getting outside the fable – its allegory, or rather its irony – which is an extremely narcissistic one. Here the self, who destroys the mirror and together with it the self, is introduced by the feminine personal pronoun, she (*elle*). This 'she' appears as an allegorical figure and can be associated with the French feminine (la) *fable/Fable*, or Truth (*la vérité*), which is tautological regarding the second line of "Fable." At this point Derrida refers to the dead female figure ('she') in de Man's favourite Wordsworth-poem so as to lead us to the figure of Psyche.

The French *psyché* – besides its usage as a proper name (*Psyché*) – as a common name has preserved not only the original meaning of the Greek psyche, but it also means a revolving mirror.[15] The French *psyché* is a very special kind of mirror as it has two reflecting surfaces on both sides, which are connected and separated by the 'psyche' of the mirror, its silvering/tain. The tain is the *inventio* of the mirror as its surface blocks transparency and without the tain the mirror does not reflect anything. If two persons are standing at each side of such a 'mirror,' without the tained surface, as if a pane of glass were between them, they could see each other clearly; more exactly, losing their own reflection, they could see only the other. However, here, as in all texts, we have a mirror, in which we cannot see anybody other than ourselves. Except if at the right angle we place another mirror facing the first (at both sides) and it will generate the mirror-play of reflection. Similarly, now I am flashing de Man-reflections in Derrida's texts and Derrida-references in de Man's works. It is not by chance that to his work on Derrida's reflexivity, Rodolphe Gasché gave the title, *The Tain of the Mirror*. As he claims: "Derrida's philosophy, rather than being a philosophy of reflection, is engaged in the systematic exploration of that dull surface without which no reflection and no specular and speculative activity would be possible, but which at the same time has no place and no part in reflection's scintillating play."[16]

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14. Derrida, "Psyche: Invention of the Other," p. 31.

15. Cf. "Psyche: A mirror that swings in a frame; a cheval glass. In full psyche glass." In *A Dictionary of American English*, ed. Sir William A. Craigie and James R. Hulbert (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1942), vol. III, p. 1849.

16. Rodolphe Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard UP, 1986), p. 6.

Turning back to the de Manian Psyche-reference, Derrida disappointedly states that here de Man speaks not about the mirror, but about the mythical character. Nevertheless, in his summary he reveals that this passage still "matters much [to us] since it also points up the distance between the two 'selves' (*moi-mêmes*), the subject's two selves, the impossibility of seeing and touching oneself at the same time, the 'permanent parabasis' and the 'allegory of irony.' "[17] In this blink of the eye, the mirror-play between the two thinkers' texts can be traced and the con-text is brought to life by recollection. Although in Derrida's "Psyche" several de Manian texts and ideas are referred to, there it is not the allegory and irony of remembrance that are put in the centre. Actually, Derrida only uses the Apuleian Psyche's fable and Ponge's "Fable" as pre-text(s) in his introduction on rhetoricity and the deconstruction of classical rhetoric. In the title of the work, "Psyche: Inventions of the Other" (*Psyche: Invention de l'autre*), the classical *inventio* as the first operation of the rhetorical machinery, *tekhnē rhetorikē*, alludes not to the invention, but the (re-)discovery of arguments.[18] He claims that we cannot create new things in our invention and he speaks about the finding or discovering of machines. According to Derrida, today we work with ready made (allegorical) narrating machines but the deconstructive invention aims at reaching some *other* outside the machinery as deconstruction wants "to allow the coming of the entirely other" (*laisser venir le tout autre*).[19] However, 'the other in his/her/its own otherness' cannot be placed into our context, cannot be understood and read. Thus, we can do nothing *else* then undertake this 'mission impossible' and "get ready for this coming of the other" (*se préparer à cette venue de l'autre*).[20]

This rather utopian (and quite messianic) idea and the undertaken mission influences those three lectures that Derrida wrote to commemorate de Man's death and published together under the provocative title: *Mémoires for Paul de Man*. The first word of the title with the already-quoted opening sentence – "I have never known how to tell a story" – can be taken as an inventive beginning of an autobiographical writing. But from the introductory "A peine" it becomes obvious that in these texts the mourning Derrida remembers de Man – unfortunately, speaking about him and not to him. At the same time, the promise formulated in the title re-

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17. Derrida, "Psyche: Invention of the Other," p. 39. Cf. "Psyché," p. 30.
18. Derrida, "Psyche: Invention of the Other," p. 51. Cf. "Psyché," p. 47.
19. Derrida, "Psyche: Invention of the Other," p. 55. Cf. "Psyché," p. 53.
20. Derrida, "Psyche: Invention of the Other," p. 56 and "Psyché," p. 53. Derrida also calls our attention to the same root of the words 'event,' 'advent' and 'invention' – linked to the Latin coming (*venire*).

calls the promise of "Psyche": to let the other come out in mourning and remembrance. Thus, it is not a surprise that in the conclusion of the first lecture, "Mnemosyne," we can again meet the allegorical figure of (the) *psyche*. Remembering the beloved friend and referring to the favourite Wordsworth poem, Derrida dis-plays the irony of the other's inaccessibility:

> The death of the other, if we can say this, is also situated on our side at the very moment when it comes to us from an altogether other side. . . . In another context, I have called this Psyche: Psyche, the proper name of an allegory; Psyche, the common name for the soul; and Psyche, in French, the name of a *revolving mirror*. Today it is no longer Psyche, but apparently Mnemosyne. In truth, tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow, the 'naked name' will be Paul de Man. This is what we shall call to, and toward which we shall again *turn* our thoughts.[21]

In his *Mémoires*, Derrida deals with the nature of true 'mourning' and 'true' remembrance while paying attention to the most important ideas and tropes of the de Manian oeuvre. In the Mnemosyne lecture named after the goddess of memory, there are several hints about de Man's and Derrida's theory of remembrance. Here, just like in the other two lectures – "The Art of *Mémoires*" and "Acts" – two kinds of memory are distinguished, which is based on and *recalls* a late essay of de Man titled "Sign and Symbol in Hegel's *Aesthetics*." The German *Erinnerung* signifies the interiorizing memory, while *Gedächtnis* the mechanical memorization, but – as Derrida says – "the relation between memory and interiorizing recollection is not 'dialectical,' as Hegelian interpretation and Hegel's interpretation would have it, but one of rupture, heterogeneity, disjunction."[22] In order to be able to mechanically and automatically remember something using our memory, we should forget about recollection, that is, we should avoid being lost in reverie meditating upon the past. Derrida cites de Man's statement twice, namely: "memory effaces remembrance,"[23] but he fails to quote the whole sentence (he may have misrecollected it or his memory has played him false). Quoting the whole statement from de Man's text: "Memory effaces remembrance (or recollection) just as it effaces itself."[24] In this text, which is concerned with the Hegelian theory of signification, the activities of the symbolical rec-

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21. Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 39, my italics.

22. Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 56.

23. Derrida, *Mémoires*, pp. 62 and 72.

24. Paul de Man, "Sign and Symbol in Hegel's Aesthetics," in *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 91–104, p. 102.

ollection and allegorical remembrance are replaced with memorization and writing linked to the sign. In the Greek tradition, Mnemosyne serves as a storehouse of all the stories and no kind of knowledge can be achieved without her help. Her important role is related with the strong verbality ('oral fixation') of Greek culture, where writing and the use of written records were thought to weaken memory and make man absentminded/forgetful. I do not want to dwell on the forgetfulness and memento of writing (which is introduced and dealt as a pharmakon in Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy"), I would rather call attention to the element of forgetting. According to Derrida, "for de Man, great thinker and theorist of memory, there is only memory but, strictly speaking, the past does not exist";[25] thus, in his allegorical readings, de Man always writes (about) the rhetoric of remembrance and of temporality.

If the source of all the allegories is memory and de Man is labelled as "the thinker and theorist of memory," then Derrida is the one who writes about the art of remembering *and* forgetting. The above quoted de Manian statement about memorization is elaborated in Derrida's 'memoirs' – Derrida's *Mémoires* written for de Man – where besides Mnemosyne, the mythical figure of forgetting/oblivion, Lethe, appears on the scene. Although the two characters are not closely related in Greek mythology, Pausanias records that the two fountains of the rivers, which are named after the two goddesses, can be found in the human world and they are close to each other.[26] Derrida also refers to this *locus classicus* and, while he takes Lethe as the allegory of oblivion, sleep and death, he regards her opposite, Mnemosyne, as the allegory of truth, that is *a-lethe-ia*. What is more, he connects the two allegorical figures, doing it in defence of his long de Manian quotations in his *Mémoires* (without giving the exact *source*):

> Fidelity requires that one quote, in the desire to let the other speak; and fidelity requires that one not just quote, not restrict oneself to quoting. It is with the law of this double law that we are here engaged, and this is also

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25. Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 58.

26. In Greek theogony, opposed to the bright goddess of Mnemosyne, Lethe is the daughter of Eris and the offspring of Night, and one of the rivers in Hades, the one making the souls of the dead forget their previous existence on earth, is named after her. If ever anybody is allowed back to life, again they have to drink from the river so as not to remember the afterlife. The well of Mnemosyne makes the dead who drink from it remember their lives, as opposed to the well of Lethe which makes them forget. See H. J. Rose, "The Children of Kronos II," in *A Handbook of Greek Mythology* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1959), 78–101.

the double law of Mnemosyne – unless it is the common law of the double source, Mnemosyne/Lethe: source of memory, source of forgetting.[27]

I wonder how the (inner) remembrance, (outer) memory and (inner/outer) forgetting are related. In the Hegel text we have already read that the basis of memorizing is given by the forgetting of remembrance, which the forgetting of memory goes with. That is, we can achieve memory and the allegorical remembering narratives through forgetting, the ironical act of forgetting recollection itself. Referring back to, and re-interpreting his opening sentence ("I have never known how to tell a story"), Derrida, in the conclusion of the second lecture, "The Art of *Mémoires*," considers whether he suffers from amnesia or hyper-mnesia. It seems that the recalling of allegorical and mythical figures *springs* from the lack or incapability of story-telling – whether from the *spring* of oblivion or from the *spring* of remembrance?

Derrida's text disseminates its ideas pointing at different directions for discussion, but I am still trying to follow the thread of my chosen narrative about the interrelation between allegory and irony. That is, interpreting the de Manian reminiscents, I am going to pay attention to the (en)twin(ing) of the two allegorical figures. Derrida also tries to follow the thread of his de Manian recollection, which calls and takes us into an endless chiasm from Mnemosyne to Lethe, then from Lethe to Mnemosyne. We should not forget that allegory as a recollective and narrative figure in its "specular self-reflection"[28] is of disjunctive structure: it says something, but always means something else (as well). The statements of remembrance cannot do without the moments of oblivion (either). On the basis of the chiastic relation between recollection and oblivion, Derrida ingeniously connects the two figures, as he thinks that the functioning of the two gives the rhetoric of memory, "which recalls, recounts, forgets, recounts, and recalls forgetting, referring to the past only to efface what is essential to it: anteriority."[29] In accordance with the earlier quoted de Manian definitions of allegory and irony, in our story the quasi-storyteller is diachronic allegory, while the other figure feigning amnesia is synchronic irony. That is, irony, just like allegory, is also a 'meaning one thing, saying another' type figure of self-duplicating and disjunctive structure, which, in the twinkling of an eye, is able to interrupt a narrative. It can interrupt a narrative, then it can (pretend to) cause this interruption to be forgotten so as to recall the allegorical functioning, in order to generate another break by recollecting the previous one(s), then pretend to efface the

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27. Derrida, *Mémoires*, pp. 50–51.
28. Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 76.
29. Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 82.

memory of it/them – *ad infinitum*. It is only one further step for Derrida to 'discover' or display Mnemosyne as the allegory of allegory, Lethe as the allegorical-ironical figure, and their co-operation as "a kind of hybrid of two memories, or of a memory and an amnesia which divide the same act."[30] Similarly, the moments' questioning remembrance is necessarily inscribed in the Derridian flow(ers) of recollection in *Mémoires*.

Actually, it seems that throughout his work, Derrida is struggling not to come up with his de Man image, but to 'let the other come in his otherness.' Although the title itself ironically alludes to the autobiographical voice of memoirs, here Derrida shares with us the memories about de Man, as if these were collected *for* his dead friend as well. At the same time, the work – allegorically, or with a double metonymy – is also about "deconstruction in America," which would have been radically different without de Man. As he says: "But just as, under the name or in the name of Paul de Man, we cannot say everything about deconstruction (even in America), so I cannot, in such a short time and under the single title of memory, master or exhaust the immense work of Paul de Man. Let us call it allegory or double metonymy, this modest journey that I will undertake for a few hours with you."[31] In Derrida's text, de Man's favourite and recurrent metaphors or phrases are recalled or brought to light; all that Derrida attributes to his coming domain (cf. 'de Man').[32] Therefore, the title is a direct hit as the word, *mémoires*, refers to the recollecting and autobiographical nature of writing. At the same time, the subtitle with de Man's name transfers the previous statement into the world of the de Manian texts and readings, where every writing becomes an autobiography, or an epitaph. In "Autobiography As De-Facement" de Man analyses Wordsworth's *Essays Upon Epitaphs* displaying that the poet, like a ghost or a living dead, addresses us as if his voice came from beyond the grave. Thus, the essay becomes a "monumental inscription" or epitaph, where the text of the (speaking) gravestone is (firstly) read by the (seeing) sun:

> We can identify the figure that completes the central metaphor of the sun and thus completes the tropological spectrum that the sun engenders: it is the figure of prosopopeia, the fiction of an apostrophe to an absent, deceased, or voiceless entity, which posits the possibility of the latter's reply

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30. Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 84.

31. Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 20.

32. Not only Derrida but de Man himself often refers to puns, in which they use his name, starting from the obvious 'man,' through 'demand' to 'domain' or 'demesne' – moreover, as an anagram in 'madness.'

and confers upon it the power of speech. Voice assumes mouth, eye, and finally face, a chain that is manifest in the etymology of the trope's name, *prosopon poien*, to confer a mask or a face (*prosopon*).[33]

Relying on the chain of the main ideas in de Man's Wordsworth reading, the "tropological spectrum" starts from the sun metaphor, and through the eyes it ranges, or curves to the tongue and the ability of speaking. Its vaulting curve, at the same time, refers to the movement of the sun (the trope of light) on the horizon and to the perceptive and reading human eyes. Thus, the de Manian *prosopopeia*, of which reading "assumes the face," becomes the trope not only of autobiography, but also of reading. Derrida also regards the figure as de Man's "central metaphor," which "looks back and keeps in memory, we could say, clarifies and recalls . . . everything."[34] The figure becomes de Man's commemorative, or rather "sepulchral inscription" and later/now Derrida's monument as well.[35] In his "White Mythology" Derrida names the heliotrope as the dominant metaphor of philosophy since everything turns around light, the natural light of truth. The trope of the central metaphor, revolving around the sun, that is, being a *helios-tropos*, signifies at the same time the movement of the sun and the movement of turning towards it.[36] Thus, in the metaphors of a text, the rhetoricity of language is outspoken, or rather comes to (day)light, if we read the Derridian text with the help of de Man's prosopopeia.

Yet we should not forget about the reflective structure of reading and face-giving. The rhetorical figures, besides being the "the solar language of cognition"[37] and giving-face as textual tropes, are likely to assume a form, take a turn and deface. As de Man sums up: "[o]ur topic deals with the giving and taking away of faces,"[38] and he, with pleasure, utilises the meanings of the words deriving from *face* and *figure*. The expression of *defacement* in the title is related to the word, mask, which appears in the definition of prosopopeia, and it also recalls the problem of fiction vs. autobiography. According to Cynthia Chase, though "Autobiography As De-

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33. Paul de Man, "Autobiography As De-Facement," in Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984), 67–81, p. 76.
34. Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 27.
35. Derrida was alive when I started to write my essay in 2004. And now, in 2005, Derrida's *Mémoires* can also be read as his own sepulchral monument.
36. Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the text of Philosophy," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 207–272.
37. De Man, "Autobiography As De-Facement," p. 80.
38. De Man, "Autobiography As De-Facement," p. 76.

Facement" masterfully represents the disturbing effects caused by the dependence on figurative language, a 'perceptible' explanation is given in another de Man text titled "Wordsworth and the Victorians."[39] In this text, besides the frequent usage of the terms, face and face-making, de Man – almost compelling the reader to make a *face* – *effaces*[40] the difference between Wordsworth's rhetoric and his own. He quotes that passage from the third book of "Prelude," where the poetic eye / I while observing the various forms of nature "[c]ould find no surface where its power might sleep" (3.164).[41] Interpreting the line, de Man puns on the hidden *face* within *sur-face*, and he draws a parallel between the coming to the *sur-face*, the unexploited figurative richness of the text and the trope of face-giving: "The face, which is the power to surface from the sea of infinite distinctions in which we risk to drown, can find no surface."[42] We are to really feel that there is no resting place / surface for our understanding, and in a pun, in the twinkling of an eye, the reading of de Man's central metaphor, the prosopopeia, becames questionable.

In another text of *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, titled "Shelley Disfigured," in which de Man analyses Shelley's last and fragmentary *The Triumph Life*, we can again meet the key figures of the above-read "defacing" text. Yet here the textual plasticity is given not by the gravestone, or the epitaph inscribed on it, but by architecture and statuary: Rousseau, who greatly influenced Shelley's way of thinking, is presented as a stiffened statue with empty eyesockets. De Man places the allegory of Narcissus in the focal point of the text while paying attention to the sun-imagery of the poem. In his analysis, the movement of sunrise and sunset, together with the associated human activities – as birth/death, waking/sleeping and remembering/forgetting – are shown not in their disjunctive detachment, but in their intertwining (inter)relation. The lines – "So sweet and deep is the oblivious spell; / And

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39. Cynthia Chase, "Giving a Face to a Name: De Man's Figures," in *Decomposing Figures: Rhetorical Readings in the Romantic Tradition* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 82–113.

40. I happily recall the verb, effaces, in a de Manian statement about the effacement of memory. See earlier in the present paper.

41. Quoted in Paul de Man, "Wordsworth and the Victorians," in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 83–92. p. 92. The whole passage runs: "an eye / Which, from a tree, a stone, a withered leaf, / To the broad ocean and the azure heavens / Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars, / Could find no surface where its power might sleep" (*The Works of William Wordsworth* [Wordsworth Editions, 1994], p. 651).

42. De Man, "Wordsworth and the Victorians," p. 92.

whether life had been before that sleep"[43] – in a Platonic way reveal that human awakening is connected with the state of coming into the world (birth). Accordingly, they claim that our life is characterised – and sealed – by a slumber, in which, quoting de Man, "a deeper sleep replacing a lighter one, a deeper forgetting being achieved by an act of memory which remembers one's forgetting."[44] Meanwhile, in the poem, the trope of light does not follow its right path on the sky – Shelley's sun is rather suspended as a pending question awaiting the answer. De Man brilliantly finds the appropriate metaphor: while in Wordsworth's works the sun usually "hangs" in the air,[45] in Shelley's poem the sunlight glimmers from time to time as if it could be seen through a veil. In the reading, the play of the light with its appearance and disappearance refers to the uncertainty of human life and the lack of true knowledge, which de Man calls the "t*antali*zing" "play of veiling and unveiling."

Having bound and fastened the threads, de Man shows us the central knot, where the problems of "knowledge, oblivion and desire hang suspended."[46] In the lyric passage chosen by de Man and placed in the centre, "the 'silver music' of oblivion" can be heard and its scene is coloured by the brightening light of the sun, the crystalline mirror of the water and Iris's "many coloured scarf," that is, the rainbow or the iris.[47] The metaphorical chain marks the line of the blazing sun – the reflective surface of the water – the rainbow/iris, and, finally, there is the iris of the eyes reading the lines. In the centre of the interpretation (or every interpretation), Narcissus's *figure*, that is, the floating image of his face mirrored/reflected in the water can be seen. More exactly, Narcissus's look, the iris of his eyes, gives the tropological centre of prosopopeia. Looking back, de Man claims that "[t]he sun, in this text, is from the

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43. The quoted passage goes: "So sweet and deep is the oblivious spell; / And whether life had been before that sleep / The heaven which I imagine, or a hell / Like this harsh world in which I wake to weep, / I know not" (*The Works of P. B. Shelley* [Wordsworth Poetry Library, Wordsworth Editions, 1994], p. 458).

44. Paul de Man, "Shelley Disfigured," in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984), 93–123, p. 105.

45. Paul de Man, "Time and History in Wordsworth," in *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism: The Gauss Seminar and Other Papers* (The Johns Hopkins UP, 1993), 74–94, p. 79. According to de Man, the floating instability of the earth, due to the frequent usage of the words, *hung* and *hanging*, becomes vertiginous in Wordsworth's poetry.

46. De Man, "Shelley Disfigured," p. 106.

47. "A shape all light, which with one hand did fling / Dew on the earth, as if it were Dawn / Whose invisible rain forever seemed to sing // A silver music on the mossy lawn, / And still before her on the dusky grass / Iris her many coloured scarf had drawn." Quoted in de Man, "Shelley Disfigured," p. 108.

start the figure of this self-contained specularity. But the double of the sun can only be the eye conceived as the mirror of light."[48] The sun, similarly to Narcissus, can "see" only the reflection of his image/light in the water, and the mirroring surface of the water functions as a mirror and the looking eye. The sun-eye with the rainbow (iris) becomes seeing, while the water of the fountain as a mirroring surface makes it visible. That is, reading prosopopeia, the text functions as the mirror of the interpreter, in which it can be seen that Shelley is reading Plato, Rousseau and himself, or that de Man is reading Shelley – who is reading Plato, Rousseau and himself – and himself, or as the reader is reading de Man, who is reading himself and Shelley – more exactly, as Shelley reading Plato, Rousseau and himself – and herself. In this mirror-play "the text serves as a mirror of our own knowledge and our knowledge mirrors in its turn the text's signification."[49] With this statement, we have already started to remember and write a story that, of necessity, can be turned over by the insight of figurality in the twinkling of an eye.

Now just remember, in his earlier writing de Man characterises the rhetorical figures by saying that they always say something other than they mean; and here he sums up: "[l]anguage, as trope, is always privative."[50] Nevertheless, the reader's life-forgetting and floating textual reverie/musing is drastically interrupted by the awareness of the text's "monumentality." The mythical Narcissus pines away in his desire for self-knowledge, Rousseau is petrified, the poet drowns, and the text – like other masterpieces of romanticism – *recalls* the atmosphere of a cemetery. Yet the illusion-breaking moments of irony are again forgotten, thus, the tropes are suspended, then later interpreted – in facing and defacing. According to de Man's *de-mand*, "to read is to understand, to question, to know, to forget, to erase, to deface, to repeat – that is to say, the endless prosopopeia by which the dead are made to have a face and a voice which tells the allegory of their demise and allows us to apostrophise them in turn. No degree of knowledge can ever stop this *madness*, for it is the *madness* of words."[51] In its mo(nu)mentalization, reading gives a face, then listens to the voice-from-beyond-the-grave, from which, in our case, such characteristically de Manian puns can be heard as *demand* or *demise*.

In the disjunctive allegorical readings of figuration, we always should embed the moments of the ironical turnings/reversal, or rather we should *face* the risk that we

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48. De Man, "Shelley Disfigured," p. 109.
49. De Man, "Shelley Disfigured," p. 112.
50. De Man, "Autobiography As De-Facement," p. 80.
51. De Man, "Shelley Disfigured," p. 122. Italics are mine. See footnote 32.

cannot tell when an allegorical reflective disjunction leads to facing or to defacing. Although Werner Hamacher regards "read!" and "understand!" as de Man's imperatives, he accepts that "no allegory can grasp the incidences of irony by which it is disrupted, none can catch up with the positing violence of the imperative, but each one – for each one remains exposed to its positing – must undertake the attempt to translate it into a cognitive content. . . . Ironically, the imperative – of language, of understanding – allows no decision whether it is to be allegorical or ironic."[52] De Man's allegorical readings and Derrida's psyche-promise about the coming of the other reveal the same: the possibility, or rather the impossibility of the understanding of the other. The undecidability of the question can be represented by a metaphor taken from Genette, namely, the revolving door (*tourniquet*), of which the vortical/whirling and accelerating motion borders on insanity. In his *Mémoires* Derrida also quotes the important passage from de Man's "Autobiography As De-Facement": "The specular moment that is part of all understanding reveals the tropological structure that underlies all cognitions, including knowledge of self. The interest of autobiography, then, is not that it reveals reliable self-knowledge – it does not – but that it demonstrates in a striking way the impossibility of closure and of totalization (that is, the impossibility of coming into being) of all textual systems made up of tropological substitutions."[53]

In other words, self-understanding in autobiographical texts (actually, all texts are self-understanding) heightens the swirling motion of tropes and makes the mirror-play more spec(tac)ular. The word *tourniquet* translated as "whirligig" in de Man's text signifies not only turning around, but also rolling over and over – stirring and returning endlessly. The picture of the revolving door reminds us of *psyché*, the revolving mirror, while in the verb, *tourniquer*, the endless reflection of mirrors is recalled.[54] The vertiginous dizziness is caused by the endless chiasms of the allegorical disjunctions and the ironical reversals of the figures. The rhetorical revolving mirror is called into play by de Man's "trope of tropes," irony, which is "unrelieved *vertige*, dizziness to the point of madness."[55] In the third lecture of

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52. Werner Hamacher, "LECTIO: de Man's Imperative," trans. by Susan Bernstein, in *Reading de Man Reading*, ed. Lindsay Waters and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 171–201, p. 199. See also in *Entferntes Verstehen: Studien zu Philosophie und Literatur von Kant bis Celan* (Frankfurt an Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), 151–194, pp. 192–3.

53. De Man, "Autobiography As De-Facement," p.71. Also quoted in Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 25.

54. In the French verbs, *tourniquer* and *tourniller*, and the noun, *tourniquet*, the root is given by the verb, *tourner*, that is, to turn or revolve.

55. De Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," p. 215.

his *Mémoires* (titled "Acts") Derrida, in a rather lengthy footnote, comments on the above quoted sentence:

> [we could play here on the French word 'vertige': as we say in French, it makes one's head turn (*il fait tourner la tête*), and it is the experience of a turn – that is, of a trope which cannot stop turning and turning around (*tourner et retourner*), since we can only speak of a (rhetorical) turn by way of another trope, without any chance of achieving the stability of a metalanguage, a metatrope, a metarhetoric: the irony of irony of which Schlegel speaks and which de Man cites is still an irony; whence the madness of the regressus ad infinitum, and the madness of rhetoric, whether it be that of irony or that of allegory: madness because it has no reason to stop, because the reason is tropic].[56]

In Derrida's expressive "whirligig," spinning the de Manian statement and recalling the motion of Genette's revolving door, the reader has the feeling as if she were to swallow her own tongue – the mnemonic or amnesiac source of all the troubles. In Wordsworth's short lyric poem that has been referred to several times in my text the turning of the tropes is intensified to extremes. By the end of the work, we are forced to be "rolled round" together with the globe and the dead beloved in the allegorical remembrance of the mourning man, while this revolving is guaranteed by the ironic interrupting moments of forgetting. In the poem the beginning state of slumber fetters, more exactly, "seals" the interpretation. The word, seal, is frequently used in de Man's texts, consequently, it often appears in *Mémoires*, where Derrida remembers de Man. He speaks about (sealing) wax in connection with Mnemosyne's activity, then about stamps and later about a mark or signature – "as if the ironic moment were signed, were sealed in the body of an allegorical writing."[57] The key (and the lock) to *Mémoires* is de Man's seal and at the same time his name, sign, or signature will be the trademark of the irony of allegory. Thus, Derrida is mistaken, or rather speaks ironically, when – assuming the irony hidden in the de Manian allegorical readings – claims that irony hardly helps us tell the story. On the contrary, being aware of the ironic force in the power of allegory, we must declare: only irony can help us proceed with our story.[58]

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56. Derrida, *Mémoires*, pp. 152–153.
57. Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 84.
58. "It is the power of allegory, and its ironic force as well, to say something quite different from and even contrary to what seems to be intended through it" (Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 74). This quotation foreshadows the rest, or refers back to the previous ideas in my text, and it

In *Mémoires*, however, we can also read about whether it is possible to find the source of the two fountains, Mnemosyne and Lethe, and to arrive at an anamnesis of an ancient time concept. So to say, to arrive at the slumber of timelessness, since the work is "sealed" by the cause of its writing: Derrida writes it for the dead de Man, and in his memoirs his own work of mourning is expressed. Therefore, the metaphor of the seal leads us to the immediate context of the work, namely, (Derrida's) work of mourning; more exactly, to the impossibility of mourning and its allegorical-ironical narcissism. According to de Man, "[t]rue 'mourning' is less deluded [and] [t]he most *it* can do is to allow for non-comprehension."[59] In the statement, the italicised *it* emphasises that true "mourning" is only a tendency which actually denies the truth of mourning. Derrida also thinks that the Freudian "normal" work of mourning is unsuccessful as it operates with the other's interiorization, that is, with the abandonment of the other's otherness. Whereas, true mourning is the impossible work of mourning, which will be successful if it fails: it is "an aborted interiorization [and] is at the same time a respect for the other as other, a sort of tender rejection, a movement of renunciation which leaves the other alone, outside, over there, in his death, outside of us."[60] In Derrida's mourning de Man's texts become the prosopopeia of the-voice-from-beyond-the-grave and the rhetoric of the allegorical remembrance.

Thus, connecting the de Manian true "mourning" with the promise of "Psyche," we can understand what Derrida means by "true (work of) mourning." It is not "the most deadly infidelity[,] that of a *possible mourning* which would interiorize within us the image, idol, or ideal of the other who is dead and lives in us," but "that of the impossible mourning, which, leaving the other his alterity, respecting thus his infinite remove, either refuses to take or is incapable of taking the other within oneself, as in the tomb or the vault of some narcissism."[61] That is, in true mourning one tries to keep the dead at the other side of the revolving mirror/*psyché*, and starting the endless mirroring, he tries to 'allow the other to come in his otherness' – or rather, let the other go, disregarding interiorization. Nevertheless, these questions,

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provides disturbing insights concerning *aletheia*. What is hidden in the story? Certainly, (an)other one(s)!

59. Paul de Man, "Anthropomorphism and Trope in the Lyric," in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984), 239–262, p. 262. Italics are in the original; also quoted in Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 30.

60. Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 35. On the Derridian work of mourning see Jacques Derrida, *The Work of Mourning*, ed. Pascal-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

61. Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 6.

though they help to proceed with the story, will return from time to time haunting; the figure of Narcissus is *unforgettable* since all the time he is (at) the other (side of the mirror). Even if we think that we make an effort to give the leading part to the other in "impossible mourning," it again demonstrates our narcissism – just like in this sentence. With his promise in "Psyche" and the (promised) endless mirror-play, Derrida exactly attempts to move away from it/himself and, in his withdrawal, he tries to get closer to the other. Remembering the other, he wants to go beyond the mirror of speculation, over the narcissistic structure, of which "ruses, mimes, and strategies can only succeed in supposing the other – and thus in relinquishing in advance any *autonomy*."[62]

I do not intend to discuss the possibility and impossibility of the work of mourning. Now I simply accept Derrida's summary that in normal mourning "Narcissus, who turns back to himself, has returned"[63] – there is nothing extraordinary in it. However, Narcissus taken as an allegory gathering and then spreading the other figures, is also only a figure: only a returning (*revient*) ghost. As the artist of memoirs says: "The ghost, *le re-venant*, the survivor, appears only by means of figure or fiction, but its appearance is not nothing, nor is it a mere semblance."[64] That is, while the true impossible mourning can work without rhetoric and silently accept death, in the recollecting texts we become living dead conversing with ghosts. I again refer to the ending of Wordsworth's poem, where the ironic moment(s) of the awakening, recollecting the previous forgetting(s), interrupt(s) the continuity of allegorical remembrance and dreamlike mourning. In his earlier cited writing, Hamacher also points out that understanding, that is, reading as "the allegory of the linguistic imperative is an endless work of mourning the traumas inflicted by irony."[65] So far nice things have been written about death since, as we know about writing, it is capable of disguising the dead as living, giving lively colours to the corpse, the mask and (dis)simulation.[66] The remembering texts are haunted by the rhetorical figures, which remind us of de Man's, Derrida's and, in time – actually, always already – of our own remembrance (and oblivion).

"Müssen dafür Worte, wie Blumen, entstehn"; poetic words are supposed to bloom like flowers – in de Man's reading of the Hölderlin passage, we can hear,

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62. Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 32. Italics are in the original.

63. Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 66.

64. Derrida, *Mémoires*, p. 64.

65. Hamacher, p. 199. I slightly altered the translation – see in the original p. 193.

66. See about the meanings of writing in Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 61–172.

paradoxically, the true nature of language. Opposed to the natural origin of flowers, words can only originate *like* flowers, always like something else. To quote de Man's summing statement: "For it is in the essence of language to be capable of origination, but of never achieving the absolute identity with itself that exists in the natural object."[67] In the ironic reflections of the allegorical unfolding, it *turns* out about the textual flowers of rhetoric: they are dead. Contrasted with the (seemingly) 'lifelike' heliotrope recalled in Derrida's "White Mythology," in our texts we have mostly read about "the forgotten heliotropes that beyond all nostalgia mime death with the apotropaeic mask of stone and treasure whatever light they have been granted."[68] Actually, looking for the figurality of the Derridian "solar language," all the time we have been revolving around the pseudo-heliotrope – the narcissus. Although the heliotropic metaphors seem to move round the sun they can only turn round themselves. Derrida claims that, on the one hand, a metaphor always embodies its own death, on the other hand, it is capable of sublation (cf. *Aufhebung*) and becoming a dried flower in a book.[69] In our collection of (dried) flowers, in our anthology,[70] we can only collect figure-phantoms, that is, the (dead) flowers of rhetoric. Reading about these figures, we enter the world of the dead, where as mythical death-flowers, asphodels,[71] the sepulchral flowers are blooming and unfolding their stories. And even if we know about it, suspending our doubts, we start to remember again and again. And looking in the mirror, we try to see the other – always already allegorically and from one ironic moment to the next.

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67. Paul de Man, "The Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image," in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984), 1–17, p. 6.

68. Dirk De Schutter, "Words Like Stones," in *(Dis)continuities: Essays on Paul de Man*, ed. Luc Herman, Kris Humbeeck and Geert Lernout (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989), p. 108.

69. Derrida, "White Mythology," pp. 271–272.

70. Derrida also mentions that the Greek word *anthologia* originally meant flower-collection. See in "White Mythology," p. 272.

71. The Greeks planted the asphodels near tombs, regarding them as the form of food preferred by the dead; they also believed that there was a large meadow overgrown with asphodel in Hades (mentioned in Homer's *Odyssey*, XI.539, XI. 573 and XXIV.13). The flower itself belongs to the liliaceae, together with the narcissus. See Rose, pp. 88–90.

Zoltán Dragon

Derrida's Specter, Abraham's Phantom

Psychoanalysis as the Uncanny Kernel of Deconstruction

The aim of this paper is to trace the haunting effect of two texts by Jacques Derrida and disclose the cause of that effect. First I discuss J. Hillis Miller's bafflement and subsequent misreading of Derrida's rather enigmatic text, "Fors," and then read it in tandem with a similarly haunting-haunted text, *Specters of Marx*. This forms the basis of my endeavor to disclose the silenced traces that lead to the work of Nicolas Abraham, an old friend of Derrida's, whose name is simply foreclosed from the French philosopher's oeuvre even though he wrote two prefaces to Abraham's works (one of them being "Fors" – which curiously turns into an enigma for Miller). My aim, in other words, is to let the foreclosed trace speak and to see what it does to Derrida's deconstructionist project culminating in his later project of "hauntology."

In the penultimate chapter of *Topographies* (1995), J. Hillis Miller sets himself the task to "map" Jacques Derrida's "topographies," which is an attempt to locate Derrida's discourse in the domains of literature, theory and philosophy. To map the French philosopher's discourse, Miller chooses as basic reference Derrida's "strange" text[1] of "Fors," the text that features the curious term "crypt" and that transgresses the discursive domains Miller aspires to detect. The "strange case" of "Fors" is thus the origin for a topographic rhetoric not only in Derrida, but also in Miller's project: this is the point from which all subsequent texts would be viewed. The reason for Miller to embark on this cartography is that "somewhere and nowhere in every Derridean topography is a secret place, a crypt whose coordinates cannot be plotted. This place exceeds any ordinary topographical placement."[2] This strange crypt is thus present in its absence: it is the invisible in the visible, the blind spot of Derrida's writing. Miller, however, having recognized that this crypt insists in Derrida's texts,

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1. J. Hillis Miller, *Topographies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 295.
2. Miller, *Topographies*, pp. 296–297.

fails to map its recurrence and effect, focusing instead on the question of whether Derrida's language gets close to literature or it retains certain philosophical traits even in asking "What is literature?" – a question Derrida (in Miller's reading) seems to be obsessed with; a question that is displaced by the question of "What is a crypt?" in "Fors."[3] My aim here is to consider the concept of the crypt as crypt, and not as a displacement of "literature," and to see what "crypt-effects" can be spotted in some of Derrida's texts: in other words, to "map" what Miller refused to map, namely the uncanny kernel of psychoanalytic thought hidden in Derrida's deconstructionist technique of reading that seems to haunt others in the same discursive domain as well. Moreover, I will turn to Derrida's *Specters of Marx* in order to locate the hidden train of thought that the text uncannily silences, and to see the implications of this silencing in the context of Derrida's deconstructive reading that seems to be haunted by its own specters.

1 Derrida's Crypts

To proceed, I first need to "locate" Derrida's "Fors," since Miller continuously "defers" this gesture, even though the appearance of that text is pivotal in any further investigation of the "crypt." During the late 1950s and early 1960s Derrida took part in a series of seminars organized by Nicolas Abraham, Hungarian-French philosopher-psychoanalyst, on the issue of "transphenomenology": a reading of Husserlian phenomenology in the light of Sándor Ferenczi's work and Freudian psychoanalysis.[4] During the seminars Derrida and Abraham made friends, the result of which are the two forewords the former wrote for the posthumous publications of Abraham, one of them being "Fors: The Anglish Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok" in Abraham and Torok's *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*. The concepts of "anasemia," "transphenomenology," "crypt," "cryptonymy," "phantom," and "transgenerational haunting" were developing at that time, and the analysis of the Wolf Man *in absentia* also began then. *The Wolf Man's Magic Word* is the result of an analytic reading of Freud's failed treatment of Sergei Pankeiev, and the later at-

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3. Miller, *Topographies*, p. 311.

4. Abraham and Torok organized a series of private seminars at their residence in Paris between 1959 and 1961 under the general title "Phenomenological Psychology," later modified to "Genetic Phenomenology" (Nicholas T. Rand, "Editor's Note to Part One," in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel* [Chicago: The University Press of Chicago, 1994], p. 23).

tempts to complete the analysis by Ruth Mack Brunswick and Muriel Gardiner, and also of the Wolf Man's own works.

Abraham redefined Freud's concept of the primal scene as "primal words" (*les mots originaires*), as he believed that the traumatic scene that haunted the Wolf Man had been incorporated in his language. "Where Freud speaks of *Verwerfung* [foreclosure or repudiation], Abraham speaks of incorporation; where Freud says the Wolf-Man's libido was 'splintered,' Abraham speaks of the 'shattered symbol' (*le symbole éclaté*) and the formation of the 'crypt.' "[5] That is, Abraham set his analysis onto a rhetorical field, in which the trauma is in fact not a psychic entity that is foreclosed, but rather it is incorporated, buried alive as it were, in the foreclosed or incorporated word itself. Therefore, Abraham could locate the fault lines, the shatterings or fissures, not in terms of psychic topography, but in a linguistic domain. This opens the way for a transliteral reading of the Wolf Man's language that includes his native Russian, the German he spoke to Freud, and also English. The "anasemic" reading Abraham performs is in fact a reading of hidden Russian homonyms that support the Wolf Man's German words through which Freud tried to decipher the primal scene. The "anaseme" in Abraham's analysis is the unspoken word adjacent to the one that is uttered, always being there but still absent, "over," "under," or "beside" – as the Greek prefix "ana-" suggests.

Completely in harmony with the Lacanian principle that desire is a metonymy, Abraham successfully pursues the "primal" line in the series of homonyms, displacements and metonymies at the end of which he locates the three pillars of the Wolf Man's language: "*vidietz*": witness; "*goulfik*": zipper; and "*tieret*": to rub. These words encrypt three positions that are pictured in the primal scene of the Wolf Man: the position of the sister, that of the father committing the incestuous act, and that of the witness, the little Sergei himself. It is thus this threefold identification incorporated in a series of words that haunted the Wolf Man's speech, and it was the primarily topographical analysis Freud and his followers performed that obscured the solution, deferring it further and further. Abraham's turn towards language and defining the crypt not in topographical but in linguistic terms let him decode the secret(ed) "*verbarium*" and thus to the termination of the analysis.

It is thus surprising that Derrida, and Miller too, for that matter, in a deconstructionist reading turn back onto the path Freud had taken. The stranger it gets when one reads "Fors," which is placed before Abraham's analysis as a foreword, as

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5. Ned Lukacher, *Primal Scenes: Literature, Philosophy, Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 157.

introducing Abraham's technique, calling attention to the uniqueness of his psycho-analytic thought that clearly distinguishes him from the two most influential trends in psychoanalytic thought: Freud and Lacan. Why did Derrida retain the topographi-cal analysis? Why did he simply neglect Abraham's genuine way of interrogation while acting as if he were doing a demonstration of it? And finally – a question that locates Derrida's crypt in this enigmatic foreword – why does he later work with the concepts clearly inspired by Abraham without referring to this old friend? In other words, while he utilizes (textual) analytic processes that at points come very close to the technique of cryptonymy, he seems to be reluctant to perform this on his own texts in order to locate his own crypt (although I have to mention that in "Fors" he in fact strives to find the crypt in Abraham and Torok's text, but he clearly fails).

Derrida's reading of Abraham and Torok's cryptonymy has a haunting effect onwards. I claim that it is precisely this effect that Miller noticed in Derrida's works, and he gets very close to the Derridean crypt in locating it. Nonetheless, Miller sim-ply ignores Abraham and Torok's text, and performs a reading of the foreword to *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*. This is evident from the title of the chapter in his *Topog-raphies*: "Derrida's Topographies." Thus he commits himself to the same "misread-ing" he did in "The Critic as Host," where he attempts to demonstrate the proceeding of a deconstructive reading, in which one example for the etymological tracing of potential meanings he mentions is the pair of opposites *Unheimlich* and *Heimlich*.[6] Enlisting some of the meanings from the history of these words, Miller concludes that there is a certain meaning of *Heimlich* that mysteriously coincides with the pri-mary meaning of *unheimlich*. The editor of the anthology of *Modern Literary The-ory and Criticism*, David Lodge is quick to come with the help: he notes in a footnote, in a rather unusual way, that the author of the essay probably missed that the meaning of *Heimlich* as "secret" is fairly evident even from a German-English dictionary.[7] What they both miss, however, is that Freud had long ago published an essay, "The Uncanny," that gives a much more minutely detailed analysis of this pair of opposites than that of Miller and Lodge's together. Strangely enough, the same way Derrida seems to forget about Abraham, Miller forgets about Freud.

Derrida's topographical incorporation has thus had an effect on Miller as well, which is evident in *Topographies*. While Freud, Brunswick and Gardiner tried to map the psychic topography of the Wolf Man, Abraham proposed another type of

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6. J. Hillis Miller, "The Critic as Host," in *Modern Literary Theory and Criticism: A Reader*, ed. David Lodge (New York: Longman, 1988), p. 279.

7. Miller, "Critic," p. 279.

reading that shed light on the crypt in a linguistic scrutiny, which Derrida threw back onto the literal topography of the psyche, only to be taken up some twenty years later by Miller, who does not even seem to bother with all the predecessors, taking the concept of the crypt as a genuinely Derridean term. This way he incorporates the entire preceding discourse without giving a note of it, which refers me back to another Abrahamian concept: that of the *phantom*, which I intend to discuss in the next section. Before that, however, a more elaborate investigation of the basic differences between Derrida and Abraham is needed in order to be able to locate Derrida's crypts (i.e. his textual incorporations of concepts originally heterogeneous to his discourse) that will lead me on to the confrontation of his phantoms in the program of "hauntology" or "spectropoetics."

As it has been mentioned, "Fors" is a foreword to *The Wolf Man's Magic Word* that arrives to the reader of the book as both an introduction and an interpretation of Abraham and Torok's text. As the translator, Nicholas T. Rand argues, "the juxtaposition of Derrida's essay with Abraham and Torok's text represents an encounter between two distinct critical trends."[8] These two trends, however, do not exclude each other: cryptonymy – unlike the implication of Derrida's text – "is neither for nor against deconstruction."[9] Before one would get to the actual text of the analysis, there are already two introductions: one written by Derrida, adapting the tools of cryptonymy to a deconstructive end, and another text written by the translator (and familial and intellectual inheritor of Abraham and Torok's life and work). These two texts undermine each other even before the reader would know on behalf of what they perform their activities. Whereas later Miller celebrates "Fors" to be one of the most enigmatic Derridean texts that demonstrate the power and possibilities of deconstructive reading, Rand – with the same Yale education behind him – seems to "correct" Derrida on numerous points. One such point is the question of reading.

Deconstruction is, seen in the present context, a theory of reading.[10] A theory of reading offers a model of the act or process the reader adopts in engaging with a text,

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8. Nicholas T. Rand, "Translator's Introduction," in Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. lxvi.

9. Rand, "Translator's Introduction," p. lxvi.

10. I follow here Rand's comparison of deconstruction and cryptonymy as "two separate theories of reading." See: Rand, "Translator's Introduction," p. lxvi. What Rand does not include in his discussion is that deconstruction (especially as practiced by Derrida) is a lot more than simply a way of reading – which may perhaps be said of cryptonymy, as well, I would suggest.

thus defining or delineating this activity (for some, even prescribing the procedure). While Derrida and Miller both seem to argue that cryptonymy is similarly such a theory (and in orientation quite close to the deconstructive project), Rand's definition of cryptonymy as a theory of *readability* focuses on an entirely different aim. In his formulation the theory of readability has nothing to do with the ways "meaning arises, functions or fails to function," which is the concern of many poststructuralist, psychoanalytic and phenomenological projects: it rather "shows how signification can be reinstated after its collapse."[11] In other words, cryptonymy as a theory of readability demonstrates "the feasibility of interpretation in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstructions."[12]

Whereas deconstructive reading proceeds as dictated by the infinite play of signification performed by language, or as dictated by the text's self-deconstruction, Abraham's aim is to study the very barrier or bar that allows the sliding of signifiers over the signifieds. Although he acknowledges the feasibility of the working of the chain of signification (as defined by Lacan and used by others as well), he aims to work on the obstacles this separation may induce in understanding. Behind this orientation is Abraham's theory of the symbol, which he adopts from the Greeks: for them the symbol was the broken half of an object that was used to indicate a pact or engagement between two persons when joined with its missing part. For Abraham, an analyst is given only symbols, not meanings: data that lack a missing part that "can be determined."[13] The aim of analysis is to restore the symbol's unity, thus overcoming the separation, and making it possible for the patient to heal through speaking.

Contrary to this approach, Derrida does not seem to believe in the recovery of obstacles in language, in the operation of a given text. His aim is different inasmuch as his focus is to explore the play of signification in a way that annuls the mastering of the center, of the logos, to foreground the inherent tension or even contradiction a text may contain. In other words, while Derrida discloses the operation of the trace, Abraham "offers an inquiry into and an eloquent 'cure' for one particular pathology: the impossibility for the trace to speak."[14] To put it somewhat differently, while the deconstructionist reading attempts to lay bare the ambiguity of textual foundations in the operation of a text, which inevitably foregrounds that the only possibility is the

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11. Nicholas T. Rand, "Introduction: Renewals of Psychoanalysis," in Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, p. 17.

12. Rand, "Renewals of Psychoanalysis," p. 17.

13. Abraham and Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, p. 79.

14. Rand, "Translator's Introduction," p. lxix.

production of a series of different readings, the aim of a cryptonymic analysis is to make reading as such possible. These are the basic differences regarding the purely textual operations of the two distinct theories of deconstruction and cryptonymy: differences which seem to disappear in Derrida's "Fors," and which render Derrida's subsequent concern with secrets, crypts, and ghosts rather problematic.

I stress that the differences I have just pointed out concern both theories in terms of *textual* operations because what Derrida, and then later on Miller, advocate is something completely different. In what follows I will read Derrida's "Fors" in tandem with Miller's discussion and contrast it with Abraham and Torok's text to disclose a thematic shift in the two deconstructive readings (thus misreadings, of course) that has gone unnoticed until today. Inevitably, the question centers around the concept of the crypt which Derrida arbitrarily dissects from the first word of the original French title of the book, *Cryptonymie*: "crypte." The question "What is a crypt?" resonates through Derrida's essay, and everything he does is a move towards a definition – which finally is lost somewhere, or more precisely, absorbed into the metaphysical vocabulary stemming from Plato to Heidegger.

The title of the essay, "Fors," already designates Derrida's trajectory. In a lengthy footnote to the English translation Barbara Johnson explains the potential meanings of the word "*for*" and its plural, which underlines Derrida's attempt to produce a topographical analysis. *Fors* is the derivative of the Latin *foris* ("outside, outdoors"), and an archaic preposition for "except for, barring, save."[15] Then *fors* as a plural of *for* "designates the inner heart, 'the tribunal of conscience,' subjective interiority."[16] *Fors* thus may mean both exteriority and interiority at the very same time – it may be read as a distant echo of Lacan's rendition of Freud's concept of the *unheimlich*: "*extimité*." What is significant here is that already the title of the essay designates the role the concept of the crypt would play onwards: the crypt is in fact the topographical embodiment of this impossible place, this invisible *topos* in the visible cartography. In Miller's reading of Derrida, "Fors," the very word itself, is precisely the strange or uncanny (*extimate*, in Lacanese) crypt, "where something or someone both dead and alive is buried, where something has happened without having happened."[17]

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15. Barbara Johnson's note in Jacques Derrida, "Fors: The Anglish Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok," trans. Barbara Johnson, in Abraham and Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, p. xi.

16. Johnson, pp. xi–xii.

17. Miller, *Topographies*, p. 295.

The problem in this case lies with Miller: Derrida goes with Abraham on this point, namely that the crypt encloses something or someone (a secret, an unmourned beloved, etc.) *buried alive*. Were it buried dead, it would not haunt, that is there would not be any crypt effects. Miller thus makes Derrida's reading of the crypt as an impossible yet pivotal point in topography even more impossible (if that is possible at all), thus undercutting the definition itself. Thus, while for Derrida this impossible point makes possible the very existence of any topography, for Miller topography altogether becomes an impossibility: it becomes a domain that requires "a virtually interminable mapping procedure."[18]

As mentioned before, Miller hears in Derrida's recurring question of "What is a crypt?" another question: "What is literature?" According to Miller, Derrida's "interest in reading works of literature puts him in danger of being seen as a strange, Continental, crypto-New Critic"[19] – an assertion that applies to himself as well in certain respect. However, evoking New Criticism is quite mistaken at this point, and it in fact reveals the basis of the multilayered misreading the two deconstructionists perform regarding cryptonymy. The aim of a New Critic is to study the text and nothing else outside it, which indeed would be very well in accord with the deconstructive claim that "there is nothing outside the text" ["*Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*"].[20] However, what Derrida does is precisely leaving behind the text in the case of "Fors." Admittedly, he does not even try to talk about the text which his foreword precedes. For that matter, he does not even talk about "texts": right from the beginning he – with the help of a vocabulary drawn from building construction ("Caulked or padded along its inner partition, with cement or concrete on the other side. . .")[21] – reflects on "crypt" as an object, a material existence of an object that is uncanny in its form. In this light what is even more uncanny is Miller's association of the crypt with literature.

The problem is highly significant: Derrida talks of topographies while Abraham and Torok *clearly state that they do not analyze the Wolf Man with the help of the topographical method used by Freud and his followers, but instead utilize the power of language.* The crypt, in Abraham and Torok's formulation is *purely linguistic,* and explicitly *non-topographical.* What might be called a somewhat New Critical orientation is then the technique of cryptonymy rather than what Derrida performs. Therefore, what Miller attributes to Derrida's discourse here, namely that

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18. Miller, *Topographies*, p. 296.
19. Miller, *Topographies*, p. 293.
20. Jacques Derrida. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. G. Ch. Spivak. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 158.
21. Derrida, "Fors," p. xiv.

"What is a crypt?" is in fact a question of Derrida's endless obsession with "What is literature?" points at precisely what is *missing* from "Fors": it locates the crypt, Derrida's crypt. Since what Derrida performs is nothing else but the incorporation of the "secret" of cryptonymy: he silences the "linguistic turn" of the concept and works with its topographical allusions. Miller is thus, while completely missing the point with his obsession of detecting the question of literature in a text that clearly has nothing to do with the issue, quite accurate in detecting the paradoxical position of "Fors" as a foreword: it is about something that the text immediately following it is not concerned with.

Another crucial point is that for Derrida (and even more radically for Miller) the crypt is an unlocalizable point within the topography: an impossible place in the possible space, invisible in the visible, subverting and sustaining the map at the very same time. For Abraham and Torok it is somewhat different. The crypt effect for them is a symbol in the language of the patient, and as such, it lacks its "cosymbol" – i.e. the part with which signification can operate successfully. Once the symbol is detected and its cosymbol attached to it, reading or speaking becomes possible, as the obstruction that blocked the flow is surmounted. As it can be seen, the crypt in this case is not some mysteriously impossible non-entity: rather, it is a "safe," a linguistic trope (a homonym, an alloseme, or any other trope) that encrypts, that is hides or conceals, the trace of the cosymbol. Contrary to what Derrida says about the crypt, for Abraham and Torok it can be detected, though not topographically: it is purely in language, but – and here is once again a crucial point Derrida and Miller absolutely miss – *not in all languages*, i.e. not in every textual or verbal manifestation. For Abraham and Torok a crypt is formed when the suffering, pertaining to the particular person, cannot be uttered, nor can it be discharged or dispensed with. As every suffering is genuine, every crypt should be treated accordingly. That is the reason Abraham and Torok criticize the institution of psychoanalytic thought that is confined to set rules: if the patients present distinct cases, how is it possible to treat them with only one set of formulae? According to them, the primary task of the analyst is to listen to the patient, listen to the very words, and locate the crypt, and it is only then when the procedure of analysis can be thought out – a view that rejects the standard procedure of psychoanalysis with its set analytic progress, stages and complexes.

In my view, in terms of textual analysis, cryptonymy offers a more liberating potential than the deconstructive model of reading Derrida and Miller offers in their examined texts. Whereas, as Miller argues, Derrida proved that the cosymbol is always already lost (a kind of Lacanian *objet a* – which in Abraham and Torok's text it

is clearly not), irrevocably missing, thus providing the point of ultimate textual (I should correct Miller here as he talks about topography continuously: topographical) vortex, the anasemic procedure of cryptonymy transgresses the two-dimensional view of the map and the logocentric concept of cartography. As the prefix "ana-" suggests, the crypt can be everywhere in the text, floating until its cosymbol opens it up. This allows a far greater play with words (not only etymology), and thus a more elaborate analysis as well.

There is one more crucial problem with Derrida and Miller's approach concerning the issue of the crypt. It is none other than the impossibility of surmounting the obstruction the crypt sets in the face of reading: when they claim that every topography has a crypt,[22] and they strive to assign a place for it, rather than disclosing, they simply add a layer of concealment to the crypt effect. For supposing a crypt where there is none, or assigning it a role it does not necessarily fulfill leads to an impasse, another obstruction before any reading. An unacknowledged Formalism may also be detected in Miller's obsession with the recurring question "What is literature?"[23]: if we accept the otherwise quite improbable shift in asking "what is literature?" instead of the original Derridean question of "what is a crypt?" it follows logically that literature, just as the crypt, holds a secret, which one should attempt to disclose through reading. It means, then, that what makes a text literary is the secret it holds safe: it has an essence, something that is "defamiliarized," as it were, something uncanny encrypted within. What he does not bother asking is what this crypt effect does to the reader, since originally the crypt is erected to keep a traumatic knowledge out of the reach of the ego. If the walls of the crypt are torn down, the traumatic secret is set loose (it is at this point that Abraham proceeds with different psychoanalytic techniques, none of which is retained in either Derrida or Miller). Nonetheless, the effect of this traumatic secret, the so-called crypt effect, or what later Abraham terms as the phantom effect, reaches and touches the reader (as the recent investigations of trauma theory show).

Interestingly, some twenty years later, in *Specters of Marx*, Derrida takes up this very question, and tries to offer ways to deal with such situations. However, surprisingly, *his phantom does not seem to let him loose*: he proceeds in his discussion of ghosts, specters and phantoms without mentioning his late friend and his highly

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22. Miller, *Topographies*, p. 308.

23. It is a question he has recently had a chance to tackle: *On Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2002) was published in Routledge's "Thinking in Action" series in 2002. Here, discussing Derrida and literature in Chapter Three, he designates literature as the "wholly other," which can easily be traced back to his understanding of the crypt.

influential work on transgenerational haunting and the work of the phantom, two topics that are results of his indefatigable engagement with the issue of the crypt effect.

2 Derrida's Phantoms

When Derrida chooses not to refer to Abraham and his concept of the phantom and the transgenerational effects and dangers of haunting, he refers Abraham to occupy the very position of the phantom: he is always there but not there, i.e. present through his very absence. This is not a mere guess or some fancy of overinterpretation (in which case I would see phantoms whenever Derrida's name appears in some similar context, just because in the 1970s he wrote two forewords to Abraham's texts), it has been noted by several commentators, among them Nicholas Royle and Elizabeth Roudinesco. Royle in fact curiously begins his latest book on Derrida's work by drawing the reader's attention to the presence of Abraham's theoretical heritage even – and most importantly – where he is not mentioned.[24] Furthermore, even before Royle's previous study on Derrida, *After Derrida*, which also calls attention to Abraham's uncanny presence in several Derridean texts, Roudinesco, in her *Jacques Lacan & Co. A History of Psychoanalysis in France, 1925–1985*, quite explicitly recalls the friendship of Derrida and Abraham and the latter's influence on the formation of the former's system of thought, and their common detest at Lacan's *aura*.[25]

Therefore, what is really haunting in Derrida's program of *hauntology* is the uncanny silence concerning Abraham: the concept of the phantom developed throughout Abraham's occupation with the case history of the Wolf Man and his concurrent experience as a clinical psychoanalyst. In his practice he met several patients who produced symptoms the origins of which could not be detected in the psychic life of the patient.[26] Thus, their uncanny presence and form proved to be heterogenic to

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24. Nicholas Royle, *Jacques Derrida* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

25. Elizabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Co. A History of Psychoanalysis in France, 1925–1985*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 598–601.

26. I wish to provide a summary of the theoretical formulation on the basis of Abraham's programmatic essay, "Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud's Metapsychology," in Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel*, pp. 171–176. I mention here only what may be of special interest in the discussion of Derrida's program.

their context. While refining the technique of cryptonymy, Abraham realized that there is a possibility for undisclosed traumatic secrets to "travel" in the language of the parent to the child. This way, the uncanny symptom formation the particular patient produced may be the result of a previous generation's repression that formed a crypt in the child's unconscious. This crypt, however, must be guarded in order to go unnoticed and thus undisturbed. Abraham defined an active entity that produces fake traces in order to ward off any attempt at the disclosure of the crypt, using the term of *phantom*. The phantom works in silence, and returns as a witness to the secret buried alive in the crypt.

Derrida's *hauntology* or *spectropoetics* is announced in connection with Marx's specter (that which is said to haunt Europe), and concerns the issues of incorporation, mourning, ghosts and phantoms, and finally Hamlet. What is striking at first sight here is that looking at Abraham and Torok's *The Shell and the Kernel*, one finds the very same topics – only without Marx. Taking the lead from Freud, Jones and to an extent Lacan, Abraham developed a distinct interpretation of Hamlet by focusing on Hamlet's illness of mourning, which is a special problem of incorporation, made manifest by the appearance of the Ghost – i.e. the phantom. Abraham was so keen on this interpretation that, in 1975, he even wrote a sixth act in "The Phantom of Hamlet *or* The Sixth Act *preceded by* The Intermission of 'Truth,'" in which he called forth the phantom to reveal his secret that – according to him – is left in the dark in Shakespeare's text, thus blocking the process of working through not only for Hamlet, but for the reader as well.[27] In this light it is rather "uncanny" that Derrida bases his "new program" on the very same conceptual framework.

Thus, when Derrida introduces the specter or phantom as "the furtive and ungraspable visibility of the invisible, or an invisibility of a visible X, that *non-senuous senuous* . . . the tangible intangibility of a proper body without flesh, but still the body of some*one* as some*one other*,"[28] he comes very close to repeat his own definition of the crypt in "Fors," and finally to the definition of the phantom by Abraham. Then he introduces the *visor effect*: the strange situation when "we do not see who looks at us,"[29] and regards his forthcoming text as being watched by the unseen eyes of the specter "in Marx and elsewhere." (It is, of course, quite a Lacanian turn, as the definition Derrida attributes to the phantom is strangely reminiscent of Lacan's

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27. Nicolas Abraham, "The Phantom of Hamlet *or* The Sixth Act *preceded by* The Intermission of 'Truth,'" in *The Shell and the Kernel*, pp. 187–205.

28. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 7.

29. Derrida, *Specters*, p. 7.

definition of the *gaze* in the field of vision.)[30] I suggest that the strangely algebraic "X" designates the invisible and silenced position of this "elsewhere": precisely the topographical crypt within his own text that he composed long before, in his foreword "Fors." The phantom that haunts his text in this case is definitely Abraham.

3 Symptoms of the Phantom, or Derrida's Specter

One may even attempt to regard Derrida's cautious tackling of the figure of the phantom as his endeavor to come to terms with it, while being aware of the impossibility of the undertaking. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida puts the phantom onto the stage (*mise-en-scène*) in order to "meet" it face to face, using Shakespeare as a referent. While his reference to *Hamlet* and the issue of spectatorship seems to be a genuine "analytic" trick to get rid of the phantom and its haunting effect, I wish to recall that one of the basic effects of the phantom is ventriloquism, i.e. unwitting enunciation generated by the phantom. In this light the turn to *Hamlet*, and especially to the figure of the Ghost, should be read as a ventriloquist act commemorating (and by the same gesture concealing) the encrypted secret of the text: as I have already mentioned, Abraham provided not only an interpretation but also a (literary) solution to the haunting effect of the Father's Ghost in his "The Phantom of Hamlet *or* The Sixth Act *preceded by* The Intermission of 'Truth,' " which thus may be heard as an echo in Derrida's "staging." For Derrida, however, it is no longer the expert (i.e. the analyst) to decipher the ventriloquist drive behind the stage apparition, but the spectator:

> What seems almost impossible is to speak always *of the* specter, to speak *to the* specter, to speak with it, therefore especially *to make or to let* a spirit *speak*. And the thing seems even more difficult for a reader, an expert, a professor, an interpreter, in short, for what Marcellus calls a "scholar." Perhaps for a spectator in general. Finally, the last one to whom a specter can appear, address itself, or pay attention is a spectator as such. At the theater or school.[31]

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30. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Vintage, 1998), pp. 82–84. Derrida introduces a strange confluence at this juncture: he blends the distinct concepts of the Lacanian *gaze*, the Abrahamian *phantom*, the Heideggerean *spirit* and his own formulation of the *specter* (intended undoubtedly as a reference to the Marxian notion). It should be clear that these concepts are not only far from each other in their theoretical scope, but that more often than not they are also mutually exclusive with regard to one another.

31. Derrida, *Specters*, p. 11.

With this above quote, Derrida seems to take the concept into a fairly different direction: first, he blends it with the philosophical concept of the spirit (see his discussion of Heidegger[32]); second, he thinks one should let the specter speak (whereas in Abraham we should *notice that it is a phantom speaking*); and third, Derrida believes that the phantom does appear (while in Abraham the phantom works in complete silence). With this move Derrida implicitly changes routes, as his description of the moment of facing the specter or phantom more or less matches the Lacanian definition of uncanny spectral apparitions in visual representation. According to Slavoj Žižek, the Lacanian Real "*(the part of reality that remains unsymbolized) returns in the guise of spectral apparitions.*"[33] This would mean that the specter comes forth to appear in front of the spectator as the messenger of the Real.

However, Derrida's original working concept of the specter – as circumscribed in the first chapter of *Specters of Marx* – retains implicitly the Abrahamian notion, which should imply that the phantom never appears: it is present via its very absence. I wish to address another already mentioned issue here as well, notably the shift from an essentially linguistic definition to a topographical and thus visualized notion that Derrida seems to work with, however implicitly. To shed light on Derrida's textual process of encrypting that ends up in a visualized form and to understand the "flaw" in his mentioning of the phantom as an "apparition" put on the stage, I wish to open up the original Abrahamian definition of the phantom toward a visual type of haunting as well. In so doing, it is perhaps best to refer to the etymological root of the word *phantom*. The Greek word φάντασμα translates as "vision," "specter," which is the synonym of "phantom." When looking further, it becomes apparent that the word φαντάζετν means, "to display." This etymological trace discloses that the very word "phantom" encrypts in itself the condition of visuality, of being a ghost-like medium, and also the potential to show and to present. But this definition also calls attention to a crucial detail: the phantom never appears – it returns in silence, hiding itself and the cause of its return.

What appears, thus, is a mere display created in order to hide something else more effectively. In other words, the phantom does not return *in the form of uncanny apparitions*, but it returns *to form uncanny apparitions*. What this strange display hides is, furthermore, not the Real (the traumatic kernel) *per se*: it can only

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32. Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question,* trans. G. Bennington and R. Bowlby (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).

33. Slavoj Žižek, "I Hear You with My Eyes," in *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, ed. Slavoj Žižek and Renata Salecl (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 112.

hide the crypt – more precisely, that *there is a crypt*, i.e. one comes to know of the *presence of an unknown knowledge but not the knowledge itself.*

To return to the issue of the specter appearing in front of the spectator, I argue that the problem with Derrida's staging is that the spectator does not know what the apparition is, in the first place, and since it is an apparition (the staging of something that is properly off-stage), the spectator does not even know whether it *is* at all.

> *It is* something that one does not know, precisely, and one does not know if precisely it *is*, if it exists, if it responds to a name and corresponds to an essence. One does not know: not out of ignorance, but because this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent . . . one no longer belongs to knowledge.[34]

This is precisely the working of the Abrahamian phantom, which gives the logic of Derrida's project on Marx. As his discussion proceeds, however, he modifies the concept, making it appear, as if it were returning as the repressed content of some traumatic past in the Freudian fashion, forming strange symptoms in the present. Thus he displaces the concept of the phantom at least twice: to a seemingly Lacanian and then to a seemingly Freudian domain. The concept of the phantom is thus silenced, buried alive as it were under the conceptual whirlwind of philosophy and psychoanalytic trends, which thus marks the birth of the symptom of Derrida's text: it becomes haunting and haunted at the same time.

As Abraham is not mentioned explicitly in Derrida's text, his phantomatic presence returns, but not in the form of the Freudian scenario of "the return of the repressed," where the symptom is a compromise formation of a content repressed within. This symptom, however, returns from without, from the outside, insisting and persisting ever more forcefully. To understand this mechanism, I refer to Lacan's conceptualization of the symptom in his later seminars under the name of the *sinthome*. First, the subject forecloses a traumatic experience so that it results in more than simple forgetting, as the trauma is in fact erased. Nonetheless, it creates a rupture that needs to be covered to ensure consistency in the reality of the subject. This consistency, strangely enough, is achieved by the foreclosed traumatic Real returning from without the subject (who thus may not even recognize it as his own) standing in to cover the lack. This symptom figures not in the Symbolic, but in the Real.

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34. Derrida, *Specters*, p. 6.

As Žižek explains, the *sinthome* is like a pathological "tic" that resists dissolving and insists stubbornly without any apparent reason.[35] He gives the example of the Harmonica man in Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West*, who significantly has no name, and is signified by his notorious harmonica. The harmonica, however, serves as his *sinthome*: it signals the traumatic scene where he was forced to support his brother, who had a rope around his neck. He had to play the harmonica as long as he had the power to, and when he stopped and collapsed, the rope around his brother's neck fastened, and he died. As the world falls to pieces around him due to this tragic scene, the only support for him to continue his life is precisely the harmonica: it becomes his only positive support of his being, a symptom that cannot be integrated into his reality, a symptom that does not dissolve, i.e. a symptom that returns from without him.

This way the symptom *as sinthome* "ex-ists," i.e. insists or persists from the outside. This may be seen to be the scenario at work in Derrida's text. Haunting as it may be, with the same gesture, the return of the Real supports Derrida's text while calling attention to the foreclosed content or reference it seeks to elude. Moreover, as the beginning of this essay testifies, it is not only Derrida's text that is subject to the haunting effect of the foreclosure of Abraham and his concept of the phantom: Miller also takes over, so to speak, "inherits" the encrypted secret. This implies that what the reader faces in Miller's and in Derrida's texts goes further than the Lacanian return of the Real that appears – once again – as a strange apparition. Here one has to face the uncanny scenario because the Abrahamian phantom is at work, trying to hide the cause of its return. Indeed, the way the encrypted and silenced presence of Abraham and his theoretical heritage travels through the deconstructionist writings seems to perfectly illustrate the "transgenerational" sense of the concept of the phantom itself.

Once again, it is not the Real, not the trauma, or the traumatic experience or knowledge that returns to haunt, but the phantom that produces uncanny formations *in order to hide the Real kernel*, which in turn is the proper cause of its compulsive return. It returns to hide the presence of the crypt in Derrida's texts and also to transmit it on and on, until its effect starts to fade – although this is rather *deferred*, since due to the endless play of signification in an intertextual model it is almost impossible to grant an end to haunting.

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35. Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992), p. 139.

4 Tearing Down the Walls of the Crypt

What I have attempted to present above is a kind of "anasemic" reading in the sense that I tried to locate the crypt in Derrida's discourse that has been formed as an incorporation of some specific psychoanalytic thought in his theory of reading known as deconstruction. I briefly contrasted the way a deconstructionist reading of a concept proceeds with the way cryptonymy is performed. The basis of this comparison was provided by Miller, who argued that one of the most enigmatic and haunting texts Derrida ever produced was "Fors," written as a foreword to Abraham and Torok's *The Wolf Man's Magic Word* – the book that presents a cryptonymic analysis for the first time. In that text Derrida presents his interpretation as if he were performing a cryptonymic analysis on the fragment of a word of the title of Abraham and Torok's book: "crypt." I argue that his technique or theory of reading is evidently different from what he claims to mime: he performs a deconstructive reading in the face of a theory of *readability.*

Derrida thus incorporates the pivotal concepts of cryptonymy, and utilizes them to a deconstructive end – thus silencing the psychoanalytic background or inheritance. This forms an uncanny kernel in his own discourse that gains its final formulation (symptom *qua* the return of the foreclosed subject matter, knowledge, in the form of an unknown knowledge) in his program of *hauntology*, being present via its very absence. Thus, the very program of hauntology or spectropoetics is already haunted by a silent and effective phantom, whose effect is the transmission of the Derridean crypt on and on.

Anthony Warde

"One Was a Woman, the Other a Man"

A Psychoanalytic Study
of Sexual Identity in the Novels of Toni Morrison*

This paper explores the links between sexuality and subjectivity in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Paradise*. The theories of Jacques Lacan and Nancy Chodorow are employed to examine the anatomical and social / symbolic factors that lead Morrison's subjects to adopt a gendered self. Chodorow's argument that the mother's gender and preoedipal relationship with her child have a profound bearing on the child's gender identity and subsequent sense of self is cited in addressing gender formation and male-female relationships in Morrison's novels. Lacan's view of gender formation as positioning the gendered subject in a particular position in relation to language / the Symbolic system is also considered. Lacan's and Chodorow's concepts are applied in a study of a number of issues pertaining to sexuality and identity, including: homosexuality and 'deviant' sexuality as perceived threats to normative patriarchal gender systems in *The Bluest Eye* and *Paradise*; the discord apparent in male-female relationships in Morrison's novels; and the marginalisation of mothers and women as 'other.'

Throughout Morrison's novels, sex, sexuality, and gender identity are sources of uncertainty and struggle for both characters and communities. As the following passage from *Paradise* indicates, even a natural rock formation that resembles "[a] man and a woman fucking forever"[1] can become a site of sexual controversy and confusion, a place where the social regulation and regularisation of the sexual identity and interaction of subjects in Morrison's novels are revealed:

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1. Toni Morrison, *Paradise* (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 63.

The committee members said their objections were not antisex at all but an-tiperversion, since it was believed by some, who had looked very closely, that the couple was two women making love in the dirt. Others, after an equally careful examination (close up and with binoculars), said no, they were two males – bold as Gomorrah.

Mikey, however, had touched the body parts and knew for a fact one was a woman, the other a man.[2]

Although natural and neutral in itself, this geological landmark acquires social significance and becomes an object of censure as it appears to bear some semblance to human forms, and because it proves impossible to attribute "sexual" specificity to either of these forms with any sense of certainty.

The attempt to assign sexual identity to an apparently anthropomorphic rock formation reflects Nancy Chodorow's observation that:

The social organization of gender, and people as sexed and gendered, are an inextricable totality or unity: the social organization of gender is built right into our heads and divides the world into females and males; our being sexed and gendered (our sexuality and our gender identity) is built right into social organization. They are given meaning one from the other.[3]

The "antiperversion" actions of the "committee of concerned Methodists" in *Paradise* are mirrored elsewhere in Morrison's works in the endeavours of parents and authority figures to enforce and reinforce a system that produces heterosexual subjects. As with any system, however, the organisation of gender identity in Morri-son's novels is far from flawless, since it is predicated upon laws which lend them-selves to (gender-)bending and breaking. Furthermore, as psychoanalysts since Freud have stressed, the subject's sexual orientation and gender identity entail more than the sum of mere body parts, and consequently frustrate any attempt to neatly or naturally determine whether a subject is a woman or a man.

This paper will explore the links between sexuality and subjectivity in Toni Mor-rison's *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Paradise*. These works provide examples of a number of sexual issues which may be addressed adequately within the scope of this paper, while providing an analytical paradigm that can applied in a reading of Morrison's entire oeuvre. The psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan

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2. Morrison, *Paradise*, p. 63.

3. Nancy Chodorow, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 168.

and Nancy Chodorow will be employed both to examine the anatomical and social / symbolic factors that lead Morrison's subjects to adopt a gendered self, and to address the various crises of identity such sexualised selves are constantly prone to.

Offering unique insights into the lives of Morrison's protagonists, Lacan's and Chodorow's theories are also inextricably tied to Freud, who, as Hortense J. Spillers notes, eschews the issues of race, social standing, and political empowerment. Although Freud's Oedipal family is representative of the "sociometries of the bourgeoisie household of Viennese society of [his] time," he nonetheless writes "as if his man/woman were Everybody's, were constitutive of the social order, and that coeval particularities carried little or no weight."[4] Since the racial and social "particularities" of Morrison's protagonists weigh heavily on the gender identities they assume, this reading of Morrison will rely upon writers who, like Spillers, challenge and correct traditional psychoanalytic theory at the same time as they highlight and employ "the major topics of its field" which are not only relevant for but also "stringently operative" in the African American community and in the works of African American writers."[5]

"The Body Parts"

> He peed standing up. She squatting down. He had a penis like a horse did. She had a vagina like the mare. He had a flat chest with two nipples. She had teats like a cow. He had a corkscrew in his stomach. She did not. She thought it was one more way in which males and females were different.[6]

> We clearly lead an embodied life; we live with those genital and reproductive organs and capacities, those hormones and chromosomes that locate us physiologically as male and female. But, as psychoanalysis has shown, there is nothing self-evident about this biology.[7]

For Morrison's protagonists, a sense of embodiment is intrinsic to the development of a separate and singular self, and the recognition of bodily boundaries is essential

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4. Hortense J. Spillers, " 'All the Things You Could be by Now, If Sigmund Freud's Wife Was Your Mother': Psychoanalysis and Race," *boundary 2* 23.3 (Autumn, 1996) 75–141, pp. 86–7.

5. Spillers, p. 87.

6. Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (London: Vintage, 1977), p. 143.

7. Chodorow, *Feminism*, p. 101.

for the establishment and maintenance of a sense of psychical separation from others and from the world at large. Such a sense of corporeal completeness and discreteness, Jacques Lacan contends, is instilled in the "mirror stage," the point at which an infant first finds in its reflection or the image of another person a representation of its body as a totality. Previously plagued by the belief that its body was composed of various parts it could neither connect nor control, the mirror stage infant embraces its counterpart as a paragon of physical integrity and the source of its sense of "self."[8]

Reliant upon an external image rather than an inalienable inner certainty of self, the subject's feeling of physical stability is far from fixed. Accordingly, the countless crises and uncertainties faced by Morrison's protagonists are frequently accompanied by feelings of physical fragmentation, merging, and/or incompleteness. Like Milkman Dead in *Song of Solomon*, many of Morrison's characters often feel that their bodies lack "coherence, a coming together of the features into a total self."[9] In light of the often unreliable or indeterminate ties between the corporeality and identity of the subject in Morrison's fiction, it is not surprising that, in contrast to the views of certain protagonists in *Paradise*, the question of whether a subject is – or becomes – a man or a woman involves more than the "fact" that it has specific "body parts." As Dylan Evans notes, although the "anatomy/biology of the subject plays a part in the question of which sexual position the subject will take up, it is a fundamental axiom in psychoanalytic theory that anatomy does not determine sexual position."[10] Chodorow, similarly, emphasises that the manner in which the subject "experiences, fantasizes about, or internally represents [its] embodiment grows from experience, learning, and self-definition in the family and in the culture" which oversee its socialisation.[11] This view provides a valuable perspective on Pilate's assumption, in *Song of Solomon*, that her lack of a navel is a trait she shares with all women, and is simply a sign of men and women's anatomical and sexual difference.[12]

In *The Bluest Eye*, a similar uncertainty surrounding the navel and its link to biological sex is revealed in the question posed by Pecola to Maureen Peal: " '[I]f the belly buttons are to grow like-lines to give the baby blood, and only girls have babies,

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8. Jacques Lacan, "Some Reflections on the Ego," *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 34.1 (1953) 11–7, p.13.

9. Morrison, *Song*, pp. 69–70.

10. Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Sussex/Philadelphia: Brunner & Routledge, 1996), p. 179.

11. Chodorow, *Feminism*, p. 101.

12. Morrison, *Song*, p. 143.

how come boys have belly buttons?' "[13] Pilate's assumption that navels naturally belong to boys and not to girls, and Pecola's bewilderment that both boys and girls have them, indicate that the meanings each associates with particular body parts are neither natural nor innate. Rather, the significance with which they endow any body part, particularly those that they associate with sexual difference and sexual reproduction, derives from their childhood experience and from their development in a society that produces and is predicated upon heterosexual men and women.

Given Pilate and Pecola's confusion as to which body parts are signs of sexual difference, it is perhaps unsurprising that some of Morrison's characters find that although certain body parts may mark the difference between biological males and females, they do not naturally endow the subject with masculine or feminine traits. This is apparent from the sexual perversion and incertitude of Soaphead Church in *The Bluest Eye*. Although Soaphead Church is biologically male, he is subject to continual struggle and evasion in his attempt to find both a sexual identity and gratification for his "rare but keen sexual cravings":

> He could have been an active homosexual but lacked the courage. Bestiality did not occur to him, and sodomy was quite out of the question, for he did not experience sustained erections and could not endure the thought of somebody else's. And besides, the one thing that disgusted him more than entering and caressing a woman was caressing and being caressed by a man.[14]

Soaphead's convoluted path to patronage of little girls demonstrates that both the development of sexual identity and the choice of a sexual object are fraught with difficulties for the subject, for whom, Chodorow argues, the assumption of any sexuality is always a compromise.[15]

Chodorow maintains that patriarchal society's privileging of heterosexuality as both normal and normative and its dismissal of other sexualities as pathological or perverse is an invalid polarisation which is based on "ad hoc criteria" and misguided assumptions. These include the belief in "biological normality" – the supposed encoding of sexuality in the body – and in the equivalence of sexual orientation and gender roles.[16] Consequently, while Shadrack's eschewal of adult heterosexual relations and favouring of little girls may be perceived as perverse, such a view reflects

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13. Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (London: Vintage, 1970, 1999), p. 54.

14. Morrison, *Bluest Eye*, p. 131.

15. Nancy Chodorow, *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities: Freud and Beyond* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1994), pp. 34–5.

16. Chodorow, *Sexualities*, p. 66.

the idealisation and normalisation of heterosexual fantasies in patriarchal societies rather than the inherent unnaturalness of Shadrack's sexual orientation. As the experience and confusion of Morrison's protagonists prove, any sexual identity is a compromise and, consequently, no more normal than that which Shadrack adopts.[17]

Shadrack's characterisation of boys as "scary" and "stubborn" and his view of girls as being "usually manageable" draw attention to the fact that, apart from body parts, sexual development for Morrison's protagonists involves the recognition and assumption of a socially constructed gender role, together with the traits that typify that role. Chodorow argues that the patriarchal perpetuation of gender roles and the sexual division of labour aim at feminine domesticity and docility and, conversely, at masculine motility and forcefulness. These gender traits are also salient in men and women's assumption and provision of their appropriate parts in a cyclical system of reproduction.[18] Surveying fictional families who "for one reason or another [escape] the imperatives of male dominance," Jean Wyatt ventures that the oedipal stage is "not necessary to development, [but] only to the maintenance of patriarchy. If the value system that sustains male dominance did not require that girls learn to love submission and that boys learn to derogate women and women's work, there would be no oedipal stage."[19] While Wyatt's suggestion is compelling, and follows from her identification of the central role played by strong mothers in Morrison's fiction, the patriarchal and gender systems she sees as inevitable profoundly inform the lives of Morison's protagonists.

In *The Bluest Eye*, the correlation between gender roles and reproduction is reflected in Pecola's aforementioned confusion as to why " 'boys have belly buttons,' " when " 'only girls have babies,' " and in the question she poses after her first menstruation: " 'Is it true that I can have a baby now?' "[20] Brooding over Pecola's question, Claudia consults the images of men and women circulated by society:

> It would involve, I supposed, "my man," who, before leaving me, would love me. But there weren't any babies in the songs my mother sang. Maybe that's why the women were sad: the men left before they could make a baby.[21]

17. Chodorow, *Sexualities*, pp. 34–5.

18. Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender, Second Edition* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/ London: University of California Press, 1999), p. 173.

19. Jean Wyatt, *Reconstructing Desire: The Role of the Unconscious in Women's Reading and Writing* (Chapel Hill/London: The University of North California Press, 1990), p. 215.

20. Morrison, *Bluest Eye*, pp. 54, 23.

21. Morrison, *Bluest Eye*, p. 23.

Although the issues of gender roles and reproduction which confound Claudia become most salient during and after puberty, they are, Chodorow insists, implicated in the subject's development from earliest infancy, and have a determining influence on gender development.[22] It is telling, then, that the "big, blue-eyed Baby Doll" that Claudia receives at Christmas not only represents for her pervasive white ideals of the body and of beauty, but also introduces her to the notion of "babies [and] the concept of motherhood."[23] Similarly, the songs that Claudia's mother sings form a significant, if subtle, part of the patriarchal ideology of gender. Claudia's interpretation of her mother's songs as the laments of would-be mothers and the fact that adults give her dolls in the belief that motherhood is her fondest wish are both symptoms of her development in a society in which "children of both genders [grow] up in families where women, who have a greater sense of sameness with daughters than sons, perform primary parenting functions."[24]

Although by no means homogenous, the pattern of parenting and development described by Chodorow is found throughout Morrison's novels, where women are primarily and often exclusively responsible for rearing children. The divergences between masculine and feminine gender formation and the centrality of the mother's role in shaping these gender identities are evident in the portrayals of the Wright family in *Sula* and of the Dead family in *Song of Solomon*. Both families are headed (nominally, at least) by a predominantly absent father, while childrearing is carried out exclusively by a mother. After giving birth to a daughter, Nel, Helene Wright "[rises] grandly to the occasion of motherhood," and discovers that her daughter is "more comfort and purpose than she [has] ever hoped to find in this life."[25] Helene's husband, Wiley Wright, works as a ship's cook on one of the Great Lake lines, and is "in port only three days out of every sixteen," thus leaving Helene alone to enjoy "manipulating her daughter," whose appearance and behaviour she seeks to alter to her satisfaction.[26] Chodorow, reviewing clinical studies by Fliess and others, finds that maternal manipulation and interference typifies most mother-daughter relationships, and is attributable to the fact that mothers "are the same gender as their daughters and have been girls." As a consequence, mothers "tend not to experience these infant daughters as separate from them in the same way as do mothers of infant sons."[27]

22. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, pp. 38–9.

23. Morrison, *Bluest Eye*, p. 13.

24. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 110.

25. Toni Morrison, *Sula* (London: Vintage, 1973), p. 18.

26. Morrison, *Sula*, pp. 17–8.

27. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 109.

The experience of "prolonged symbiosis and overidentification" with the mother causes the girl to develop anxiety as to her separateness and boundaries, a concern which remains with her into adulthood.[28] This disquiet is experienced by Nel, whose friendship with Sula initially offers respite from her mother, but becomes a threat to her sense of self when "they themselves have difficulty distinguishing one's thought from the other's."[29] For Morrison's male characters, on the other hand, the determining factor in gender development is typically not a continued identification with the mother, but rather the emergence of Oedipal issues in the mother-son relationship. Because of his gender, or, more accurately, his male physiology, the boy is treated by the mother as "a definite other – an opposite gendered and sexed other," and as a substitute for the often absent father.[30] Such substitution can be discerned in the intimacy that initially marks Milkman and Ruth's relationship in *Song of Solomon*. "Long deprived of sex, long dependent on self-manipulation," Ruth finds "physical pleasure" in nursing her son, whom she views as "a beautiful toy, a respite, [and] a distraction."[31] Physical pleasure is implicated not only in Ruth's imagined unity with her son (her sense that he is "pulling from her a thread of light"), but also in her linking of her son to the "last occasion she had been made love to" by her husband.[32]

As well as determining the distinct Oedipal issues that Morrison's male and female subjects must negotiate, the pattern of maternal omnipresence (and omnipotence) and paternal absence in her novels also affects the manner in which these characters assume a gender role through identification with the appropriate parent. While the mother's pervasive presence and over-identification may cause a daughter such as Nel to develop anxiety regarding separateness and boundaries, this negative effect is somewhat counterbalanced by the fact that the mother provides a model on which the daughter can base her own feminine identity. "Insofar as a woman's identity remains primarily as wife/mother," Chodorow claims, "there is greater generational continuity in role and life activity from mother to daughter than there can be from father to son."[33] This generational continuity from mother to daughter reveals itself in the Wright household, where Helene treads a path that largely overlaps that laid down by her grandmother. Raised under the "dolesome eyes of a multicoloured Virgin Mary" (a cogent symbol of maternity and obedience), and counselled to be

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28. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 137.
29. Morrison, *Sula*, p. 83.
30. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, pp. 104–5.
31. Morrison, *Song*, pp. 132–4.
32. Morrison, *Song*, pp. 13, 134.
33. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 175.

"constantly on guard for any sign of her mother's wild blood," Helene eventually enjoys the privilege of "manipulating" her own daughter.[34] Any childish enthusiasms that Nel displays "[are] calmed by the mother until she [drives] her daughter's imagination underground."[35] Morrison conveys the extent to which Helene is subsumed by the maternal role not only by describing her domineering behaviour, but also by designating her as "the mother," and not as "her mother" or "Helene."

Despite her desire for independence from her mother, and her goal of leaving her hometown for "faraway places," Nel, like Helene, eventually finds herself in the role of wife and mother. As well as adopting her mother's roles, Nel also displays many of Helene's traits, such as her concern for the upkeep of her household and the disciplining of her "grimy intractable children."[36] However, the greatest evidence of the generational continuity between Nel and her mother emerges after the departure of her husband, Jude. Left alone, Nel replicates Helene's omnipresence and over-investment, twisting her love for her children "into something so thick and monstrous she [is] afraid to show it lest it break lose and smother them with its heavy paw."[37] While Nel's two sons love the fact that, because of her need for intimacy, she "[cannot] stop getting in the bed with her children," her daughter, significantly, does not enjoy her presence.[38] This suggests that the cycle of mother-daughter identification and gender role repetition that Nel and Helene have each negotiated has begun yet again.

If the daughters of Morrison's fiction regularly assume a gender role that is characterised by continuity with the mother and her values, the sons in her novels generally assume an appropriate masculine role despite the father's predominant or even permanent absence. In contrast to the personal identification that marks Nel's relationship with her mother, the relationships between boys and their fathers in Morrison's novels is commonly characterised by what Chodorow terms "positional identification." Lacking the emotional and empathic closeness of daughter-mother identification, positional identification consists in "identification with specific aspects of another's role," and not necessarily with their ideals or personality.[39] In assuming the traits and role of a male, boys in Morrison's novels may "appropriate those specific forms of the masculinity of their father they fear will otherwise be used against them."[40]

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34. Morrison, *Sula*, pp. 17–8.
35. Morrison, *Sula*, pp. 17–8.
36. Morrison, *Sula*, pp. 96–7.
37. Morrison, *Sula*, p. 138.
38. Morrison, *Sula*, p. 109.
39. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, pp. 175–6.
40. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 176.

In *Song of Solomon*, the contrast between the respective forms of female and male gender role identification is apparent in the experience of the children in the Dead family. Accepting their mother's valuation of their lighter skin colour and distinguished ancestry (their grandfather being both a doctor and a man of means), the Dead girls, Magdalena and Corinthians, assume that their future fulfilment and financial security is to be found through marriage to "a professional man of color."[41] As Corinthians reflects, it is assumed that she and Magdalena (called Lena) will "marry well," and hopes for Corinthians are "especially high since [she has] gone to college." Despite Corinthians' aspirations, however, her college credentials do not equip her for the wider world of work, but rather revolve around the roles associated with her gender in a patriarchal society:

> Her education had taught her to be an enlightened mother and wife, able to contribute to the civilization – or in her case the civilizing of her community. And if marriage was not achieved, there were alternative roles: teacher, librarian, or. . . well, something intelligent and high-spirited.[42]

Corinthians' examination of the employment options open to her as an educated woman echoes Chodorow's argument that "[w]omen's work in the labor force tends to extend their housewife, wife, or mother roles and their concern with personal affective ties."[43] While Magdalena seems resigned to a life of domesticity and spinsterhood, Corinthians suffers a "severe depression" upon discovering that she is "a forty-two-year-old maker of rose petals" and is unlikely to acquire either the husband or the career she has hoped for.[44] Desperate to "get out of the house" and away from the hobby that she associates with her mother, Corinthians seeks employment and, being "[u]nfit for any work other than the making of red velvet roses," accepts a job as a maid.[45] Magdalena and Corinthians' ensnarement by a patriarchal system which is predicated upon the division of labour along gender lines is reflected in the fact that their brother is unable "to really distinguish them (or their roles) from his mother."[46]

Although Milkman's inability to differentiate between his mother and his sisters reflects the generational continuity that typifies many mother-daughter relationships, his relationship with his father follows the pattern of positional identification

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41. Morrison, *Song*, p. 188.
42. Morrison, *Song*, p. 188.
43. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 180.
44. Morrison, *Song*, p. 189.
45. Morrison, *Song*, pp. 187–9.
46. Morrison, *Song*, p. 68.

that is characteristic of masculine identity formation.[47] As his father's employee, Milkman tries "to do the work the way Macon want[s] it done," and fears and respects the man who apparently has "no imperfection" and who seems to strengthen with age.[48] Notwithstanding this deep-rooted respect, Milkman feels that he can "never emulate" his seemingly flawless father since his own body is marked by an (imaginary) imperfection – one of his legs is, he believes, shorter than the other.

While Milkman views Macon's body as a model of physical perfection, he refuses to mimic his father's appearance or to adopt his interests:

> Macon was clean-shaven; Milkman was desperate for a moustache. Macon wore bow ties; Milkman wore four-in-hands. Macon didn't part his hair; Milkman had a part shaved in his. Macon hated tobacco; Milkman tried to put a cigarette in his mouth every fifteen minutes. Macon hoarded his money; Milkman gave his away. But he couldn't help sharing with Macon his love of good shoes and fine thin socks.[49]

Even when he usurps the paternal power that has previously been wielded against him by defending his mother and "deck[ing] his father,"[50] Milkman's identification with Macon is devoid of empathy and does not extend beyond physical supremacy. Despite listening to Macon's motives for striking his wife, Milkman feels "curiously disassociated from all that he [has] heard":

> As though a stranger that he'd sat down next to on a park bench had turned to him and begun to relate some intimacy. He was entirely sympathetic to the stranger's problems – understood perfectly his view of what had happened to him – but part of his sympathy came from the fact that he himself was not involved or in any way threatened by the stranger's story.[51]

Milkman's view of Macon as a stranger, an "alien," and "another man," suggests that, like most males, he identifies with his father's power and position rather than his personality. Macon, for his part, transforms the pride and love he experiences as a boy working " 'right alongside his father,' " an ex-slave who has bought and built up a farm of "a hundred and fifty acres," into a belief that there is only one important thing that Milkman will ever need to know: " 'Own things. And let the things you own own other

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47. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, pp. 175–6.
48. Morrison, *Song*, p. 63.
49. Morrison, *Song*, p. 63.
50. Morrison, *Song*, p. 69.
51. Morrison, *Song*, p. 74.

things. Then you'll own yourself and other people too.' "[52] Macon's single-minded determination to own both property and people suggests that he wishes to assume the authority and agency that his father has previously enjoyed as a landowner, rather than adopt or emulate his father's affectionateness and other personality traits. Such impersonal identification indicates that Macon and Milkman come to view the father less as a begetter nor someone to whom they are tied by biological, imaginary, or affective bonds, and more as an embodiment of patriarchal power, or in Lacanian terms, the Law of the Father.

"Maleness, for its Own Sake"

> Where do you get the *right* to decide our lives? . . . I'll tell you where. From that hog's gut that hangs between your legs. Well, let me tell you something baby brother: you will need more than that. I don't know where you will get it or who will give it to you, but mark my words, you will need more than that.[53]

> The phallus is the privileged signifier of that mark where the share of the logos is wedded to the advent of desire.
> One might say that this signifier is chosen because it is the most tangible element in the real of sexual copulation, and also the most symbolic in the literal (typographical) sense of the term. . .[54]

As is evident from the difficulties that Morrison's protagonists face in assuming and maintaining sexuality, the respective social standing and characteristics of males and females are not natural. Rather, the meanings of masculinity and femininity derive from a socially perpetuated pattern of gender identities and, more precisely, from myths (embodied in forms as diverse as dolls and songs) circulated in support of this pattern. Since the assumption of any sexual identity is tenuous and involves the interplay of psychological and sociological factors, any privileging of masculinity over femininity in Morrison's novels, although normative, is neither innate nor inevitable. Morrison's characters both adhere to and violate this psychoanalytic model, admitting, if not always submitting, to the idea that men are privileged in a system of heterosexual hierarchy and hegemony.

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52. Morrison, *Song*, pp. 51, 54.
53. Morrison, *Song*, p. 215.
54. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection.* Alan Sheridan, translator (London: Routledge, 1977), p. 318.

In *Sula*, patriarchal privilege is implicated in Nel and Sula's decision, upon discovery of the fact that they are "neither white nor male, and that all freedom and triumph [are] forbidden to them," to "set about creating something else to be."[55] Susan Neal Mayberry sees in this passage evidence that the "traditional African American community is not ready to accept a woman who assumes a man's freedom," an intolerance eventually voiced by Nel, who, in admonishing the dying Sula, rejects "the masculine part of herself."[56] A similar view of masculinity as normative and honoured seems to be implied in Morrison's account of the acrimony between Macon Dead and his wife in *Song of Solomon*: "Each one befuddled by the values of the other. Each one convinced of his own purity and outraged by the idiocy he saw in the other."[57] As this description pertains to a man and a woman, the designation of each party as "he" suggests that, in language, the privileged subject position is that of the male. Morrison's use of the pronoun "he" cannot be construed as countenancing patriarchal privilege or as supporting a system that assumes mankind is male, but is, rather, indicative of the manner in which the symptoms and supports of patriarchy insinuate themselves in language.

Fraught as it is with evidence of the assumed ascendancy of males in patriarchal society, language also lends itself to those who wish to challenge such superiority and expose its essential hollowness. The aforementioned assertion in *Paradise* that "one" is "a woman" and "the other" is "a man" encapsulates the interrogation and subversion of male dominance that runs throughout Morrison's work. As Magdalena's emasculating remarks to her brother demonstrate, men in Morrison's novels require more than an appeal to physiology to justify their "right" to rule over women and society.[58] While Milkman's "hog's gut" marks him as male, and thus as a member of the gender group wielding power in a patriarchal society, it is not in itself the source of that power. Commenting on the power that patriarchal society erroneously attributes to its male members, Lacan claims that it is by merit of its visibility that the penis becomes associated with the phallus, the privileged signifier of the Symbolic order.[59] The significance with which the phallus is endowed derives from its role in liberating the subject from its imaginary dependence on its mother and projecting it into its lifelong project of

55. Morrison, *Sula*, p. 52.
56. Susan Neal Mayberry, "Something Other Than a Family Quarrel: The Beautiful Boys in Morrison's *Sula*," *African American Review* 37.4 (Winter 2003) 517–33, p.519.
57. Morrison, *Song*, p. 132.
58. Morrison, *Song*, p. 215.
59. Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 318.

self-development in the symbolic and social orders.[60] Ellie Ragland-Sullivan asserts that although "the Phallus does not refer to the real father, . . . Lacan used this term to underline the idea that the biological father, the penian part-object, and the phallic differential function are confused in language."[61] Macon plays the part of the father in *Song of Solomon*, separating Milkman from his mother first by forbidding him to sit on her lap, and later by removing him from the domestic (and traditionally feminine) sphere and introducing him to the (supposedly masculine) world of work and capitalism.[62] Macon's fulfilment of the phallic function of differentiation, however, does not prove that male physiology and the phallus are superior or superposable; in fact, Macon's body in and of itself bears no more phallic power than the "male doll with a small chicken bone stuck between its legs" which Pilate places in his office to deter him from abusing his pregnant wife.[63]

In *Sula*, men and male physiology are the subject of Nel and Sula's interest as they venture past the pool hall towards the ice cream parlour; it is not ice cream that the girls want, but rather the sight of the "inchworm smiles" and the "squatting haunches" of the men who haunt the pool house:

> The cream-colored trousers marking with a mere seam the place where the mystery curled. The smooth vanilla crotches invited them; those lemon-yellow gabardines beckoned to them. . . . Somewhere beneath all of that daintiness, chambered in all that neatness, lay the thing that clotted their dreams.[64]

Nel and Sula's attraction to the men at the pool hall and to "the thing" that each of them possess is attributable not only to the girl's adolescence and sexuality, but also to their desire to distance themselves from their mothers and their families.[65] Although she acknowledges the father's part in the infant's development, Chodorow questions any privileging of males or their organs that rests on either a logical or biological basis.[66] In the development of gender identity, the import of the male member is always secondary, an offshoot of the infant's experience of being parented by the mother:

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60. Lacan, *Écrits*, pp. 320–1.
61. Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, *Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), p. 283.
62. Morrison, *Song*, pp. 32, 55.
63. Morrison, *Song*, p. 132.
64. Morrison, *Sula*, pp. 50–1.
65. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 138.
66. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, pp. 145–7.

> The penis, or phallus, is a symbol of power or omnipotence, whether you have one as a sexual organ (as a male), or as a sexual object (as her mother "possesses" her father's). A girl wants it for the powers it symbolizes and the freedom it promises from her previous state of dependence, and not because it is inherently and obviously better to be masculine.[67]

Nel, subject to her mother's manipulation in her father's absence, pictures herself "waiting for some fiery prince."[68] Sula, similarly, lives with her mother, Hannah, and grandmother, Eva, in a house from which men are absent. In light of the generational continuity and often inhibitory intimacy that mark the mother-daughter relationships in their family, it is possible that the Peace women's "manlove" is, as the novel suggests, a love of "maleness for its own sake,"[69] that is, a love for those gender and body traits that characterise men and mark their difference from women.

In Morrison's novels, maternal omnipotence not only endows male members of patriarchal society with importance and an association with the phallic function of differentiation, it also results in the devaluation of females and their bodies by male subjects. While a girl's assumption of a feminine gender identity is largely in line with her identification with her mother, a boy's acquirement of a heterosexual masculine identity means that he "represses those qualities he takes to be feminine inside himself, and rejects and devalues women and whatever he considers to be feminine in the social world."[70] Milkman's misogyny can be explained from this perspective, as he, more than most males, has experienced prolonged dependency on – or, at least, submission to – his mother, who nurses him past infancy in an attempt to fulfil her "fantasy" and satisfy her desire to be loved.[71]

In *The Bluest Eye*, Cholly comes to devalue women as a result of the dependency and powerlessness he associates with them. Abandoned by his mother when he is four days old, Cholly is rescued and raised by his Great Aunt Jimmy, who takes delight in reminding him of that fact.[72] Although grateful to his aunt, Cholly occasionally appraises his experience of being forced to "sleep with her for warmth in winter and [seeing] her old, wrinkled breasts sagging in her nightgown," and wonders

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67. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 123.
68. Morrison, *Sula*, p. 51.
69. Morrison, *Sula*, p. 41.
70. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 181.
71. Morrison, *Song*, pp. 13–4.
72. Morrison, *Bluest Eye*, p. 103.

"whether it would have been just as well to have died."[73] While Cholly's subjection to an old woman's demands makes him question the value of living, his devaluation of all women can be traced to the impotence he experiences during his first sexual encounter with a young girl, Darlene. Interrupted by two white hunters during this liaison, Cholly is forced to repeat, or, rather, "to simulate what [has] gone on before": he is too terrified to do "more than make believe."[74] Humiliated and emasculated, Cholly does not consider "directing his hatred towards the hunters," who are "big, white, armed men," but cultivates instead "his hatred of Darlene," since she is the one "who [has] created the situation, the one who [has borne] witness to his failure, his impotence."[75]

While Cholly, like many other African American men, chooses to blame a woman for his failure, Morrison insists in an interview with Robert Stepto that "everybody knows, deep down, that black men were emasculated by white men, period. And that black woman didn't take any part in that."[76] Cholly's sexual failure illustrates Jean Walton's assertion that "though the penis can be attributed to all men (as opposed to women) . . . the phallus cannot."[77] If Milkman's economic standing places him in proximity to the phallic power of capitalistic society, then Cholly occupies a much more marginal position, that of a poor African American boy standing prone before two white gun-wielding men. Like many African American men who possess a penis but lack the means to assert themselves as men, Cholly is "a figure whose relation to the phallus, as signifier of white male privilege in a racialized, patriarchal society" is extremely tenuous.[78]

Women's mothering is not only implicated in men's subjection and devaluation of women, but is also entailed in the positioning of women as other by men in Morrison's novels. Lacan ascribes the myths and fears that the male subject associates with "Woman" to the fact that females, unlike males, do not have an affiliation with the phallus, and have therefore no "signifier" for their sexuality.[79] Chodorow, in contrast, follows Karen Horney in attributing the myths and misogyny that characterise patriar-

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73. Morrison, *Bluest Eye*, p. 103.

74. Morrison, *Bluest Eye*, p. 116.

75. Morrison, *Bluest Eye*, p. 118.

76. Robert B. Stepto, " 'Intimate Things in Place': A Conversation with Toni Morrison," in *Toni Morrison: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*, eds. Henry Louis Gates , Jr. and K.A. Appiah (New York: Amistad, 1993) 378–95, p. 384.

77. Jean Walton, "Re-placing Race in (White) Psychoanalytic Discourse: Founding Narratives of Feminism," Critical *Inquiry* 21.4 (Summer, 1995) 775–804, p. 784.

78. Walton, p. 784.

79. Ragland-Sullivan, pp. 286–7.

chy as manifestations of men's deeper dread of women and of "a masculine fear and terror of omnipotence that arises as one major consequence of their early caretaking and socialization by women."[80] However, as a result of the Oedipal issues involved in the boy's individuation this terror is always ambivalent, as the boy fears the mother and yet also finds her "seductive and attractive." In an attempt to cope with their simultaneous fear of and attraction towards women, men develop certain "psychological and cultural/ideological mechanisms," such as polarising women as witches and angels.[81]

In *Song of Solomon*, these opposing attributes of the woman as other are detectable in Milkman's encounter with Circe, the almost mythic midwife who harbours Macon and Pilate after their father is killed by the very people she works for.[82] Onomastic critics would undoubtedly draw attention to the fact that Circe is a sorceress from Greek mythology, who, in Homer's *Odyssey*, detains Odysseus on her island and transforms all of his companions into pigs. The Circe of *Song of Solomon* shares with her Homeric counterpart an association with witchcraft, the supernatural, and, most importantly, with the power to emasculate the males she encounters:

> He had had dreams as a child, dreams every child had, of the witch who chased him down dark alleys, between lawn trees, and finally into rooms from which he could not escape. . . . So when he saw the woman at the top of the stairs there was no way for him to resist climbing up toward her outstretched hands, her fingers spread wide for him, her mouth gaping open for him, her fingers devouring him. . . . [H]e knew that always, always at the very instant of the pounce or the gummy embrace he would wake with a scream and an erection. Now he had only the erection.[83]

This seemingly surreal passage can be interpreted in light of the dread of and attraction to women that mothering ingrains in certain of Morrison's male subjects. In the case of Milkman, the amativeness and terror that he associates with the dream of the witch may be connected with the oedipal overtones of the nursing he has been subjected to by his mother. Part of the pleasure Ruth receives from her "secret indulgences" comes from the room in which it occurs, a little room inhabited by a "dark greenness" which is "made by the evergreen that press[es] against the window and filter[s] the light."[84] As a child Milkman comes to this little room

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80. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 183.
81. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 183.
82. Morrison, *Song*, p. 238.
83. Morrison, *Song*, p. 239.
84. Morrison, *Song*, p. 13.

"reluctantly, as to a chore," and suspects these meetings with his mother are "strange and wrong."[85] It is perhaps telling, then, that the witch who haunts Milkman's dreams chases him "between lawn trees, [and] into rooms from which he cannot escape."[86]

"A Lover Was Not a Comrade"

> [The men] had merged into one large personality: the same language of love, the same entertainments of love, the same cooling of love. Whenever she introduced her private thoughts into their rubbings or goings, they hooded their eyes. They taught her nothing but love tricks, shared nothing but worry, gave nothing but money. She had been looking all along for a friend, and it took her a while to discover that a lover was not a comrade and could never be – for a woman.[87]

> Freud originally ("a man's love and a woman's are a phase apart psychologically"), and psychoanalytic thinkers after him all point to a way in which women and men, though "meant for each other," and usually looking for intimacy with each other, are, because of the social organization of parenting, not meant for each other, and do not fulfil each other's needs.[88]

Given that the subject's assumption of a gender identity is fraught with difficulties and is neither natural nor innate, it is unsurprising that relationships between those subjects who identify themselves as masculine and those subjects who identify themselves as feminine are often marked by misunderstanding and conflict. Such is certainly the case in Morrison's novels, with conflict between Cholly and Pauline Breedlove in *The Bluest Eye*, marital breakdown between Eva and BoyBoy and between Nel and Jude in *Sula*, and acrimony between Macon and Ruth Dead in *Song of Solomon*. So marked is this gender conflict in Morrison's fiction that it prompts Louis Menard to gloss Morrison's proposed title for *Paradise* – "War" – in referring to "The War between Men and Women" in that novel.[89]

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85. Morrison, *Song*, pp. 13–4.
86. Morrison, *Song*, p. 239.
87. Morrison, *Sula*, pp. 120–1.
88. Chodorow, *Feminism*, p. 77.
89. Menard, Louis, "The War between Men and Women," *The New Yorker* 73.42 (1998) 78–84.

If, however, it is misguided to believe that sexuality is biologically based or that men and women are meant for each other, it is equally erroneous to attribute disparities in male-female relationships in Morrison's works to natural differences. Chodorow asserts that the disparities between masculine and feminine gender identity are attributable to the differential treatment of girls and boys by mothers and to the distinct preoedipal and Oedipal issues experienced by each gender.[90] Whatever its importance for the subject's sexual orientation, the greatest significance and effects of the Oedipal complex, Chodorow insists, are found in "the constitution of different forms of 'relational potential' in people of different genders."[91] Since the development of feminine identity is characterised by a prolonged preoedipal relationship with the mother, women generally develop a sense of self in relationships, and acquire strong emotional and relational needs and capacities.[92] Men, in contrast, "are more likely to have been pushed out of the preoedipal relationship, and to have had to curtail their sense of empathic tie with their mother" in order to attain a sense of separateness and masculinity.[93]

As a result of the asymmetry in the experiences of males and females in their relationships with their mothers, girls develop "a basis for empathy built into their primary definition of self in a way that boys do not." Because they have a need for intimacy and empathy that men, because of their Oedipal separation and gender role training, are generally incapable of supplying, most women, although erotically heterosexual, tend to establish a less exclusive and secondary emotional attachment to men.[94] This is reflected in the disillusionment that Sula experiences in her relationships with men who are unable to share anything but worry or give anything but money, and who "[hood] their eyes" whenever she attempts to convey her "private thoughts" to them.[95] Since masculinity entails the repression of relational capacities, it is inevitable that for a (heterosexual) woman, "a lover [is] not a comrade and [can] never be."[96]

Elsewhere in *Sula*, the marriage of Nel and Jude encapsulates the chasm between men and women, and between the desires each gender seeks to satisfy in a relationship with the other. Jude seeks to be married since he needs "some of his

90. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, pp. 169–70.
91. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 166.
92. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, pp. 199–200.
93. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 166.
94. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 167.
95. Morrison, *Sula*, p. 121.
96. Morrison, *Sula*, p. 121.

appetites filled, some posture of adulthood recognized," but "mostly he wants some-one to care about his hurt, care very deeply," and "if he [is] to be a man, that some-one can no longer be his mother."[97] Jude fears leading an emasculated life as "a waiter hanging around a kitchen like a woman," and views marriage as an arena in which he can prove his masculinity as "the head of a household pinned to an unsatis-factory job out of necessity."[98] Jude also wishes to gratify his desire for an exclusive, dual relationship, and takes Nel as his wife with the certainty that the "two of them together [will] make one Jude."[99] Testifying to the projections that reveal themselves in the subject's imaginary relations with the other, Jude's actions and the motives behind them also reflect Chodorow's observation that, as a result of their treatment by the mother in infancy, "men look to relationships with women for narcissistic-phallic reassurance rather than for mutual affirmation and love."[100]

Ironically, Nel is attracted to Jude because he provides her with a "new feeling of being needed by someone who saw her singly."[101] This reassertion of her sense of individuality is important, since her infant relationship with her overbearing mother, like the mother-daughter relationships studied by Deutsch, has left her with a fear of merging, and her relationship with Sula is "so close, they themselves [have] difficulty distinguishing one's thoughts from the other's."[102] Chodorow, however, supports Deutsch in stating that relationships with other women are essential for a woman:

> Some women . . . always need a best friend with whom they share all confidences about their heterosexual relationships. These relationships are one way of resolving and recreating the mother-daughter bond and are an expression of women's general relational capacities and definition of self in relationship.[103]

While allaying Nel's unease regarding her boundaries, therefore, Sula's depar-ture also deprives Nel of the empathy and emotional attachment she needs. Fortu-nately for Nel, however, Sula returns after a ten-year absence, and their reunion is "like getting the use of an eye back, having a cataract removed."[104]

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97. Morrison, *Sula*, p. 82.
98. Morrison, *Sula*, p. 83.
99. Morrison, *Sula*, p. 83.
100. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 196.
101. Morrison, *Sula*, p. 84.
102. Morrison, *Sula*, p. 83.
103. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 200.
104. Morrison, *Sula*, p. 95.

Jude's belief that marriage will cast him in the role of breadwinner for his family and will thus offset the emasculating effects of a job that requires him to "[hang] around a kitchen like a woman"[105] draws attention to an area of conflict between men and women in Morrison's fiction which revolves, not around relational capacities, but around the world of work. Chodorow suggests that an intrinsic element in the perpetuation of gender identities is the sexual division of labour. While generational continuity and gender role identification generally ensure that the girl will adopt her mother's domestic roles, the boy, who has identified away from his mother and achieved a sense of separateness, is enabled and expected to enter into the capitalist work environment.[106]

The belief that men are – or should be – independent and mobile is one of the motivating factors behind Eva's killing of her son, Plum. Returning from war service to the home where he has "floated in a constant swaddle of love and affection as a child," Plum is killed by his mother not only because she fears that he wishes to return to her womb, but also since he is unable to "leave [her] and go on and live and be a man."[107] As Patricia Hill Collins notes, however, the inculcation of such gender roles creates conflicts between African-American men and women, since they are based on a white "normative family household [that] ideally consists of a working father who earns enough to allow his spouse and dependent children to withdraw from the paid labor force."[108] While this ideal, as seen previously, is an important element of Jude's desire to marry, it is often unattainable for African-American men, since racial prejudice creates "reversed roles for men and women."[109] This role reversal arises when African-American women are employed while African-American men "have difficulty finding steady work," and results in the charge that "Black women emasculate Black men by failing to be submissive, dependent, "feminine" women.[110] In *The Bluest Eye*, this transposition of the position of men and women in the division of labour leads to conflict between Cholly and Pauline Breedlove. Although Cholly feels free "to take a woman's insults . . . to be gentle when she [is] sick, or mop her floor, for she [knows] what and where his maleness [is],"[111] his sense of masculin-

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105. Morrison, *Sula*, p. 83.

106. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, pp. 178–90.

107. Morrison, *Sula*, pp. 45, 72.

108. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 46–7.

109. Collins, p. 75.

110. Collins, p. 75.

111. Morrison, *Bluest Eye*, pp. 125–6.

ity rests upon his supposed superiority over her. Cholly and Pauline's marriage deteriorates, therefore, when Pauline finds a permanent housekeeping job in the home of a white family. As Pauline reflects, it is at this point that Cholly starts to become "meaner and meaner" and wants to fight her "all of the time."[112]

In contrast to the hostilities and misunderstandings that beset many male-female relationships in Morrison's novels, female friendships, several critics suggest, are marked by their nurturing qualities; some, such as Barbara Smith, have interpreted the harmony of these relationships as evidence of a "lesbian 'disloyal' subtext."[113] Such a proposal echoes Chodorow's argument that lesbian relationships are positive for women in that they "tend to recreate mother-daughter emotions and connections."[114] Notwithstanding the desirability of homosexual relations for women, however, "heterosexual preference and taboos against homosexuality, in addition to objective economic dependence on men, make the option of primary sexual bonds unlikely."[115] While Chodorow's view of women's economic dependence on men can only be applied to an African American context after it has been qualified, her argument that heterosexual taboos deter women from entering into homosexual relations is echoed by commentators on African American culture. Collins suggests that for Black lesbians "homophobia represents a form of oppression that affects their lives with the same intensity as does race, class, and gender oppression."[116]

The extent of the opposition and oppression which lesbians experience can be gauged from the previously cited passage from *Paradise* in which a "committee of concerned Methodists" seek to fulfil their "antiperversion" duties by destroying a rock formation which, in their minds, resembles "two women making love in the dirt."[117] This sentiment is shared by the town fathers of Ruby, who construe the fact that the Convent women "don't need men" as a sign that they are "[k]issing on themselves," and as an omen of the "ruination that [is] upon them – how Ruby [is] changing in intolerable ways."[118] Ruby's patriarchs cannot tolerate lesbianism since it both subverts the sexual and social structure that affords them their privileged position and undermines the system of mothering that guarantees the continuance of their

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112. Morrison, *Bluest Eye*, p. 92.
113. Barbara Smith, *Toward a Black Feminist Criticism* (New York: Out & Out Books, 1977), pp. 8–13.
114. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 200.
115. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 200.
116. Collins, p. 193.
117. Morrison, *Paradise*, p. 63.
118. Morrison, *Paradise*, pp. 275–6.

names and bloodlines. In deciding to kill the women "who [choose] themselves for company, which is to say not a convent but a coven,"[119] the town fathers manifest both the typical masculine demonisation of women as witches, outlined above, and the severity with which patriarchal societies enforce the systems that produce heterosexual gendered subjects.

While the threat posed by female homosexuality to patriarchal and heterosexual society is often felt most keenly by men in Morrison's novels, it is curbed not only by masculine forces, but also (and occasionally more so) by maternal forces. If men in Morrison's texts seek to eradicate the threat of lesbianism through physical force or militant means, mothers are equally active and aggressive in ensuring that their daughters adopt a normative (and purportedly normal) sexual identity. This is evident in *The Bluest Eye*, where Claudia and Frieda's mother discovers their efforts to assist Pecola, who has just had her first period, and mistakenly assumes that her daughters' actions are "nasty":

> "What you all doing? Oh. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Playing nasty, huh?" She reached into the bushes and pulled off a switch. "I'd rather raise some pigs than some nasty girls. Least I can slaughter *them*!"[120]

Mrs. MacTeer's horror at her daughters' apparently perverted play, and the implication that, given the choice, she would "slaughter" rather than raise "nasty girls," reveal her role in reproducing of a system of heterosexual subjects. Her anger lessens, however, when she learns that her daughters are aiding Pecola with the practical and emotional adjustments that are necessitated by menstruation. Foremost among the psychological adaptations that Pecola must make is an acceptance of her newfound capacity to bear children and, consequently, of her apparently predetermined role in a patriarchal and cyclical system of reproduction. As seen above, Pecola and her friends are aware of the fact that " 'only girls have babies,' " even if they are bewildered by the complexities and signs of sexual difference.[121] Pecola's and Claudia's preoccupation with maternity may be attributed to gender role identification, which, as outlined above, shapes the selfhood of girls who are raised "in families where women, who have a greater sense of sameness with daughters than sons, perform primary parenting functions."[122] In addition to their acquired sense of identicalness

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119. Morrison, *Paradise*, p. 276.
120. Morrison, *Bluest Eye*, p. 22.
121. Morrison, *Bluest Eye*, p. 54.
122. Chodorow, *Reproduction*, p. 110.

with their mothers, the girls of Morrison's fiction are introduced to the concept of maternity by more active ideological agents and apparatuses. Claudia's parents attempt to satisfy what they believe is her "fondest wish" by gifting her with baby dolls, and also presume that her playful parenting of these dolls will both fulfil and sustain her supposed "enthusiasm at the prospect of being a mother."[123] Although Claudia associates her toy with motherhood, "old age, and other remote possibilities," it is probable that she, like so many of Morrison's female characters, will assume the roles of wife and mother, thus continuing the cyclical system of mothering and gender formation.

Operating both overtly and covertly through various agents, the patriarchal systems depicted in Morrison's novels seek to ensure that each of Morrison's subjects adopts one of two offered gender identities – "one . . . a woman, the other a man."[124] As has been demonstrated above, however, the task of assuming and sustaining a sexualised sense of self proves to be a tortuous and bewildering one for Morrison's protagonists, for whom gender identity is neither innate nor naturally determined by anatomy. Indeed, the so-called sexual perversions that appear in Morrison's novels disprove the belief that the subject's gender identity is prefigured in its biologically-sexed body. Furthermore, the meanings that Morrison's subjects attribute to body parts and to the signs of sexual difference vary according to the familial and cultural influences to which they are exposed in infancy. The differential valuation of male and female bodies by the patriarchal societies of Morrison's novels leads to both an unjustified privileging of men and male gender traits and an equally erroneous degrading of mothers and women in general. Not only are "man" and "woman" just two of the sexual positions that Morrison's subjects can – and indeed must – assume, the very structures of self-identity and the patriarchal system of reproduction in which women mother mean that one can't have "one" without the "other."

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123. Morrison, *Bluest Eye*, p. 13.
124. Morrison, *Paradise*, p. 63.

Nóra Koller

The Construction of Masculinity in
The Matrix

The purpose of this paper is to explore the different modes of the representation of genders in the *The Matrix* (1999). Depicting a process of initiation and development, the film has for its major objective the production of a solo male protagonist that will fulfil the role of saving humanity from apocalyptic danger. This mission is a commonplace characteristic of films made in the science fiction/cyberpunk genre; the construction of the hero is, however, represented in a unique and contradictory way, especially with respect to gender and sexuality, and the phenomenon of masculinity crisis as the basis of identity formation. My claim is that in the formation of both the self and the social — two intertwined processes — performances of masculinities and femininities are determining. As the result of the homogenizing perspective of the film, femininity and masculinity come to be defined as mutually exhaustive categories in order to frustrate the notion of gender as performative. The final ascension of the triumphal, heteronormative masculinity reinforces gender hierarchy, underlining femininity as embodiment. Also, it serves to invalidate the homoeroticism the relationships between male characters are invested with throughout the film.

> "Welcome . . . to the desert . . . of the real."
> (Morpheus, *The Matrix*)

> "(T)he boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion."[1]

"Genders," writes Judith Butler, "can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived." Questioning any claim to truth, genders, nevertheless, can be credible bearers of the above attributes; they are *incredible* because they are copies that conceal the lack of an original.[2] Gender reality, then, is a simu-

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1. Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991), p. 149.

2. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 141.

lated one. Why is this reality, however, postulated as a generic necessity in the narrative of *The Matrix*? How does the film's recourse to the "real" relate to the construction of masculinity and dis/embodiment? Why does the notion of "reality" in the film necessarily produce a hierarchy of genders?

In this paper I will argue that *The Matrix*'s narrative capitalizes on establishing an alliance between the real and the nostalgically normative that serves to validate hegemonic gender and sexual identity claims that are voiced through the recoupling of masculinity and the male body. In the first part, I will locate my analysis of the film's representational strategy within the wider framework of the crisis of masculinity. In the second part, I will establish a relationship between the particular performances of masculinities and femininities and the supposedly anti-capitalist, anti-globalist ideology of the movie. In the third part I will underline how the annihilation of queers is necessitated by the narrative's interest to produce a universal, disembodied subject. This narrative strategy serves to erase any notion of the subject as a site on which open systems converge as a consequence.

1 The Masculine Problematic

Released in the USA on Easter Eve in 1999, the very year its story begins, *The Matrix* seems to have made use of the apocalyptic fears of a society highly influenced by catastrophic prophecies of the millennium and characterized by uncertainty about what its effects may be in a world controlled by technology, and computer technology in particular. This context was, ironically, highly similar to the pre-nuclear visions science fiction films about the New Bad Future depict. NBF narratives, writes film aesthete Fred Glass, are characterized by their portrayal of double/schizoid/split subjects that bear a metonymic relationship to the pre- or post-millennial chaotic urban structures and devastated landscapes where these films are typically located. The characters of the NBF subgenre live in a world that has either survived or is awaiting a nuclear apocalypse, and is governed by corporate power that has strong affiliations with the media, information technology, and commodity production. Portraying identities that are forged through mass media, NBF movies are sometimes willing to posit a muscleman character as protagonist. It is the result of the sexual commodification of the male body through its enhanced visual display in these films, and that they offer various ways of being a man, that masculinity appears as a visible category in the 1980s. The muscleman action hero can be read as the antithesis of the emerging image of the new man in 1980's cinema that supposedly represents feminist gains, like the figure of Harrison Ford in *Working Girl* (Mike

Nichols, 1988.)[3] On the basis of its repertoire of masculinities, *The Matrix* also shares a history with Cold War classics like *The Fly* (Kurt Neumann, 1958, and David Cronenberg, 1986) or cyberpunk movies such as *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982) or *Total Recall* (Paul Verhoeven, 1990).[4]

The Matrix's mobilization of NBF cinematic tradition, as well as the religious subtext of the plot and the promising event of the day may well have contributed to the positive reception the film had. Websites and newspaper articles dealing with *The Matrix* phenomenon have been devoted almost exclusively to the investigation of the movie's connections to various sacred texts. Also, they have been emphasizing the parallels between Neo, the male hero and "Chosen One" of the narrative, the symbolic day of Jesus' resurrection and the closing millennium believed by many to signal the beginning of the Third Empire when God's power returns to Earth.[5] Apart from questioning the sexualization of the relationship between Neo and Trinity, the film's ultimate couple, none of these sources see the construction of masculinity – or, for that matter, that of femininity – problematic in the case of *The Matrix*'s absolute figure. They continue to underline the eternality of male leadership that is naturalized in the film that focuses on the reconstruction of idealized masculinity – whose loss has been thematized by men's studies since the 1990s.

1.1 The Crisis of Masculinity

The second wave of men's studies has been marked by the concept of masculinity in crisis. As Miklós Hadas observes in his review of the development of the field, the first wave of men's studies in the 1980s had for its objective the investigation of mas-

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3. Yvonne Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema* (London and New York, Routledge, 1993), 1.

4. Fred Glass, "Totally Recalling Arnold: Sex and Violence in the New Bad Future," in *Tarantino előtt: Tömegfilm a nyolcvanas években*, ed. Zsolt Nagy (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2000), 121–138.

5. For such analyses, see Jake Horsley, "Gnosticism Reborn. *The Matrix* as Shamanic Journey," retrieved on September 30, 2005 <http://www.divinevirus.com/matrix.html>; Doug Mann and Heidi Hochenedel, "Demons, Saviors and Simulacra in *The Matrix*," retrieved on September 30, 2005 <http://www.home.comcast.net/~crapsonline/Library/matrix.html>. The premise of these arguments is the postulation of a hegemonic subject in the name of generic consciousness, where generic applies to Gnosticism and the Bible, respectively. In other words, these texts' performance and ambition of cracking *The Matrix*'s code is rather philological in the sense that they do not question the narrative's identity, i.e. the calculated interests in the filmmakers' act of choosing these very texts as possible points of reference.

culinities and male experience, and considered them to be unique and unstable so-cial-cultural-historic formations. Exploring non-normative masculinities, men's studies from the 1990s on have contributed to the renaissance of this relatively new male self-reflexivity but intended to break with the framework of modernism as expressed through the investigation of "male-stream master narratives," the main concern of the first period.[6] Recent research in men's studies admittedly owes a lot to the conceptual revolution of feminist thinking, especially in the field of gender studies. However, as I shall argue, its self-declared postmodernity does not seem to be in harmony with current theories of feminism on the multiple dimensions of identity. The second wave of men's studies remains blind to the very logic of feminism's understanding of multiplicity, although among others, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick liberates masculinity from male embodiment, and argues against conceiving it as self-identical or transparent:

> I would ask . . . that we strongly resist the presupposition that what women have to do with masculinity is mainly to be treated less or more oppressively by the men to whom masculinity more directly pertains. . . . As a woman, I am a consumer of masculinities, but not more so than men are; and, like men, I as woman am also a producer of masculinities and a performer of them.[7]

Still subscribing to the specificity of male experience, however, masculinity studies tend to respond to men's lost privileges in the economy, education, and the home with the problematization of the single gender that is supposed to correspond to maleness. As Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis and Simon Watson put it in *Constructing Masculinity*, "masculinity . . . is a vexed term, not limited to straightforward descriptions of maleness."[8] In the same volume, postmodernist theorist Homi K. Bhabha similarly argues against speaking of masculinity in general, *sui generis*, and addresses masculinity as a "prosthetic reality – a 'prefixing' of the rules of gender and sexuality, an appendix or addition, that willy-nilly, supplements and suspends a lack in being." What he does not question, however, is the tyranny of sex that does not

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6. Miklós Hadas, "Hímnem, többes szám: A férfikutatások első hulláma," *Replika*, retrieved on March 25, 2003 <http://www.replika.c3.hu/4344/02hadas.htm>.

7. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Gosh, Boy George, You Must Be Awfully Secure in Your Masculinity!" in Maurice Berger et al. eds., *Constructing Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 11–20, p. 13.

8. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson, "Introduction," in *Constructing Masculinity*, 1–7, p. 2.

seem to have lost its regulative privilege in the (re)production of the so-called male gender, that is, in his own account, the effect of "patrilineal perpetuity."[9]

In other words, biological maleness is continued to be taken as a natural given, allocated as the direct prerogative of this New Man's self: masculinity is in crisis because maleness is perceived to be there and not vice versa. Consequently, masculinity is seldom detached from the male body when underlined either as victimized or pathological. It is this prevailing orthodoxy that underlies the narrative of *The Matrix*, too.

The film can be seen as a hysterical response to this crisis as it strengthens the implication of the interrelatedness of sex, sexuality and power. Although there is a theoretical controversy about whether the crisis is a new phenomenon or it is what masculinity has always been, the starting iconography of the centrifugal character of the prospective hero clearly represents the deficit of manhood that is considered to have over-determining effects: the loss of ideal masculinity.

1.2 Contouring Neo, Materializing the Trinity

The character of Neo/Mr Thomas A. Anderson is given a fairly long time for contextualizing himself both in the inner and outer reality of the Matrix, since more than half of the film is devoted to his enlightenment. The film's sceptical hero learns that he is, or rather, he is going to become the Chosen One, although it remains unspecified who should have selected him. Also, he gains theoretical knowledge necessary for his spiritual development, and for the fulfilment of his 'mission' – the liberation of Earth from the totalitarian reign of the Artificial Intelligence. Though the spectacular action part is limited to the second half of the movie, the battle of the politically and technologically differing two worlds begin far back in the all-encompassing program named the Matrix. Within the rapidly evolving narrative, it is the sequence of the first three scenes that contour the primary trajectories of the narrative, foreshadowing its major controversies as well.

As *The Matrix* begins, we find ourselves enclosed right in cyberspace. The screen resembles that of a computer; we watch a trace program running and individuating a row of figures on the top. Simultaneously, we overhear the dialogue of Cypher and Trinity: he is doing a nightshift watch-guarding somebody that is believed to be the One, a man we cannot see yet; Trinity's presence is unexpected on the scene. Apparently a disbeliever, but certain that "it doesn't matter what I believe," Trinity's re-

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9. Homi K. Bhabha, "Are You a Man or a Mouse?" in *Constructing Masculinity*, 57–65, p. 57.

sponse to Cypher's cynical question, "You like him, don't you? You like to watch him" is a quick-spoken "Don't be ridiculous."[10] As the camera slowly closes to the numbers flickering green, the tension of the dialogue is then suspended by Trinity's worries that they are being tapped.

The camera then slides through the dissolving outline of the zero/cypher, and we arrive at the next short episode that gives a fairly graphic description of the film's yet unseen female protagonist. Chased by a trio of agents and a bunch of policemen, Trinity (Carrie-Ann Moss) kicks and jumps, and runs for escape to a phone cell where a ringing telephone awaits her. With a second of delay, the camera imitates a similar movement of sliding in than in the beginning – a clear allusion to her way out through the telephone line.

Then, in the next move, completing an anti-clockwise curve, the camera centers on the face of a sleeping young man. On his computer screen, online articles on a "terrorist" called Morpheus are being rapidly enlisted until a personal message arrives, awakening Neo (Keanu Reeves). The successive lines on his computer read: "Wake up, Neo. The Matrix has you. Follow the white rabbit." And: "Knock, knock, Neo." The couple of DuJour and Choi appear in Neo's apartment to buy illegal software and to invite him to an orgy-like gothic party. It is put quite clearly that the reason why Neo's final answer to the intruding presence of the couple is positive is neither DuJour's seducing appearance nor her promise that the party "will be fun" for him too, but his realization that her body has become the signifier of his way to Morpheus, bearing a tattoo, a symbol he is supposed to follow according to the message sent by the very man: the white rabbit.

It is the fluidity of spatial relations that characterize the reality that the sequence of the first three scenes introduce us into. The representation of space as fluid, temporal and permeable serves as a comment on the portrayal of the bodies involved. Characterized through their motoric functions and defined as the loci of superhuman power, these bodies are not conceived as border symbols; appropriating and transfiguring space through their bodily performances, Trinity and the agents even make it appear corporeal. Although the thematization of bodies with blurring boundaries and the consequent corpo-realization of any notion of the "real" within the Matrix are among the primary foci of the narrative, it nevertheless capitalizes upon a rather conservative politics of representation with respect to the construction of gendered

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10. "*The Matrix*: Script," <http://www.theforbiddenknowledge.com/the_matrix_script/ index01.htm>. Date of retrieval: September 26, 2003. All quotations from the film are taken from this online resource.

identities. Allocated voyeuristic agency in the first scene, and sliding through the tissue of the plot in her gleaming, wet-looking latex costume, Trinity is invested with a dynamism that is unique in the NBF tradition of action heroines. The fact that she is also identified with an all-embracing symbol, however, indicates the narrative's further interest to relegate her to the role of the receptive and mothering female character, a stereotype in SF cinema. In other words, the gendered reality that the character of Trinity assumes until the very end of *The Matrix* may well be that of a butch lesbian. However, the narrative strategy to create a Trinity whose embodiment is to connote (hetero)sexual tension is apparent in the very first episode. Her assumption of a non-normative sexual identity, as coded in her appearance and her reserved sexuality, then, is violated and offered as a possible misrecognition from the beginning.

As Yvonne Tasker suggests,

[t]he action movie often operates as an exclusively male space, in which issues to do with sexuality and gendered identity can be worked out over the male body. It is perhaps no surprise then that the heroines of the Hollywood action cinema have not tended to be action heroines.[11]

The hypermuscular male bodies in action/SF cinema thus may serve to articulate anxieties concerning manhood, heteronormativity, and male power that they seem to assert so powerfully. Scenes of physical work-out may resolve these fears as they both denaturalize these bodies by revealing their constructed nature, and underscore the manhood they stand for as accessible. The portrayal of musclewomen action heroines, however, posit further threats to transparent male identities by undermining the understanding of masculinity as inextricably linked to male embodiment. Reappropriating butch/lesbian imagery, and associating it with hyperactivity while establishing a relationship between hero and heroine in the very first scene, *The Matrix* constructs its female protagonist merely to produce an epistemological framework against which the hero's masculinity can be tested. The basis of epistemology here is sexual difference; serving as a medium for messages to Neo, Trinity's figure has limited signifying capacity to rework gendered relations of power.

Neo's body is read against dynamism (Trinity and the agents in the second episode) and female seduction (DuJour) – he is, after all, brought to consciousness by a message sent by another male: Morpheus, a character bearing the mythical name of the God of Dreams. Identified with a sleeping masculinity, the display of Neo as a

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11. Tasker, p. 17.

beautiful, passive young man evokes late-17th- and early-18th-century French painting. Mostly preserved for the portrayal of desirable young women, the techniques of representation in these paintings contour masculinity as something to acquire, to be achieved and to be initiated into, argues Abigail Solomon-Godeau. Their homoerotic effect destabilizes masculinity such that it forfeits "its previous transparency, its taken-for-grantedness, its normalcy." It is this loss of the transparency of the male sex that "underpins the now-frequent invocations of a 'crisis' in masculinity."[12] The political hinterland for the historical denial of the crisis as the very condition of masculinity was the preservation of the public for men and the relegation of women to the private sphere of life. The enhanced homosociality that characterizes these paintings thus attests to the fact that non-phallic – here: non-normative – masculinities are ideological as well.

Solomon-Godeau underscores the creation of hegemonic masculinities as an effect of male bonding. Women, suggests Sedgwick, are "objects of exchange" in the sense that they mediate the relationship of unacknowledged desire between men as the explicit and ostensible objects of discourse. Male homosocial desire – that may include homosexual desire as well – is characterized by its intense relation with the "structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power" and thus "may take the form of ideological homophobia, ideological homosexuality, or some highly conflicted but intensively structured combination of the two."[13]

In the third scene, Neo is literally awakened by Morpheus. Neo's quest – or "manhunt," as the headline of a site on his computer states – for Morpheus is made parallel to the agents' search; moreover, agent Smith (Hugo Weaving), Neo's chief enemy is there right in the second episode to complete a male trinity. As Sedgwick suggests, male bonding is in direct relation to the maintenance and reproduction of male power. The fact that the trinity is embodied in *The Matrix* by reinforcing the female-male binary underlines the function of the female protagonist merely as the material condition to its ontology.

The film's narrative strategy in connection to women is made obvious with DuJour's appearance. Neo's way toward absolution is made possible only by gaining information from female characters; Trinity's foes in the second episode, the agents, want her because she can lead them to either Morpheus or Neo. The various female figures in the film, DuJour, Switch, the Oracle, the Woman in Red or Trinity herself

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12. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Male Trouble," in *Constructing Masculinity*, 58–76.

13. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

are made easily interchangeable since they are present first and foremost as aids to the hero: they mediate male relationships, regardless of their physical and sexual iconography. Although the femme fatale DuJour and the butch Trinity may represent the two extremes on the narrative's axis of femininity, it is on the basis of their bodies, their suggested essential femaleness, that they are relegated to the same category.

In *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, Don Siegel's classic from 1956, extraterrestrials attempt to colonize, "steal" the bodies of human beings. It is the body that matters in *The Matrix*, too; however, it seems to be the interest of both worlds.

As opposed to the repertoire of genders established in the sequence, the narrative's underscoring female embodiment indicates a recourse to an essentialist framework of masculinity and femininity. According to its logic, dichotomy is the basis of gender; caught in the singular, masculinity and femininity are contoured as exclusive, though hierarchical opposites. As unified and mutually impermeable categories in complementation, masculinity and femininity correspond to biological fe/maleness – i.e., to an unproblematized morphology of the body. Built upon the lore of biological determinism, such representations propagate the predominance of sex as opposed to gender. Although the latter is considered to encompass masculinity and femininity as mere social constructs, the primacy of bodily morphology is not questioned. Sex, i.e. the possession of genitalia that makes a clear distinction between male and female bodies, has the strong implication of the natural.

2 The De/Construction of Sex

The view of sex as an exclusionary divide within materialist feminist scholarship was first challenged by Christine Delphy. Contesting the priority of nature/biology over culture, Delphy emphasizes that "part of the nature of sex itself is seen to be its *tendency to have a social content*/to vary culturally."[14] Naturalizing the hierarchy of difference, the biological essentialist approach posits sex as the expression of a natural dichotomy, while gender is conceived of as signalling a social dichotomy. However, argues Delphy, differences are multiple and are not necessarily oppositional and/or hierarchical. The relationship between and within sex and gender should thus be recognized as a relationship of mutual incommensurability. That is, they

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14. Christine Delphy, "Rethinking Sex and Gender," in Diana Leonard and Lisa Adkins eds., *Sex in Question: French Materialist Feminism* (London and Bristol: Taylor & Francis, 1996) 33. Emphasis in the original.

cannot be defined, evaluated and exhausted in terms of each other as they are devoid of a common measure. The conception of sex as a pure marker is an act of the social. This act is reductionist in the sense that it eliminates all but one variable of the sign in order to enable the use of sex as accounting for dichotomy. In Delphy's view, the sex/gender hierarchy is to be reversed with sex interpreted as part of "the way a given society represents 'biology' to itself."[15] The arbitrary nature of gender indicates its independence from sex, while "sex itself simply marks a social division ... it serves to allow social recognition and identification of those who are dominant and those who are dominated."[16] In other words, sex presupposes gender and it is gender that precedes sex.

The ideological background for the historical juridico-medical preference of gender as simply a mirror of sex is ultimately overthrown by Judith Butler. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler sets out to investigate the interdependence between sex and gender, and, following Foucault, underlines 'sex' not as a fact of nature, but rather as the product of scientific discourse. Contesting the immutable character of sex, she presupposes that sex is "as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all."[17]

Butler thus underlines both categories as constructs while retaining the notion of difference between their cultural formations. As sex is itself established as a gendered category, its suggested preliminary signifying existence in the sex/gender hierarchy produces a paradoxical ontology where the sexed body is conceived of as a passive object awaiting cultural inscription. However, argues Butler, bodies should be interpreted as signifying practices themselves as their meaning is dependent upon the framework of interpretation that characterizes a society; the construction of nature is the effect of this binary framework that establishes bodies as liveable/meaningful or unliveable/expelled/abject, calling into evidence dominant cultural assumptions about sex and sexuality. Gender is thus the means by which culture creates sex as a natural given, or, to put it differently, gender is the discursive/cultural formation that designates the production and establishment of sex in such a way that the latter category *appears as* prediscursive.

As the gendered body is constructed through exclusions and denials so that it is intelligible in the female/male binary, gender reveals its performative nature as per-

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15. Delphy, p. 35.
16. Delphy, p. 35.
17. Butler, p. 7.

formance is – as in Austin's linguistic theory on performative utterances – the re-enactment of a set of already established social cultural norms repeated through the enactments of identity. Nietzsche claims that "there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything."[18] On this analogy, Butler negates the existence of a core gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity, she argues, is "performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results." The notion of a fixed gender identity is thus a normative ideal, a regulatory fiction as gender does not behave as a noun but is always a dynamic process, a doing, "though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed."[19]

Realized through a series of acts, gender is materialized as through the process of the corporeal stylization of the body. Its performance invests gender identity with a "cultural/personal history of received meanings subject to a set of imitative practices which refer laterally to other imitations." As the binary frame founds and consolidates the subject, but cannot be attributed to it, gender cannot be considered as a locus of agency from which various acts/performances will follow. Concealing its very performativity, the imitative practices that establish gender "construct the illusion of a primary and interior gendered self or parody the mechanism of that construction." In other words, gendered identity is "an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*."[20]

The body thus cannot be invested with a stable, fixed existence beyond the constraints of the systems of power/knowledge. The body that performs is constructed by and through signification, through performances that – continuously re-enacting what constitutes a gendered reality – reveal the impossibility of any recourse to an original or true gender. The maintenance of the ideal of a true gender core is, however, the interest of the dominant ideology that defines the co-existence of masculinity and femininity in performance as deviation from the norm:

> the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's performative character and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality.

18. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1969) 45, cited in Butler, p. 25.

19. Butler, pp. 25–26.

20. Butler, p. 140. Emphasis in the original.

Butler's contention is that both women and men are subject to the "regulatory fiction" that gender represents and which is not only sustained but can also be subverted through performance. However, Butler actively embeds the body in a purely discursive framework that cannot account for the social/material differences that allow for various modalities of recognition regarding identity *as* performance, let alone sustainable subversive performance. In this respect, then, Butler's theory is rather local. Whereas Delphy is more interested in the social construction of gender division itself, her emphasis on the discursive act of interpretation gives way to, but does not accommodate the material dimension of the sex(uality)/gender distinction. The binary frame of heterosexuality represents a gendered hierarchy that Butler and Delphy articulates in terms of the hierarchy of language/theory and materiality. However, as Stevie Jackson writes, "heterosexuality is founded not only on a linkage of gender and sexuality, but on the appropriation of women's bodies and labor."[21]

The normative understanding of sex as the dominant element in the sex/gender hierarchy is thus ideologically biased as it capitalizes upon the material interests of the sexual division of labour. The ideological positioning of the body as a domain beyond the operations of power results, on the one hand, in a social division which is – legitimized by the marriage contract – characterized by women's unpaid domestic and emotional work. On the other, it produces the docile, feminine bodies through the maintenance of gendered disciplinary practices.[22]

Portraying competing realities, the narrative of *The Matrix* plays out contesting notions of sexual identities, performances of masculinity and femininity, against the background of late capitalism. This is a focal point in the diegetic construction of the Matrix, the program itself.

2.1 The Female Dynamic:
The Matrix and the Feminization of Technology

When they first meet at the party in the fourth scene, Neo is surprised to find that the Trinity he has sought, the one who cracked the I.R.S. database, is a girl:

> *Neo*   Jesus.
> *Trinity*   What?
> *Neo*   I just thought, um. . . you were a guy.

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21. Stevie Jackson, "Gender and Sexuality: A Materialist Feminist Analysis," in *Heterosexuality in Question* (London: SAGE Publications, 1999), 123–134, p. 129.

22. Jackson, p. 130.

> *Trinity*   Most guys do. . . . Please just listen. I know why you're here, Neo. I
>   know what you've been doing. I know why you hardly sleep, why you live
>   alone, and why night after night you sit at your computer. You're looking
>   for him. I know, because I was once looking for the same thing. And when
>   he found me, he told me I wasn't really looking for him. I was looking for
>   an answer. It's the question that drives us, Neo. It's the question that
>   brought you here. You know the question just as I did.
> *Neo*   What is the matrix?

The dialogue underlines the intimacy of Neo's quest for Morpheus by locating it
in the privacy of the home. Exchanging the "him" for the "it" as the object of her
speech, Trinity offers a point of identification with Neo. This shared discursive space
of the "us" is defined by the quest/ion and is formulated to denote a communal force
of deviancy that is expelled from hegemonic discourse. The creation of spaces of
enunciation via their very disarticulation resonates with the body's entanglement in
and by forces of presence and absence in the program. For Trinity, vision, or the gaze
of – and off – recognition is one such force.

In the fourth scene, notions of sex and sexuality are subsumed under the bipolar
model of the sexual division of labour. Showing a Trinity that admits that most guys
take her for a man, the scene strengthens her butch persona via an uncritical appro-
priation of sex role-stereotypes that are superimposed, as Butler suggests, on lesbian
sexual identities from within the practice of heterosexuality.[23] Trinity appears here
as a woman who has usurped the male privilege of doing creative, even heroic intel-
lectual work by personifying the cult figure of cyberpunk, the traditionally male mas-
culinist hacker character.[24] Cracking the Integrated Revenue System database, her
figure communicates the outer world's anti-capitalism. A hacker himself, Neo is
again negatively characterized in the context of overwhelming female activity. At the
end of the dialogue, anxieties concerning sexuality and power are displaced onto the
idea of the matrix.

The matrix, this archetypal space of intellectual interaction is, according to cy-
berpunk writer William Gibson, "a 3-D chessboard, infinite and perfectly transpar-
ent,"[25] that allows for entrance provided the limits of the body are extended with
high-tech prostheses. Receptive and demanding by definition, and bearing a name
that means "womb" in Latin, the Matrix reflects on a hegemonic understanding of

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23. Butler, p.137.
24. Karen Cadora, "Feminist Cyberpunk," *Science Fiction Studies* 3 (1995), p. 359.
25. William Gibson, *Burning Chrome* (New York: Ace Books, 1987), p. 168.

the biology of the female body. Depicted as a global metropolis, and identified with the power plant, the program in Larry and Andy Wachowski's film of appears as a nurturing and mothering, and at the same time repressive phenomenon. As a technological mother, the Matrix operates on the basis of its total control over biology, gaining its energy by feeding the living with the liquidized remains of the dead in the infinite fields that contain the cells of the unconscious human beings. As it is put by Switch, a female member of Morpheus's hovercraft crew, the Matrix reduces human bodies to "copper tops." Through this formulation, the late capitalism of turn-of-the-century North-America is figured in the narrative, "copper top" being a reference to Duracell battery. Science fiction history is intertwined with the history of capitalism itself as the matrix serves to preserve "concentrations of data (those stored by corporations, government agencies, the military, etc.)."[26] In cyberpunk narratives, global economy is epitomized by the iconic corporations, such as the one Neo is employed by: Metacortex. The name of the software company underlines the hyperreal nature of production, locating it in the cortex, the tissue of the brain. Also, it clearly conveys the anti-individualist ethics of capitalism: as Mr Rhineheart, Neo's boss puts it, "every single employee understands that they are part of the whole."

This ideology characterizes the program itself. As the effect of a contract that was made between humankind and the Artificial Intelligence after their apocalyptic battle, the Matrix exists as a "consensual hallucination," in that "exactly the same hallucinatory landscape is experienced by everyone who 'jacks into' any one of the system's terminals."[27] Global and personal at the same time, the program's hyperreal, simulated world realizes the "ambivalent abstractness that defines capitalist production and exchange circuits."[28] The Matrix represents what Jean Baudrillard describes as the fourth phase of the image that "has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum."[29] Simulation is based on the "death of reference," that is brought about by the capital's objective to make possible the "pure circulation" of signs in order to accelerate the accumulation of profit. In this respect, the Matrix can be seen as a postmodern capitalistic venture, precisely with respect to its subjective overtones.

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26. Brian McHale, "Towards a poetics of Cyberpunk," in *Constructing Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 252–311, p. 254.

27. McHale, p. 254.

28. Lyn Phelan, "Artificial Women and Male Subjectivity in *42nd Street* and *Bride of Frankenstein*," *Screen* 2 (2000) 161–182, p. 166.

29. Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," in *Simulations: Foreign Agents Series* (New York: Semiotexte[e], 1983), 9–13, pp. 11–12.

The mass-produced and mechanized bodies of the power plant model a new kind of worker, and are thus, according to Lyn Phelan, "peculiarly emblematic of American industrial modes and might."[30] Uniform in their appearance and having the interchangeable names of Smith, Jones and Brown, the agents, the Matrix's sentient programs also serve as references to contemporary features of North-American modes of production and reproduction. As an effect of the erasure of the referent, late capitalism is characterized by an increased mobility, especially with regard to the transnational corporation that is, writes Rosemary Hennessy, the primary determiner of the transmission of capital. Production relies on the "heightened mobility, and on time and space compression" that has replaced the assembly line.[31] Moving in and out of the digital bodies of those who are not yet unplugged from the program, the figures of Smith, Jones and Brown serve as the narrative's comment on the dangers of the economy of the late 20th century. The film's seemingly anti-capitalist ideology is, however, intertwined with its sexual politics, played out in the interrogation room scene.

2.2 The Interrogation Room Scene

The scene introduces an overtly homoerotic dynamic to Neo and Smith's relationship through its emphasis on role-play that involves the imitation of intimate confessional dialogue, and bodily penetration. Pretending sympathy towards Neo, Smith offers him a fresh start provided Neo informs him about Morpheus, confessing that his colleagues believe that he is wasting his time with "Mr Thomas A. Anderson." Being called by his official name, Neo overcomes his so far uncertain masculinity when responding: "How about I give you the finger . . . and you give me my phone call." Neo's unexpected assertion of male power is defined against the threat of bodily penetration. This conception of power is, however, reworked sadistically and hyperbolically in the next pictures when Smith implants a bug in Neo's body.

The film's characterization of male-to-male physicality as violent, painful and predominantly infectious serves to validate its ambition to reinstate heteropatriarchy. Reinforcing the cultural assumptions of homoeroticism as threatening one's identity as well as their health, the scene capitalizes on the social construction of the AIDS pandemic, that is, as Tamsin Wilton suggests, a gendered disease in that it is perceived to affect men – and homosexual men in particular – more likely than

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30. Phelan, p. 167.
31. Rosemary Hennessy, "Setting the Terms," in *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 1–36, p. 21.

women.[32] The threat of the enhanced mobility that characterizes late-20th-century capitalism is thus reworked as a threat to the integrity of the body. According to the anthropologist Mary Douglas, permeable body boundaries represent a threat to the social order because they refer to pollution and endangerment; the permeable body is also conceived of as dangerous because it cannot be regulated.[33] As an effect, penetrative homosexuality is "almost always conceived within the homophobic signifying economy as both uncivilized and unnatural."[34]

Thematizing homosexual intercourse, the interrogation room scene also signals *The Matrix*'s anxiety concerning the technological. Hi-tech development has brought about the new global division of labour that magnifies the homogenization of social relations and fragments production to subnational localities with the sole objective of reducing the expenses and accumulating profit for the company. The interplay between these two components of production processes has, argues Hennessy, "registered in new forms of consciousness and transnational identity – multiculturalism for one, and more gender-flexible sexual identities for another."[35] The narrative, however, seeks the reconstruction of rigid and irreversible gender designations, elaborating its nostalgia by contesting realities that are symbolized by reproductive organs, the biotechnological femininity of the Matrix having its counterpoint in the Nebuchadnezzar, Morpheus's phallic hovercraft. The anti-capitalist attitude of *The Matrix* is thus developed by queering desire through the figure of the clone.

The mass-produced human bodies of the power plant foreclose the problem of genetic engineering, the program's reproductive technique that is metonymically realized through the uniform figures of the agents. In the interrogation room episode, associations between cloning and homosexuality are played out. As Jackie Stacey points out, cloning has homoerotic connotations in SF cinema; apart from a particular gay male style, commonly nicknamed as "the clone," narratives deploy the "more general assumption that same-sex desire is inextricable from narcissism, commonly understood as a desire for oneself or one's own image."[36] The physical resemblance between Reeves and Weaving establishes the narcissistic aesthetic of duplication. The scene also draws on the two actors' cinematic personae. Famous for

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32. Tamsin Wilton, "Sex, Texts, Power," in En*gendering AIDS: Deconstructing Sex, Text and Epidemic* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997), p. 2.

33. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, cited in Butler, pp. 131–134.

34. Butler, p. 132.

35. Hennessy, pp. 6–7.

36. Jackie Stacey, "She Is Not Herself: The Deviant Relations of *Alien Resurrection*," in *Screen* 44:3 (2003) 251–276, p. 269.

his role as the female impersonator Mitzi Del Bra in *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Stephan Elliott, 1994), Weaving shares a queer cinematic history with Reeves who starred as the male prostitute Scott Favor in the cult movie *My Private Idaho* (Gus Van Saint, 1991) Assuming a relationship between genetic engineering and homosexuality, *The Matrix* identifies them as problematic, concomitant effects of late capitalist ideology.

Significantly, Trinity and Neo get the closest to each other physically when she is operating the bug out of him on the back seat of a car while driving towards Adams Bridge. On his way towards re/birth, the hero is offered the Neb as the space of phallic identification as *The Matrix* ultimately subscribes to a homogeneous perspective of gender. Eliminating the dangers of an infectious sexuality, the film exchanges the feminized, late capitalist economy of the program for the heterosexual matrix, i.e. "that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders and desires are naturalized."[37] The narrative's concern for a stable sex expressed through a stable gender is voiced through the representation of cloning as a deviant way of reproduction. The coupling of maleness with masculinity, and femaleness with femininity is the primary truth-claim of a society that "allows for bodies to cohere and acquire meaning within the dialectic framework of sex, and through the practice of heterosexuality."[38]

2.3 Un/Liveable Bodies

Performance, argues Butler, should be distinguished from performativity as the former is a bounded act whereas the latter represents the reiteration of norms. The "citational legacy" performativity is invested with precedes, constrains and exceeds the performer, disallowing for the moment of choice: "what is performed works to conceal, if not to disavow, what remains opaque, unconscious, unperformable."[39] Through a parodic reappropriation by the subject, however, performance can work as subversion. Recently reinterpreted as signifying an affirmative set of norms, the concept of "queer," for instance, has been able to provide a site for opposition through a theatrical appropriation of performance. Underlining the hyper-reality of truth-claims and recourses to the myth of the original in discourses on sex, sexuality and gender, "queer" embraces a definition of sexual identity as a protean, shifting set

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37. Butler, p. 151n6.
38. Butler, p. 151n6.
39. Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," in *Bodies That Matter* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 218–242, p. 234.

of meanings.[40] "Queered" into public discourse by homophobic interpellations, the subject performs – cites and reiterates – the term; the performance, revealing the contingency of the construction of meaning, is "theatrical to the extent that it *mimes and renders hyperbolic* the discursive convention that it also *reverses*."[41]

Engaging in nostalgia, *The Matrix* contests gendered systems of power/knowledge, disallowing for the affirmation of queer desire by locating it within a negative framework of postmodern science that is rejected precisely on the basis of its questioning natural, biological insemination as the basis of reproduction. As Heidi Hartmann argues, patriarchy represents "relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women."[42] Conveying a demand for heteropatriarchal dominance, *The Matrix* sets out to reinstate it through a series of performances that, in response, allow for the moment of choice in the case of queer sexualities, underlining them as the very effects of this choice, i.e. unnatural at the same time. The "material base" of patriarchy as contoured in the film narrative outlines which bodies matter, i.e. which are considered liveable or unliveable.

3 The Masculine Continuum

> "To be a subject is to *be* a man – to be male or literally empowered 'as' male in culture and society. . ."[43]

As power acts as discourse in the domain of the performative, the act of performance is bounded as it is always determined by the chain of conventions. Defined by the historicity of force, the performer's identity that is tenuously constituted in and through the performance is endowed with a relative stability, and a history. The construction and recognition of the "I" is thus possible only through the systems of power and knowledge; realized through the practice of reiteration, the "I" is a simulacrum itself, and as such, it is never fully recognizable. As the forming condition of the subject, the "I" is the necessary locus of action that is activated when the subject

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40. Wilton, p. xii.

41. Wilton, p. 232.

42. Heidi Hartmann, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," in Lydia Sargent ed., *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981), 1–44, p. 14.

43. Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 94.

is interpellated as the effect of social recognition. In Butler's words, "it is the historically revisable possibility of a name that precedes and exceeds me, but without which I cannot speak."[44]

Denying the validity of Neo's identity on its own, that is, questioning the recognizability of the performances that have constituted his persona so far, Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) offers him a historical framework of subjectivity which, however, calls for uncritical and mechanical repetition:

> when the Matrix was first built, there was a man born inside who had the ability to change whatever he wanted, to remake the Matrix as he saw fit. It was he who freed the first of us, taught us the truth: 'As long as the Matrix exists the human race will never be free.' After he died the Oracle prophesized his return and that his coming would hail the deconstruction of the Matrix, end the war, bring freedom to our people. That is why there are those of us who have spent our entire lives searching the Matrix looking for him. I did what I did because I believe that search is over. . .

The "I" that determines the subject and that is, in turn, determined by it through the series of performances is thus allocated a coercive macro-dimension of history that mediates and regulates the subject's recognition in *The Matrix*. In other words, Morpheus's nostalgia catalyzes the very historicity of force while rendering it hyperbolic at the same time, assigning a discursive space to Neo only within a patrilinear framework that is empowered by the notions of nature and natural birth.

In order for Neo to become the One and not the Other, working concepts of identity – as defined by their micro-dimensional historicity – should be thus regarded as merely self-fashioning. The notion of a split, totalizing, decentred, centrifugal subjectivity is deprived of meaning outside the Matrix's hyper-reality. Morpheus's emphasis on a preliminary and all-determining masculinity establishes a relationship in the film between reality as expressed through the trope of the birth, and an uncritical model of objectivity – based on the transferability of truth – as the counterpoints of postmodern/capitalist subjectivity. While the latter encompasses and is founded by cross-cutting differences, the former is based on a hierarchy of differences, as expressed through the representation of the Neb. The focal place for Neo's emasculation, the hovercraft, walking its way in the service and waste systems of old metropolises, serves as a graphic, though not unproblematic, symbol for Morpheus's nostalgia for "true" masculinity.

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44. Butler, "Critically Queer," pp. 225–226.

3.1 Engendering Science

Female stars in action cinema pose problems to the binary constructions of gender, argues Tasker. Defined by their assertive physicality, and revealing the contestability of gendered relations of power, muscular action heroines strengthen male anxieties. The male body remaining the norm against or alongside which they are tested, these characters can be addressed as "musculine" insofar as musculinity "indicates the extent to which a physical definition of masculinity in terms of a developed musculature is not limited to the male body within representation."[45] Excessive and triumphal, action heroines give way to male nostalgia towards a clear-cut definition of power as realized in idealized accounts of private patriarchy,[46] or patriarchy before the rapid technological development of the late 1970s. SF heroines are often equipped with impressive weaponry or are the products of technology: in my view they challenge notions regarding the accessibility and ownership of power as male privilege, and economic privilege in particular. As Mary-Ann Doane suggests, SF narratives typically combine economic and social frustrations when portraying triumphal masculinities. In these films, "anxiety concerning the technological is often allayed by a displacement of this anxiety onto the figure of the woman or the idea of the feminine"[47] Marjorie Kibby attributes this relationship between female characters and/or femininity, and machines to the emergence of a nostalgic masculinity from the 1970s on. The radical changes in industrial structures in that period were parallel to the feminization of work. The growing number of female employees, and the simultaneous increase in the application of (computer) technology at the workplace resulted in male anxieties, since the new, emerging positions did not require creativity but reinforced passivity, and a lower social status. Writes Kibby: "men were retrained for positions they considered as less manly. . . . Those who lost their jobs were defeated by a combined force of technology and women."[48]

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45. Tasker, p. 3.

46. Private or domestic patriarchy is characterized by women's restriction to the private sphere. The transition from private to public patriarchy was the effect of women gaining political citizenship. Patriarchy is maintained by rendering the gendered differentials within "citizenship" – such as the actualization of the right to speak – invisible. See Sylvia Walby, "Is Citizenship Gendered?" *Sociology* 28 (1994) 379–395.

47. Mary-Ann Doane, "Technophilia: Technology, Representation and the Feminine," in Jenny Wolmark ed. *Cybersexualities* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1999), 25–34, p. 27.

48. Marjorie Kibby, "Cyborgasm: Machines and Male Hysteria in the Cinema of the Eighties," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies* 2 (1996), retrieved on May 12, 2003 <http://www.kibby.org/masculinity/cyborgas.html>.

As class and gender relations became relativized, a nostalgia for hegemonic masculinity started to develop. The (sub)cultural response to the phenomenon was the proliferation of science fiction films. From the 1950s on, S/F narratives have made realizable the restoration of patriarchy through defining both femininity and technology as the Other. Denying capitalist technical development, and giving way to nostalgia through the representation of its archaic, ravaged and underdeveloped technology, the devastated reality of *The Matrix* reproduces the very ideology it denies. Concerned about its own reproduction, the patrilinear frame of Neo's emasculation is embedded in a logic of belief in repetition and re-enactment; apart from Morpheus, it is empowered by the figure of the Oracle. However, this logic posits historical relativism/nostalgia against the program's capitalist relativism. This is apparent in the narrative construction of the two cities in the film: that of the program, and Zion.

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The Matrix creates the illusion of a chaotic, disintegrated global city that is in a metonymic relationship with its inhabitants, whose documentation is in harmony with that of Neo. The rarity of centre-heavy frames, the badly lit spaces of action and the reduction of close-ups to the momentary introduction of body parts give plastic descriptions of fragmentation. While the narrative maintains a relationship between the heterogeneity and instability of the subjectivities of the Matrix, and its excessive use of technology, the outer reality is not less characterized by technological fetishism, as expressed through the surgical reconstruction of gender in the case of Neo. As Jackie Stacey writes,

> [f]antasies of reproductive technology, such as in-vitro fertilization, have pervaded popular culture in the form of a technological fetishism, involving a disavowal of the mother's role, an omnipotent fantasy of procreation without the mother, enabling science . . . to fulfil the desire to father itself. [49]

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49. Stacey, p. 259.

Stacey's model of masculinist systems of knowledge points at science's concern to reproduce itself while maintaining a gendered hierarchy as well. The dichotomy between the Matrix and the Neb offers a contested field of bodies of knowledge where the dialectics of body/mind, and nature/culture are played out. Allowing for the cyberspace of the program to realize the fantasy of in-vitro fertilization, *The Matrix* reinforces these binaries that stabilise femaleness as embodiment while liberating maleness from the constraints of the body, the emphasis on mind and culture allowing for the establishment of a universal subject position, an "I" that conceals its gendered character.[50] This dualism is the basis of the way matter and materiality are represented in the film; the contrast between the metropolis of the program and the reality of Zion, the last human city brings about the hierarchy of embodied and disembodied knowledges as Zion remains a utopian construct throughout the film.

The vision of a city that is "deep underground, near the earth's core where it's still warm" simultaneously catalyzes nostalgia through a recourse to the *arches* of the "earth" and "fire" in Zion's discursive construction, and through the idea of the natural that is expressed both through them and the genuineness of birth. The latter is represented by the muscular figures of Tank and Dozer; as Tank says, "me and my brother Dozer, we're both one hundred percent pure, old fashioned, home-grown human, born free right here in the real world. Genuine child of Zion." The idea of birth as an incontestable claim to truth is now coupled with the materiality of male power and will curiously underlie Neo's emasculation as Morpheus's proposition of the patrilinear framework of birth implies the reproduction of science through the biomedical reconstruction of Neo's body. Unplugged from the program, Neo is shown lying on an operating table, with needles in his body that Morpheus uses to rebuild the atrophied muscles. Morpheus's newly achieved medical authority underlies the interplay of the material and the cultural: through his effective use of biomedicine, Neo's body is established as an available site for the imposition of the social structures of masculinity. Although his motoric functions are strengthened in the traditionally male arenas of the dojo or the business district, the materiality of his bodily strength is simultaneously disavowed of in the loading program's neural-interactive simulacrum where these spaces of action are located.

On the Neb, Neo's figure is offered as an easy site of identification: apart from his failures throughout the training, the normative masculinity he is initiated into is also commodified as it appears downloadable from the deck program, the Construct. The iconography of Neo's masculinity as achieved on the Neb serves to frustrate his

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50. Donna Haraway, p. 187.

earlier gender performances. Connected to the deck computer, his body appears as passive, awaiting signification. However, the impossibility of the existence of the body beyond the realm of the systems of power and knowledge is underlined by Morpheus's recourse to biotechnology. The medical manipulation of Neo's body attests to the fluidity of the categories of "nature" and "truth" themselves. In other words, the surgical construction of gender, while outlining the essentialist norms it serves to reinforce, underscores that essentialism is a cultural construction itself.[51] Also, it attests to the concern of science to reproduce itself by securing the very patrilinearity that is underlined as the prerequisite for the transmission of truth. This particular application of biotechnology is parallel to the way the Matrix deploys genetic engineering. However, the narrative strategy to intimidate the material has the effect of silencing cloning; the technology that could challenge the film's biologism is rendered invisible as the construction of normative masculinity becomes the main focus in *The Matrix*. Still, male nostalgia indicates its alignment not only with technology but with capitalism itself.

3.2 The Annihilation of Queers

SF cinema is highly determined by the very capitalist ideology whose conflicts and injustices it thematizes. Succumbing to a past that appears as idyllic, these movies are accomplices to the ruling class: their objective of maintaining the status quo is expressed through the narratives' desire to re-establish the state of affairs that was destroyed by the appearance of the Others towards the maintenance of the status quo.[52] Problematically enough, science fiction films thus reproduce the very male anxieties they attempt to resolve.

The transhistorical perspective that characterizes SF in particular contours a model of objectivity that is empowered by the persistence of vision. Emphasizing that this model is also typical of Western thought, Donna Haraway draws a parallel between the contemporary technological investment of vision with new horizons and a notion of the real as completely knowable. The increased visibility of objects of investigation, she argues, conceals the invisibility of the scientist *him*self; abstracted away from – gendered – relations of power, the knowing subject is assigned an omniscient, universal, and consequently, a disembodied position:

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51. See Marjorie Garber, "Spare Parts: The Surgical Construction of Gender," in *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety*, p. 109.

52. Judith Hess Wright, "Genre Films and the Status Quo," in *Tarantino előtt: Tömegfilm a nyolcvanas években*, pp. 77–87.

Vision in this technological feast becomes unregulated gluttony; all perspective gives way to infinitely mobile vision, which no longer seems just mythically about the god-trick of seeing everything form nowhere, but to have put the myth into ordinary practice.[53]

The masculine signifying economy of *The Matrix* systematically denies the multiplicity of locations from where to see, foregrounding its aspiration for a universal and univocal position by the naming of its hero. As a hysterical attempt to ultimately secure the privilege to see, the film mediates power-relationships through the force of the male gaze. It is this gaze that makes our entering the program possible as Cypher should not stop looking at Neo. Similarly, Morpheus claims that he has spent all his life looking for the One, and Smith tells Neo in the interrogation room that they have had and eye on him for some time. Neo's body thus appears as spectacle, objectified as he is made the passive recipient of the gaze. It is at the climactic action sequence at the end, that, stopping the bullets, Neo is able to return and manipulate the gaze: securing the impermeability of his body, he is able to reverse the homoeroticism Smith's gaze is invested with.

Action sequences have a crucial role in eliminating the unresolved tensions originated by the male gaze, argues Peter Middleton.[54] These scenes, however homophobic, depict male relationships at their most sexual as they allow for the otherwise prohibited contact of male bodies. Resolving and creating tension at the same time, scenes of physical brutality "show what is possible for men. These heroes can't keep their hands off one another, but when they touch, their desire turns to blows."[55]

Similarly to *The Matrix*, Anthony Mann's classical westerns offer a radical solution for the erasure of male anxieties – of the predominantly male audience of that genre – that could arise as a result of the eroticisation of the male hero's body when it is put on display. In Mann's films, writes Paul Willemen, the hero is cast diegetically in two distinct ways, one being consequent on the other. First his figure, emerging on the horizon against the bleak land of the prairie, or sometimes in action, is offered as spectacle; the hero is exposed to be eroticised through the viewer's voyeuristic admiration. As a second step, Mann destroys the hero's body in scenes of physical violence in order to deprive him of homoerotic connotations. The third stage of Mann's anti-homosexual narrative strategy encompasses the

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53. Haraway, p. 189.

54. Peter Middleton, "Boys Will Be Men: Boys' Superhero Comics," in *The Inward Gaze: Masculinity and the Postmodern Subject* (London: Routledge, 1992), 17–51, p. 26.

55. Middleton, p. 34.

hypostasization and near destruction of the male body that is mutilated and re-
stored through violent brutality – in the corresponding scenes we can see a trium-
phant male body emerging. Apart from the previous three stages that result in the
reconstruction of the hero's body, many of Mann's westerns accompany the pleas-
ure/unquiet pleasure of looking with a quite marked anti-homosexual sentiment,
most frequently represented as the murder of a supposedly or openly gay charac-
ter. Through this denial of homosocial desire the anxiety of looking is ultimately
resolved.[56]

Mann's narratives thus consciously act upon – describe and prescribe – the
gendered audience's reaction while regulating on-screen relationships. The nostalgic
construction of masculinity allows for such a double act in *The Matrix*, too. Apart
from the opening sequence, the second half of the movie is based on positioning the
male body as spectacle throughout the rapidly evolving action scenes. In contrast
with his opening iconography, Neo is portrayed as becoming more and more active
while his figure retains its homoerotic connotations, appearing in tight black clothes
that reveal the silhouette of his body. The violent action allows for a more radical
destruction of the hero's body than in Mann's westerns: in the ravaged subway sta-
tion where these final scenes are located, Neo, significantly, has to die in order for
heteropatriarchy to emerge.

As a side-effect of Neo's emasculation, Trinity's figure has been restyled: her
solitary warrior role is exchanged first for that of the side-kick of the hero when he
sets out to save Morpheus, and finally for the position of the "woman-as-romantic-
interest." As Tasker points out, "if the male body is to be a point of security," the
woman-as-love-interest "offers a point of differentiation from the hero and deflects
attention from the homoeroticism surrounding male buddy relationships." Identified
by her emotional work-out when providing audience for the hero's suffering, this
gendered performance conceptualizes 'woman' as "a space onto which a variety of
desires and anxieties are displaced."[57] Through a series of shots and counter-shots,
the film establishes both Neo and Trinity's romantic relationship on the Neb, and
allows for his resurrection as the consequence of her archetypal kiss that saves the
world.

Trinity's figure, shown standing nearby a wounded Morpheus, also allows for
the ultimate de-eroticisation of Neo's "manhunt" for him, while the ultimate action
sequence back in the Matrix serves to eradicate the anxieties concerning queer de-

56. Paul Willemen, "Looking at the Male," *Framework* 15–17 (1981) 10–18, p. 16.
57. Tasker, pp. 26–27.

sire. For Morpheus, Neo "is all that matters"; the revenge plot activated by a Neo that is ready to sacrifice his life for his master in response is, however, played out in order to eliminate the character that has been identified by infectious penetration. It is now Neo who penetrates Smith's body in the orgasmic scene that narrates their unification. Parallel to the sentinels' intrusion into the metallic body of the Neb, he projects himself into the digital body of the agent, hyperbolically reversing and reenacting the interrogation room episode and signalling patriarchy's revenge for the threat of homosexuality.

Eradicating homosexuality and achieving gender intelligibility, Neo ascends towards the open sky. His hypostasis, and his voice-over message to the enemy as the screen symbolizes that of a computer again, signifies his acquisition of an omniscient, hegemonic subject position where the universal male "I" sees everything from nowhere while his body is abstracted away. Transparent and self-identical, heteronormative masculinity is achieved through a series of performances; in order to maintain its hegemony, this masculinity needs to deny any possibility of subversion, and, indeed, the performative nature of gender itself as well. Neo's becoming the One, i.e. the primary unit in the signifying economy of reality, and the final heterosexual coupling bring about what Butler identifies as the culturally sanctioned "annihilation of queers."[58] Still, this outcome is "haunted by the sexual possibilities so annulled."[59]

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

In this paper I have investigated the representation of genders in *The Matrix*, establishing a relationship between the film's narrative strategy and the recent phenomenon of the crisis of masculinity. Interpreting the sequence of the first three scenes within this wider framework, I have argued that nostalgic masculinity is strongly connected to male embodiment. The performances of gender Neo goes through, however, underscore the body's non-existence outside the systems of power and knowledge. I have focused upon the construction of genders in the feminized space of the program, and on the phallic hovercraft of the Neb. Also, I have claimed that the idea of capitalism allows for the queer moment of identification. The realization of non-normative masculinities is, however, strongly disavowed of in the supposedly anti-capitalist reality of the narrative. Providing a constitutive outside for the construction of a universal, self-identical "I," male and female homoerotic pleasures are nevertheless subtextualized, disallowing for the resolu-

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58. Butler, "Critically Queer," p. 224.
59. Butler, p. 225.

tion of anxieties concerning sexual identity and embodiment. The crisis of masculinity thus appears as the condition to the ontology of genders in the narrative.

With the recourse to a single gender that is the expression of a stable sex as the exclusive point of departure, the theorization of masculinity crisis in men's studies is marked by its limitations. As long as men's studies shy away from breaking with the humanist concept of "man," masculinity, as we have seen, is unable to be considered a political category. Within this framework, any discussion of male subjectivity remains "a recuperative cultural fantasy."[60]

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60. Garber, p. 94.

John Sears

George Szirtes's Meetings with "Austerlitz"*

This essay addresses two recent long poems by Hungarian-born English poet George Szirtes ("Backwaters: Norfolk Fields" and "Meeting Austerlitz") to analyse their constructions of the literary friendship between Szirtes and his fellow writer, German-born W. G. Sebald. The poems are read through critical approaches informed by Blanchot, Derrida, and others, and through their connections with key precursor texts, to examine the complex interconnections they explore between themes of history and tradition, geography and place, text and canon and self and other. The essay argues that the two poems engage with a series of figures that ultimately offer literature itself as a shared space in which each writer finds a territory to substitute for that of home, while yet residing in a condition of exotic, displaced migrancy; the poems focus on language, writing and specific aspects of the English literary tradition in order to establish these spaces as grounds for a shared experience that transcends the irreducible singularity of the specific histories which each writer has, in radically different ways, encountered.

> They are
> migrating souls who've travelled far
> to get to places such as these. . .
>
> (George Szirtes, *Sisyphus*).

George Szirtes was born in Budapest in 1948. His family fled from Hungary in the 1956 uprising, first over the border into Austria, then to London. As an adult he has lived and worked as a poet, artist and teacher in the south-east of England, in Hitchin and most recently in East Anglia. He has published several collections of poetry since 1979, and is also an accomplished translator, editor and essayist. In a sonnet sequence published in 1999 entitled "Backwaters: Norfolk Fields"[1] Szirtes

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*Portions of this paper were presented at conferences at the University of Debrecen (September 2004) and the University of Warwick (February 2005).

1. All parenthesised references are to this edition: George Szirtes, "Backwaters: Norfolk Fields," in *An English Apocalypse* (Tarset: Bloodaxe Books, 2001), 103–8.

addresses the themes of landscape, belonging, language and shared experience in order to assert significant connections between his own writing and the narratives, poems and critical essays of the writer W. G. Sebald, to whom this poem is dedicated. Like Szirtes, Sebald was a writer-in-exile; he was born in Bavaria and, like Szirtes, lived and worked as a university lecturer in East Anglia. Sebald was killed in a car crash in 2001. Szirtes's later long poem "Meeting Austerlitz,"[2] first published in 2002, extends his engagement with Sebald by offering an extended meditation on Sebald's death.

Both written in the last six years, these two major poems explore themes and concerns connected to the relationship between the two writers, which are grounded in the symbolic potential of melancholy as an emotional response to historical consciousness. Sebald's rendering of melancholia as a theme is well known and permeates his writing; Long and Whitehead note that he "is often described as a melancholic writer."[3] Szirtes has recently commented on "the notion of loss" which, he argues, is "firmly embedded in the Hungarian literary imagination." "The very word *melancholy*," he continues,

> the one-syllable word *bú* (pronounced like a long 'boo'), and its adjective *bús* (booosh) recur time and again in Romantic and early twentieth-century poetry, partly as pose and garb (you can never make that 'oo' sound quite long or closed enough) but partly as a sound in the very depths of the chest and the spirit.[4]

The personal causes of such melancholy, and reasons for its re-emergence as a significant emotional tone in the contemporary English poetry he writes, are central subjects of Szirtes's oeuvre. Its relations to individual and collective historical experiences of dislocation, exile and loss and its literary expression in relation to personal and public memory arguably constitute major dimensions of the concerns of both Szirtes and Sebald.

The two Szirtes poems addressed here analyse encounters with a fellow writer that initiate, even demand, a series of meditations on history, empire, exile and be-

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2. All parenthesised references are to this edition: George Szirtes, "Meeting Austerlitz," in *Reel* (Tarset: Bloodaxe Books, 2004), 17–24.

3. "Introduction" to J. J. Long and Anne Whitehead eds., *W. G. Sebald: A Critical Companion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 3–15, p. 9.

4. George Szirtes, "Introduction" to *Leopard V – An Island of Sound: Hungarian Poetry and Fiction before and beyond the Iron Curtain*, ed. George Szirtes and Miklos Vajda (London: The Harvill Press, 2004), xiv–xxxiv, p. xvi.

longing and the functions of place and poetry in relation to them. Language is put to work to construct a particular kind of intimacy between the two writers, predicated on an acknowledgement of the irresolvable exteriority of the experience of the other in relation to the self's attempts to comprehend it. What begins, in "Backwaters: Norfolk Fields" as something akin to what Maurice Blanchot means by "the intimacy of exteriority"[5] develops, in "Meeting Austerlitz," into a profound awareness of the relations between such exterior intimacy and the fact of dying, which is, in the later poem, embedded in the (belated, posthumous) effort to represent and recuperate in literature the experience of or encounter with the other, which becomes a symbolic guarantor of the efficacy of the subject constructed in poetry and memory. Intimacy is, in Szirtes's renderings of his encounters with Sebald, the potential to share the experience of exclusion, the encounter with the exotic as shared exclusion, and the experiences of the located self as excluded from itself and from the histories and geographies in which it seeks its own location.

Both poems offer an extended and detailed analysis of the ways in which writing affords, in its discursive rendering of such displaced and displacing encounters, a particular kind of space in which elective and other affinities can develop. Such a space of writing accommodates not only the shared experiences of each writer, but also the individual otherness that each encounters, and the deeper historical consciousness that Szirtes's poems seek to evoke as a common template from which each writer's work develops. This historical consciousness includes a history alien to the specifically English, East Anglian territories mapped out in each poem; European histories, implicit in each poem and integral to an understanding of both Szirtes and Sebald, exist as residual allusions (to Polish Conrad, to Dutch Rubens) and are implied as horizons of (im)possibility, against which the detail of contemporary observation receives a different kind of scale for its measurement, a scale that seeks to incorporate "the writing of the disaster"[6] of modern Europe, a disaster signified in images of decline, decay, ending and destruction, images common to the writings of Szirtes and Sebald.[7] Each poem constructs the landscape and the historical context in which it situates itself in order to locate and temporise its own analysis and to

5. Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 54.

6. Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, passim.

7. Sebald's pre-occupations with such concerns are discussed in several essays in *W. G. Sebald: A Critical Companion*, including Greg Bond, "On the Misery of Nature and the Nature of Misery: W. G. Sebald's Landscapes," 31–44; and John Beck, "Reading Room: Erosion and Sedimentation in Sebald's Suffolk," 75–88.

depict the central encounter against the backdrop of the history embodied in and yet, at its extremes, exotic to that landscape. In each case, landscape acts as figure for the experience of geographical and historical displacement – a figure, ultimately, for absence – which in turn becomes reified in an assertion of the space of literature as habitable territory, in which each writer can find and enter into new, productive relations to the self, to the other and to literary traditions.

"Backwaters: Norfolk Fields"

"Backwaters: Norfolk Fields" (1999) establishes many themes and concerns developed in the later "Meeting Austerlitz." The earlier poem is a twelve-sonnet sequence (such sequences, with many variations in length and form, are common in Szirtes's oeuvre[8]) published in *An English Apocalypse* and prefaced with the dedication "For W. G. Sebald." The poem is included in a sequence of new poems in a collection the function of which is to anthologise Szirtes's poems about his English experience, narrating in their totality an 'outsider's view' (or "temperature chart," in Szirtes's own words[9]) of "a spectral country living out its past," as the cover blurb puts it. "Backwaters: Norfolk Fields" is a long poem of extraordinary subtlety and complexity that offers a vision of this "spectral country," and, in doing so, seeks to confirm, in its analysis of (English) history and (European) exile, the intrinsic connections between Szirtes's poetry and Sebald's oeuvre.

In this poem Szirtes meditates upon a shared environment in order to initiate a coded dialogue between his own work and that of Sebald, just as "Meeting Austerlitz" later seeks a different dialogue, or rather to extend the dialogue into a different set of relations. From the opening line's sequence of paired words – "Backwaters. Long grass. Slow Speech. Far off" – Szirtes establishes territory, disuse, language and distance as the fundamentally interconnected parameters of his exploration of the landscapes and histories of place that constitute the "Norfolk Fields," an environment encountered by both Sebald and Szirtes in radically different but formally analogous circumstances, and ultimately experienced by both, despite the poem's initial use of the inclusive "We," from the point of view of the "outsider":

> We're years behind. Even our vowels sag
> in the cold wind. We have our beauty spots

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8. Compare, for example, from recent collections, "The boys who beat up my brother" in Szirtes, *An English Apocalypse*, 70–2; and "Black Sea Sonnets" in Szirtes, *Reel*, 90–94.

9. Szirtes, "Preface," *An English Apocalypse*, p. 12.

> that people visit and leave alone, down main
> arterials and side roads. A paper bag
> floats along the beach. Clouds drift in clots
> of grey and eventually down comes the rain.   (Sonnet 1, 103)

Here the assertion of historical persistence (echoing in its tone the rhetorical flourishes and broad historical sweep of another contemporary elegy to East Anglia, Graham Swift's *Waterland*) breaks down into a shared present of isolated images; "sagging" vowels decline into silent, disconnected images of desolation, and solitude and isolation (the word "alone" seemingly central to the passage) initially overwhelm the traces of a social world already implicitly sick ("spots" and "clots" rhyming external and internal signs of malaise). "We're at the end," the poem continues contradictorily – not behind, but too far advanced, beyond even decline: "It might simply be of weather / or empire or of something else altogether." While the final clause establishes an initially indeterminate but radical otherness as central to the poem's analysis, this deliberately unspecific historical diagnosis rests uncomfortably with the poem's construction of a detailed and highly imagistic visual rhetoric through which to encode the emotional resonances embedded within a specific landscape. Such tension, between the deliberately vague and the meticulously specific, typifies Szirtes's poetry, in which the reliably visual (Szirtes is an artist as well as a poet) frequently overrides perceptual and interpretative uncertainties to provide at least some sureness, the quality of specular precision of the artist offering something to rely upon in a contemporary world of fundamental uncertainty. "Backwaters: Norfolk Fields" hovers within this tension, exploiting it to generate its initial sensation of frustrated stasis, of teetering on the brink of an impending "English Apocalypse."

The second sonnet switches from "We" and "I" to "You," the indeterminate second person address frequently used by Szirtes to account for self, narrator and reader as compound, ambiguous addressees involved a new level of uncertain complicity. "You cannot wipe the face / of the clock or restore a vanished kingdom," we are warned; historical processes are irreversible, the poem argues, as the emptiness of the landscape begins to take on allegorical significance, much as it does in Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*, his own travelogue of a walk around Suffolk (the county bordering Norfolk), with its opening descriptions of the "thinly populated countryside" and "the traces of destruction" "that were evident even in that remote place."[10] Szirtes notes the seeming significance of natural forces in "The wind at its eternal

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10. W. G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, trans. Michael Hulse (London: The Harvill Press, 1998), p. 3.

droning harangue"; nature itself is an active contributor to the social desolation, "the empty houses" in "the back of beyond" (Sonnet 3, 104).

Natural and social desolation are, the poem suggests, comparable figures of historical abandonment, and summarise the poem's representation of the experience of dislocation to the margins (the end) of time and space, exclusion from the centres of agency to the ends of the earth (a rhetorical implication developed intertextually in the poem's later allusion, in Sonnet 7, to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*). With this allegorical import established, the poem turns towards the social in order to extend it further and to ground it in contemporary observation. Figures in the landscape reply to the construction of landscape as figure by assuming parabolic significance (the man in the third sonnet is "biblical"; social roles metonymically replace people in Sonnet 4, allowing the poem's meditative shift towards the significance of naming as the determining function of identity). Again, recorded visual detail provides a shorthand for the underlying themes; "War memorials" appear suddenly amid the names, bearers of names themselves as well as markers of the traces of history towards which the poem ceaselessly strives.

But the poem refuses the simple surface meanings presented by the world it observes and records – "Too easy all this" (Sonnet 5, 105) – and seeks instead to reintegrate the initial theme of natural isolation into an elaboration of the observation of contemporary social decay and transience, metonymically indicated in "Broken windows" and "The police presence" (Sonnet 5, 105). The sense of an ending is self-reflexively encoded in the contradictorily terminal enjambment of "End / of a line," and the central insight of the poem (and, by extension, of all Szirtes's poems about England) is asserted just before the central poem of the sonnet sequence:

> This is your otherness where the exotic
> Appears by a kind of homely conjuring trick.   (Sonnet 5, 105)

These lines summarise the contradictory, complex concerns of this poem, and the thematic ambivalences that, Szirtes implies, connect his own experience to central elements of Sebald's writings.[11] The "otherness" here is ambiguous, as "your" refers (as in Sonnet 2 and throughout Szirtes's work) to the narrator's self-address (and thus to his own sense of otherness from himself) as well as, implicitly, to the ad-

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11. Sebald addresses the theme of exile most fully in *The Emigrants*, trans. Michael Hulse (London: The Harvill Press, 1996); see John Sears, "'Ghostly Presences' – Exile, Memory and Belonging in W. G. Sebald's *The Emigrants*," in *Region – Nation – Belonging: Papers of the Literatures of Region and Nation Conference 2004*, ed. David Roberts and Joss West-Burnham (London: Peter Lang, forthcoming).

dressee of the poem – the reader – who may also be the poem's dedicatee, i.e. Sebald. The abrupt collocation in the same line of "otherness" and "the exotic" suggests the shared experience of Szirtes and Sebald as immigrant writers, resident within but not wholly belonging to the landscapes indicated in the poem; the appearance of these landscapes within the poem, metonymically summarised into condensed images, constitutes the "conjuring trick" of writing (the shared profession) which is "homely" precisely because it affords, within the familiar confines of language and literary traditions, accommodation for both Szirtes and Sebald.

This assertion of writing as affording symbolic accommodation (which, as we shall see, is later elaborated as the ideological assertion of "Meeting Austerlitz"), establishes the affinity of the word as the underlying territory of the poem; names, sagging vowels, the narrator's desire to "mouth the word that fits the case" and "History's human noises" (Sonnet 2, 103) retrospectively assume deeper significance in the light of the poem's central assertion. The "exotic," the outside of the familiar, located in significant end-focus, emphasises the embedded concern of the poem with the anomalous existence of the unfamiliar within the familiar, and expresses cogently the poem's sense of alienation from itself, its performance of the verbal "conjuring trick" that constructs the landscape it analyses as a space in which poetry itself is found. The poem itself becomes, in this reading, "exotic," an "outside" rendering of English mores and views, its careful aesthetic formalism rubbing against the crumbling, eroded formlessness of the natural and social worlds it observes, a delicate poetic construction superimposed upon the exposed flat territories of decaying East Anglia.

The second half of the poem initially develops this "exotic" dimension by focussing in Sonnet 6 on "A 1580s mural" (another figure of "the writing on the wall," signifying the impending ending that seems to preoccupy the whole sequence). Here Europe, in the form of "a trace of Rubens," and wider histories in "a touch, even, of Chinese / in the calligraphic lines," assert the discovered ancient hybridity of a landscape and a culture that has, until now, appeared symbolically but irreducibly English. New forms of expression are encountered in the old, "something far flung in the code / of a different language," but the significance is the same – the restoration of the mural is balanced by its depiction of "Devastation." As this modulates into the poem's extended critique of Conradian figures of empire ("New explorers come / out of the light to exploit the heart of darkness" [Sonnet 7, 106]), we return, as if on the homeward bound leg of a slow voyage, past the "biblical" "man with welded wings" (now more reminiscent of Icarus, and therefore of European rather than Biblical myth) in Sonnet 8, into a cinematic image of "The slow unravelling / of a long reel where everyone is travelling," an image that will return as the foundational metaphor

of Szirtes's next collection, *Reel*. Return thus becomes unravelling, the homeward journey also a decline into old age (and home, implicitly, impending death and dissolution in "the sea" of Sonnet 11), as the next two sonnets summarise "The old in their gerontopolis" (Sonnet 10, 107) and "The dead fields in their last-gasp fantasy" (Sonnet 9, 107). The poem works towards its conclusion through an insistent invocation of the word "End!" (Sonnet 11, 108), a marking of England as the terminus of journeys (historical as well as geographical) from distant places that is also a question recognising the place shared by Szirtes and Sebald as one circumscribed, in the contemporary, by the possibility of the (British) empire writing back:

> And what
> are you doing here, yes, you and your friend
> from Morocco, Uganda, St Kitts or Pakistan?
> Whatever has brought you to this far, flat
>
> kingdom with its glum farmers?   (Sonnet 11, 108)

The answer to the question asked of the "You" with its strange "friends" is provided at the end of this sonnet: "Homing. We are homing to the sea. Back / where we never were, at the end of the track" (Sonnet 11, 80), a return, the poem suggests, to non-existent, imagined origins implicitly located in history rather than geography. The concluding sonnet offers a lyrical summary of the persistent destructive forces of nature, of distance and proximity, of the confusion of sea and sky ("you could drown in sky / round here" [Sonnet 12, 80] it asserts, suggesting an illusory death by water) characteristic of flat, featureless landscapes that connotes the non-difference of death. "Homing" is thus returning, a figure of the voyage towards death that ultimately grounds the allegory of "Backwaters: Norfolk Fields" on a complex concluding figure of historical closure.

Home, then, is a territory defamiliarised by historical processes that corrode the past and seem traceable only in the meticulous observation of the residues of the past surviving in the present, an illusory origin towards which the death drive, rendered as the force of historical movement, unconsciously pushes us. Szirtes's poem offers an extended meditation on the relations between migration, belonging and death within a specific, poetically rendered geography, and on the potential of language and of the literary text to afford a symbolic version of residency within this geography – a posthumous, post-historical literary existence in the comfort of writing – seemingly available to himself and, implicitly, to Sebald. If literature itself becomes, in this reading, a shared territory, criss-crossed by thematic repetitions and doubled concerns, then the asserted affinity between the two migrant writers serves

to reinforce the potential of writing to respond to and, potentially, to alleviate, the experiential hostility of loneliness. These arguments are developed further, under radically different circumstances and under the impetus of a dramatically different emotional requirement, in "Meeting Austerlitz," a poem which of necessity assumes a significantly and pointedly more self-reflexive stance in relation to Szirtes's own poetic achievements.

"Meeting Austerlitz"

Utilising the form of the elegy to lament Sebald's death in 2001, Szirtes's long *terza rima* poem "Meeting Austerlitz" enacts a symbolically Dantesque encounter, a descent into the underworld of the poet's memory in order to perform a work of mourning. "Meeting Austerlitz" is a 243-line sequence of seven poems of irregular lengths, carrying the dedication "*i. m. W. G. Sebald*," that continues and develops Szirtes's exploration of long poetic forms and sequences. The *terza rima* form allows a schematic, structural continuity that extends the poem's concerns with the tension between coherence and rupture in experience, as well as extending its canonical range of reference to include Dante; as a response to the traumatic loss of sudden bereavement, the poem seeks a form to contain the effects of that loss, and finds it in Szirtes's characteristic reliance on reassuringly strict and aesthetically demanding formal structures, on formal experiment and on a typical rigidity of line and metre.

The focus of the poem's concerns extends, as I shall argue, from the specific circumstances of this particular memorial poem, the commemoration of an individual death, through words and themes explored in other poems in Szirtes's works, and into the English poetic tradition, even as it memorialises a writer and memories largely separate from or 'grafted onto' that tradition, and only tangentially connected to its own movement. Where "Backwaters: Norfolk Fields" contained its own rendering of (literary) history, displaced only momentarily into allusions to or echoes of Conrad and Sebald himself, in the later poem Szirtes asserts his own Hungarian origins and his own literary concerns as suitable analogies for the situation of Sebald's writing and his memory, which, like Szirtes's own writings and memories, now come into the possession of the writer. The poem becomes an elegy for both self and other, a simultaneous exploration of a literary friendship and a shared series of encounters with the weight of literary tradition that transcends each individual writer.

Formal characteristics and literary allusions take on particular significances as the poem constructs a space analogous to that familiar from "Backwaters: Norfolk Fields," a characteristic landscape and social context, in which the acts of writing and

speaking enact forms of connection. The poem is, in consequence, a self-consciously literary work that mourns its own past as well as the personal pasts of which it writes, where the representational media of writing and photography have offered, as they do elsewhere in Szirtes's oeuvre (notably in *The Photographer in Winter* [1986] and in his 1994 collection *Blind Field*[12]) analogous and often complementary, if distinct, technologies of remembrance. In "Meeting Austerlitz" the individual death of Sebald offers a figurative space in which Szirtes's memories are reworked through the remembered mediation of the other writer; a double dialogue is established, between writer and writer and between poem and tradition.

Now collected in Szirtes's most recent volume *Reel*, for which he was awarded the 2004 T. S. Eliot prize for poetry, "Meeting Austerlitz" was first published in *The Rialto* 51.[13] Its subsequent appearance, in 2004, as the opening text in a major volume of critical essays on Sebald's works[14] raises questions about the place of poetry in critical discourse, and about what kind of discourse the poetic text might constitute when placed in a critical context. Effectively the poem is offered in this critical collection as a poetico-critical meditation on Sebald, a text to introduce and accompany the more formally literary-critical and theoretical essays which follow. The editors of *W. G. Sebald: A Critical Companion* offer the following introductory comment on "Meeting Austerlitz":

> This volume begins, rather unconventionally, with a poem . . . . In the light of Sebald's untimely and shocking death, it offers a meditation on friendship, loss and memory. But it is also a lyrical engagement with Sebald's work; Szirtes takes up and develops the themes of walking and travel, employing similar techniques of allusion and quotation, and, like Sebald, embedding his philosophical speculations within a precisely delineated object-world.[15]

"Meeting Austerlitz" rests between this introductory chapter and the following critical discussions – it is, ultimately, neither introduction to nor commentary on Sebald's work, but instead both offers and occupies an in-between literary space in which that work is encountered by the work of another writer, in what appears initially as a poetic conversation. This space, analogous to the territory inhabited by

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12. George Szirtes, *The Photographer in Winter* (London: Secker and Warburg 1986); *Blind Field* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

13. Michael Mackmin (ed.), *The Rialto* 51 (Norwich: Rialto, 2002).

14. Long and Whitehead, *W. G. Sebald: A Critical Companion*, 16–22.

15. Long and Whitehead, p. 9.

"Backwaters: Norfolk Fields," functions metonymically to signify the containment of the historical and its traces within geographical figures, and invites a comprehension of the poem itself as a similar space, a self-consciously formal structure that contains, in its allusions and formal borrowings, its own history.

Maurice Blanchot's extended theorisation of poetic space, in books like *The Space of Literature* and *The Infinite Conversation*,[16] is useful in this context. Writing of Antonin Artaud, Blanchot describes "the idea of poetry understood as space,"

> a space not of words but of the relations of words that . . . is their moving suspension, the appearance of their disappearance; the idea of this space as pure becoming; the idea of image and of shadow, of the double and of an absence '*more real than presence*'; that is, the experience of being as image before it is object, and the experience of an art that is gripped by the violent difference that is prior to all representation and all knowledge; the idea, finally, of art as revolt. . .[17]

These complex, contradictory characteristics of poetic space offer a series of figures that attempt to comprehend the poem as a form of representation in which absence is made present, in which the "violent difference" of words from things (specific to the literary text and its characteristic use of language) insists on the reality of the absence of things, and their absolute replacement by language, a "suspension" of meaning and signification from words themselves into the relations between them, culminating in poetry's ideational "revolt" against the loss of experience in history by performing in words its apparent return.

It is within this movement, this doubling, this being-as-image that the "in-between" status or position of "Meeting Austerlitz" enables the poem to construct its exploration of death, memory and writing. The figure of Sebald is encountered in the form of a literary manifestation, his own fictional character Austerlitz, in which the apparent, spectral presence of the character allows the voice of the absent author to be heard after death; in this slippage between author and character the suspension of meaning occurs, allowing the poem to imagine its posthumous encounter as an exchange of words generating a textual event which affords the space for the analysis of that event and its possibility, but also establishing a degree of distance between the

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16. Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature,* trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 1982); *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1993).

17. Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, pp. 295–6.

poem and its subject, who is encountered through an element of his own writing. The poem enacts memory as dialogue, a shared encounter extending beyond the personal experience of the poet into the literary tradition, and, in doing so, drawing that tradition, in true Modernist style, into contemporary speech.

"Meeting Austerlitz" opens with the solitude of the neutral observer which is also the solitude of writing, the alienation of the writer, commenting on but seemingly excluded from the social world he observes, working that social reality into a form in which his own solitude can be interrupted by the "Meeting" which gives the poem its title, and which takes place in Section 1 "some way off the road," "in the nearby fields" (17), a territorialisation which immediately links this poem's geographical symbolism with the "Norfolk Fields" of the earlier poem. This meeting-as-interruption opens up the poem's space of mourning, and leads to a series of remembered and imagined dramatic scenarios in which an extended conversation takes place between the two writers, where the voice of the dead writer, and the words of other texts he cites or alludes to, come to be heard within the written poem. These meetings and conversations construct, out of the poem's initial solitude, a writerly experience of imagined "being-together," a connectedness in which the specificity of the self is momentarily compromised in acknowledgement of the other, a moment in which one aspect of identity, "writer," with its sharing of literary traditions and forms, overrides other potential aspects of difference (nation, language, age).

This writerly "being-together" is a figure of mourning and desired connectivity with the dead which is theorised by Jacques Derrida in his obituary for Roland Barthes,[18] where he argues that it expresses the writer's desire to engage the other in speech, to seek an influence, to ask for an opinion, an attitude, an idea. This desire underpins the imagined / remembered conversation in "Meeting Austerlitz," and imitates the conversational structure of Sebald's last novel *Austerlitz*, which narrates and enacts what it calls the desire of lone travellers "to be spoken to."[19] It enables the figure of Austerlitz, a ghostly presence, a voice, a breath in the poem, to communicate within the literary space, to overcome the twin solitudes of writing and of death and exist alongside the 'neutral' voice of the poem, within a poem in which there can be a shared solitude, as Blanchot puts it, "a solitude in which they were no longer alone,"[20] resembling the time Derrida recalls spending "alone" with Barthes.[21]

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18. Jacques Derrida, "The Deaths of Roland Barthes" in *The Work Of Mourning*, ed. Pascale-Anne Brault & Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 31–68, pp. 55–7.

19. W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. Anthea Bell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2001) p. 14.

20. Maurice Blanchot, "Prophetic Speech" in *The Book To Come*, trans. Charlotte Mandel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 79–85, p. 80.

Aloneness or solitude is thus the paradoxical condition of being accompanied, in writing, by that which is absent, which allows in turn the possibility of colloquy within and across texts; it is the shared experience of the exotic (echoing the central theme of "Backwaters: Norfolk Fields"), modulated into the experience of exclusion and exile, experiences simultaneously unique and common to both writers. Their imagined "being-together" constructs a space outside of the social reality of the poem's opening section, a space "both day and night," as Austerlitz describes it in Section 1 (17), an imagined afterlife corresponding to the "night which is not night but the peaceful oneness of day and night" that Blanchot identifies in Novalis[22] rather than the "other night" of "memory without rest" in which the absolute relation between literature's origin and death is, for Blanchot, made most inescapable.[23] This safer double space, this "day and night" of "being-together," towards which Szirtes's poem tends and in which it seeks its hopeful resolution, is also the literary space in which the imagined colloquy with the dead can take place. It is a space of the familiar, only momentarily brushed by the space of the "other night" in which, Blanchot writes (alluding to Kafka), "the beast hears the other beast"[24] – or, in "Meeting Austerlitz," "Some creature squealed / in the distance. A car growled briefly past" (18). At this moment, "being-together" is momentarily threatened by the otherness of the outside, the experience figured in Sebald and in Szirtes as displacement, memory and homelessness – aspects of historical and geographical separation, of the singularities of "being-apart."

Sebald, an imagined figure renamed after his own compound fictional figure, Austerlitz, provides a voice in the poem offering a commentary on the circumstances of the two writers' meeting, on the poet's work (Szirtes's writing on wrestling), on history ("*You can't explain / history to itself*" [Section 4, 20]), and on names: "*But names are like dreams we disappear into / where all things seem to fit into the frame / of their narrative. It is names we journey through. . .*" (Section 5, 21). These themes of writing, history and names constitute the literary territory explored by Szirtes's poem, a territory whose specific features and contours he shares with Sebald, and which have already been mapped out in different ways in "Backwaters: Norfolk Fields," in particular in that poem's assertion of names (in Sonnet 4) as traces of historical presence. Both are writers displaced out of country, even out of

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21. Derrida, p. 55.
22. Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 111.
23. Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, pp. 163–4; see also "Sleep, Night," 264–8.
24. Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 168.

language; both take the centrality of memory to the construction of imagined identities as a central concern, and both offer, in different ways, extended meditations on the experience of solitude that seems to characterise a particular configuration of recent European history and European literary modernity. Through Austerlitz's voice, we encounter parables of what the poem calls, in Section 2, "the homeless / intellect" (19), found here, in East Anglia, "a long way from his birthplace" (Section 3, 19) on a "speculative journey / into melancholy" (Section 6, 23).

"Meeting Austerlitz" also locates itself within an English literary tradition of modern elegies, echoing in its title Wilfred Owen's "Strange Meeting" (1918)[25] and alluding, in its opening lines, to the opening of W. H. Auden's "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" (1939),[26] both poems by English writers addressing figures of other nationalities – the Irishman Yeats, and Owen's "one" who "sprang up," who, like Sebald, is German.[27] A comparison between Szirtes's poem and these significant precursors enables the complexities of "Meeting Austerlitz" to become apparent, and establishes the extent of his poem's dialogue with its chosen tradition. Auden's poem famously opens "in the dead of winter: / The brooks were frozen, the air-ports almost deserted,"[28] lines echoed in Szirtes's opening lines: "The cold sat down with frozen fingers. Cars / were iced up, the pavements were treacherous" (Section 1, 17); Auden's "Snow disfigured the public statues"[29] is revised and reversed by Szirtes's "Perhaps we were statues and time would pass / leaving us unaltered" (Section 4, 21).

In a more complex way, Auden provides a lexical and thematic link between Szirtes and Owen's famous assertion of "The pity of war, the pity war distilled"[30] in his lines "And the seas of pity lie / Locked and frozen in each eye,"[31] which comment on human refusal and impotence in the face of the impending history which is the wider theme of his elegy for Yeats (and which retain a subtle ambiguity in the potential of "lie" to connote "untruthfulness" as well as reluctant or enforced passivity). The "freezing" of "pity" offers a condensed metaphor for the Modernist mood of frustrated empathy or paralysed suffering – for Auden, the impotence of poetry in the face

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25. Wilfred Owen, *The Poems of Wilfred Owen*, ed. John Stallworthy (London: Chatto and Windus 1990), 125–7.

26. W. H. Auden, *Selected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (London: Faber, 1973), 80–3.

27. Owen, p. 125. Stallworthy refers to Keats's "The Fall of Hyperion" as a source for Owen's description.

28. Auden, p. 80.

29. Auden, p. 80.

30. Owen, p. 127.

31. Auden, p. 81.

of history – that characterises the tradition to which Szirtes's poem belongs. This line of descent connects his own poetry and the writings of Sebald to the melancholy characteristic of Modernist pessimism as experienced, in different ways, by Auden and Owen, in which frozenness usually connotes impotence and inability to act.

"Frozen" is a central word in Szirtes's poetic vocabulary. In the "Preface" to *An English Apocalypse* he writes about his early poems, some of which are collected in that volume:

> Looking back it seems to me that my early poems, however stilted and occasionally frozen they appeared, were that way because they were in some sense the working through of dreams with real loved and vulnerable people at the core.
>
> These dreamlike poems, frozen because they often dealt with frozen images from a frozen time, would seem no more than interesting examples of pathology, even to me, were it not that the world to which they provided an antithesis felt so dangerous and close.[32]

"The frozen dreams of pastoral," he continues, "appealed precisely because of their fragility." But the form of Romanticism inherent in this Keatsian "cold pastoral" is counterpointed, later, by Szirtes's professed admiration for Blake with his "burning energetic forms."[33] Frozenness is always, in Szirtes's poetry, arrested motion, the abrupt, often violent, curtailing of dynamism into stasis, something always potentially on the verge of heat and movement, the coldness of the past entering into the warm present. The "cold pastoral" of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" appears in an early poem, "The Silver Tree" (a poem from another long sequence called "Miserichords"), in an ekphrastic rendering that will become characteristic of Szirtes:

> As the tree grows they grow, although
> infinitely more slowly, and enter into
> the frieze where mothers and smart daughters dance
> in a cold pastoral. Ice is eating them.[34]

Here the pun on 'freeze' again points towards arrested movement and its connection to aesthetic representation, and condenses the image in writing with the static, the immobile.

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32. Szirtes, "Preface," p. 11.
33. Szirtes, "Preface," p. 12.
34. George Szirtes, *November and May* (London: Secker and Warburg 1981), p. 25.

Szirtes's 1986 collection *The Photographer in Winter* offers some further examples of the importance of the frozen in his oeuvre. In "The Swimmers," the floor of Hitchin church is "like black ice" beneath which a river of "names, resemblances and epithets / Run by," a surface of deceptive stillness concealing the movement in depth that is the turmoil of hidden history.[35] In the long poem "The Photographer in Winter" we are offered another scenario with debts to Auden, a winter in Budapest in which "Bridges march across a frozen river" and "The elderly keep slipping into graves."[36] This poem is prefaced by an epigraph from Orwell's *1984*: "He was hurrying along with frozen hands and watering eyes when he saw her not ten metres away from him. It struck him at once that she had changed in some ill-defined way."[37] Winston's "frozen hands" here balance Julia's "ill-defined" change, the static and the mobile in symbolic conflict, just as past and present (the fixity of one, the elusiveness of the other) balance writing and photography in Szirtes's poem. In the poem, "freezing" doubles as the photographer's instruction to a sitter: "Hold it right there. Freeze,"[38] cementing the metaphorical potential of the word into its primary poetic function of signifying the static, the fixed element of memory as image, with which Szirtes's poetry is so powerfully concerned. Later the emotional force of the poem's elegiac agenda emerges in an image that returns us to Auden and Owen, condensing Owen's pity with the paralysed emotions of Auden and with the eye of Szirtes's photographer, a Modernist figure but not quite the disconnected "camera eye" of Dziga Vertov: "It can be dangerous to cry / When tears freeze on your cheeks"; this section concludes with, if not the "burning" of Blake, at least a thawing: "as I click the shutter / I feel the cold blood thawing in my veins."[39]

In "Meeting Austerlitz" the frozen opposes remembered movement, so that the present is iced up and the past, in those moments where it intrudes into the present as memory, is movement, specifically the movement of Austerlitz's voice, defrosting the present: "Frozen motion. Blind field" states Austerlitz in Section 5 (21), quoting Szirtes quoting Barthes to himself.[40] This "frozen motion" is transformed, in the final

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35. Szirtes, *The Photographer in Winter*, 11–14, p. 11.

36. Szirtes, *The Photographer in Winter*, 1–9, p. 2.

37. Szirtes, *The Photographer in Winter*, p. 1; see George Orwell, *1984* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1974), p. 233.

38. Szirtes, *The Photographer in Winter*, p. 3.

39. Szirtes, *The Photographer in Winter*, p. 8.

40. George Szirtes, *Blind Field*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994), p. 1; the phrase "Blind Field" is taken from Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Flamingo, 1984), 55–9.

section, into erotic images of silky fluidity, momentarily overlapping in "Something silky froze / into permanence," but later, in the poem's concluding appeal to "hope," potentially more fluid, more mobile (Section 7, 24). In contrast, the poem's opening offers a world of illusory stasis, of repetitive activity, the annual repetition of Christmas as consumer festival in which "The shops were a chorus / of seasonal favourites, every one the same," and the same shops all stock "the latest must-have toy / (each one expensive, every one alike)" (Section 1, 17). When the narrator meets Austerlitz, with his "droll / melancholy expression" (Section 1, 17), it is on a terrain in which "everything had a double or existed / in some version of itself wrapped in a winter cloak" (Section 1, 18). Against this backdrop of sameness and doubling which offers a series of figures for the banality of contemporary consumer reality, occurs the specific event of difference which defies belief, the death of Austerlitz: "I could not believe that Austerlitz was dead" (Section 2, 18). The stasis of death is thus, in an act of symbolic transference, translated into the repetition of existence; death becomes unique, an event outside of repetition, a frozen moment of specific inaction jarring with the debased, repetitive celebration of a birth that preoccupies the wider culture. Its unbelievable status is contrasted with other repetitive events, other deaths; Austerlitz is an other to the narrating self in this poem, but not, the poem argues, an "other" the same as the relentless sameness of "others": "Though others had died that year," the poem states, "his death was strange" (Section 2, 18).

It is the "strangeness" of this particular event, this specific death, which is the theme of Szirtes's meditation. Just as the meeting with Austerlitz is different, an encounter with an other rather than with the same, so his death marks this difference as significant, "strange" in the initial sense that combines "unfamiliar" and "foreign." The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* indicates the semantic richness and complexity of this word by listing ten distinct but overlapping meanings for "strange," the first of which is "Of or belonging to another country; foreign, alien." Others significant in this context include "Belonging to some other place or neighbourhood," "Belonging to others," "Added or introduced from outside," "Unknown, unfamiliar," and "Distant or cold in demeanour." Szirtes offers Sebald's death as multiply "strange" in its conflation of these different meanings, as being "other" than the "others" to which, in its strangeness, it would seem to belong. The death of the other is, like the other's existence in the shared historical and geographical spaces of "Backwaters: Norfolk Fields," an exotic event, introducing into "Meeting Austerlitz" the absent presence of the exotic other as dead, as "distant or cold" in its frozenness, its strange difference from the otherness of the alienating social reality of the poem.

These meanings of the "distant," the "belonging to others," ultimately extend, of course, to account also for Sebald and Szirtes and the shared experience that they have carried into England as "strangers" themselves, writers living in England but nevertheless "Belonging to some other place or neighbourhood," "Added or introduced from outside" to the geo-historical matrix that constitutes England and its language and literature. Sebald's "strange" death thus affords space for a literary meditation on "strangeness" that takes up the multiple implications of "strange," established already in the poem's allusion to Owen's "*Strange* Meeting," itself an imagined encounter with the foreign and the dead – "'Strange friend,'"[41] as Owen's narrator addresses his counterpart, oxymoronically confusing familiar and unfamiliar in precisely the way Szirtes's poem seems to address Sebald. In "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" Auden also uses the word "strange," with the sense of "Unknown, unfamiliar": "Time that with this strange excuse / Pardoned Kipling for his views."[42] Strangeness is, of course, also the defining feature of the day of Yeats's death, and is present in synonymic form in Auden's poem: "a day when one did something slightly unusual," Auden writes, a day on which the dead poet becomes "wholly given over to unfamiliar affections."[43] In each poem, death is an event intrinsically connected with strangeness, with being or becoming estranged from the familiar, and with the distance pertinent to that which has become unfamiliar – to die is to become strange, to be estranged. At the same time, death, "Meeting Austerlitz" insists, is canonically and traditionally familiar, an event and theme repeated across the three poems, recurrent yet unique in its specificity, immediate to each poet as individual, unique experience, and at the same time a shift in reality that challenges "belief." Szirtes's meditation on Sebald's death explores these connections and contradictions through the juxtaposition of images of stasis with those of movement, the familiar with the unfamiliar, and ultimately in the opposition between loss and hope which, "Meeting Austerlitz" implies, characterises the poetic space in which such a "Meeting" can take place.

Contrasting its dominant mood of frozenness, Szirtes's poem offers movement in recurring clouds of breath, smoke and ash, signifiers of both life and death. Sebald's writing is remembered in these terms:

> A puff of dust from the library,
> swirling like ashes, had settled across his prose,
> its flavour tart, magical and scholarly.   (18)

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41. Owen, p. 125.
42. Auden, p. 81.
43. Auden, p. 81.

Here, the collocation of "dust" and "ashes" implies burial and death even as its "swirling" re-establishes motion in writing, in the movement between "library" and "prose." If this is balanced by the stasis of "settled," the ambiguity of the word re-introduces migration and settling as embedded themes of Szirtes's meditation, opening again the space of writing as offering a potential accommodation to the migrant writer. Further echoes and allusions reinforce the literary tradition as homely territory. "*We can distill / our terrors and make them hang like a grey mist / beyond the garden*," Austerlitz notes in Section 3 (19), echoing Owen's "pity war distilled";[44] at the end of Section 3, "He breathed out and the air stood still / before it vanished slowly like a ghost" (20). In the first section,

> The air was frosty, oddly tobacco-scented,
> thick grey clouds rose from his mouth as he spoke.
> I could not be certain whether the wisps that entered
> my mouth were frozen breath or cigarette smoke.   (18)

The strange figure of the transience of exterior intimacy offered by shared breath, "frozen" but balanced by the implicit heat of "cigarette smoke," momentarily connects the two writers, as does the expression of hope in poem's concluding section. "Whatever hope is yours," writes Owen in "Strange Meeting," "was my life also":[45] "Meeting Austerlitz," following this declaration of shared aspiration, ends in "the Esperia Hotel in Athens" (23), returning to a similar mode of second person address through which we are informed of "The name / of the hotel, which, as you know, means hope" (24) The metaphor of the "Esperia Hotel" and, more pointedly, the extended ekphrastic description of the photograph of "the young girl in the garden" (24) that close Szirtes's elegy, establish literary dialogue between himself and Sebald as transcending death. The poem refers to a photograph from the drowned Welsh village of Llanwddyn of a girl with a doll and a dog, which is discussed and reprinted in Sebald's *Austerlitz* as one symbol (among many others in that narrative) of how lost things persist in images and writing, becoming, the narrator asserts, "as familiar to me as if I were living with them down at the bottom of the lake."[46]

The closing assertion of "Meeting Austerlitz," then, is borrowed from Sebald and cements the dialogic relation between Szirtes's poem and the narrative from which Sebald's poetic persona is taken. This dialogic relation constitutes the shared experi-

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44. Owen, p. 125.
45. Owen, p. 127.
46. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, pp. 73–4.

ences of the strange becoming familiar and of identity within difference encountered by the two writers, establishing the shared, estranging but familiar territory of memory and its resurrections in various forms of representation as a common theme, as the literary space (a space already delineated and explored in "Backwaters: Norfolk Fields") within which each writer can potentially find a self. Szirtes's closing section makes use of poetry in ways analogous to the use Sebald's *Austerlitz* makes of photography, to 'unfreeze' the frozen or fixed memory and to explore its resonances in relation to experiences of exile and displacement. Where the earlier poem establishes English spaces and histories as territories of contradictory, shared experiences of inclusion and exclusion, the later one shifts its focus onto the elements of English poetic tradition in order to seek out a space within which Szirtes can poetically express these experiences.

"Backwaters: Norfolk Fields" and "Meeting Austerlitz" constitute major poems in George Szirtes's oeuvre, offering long, complex poetic meditations on the connections between and shared concerns of his own writings and those of Sebald. Both poems work to reconcile the themes of memory and hope, word and image, living and dying within the space of literature, offering, in the final lines of "Meeting Austerlitz," the metaphorical hotel of hope as a temporary accommodation for the estranged, migrant writer, a momentary residing in a strange, foreign tongue and in its literary traditions, a figure for the accommodation Szirtes and Sebald have shared in England and in English, and also in writing.

From Custom to Freedom, and Back Again

Zsolt Almási, *The Problematics of Custom as Exemplified in Key Texts of the Late English Renaissance*, with an Introduction by Péter Dávidházi (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004)

Zsolt Almási tackles an occasionally marginalized discourse of late English Renaissance thinking. His book is an attempt to reconstruct a subtle, but coherent narrative in which John Wilkinson, Michel de Montaigne, Francis Bacon, and William Shakespeare, caught between a stormy political and religious background and the demands of an increasingly pragmatic and individualistic society, cooperate to develop a genuine answer to the problems concerning custom and freedom. They aim to harness the formidable power of habituation, being fully aware "that what is at stake here is nothing else but the formation, or reformation, of the whole psychological construction of the inner self" (53). And indeed, some of their more important results, ideas and unresolved dilemmas played an important part in establishing the theoretical foundations, sometimes the very language of the epistemology and social lore to come.

The views expressed in the book reviews do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors of *The AnaChronisT*.

But what does this so-called 'problem of custom' consist of? Almási's part historical, part conceptual reconstruction formulates it as a neat double bind:

1. Contemporaries regarded the nature of custom with deeply rooted suspicion, here unfolded from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, where it is marked both as a "monster," then an "angel," due to the overwhelming influence custom is capable to exert on human behaviour. It can be employed to develop a proper virtuous character, but has the uncanny potential to deceive "the mind's eye so that it will not be able to discern right or wrong. Once one has acquired the custom of acting viciously, he or she will not be able to see the very behaviour as vicious" (1–2). Custom not only interposes itself between virtue and reason, it might even wrestle the prerogative from the latter unnoticed. If it is so, reason and custom become indiscernible motivators of action. Consequently, not only the exact nature of moral common grounds, but even their existence is called into question, including the very legitimacy of any authority to define, pass on, and enforce them.

2. To a more historically inclined eye, the origins of the problem are to be traced back to the Greek *polis*. For Aristotle, "it is the social structure that makes it possible to speak about and to practise virtue" (13). Neither virtuous

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action, nor moral education could properly be conceived in terms of the individual, as both presuppose an active and unmediated master-disciple relationship, which aims at internalizing the tutor's moral authority into the student's character. Instead of initiating a critical analysis of moral notions and precepts, Aristotle's ethics plays an 'auxiliary' role, providing a justified and systematic account to help his more philosophically inclined audience coming on rational terms with the customs of Athens (so as to become accomplished tutors themselves later on). By the 16th century this form of education practically disappeared, and Almási properly points out that "[t]he entire responsibility of moral advancement cannot be anchored in the dead letters of the book" (66). But a reader who eventually chooses to seek the guidance of letters obviously does so because of the absence of a tacit consensus on values and precepts. The uncertain moral situation calls for the same institution whose disappearance let that uncertainty loose.

Therefore, acquisition of virtue as socialization has to give way to an approach which lays more stress on the mental faculties actively involved in making moral decisions. In contrast with Aristotle, whose "anthropological image represents man as a complex human being, whose whole inner self, with its pleasures and pains, is involved

in the theory of right behaviour, and not only his intellect" (53), late Renaissance focuses on the role of reason. But reason is not to be trusted too eagerly anymore, being liable to be subtly influenced, even silently taken over by what it is expected to regulate.

Following the reconstruction of the dilemma, Almási's case studies explain how Wilkinson, Montaigne, and Bacon attempted and eventually failed to find a satisfactory solution. The last chapter, an inspired interpretation of *Hamlet*, "aims at saving everything that has been gained by the previous analyses and at reintroducing reason into the scheme by challenging the presupposed 'continuity' via emphasizing the multi-dimensionality of 'time.' This way the meditation finds a resting point in reconciling 'custom' and 'human freedom' " (4). Below I try to summarize what I see as the main line of argumentation.

As the triad of reason, custom, and 'proper behaviour' had been handed down along the Aristotelian moral tradition, Almási presents his authors' complex attitude towards the Philosopher in meticulous detail, as in the chapter on John Wilkinson's *The Ethiques of Aristotle, that is to saye, preceptes of good behauoure and perfighte honestie, now newly translated into English* (1547), which served as the first complete publication of Aristotelian ethics in vernacular English, and be-

came an influential reading in contemporary moral science. Influenced by a more pragmatic approach to books, reading, and learning, Wilkinson "reshaped Aristotle's continuous meditation into a collection of essays for the interest of the Renaissance English reader" (23), somewhere halfway between a translation and a practical 'handbook' on taking care of one's well-being and character for one's own content. Almási attributes most of the differences to the social transformation resulting in the emergence of a "reading public with less scholastic attitude" (25), an expanding group of readers with a secular upbringing and a more pragmatic approach. For example, the role played by legislators and instructors in the acquisition of virtue was not as important for them than for Aristotle (so Wilkinson abandons these topics), neither are social expectations that much obvious anymore. They are more interested in "how one should feel, how one should act, and that reason is to be applied to find out how one should act" (60). For them, the decisive step towards a proper moral character is to develop a reflection fit to determine the right pattern of behaviour (57). Thus reason becomes prior to 'being good,' and as such, it can motivate towards practically any kinds of goals or actions, immoral ones included. To avoid that, reason has to be determined by the willing habit that stands in the

middle—but, unlike Aristotle, Wilkinson can't assert whose (or even what kind of) reason should 'hit the mean.'

The Florio translation (1603) of Montaigne's *Essais*, rooted in a non-Aristotelian sceptic tradition, attempts to short-circuit the question concerning 'whose rationality' by challenging the authority of reason head-on. "Custom belongs to the past, whereas reason to the future. It is reason that follows custom and not the other way round" (80). All prerogative is to be given to custom, which plays the determining role anyway: it channels most layers of the human mind and behaviour, and thus it structures social order. Reason's role is merely to justify and rationalize— therefore its critical potential is null, as it has to presuppose that what it elaborates on is *a priori* right. This positive concept of custom emerges from Montaigne's distrust of change triggered by speculation, and his conviction that adherence to received views and institutions is a promising guarantee for social peace. He does not hesitate to revive the antique authority of the moral instructor, and bestows it on custom itself. Note that he evades the difficulty which forced Wilkinson to omit this element, as there is no need to construct or adopt a paradigmatic character, "because his Pyrrhonian scepticism projects an ideal who does not differ phenomenally from the one who is not the ideal" (97). Therefore,

the two chief aims of moral education concern discouraging violent behaviour at a young age, and encouraging political participation (in a narrow, conservative modality). A person who adopts and acts upon both completely fulfils all moral requirements—what he thinks, is of no one's concern. Montaigne thus proposes a strong distinction between a secret subjective and a public conformist self, as "[i]nner freedom and the acceptance of the received social and religious norms are more peaceful and thus more like truth than the unconscious narcissistic and egocentric truth of the competing ideologies" (88). However, his efforts fail exactly at this point. Although Montaigne keeps such a strong focus on stability that he eagerly reduces the four traditional moral maxims of antique scepticism to this single one, any model society (not to mention historical ones) *can* be packed with conflicting values and interests. So what shall one do when confronted with multiple customs equally contributing to peace, but incompatible with each other? At this point referring back to intellect seems inevitable. "By bringing back the idea of the criterion, i.e. social peace, Montaigne implicitly has brought back reason through the back door" (97).

This shift of focus from the sceptical to the institutional perspective is exactly what characterizes Bacon's approach, arriving at the conclusion that "custom is a sovereign, even a tyrant, who demands an unreflected obedience from its subjects even in matters of life and death" (112). However, Bacon does not plan to give away such power as unconditionally as Montaigne intended. Criticism and reform of received structures is not a taboo, but the privilege of a select few and 'their rationality.' Almási locates the first phase of Bacon's proposal in the *Advancement of Learning* (1605), consisting of a critical re-evaluation of Aristotle, who "was right in assigning a significant role to custom in ethics, yet the Greek philosopher failed to provide help as how to change customs" (104). Almási highlights fairly the same sources of discontent concerning antique theory as he did in Wilkinson—namely, that radically changed historical circumstances, paired with the lack of tangible precepts, make a straight application of Aristotelian doctrine almost impossible (both of these can be traced back to the fall of the *polis*). Rather, if acquisition is a process that can be guided and directed, more efficiently in communities than in solitary individuals, the focus glides to the responsibility of the society concerning the education of its subordinates (in contrast with Montaigne, who tends to emphasize the responsibility of the *citizens*). "What is at stake now is not only the individual's virtue but the whole political state. The moral discussion has now been opened

to a socio-political perspective in which the individual's virtue is formed first by an educational institution and then by the governing system of the country" (114). However, Almási is not convinced by Bacon, and points out that not even political leaders are protected from the 'mind-bending' influence of custom. The moment of choice is still obscure and hazardous, although intellect might play a solid part during the preparatory phase.

The final chapter on *Hamlet* aims to elaborate this temporal gap further. After a short excursion touching on Ricouer and Heidegger, Almási develops an interpretation generally structuralist in approach. He defines the play's four layers of time and temporality: *Social* time is rooted in the cultural milieu surrounding Shakespeare, and is presented as the time measured by the routines of everyday work and the ravages of war, while *theatrical* rendering is the way the timeline of the narrative is structured. *Personal attitudes* of the characters serve to complicate matters further. Horatio, the impersonated, yet 'achronological' narrator just cannot synchronize with the pace and time of Elsinore. A more apt attitude exhibited by Claudius, Polonius, and Hamlet himself is to 'manipulate temporal events.' Here I would translate Almási's examples: these characters are actively involved in plotting, plain dealing, preparing political manoeuvres, even

spreading propaganda. Hamlet who has returned from his sea-journey alive (which Almási interprets as a near-death experience) develops a completely different relationship with temporality. From there on he lives in a "time which is not used as the possibilities of the past, which is not present any longer, or of the future, which is not yet here, and of the present, which is infinitesimally small. . . . This is the present of the privation of the horizontal extension" (159). The fourth layer, *'alternative' time* collects intricate inferences both to the present and near future of Shakespeare, his actors, and his audience, also to mythical (Hercules), biblical (Adam, Cain), and historical figures (Julius Caesar). After developing this intricate framework, Almási concludes that the problem of freedom can be reconciled by realizing that multiple descriptions can be applied to a situation, and claims that making this decision is ultimately a matter of which 'time' one chooses. "Once the description is finished, there is no time to think, the description itself will result in action. The cognitive element and the image of the human machine, thus, have been reconciled" (183–184). It seems that Almási commits the very same mistake he found in his authors: he 'smuggles back' reason into the scheme. But he claims that this is a *different* use of reason, not the one "that tries to find out truth. This is the

almost unconscious description of the situation without explicit evaluation. This type of use of the mental faculty does not so much direct action, but rather makes it possible" (184).

My critical questions chiefly stem from my being quite puzzled by the suggestion that the problems raised by the Philosopher would have been solved by the Playwright. I had the feeling that Almási's work contains two loosely connected narratives: a scholarly reconstruction of an important episode of custom theories, and one consisting of somewhat sporadic remarks and a highly speculative conclusion about a concept of freedom—even if Péter Dávidházi's introduction identifies this latter one as the *leitmotif* (x). Indeed, most chapters *do* refer to the problematics of freedom. Though Almási carefully demonstrates that "morally valuable acts originating from custom do not denote mechanical and mindless acts either in Aristotle's or Wilkinson's books" (3), I miss a vivid background (either drawn from contemporary debates, or recent commentaries) against which his arguments could work effectively. This might be one of the reasons why these remarks seem to remain isolated. Even Montaigne is contrasted only with antique sceptics to demonstrate his views' non-deterministic character. Concerning Bacon and freedom, even the final conclusion is phrased *contra* his "descrip-

tion of man as a human automaton moved by custom in his actions" (121). I have the feeling that this "metaphor that represents man as a machine" (119) is stretched too far, one-sidedly overemphasizing a single aspect of an ambiguous concept. I only refer to the two ways he portrays man in *Novum Organum*: on the one hand, as an absolute victim of *idola*, with few, if any theoretical or methodological loopholes at his disposal; on the other, the conclusion is ripe with a sense of overcoming, supported by an infinite hope in human technology and ambition—thus, both slave and master of natures human and physical, fairly at the same time, but eventually with a promise of freedom. However, Almási neglects both these ambiguities and the pioneering role Bacon played in the characteristically British tradition of attributing philosophical errors to various kinds of bad habit formation.

Also, it is generally agreed upon that "the philosophical debates of determinism versus freedom, or . . . the theological controversies about predestination versus free will" (4) had been conducted by a different set of authors of the Renaissance. Therefore, when discussing his methodology, Almási admits he does not attempt to write a traditional historical narrative, so— aside from a vague historical linearity— he places the main stress on the logical succession of problems and the

schemes provided as solutions, and on his "objective . . . to study the texts phenomenologically, that is, the ways the text appeared and represented itself on the basis of expectations generated by other texts" (6). However, this approach would have required a more solid historical backbone, for example the analysis of a lot more contemporary sources. In the absence of these, his thread stretches a bit thin, and I sometimes had the feeling that Almási uses somewhat arbitrary expectations to fill some gaps. Although it is a common practice to refer to contemporary social context in such cases, and I found many of these instances the most inspiring and informative parts of his book, at times his references fail to connect. If Wilkinson's book is a translation of Bruno Latini's excerpt, and not of Aristotle's manuscripts, Almási's decision that "even if the modifications to the Greek original were introduced by Latini, I will attribute these changes to Wilkinson, as . . . this meditation focuses on the ways certain texts established their meaning in the very context they were produced in" (21) seems somewhat contradictory, as he explains most of the differences referring to the English, and not the Italian context, and these explanations make up a considerable part of his interpretation. Here I really missed a comparison of Latini with both Wilkinson and Aristotle.

To conclude, Almási's study is a genuine and inspiring contribution to the history of English Renaissance. What it lacks in coherence of argumentation is more than made up for by the theoretical and historical investigations in the case studies, as well as the intriguing interpretations concerning the functions and representations of 'custom' back then.

Dávid Csordás

What Eye C Is What U Get

György Endre Szőnyi, *Pictura & Scriptura: Hagyományalapú kulturális reprezentációk huszadik századi elméletei* (Szeged: JATEPress, 2004)

György Endre Szőnyi's latest book is a paradoxical work in more than one way. While its title alludes to the controversial issue of "ut pictura poesis" in classical and early humanist traditions, the subtitle, "Twentieth-century Theories of Tradition-based Cultural Representations," directs us to the most recent past. While it is intended as a comprehensive reference textbook, it is composed in a rather mosaic-like manner from Szőnyi's insightful original research, some of his earlier articles, and his survey of various theorists. And while it is as informative as any textbook should be, its attitude is highly polemic, easily drawing the reader into the world of theoretical dialogue and controversy.

The dual aim of his book, as Szőnyi explains, is "to provide a conceptional frame and methodology to the study of culture, and, primarily, early modern European culture" (ix)[1] and to use "the most up-to-date theories available in interpreting conventional symbolization" (xi). To show how this is meant to be done, the author will add a second volume to this one, including practical case studies based on the theoretical principles outlined here – that collection, too,

will surely be a valuable addition to the "Iconology and Interpretation" series, of which *Pictura & Scriptura* is the 10th volume.

An ardent promoter of the "pragmatic revolution" (48), Szőnyi chooses the historical way of describing the development of semiotics/semiology. He starts his retrospective survey with Saussure's and Peirce's theories of the sign, continuing with Charles William Morris's synthesis of dyadic and triadic systems, which, in the United States, irrevocably established semiotics as a scientific discipline in its own right. It might be because of the historical interest that Saussure receives harsh criticism; apparently following Derrida's argumentation, Szőnyi claims that "through his rigid binary structuralism and synchronicity, he eliminated historicity" (41). While this may be true, the subsequent judgement the author passes still seems a little unfair, especially if one considers the *historical* fact that Saussure was reacting against the abuse of naive historical analogies by the early comparative philologists and the lack of a clear synchronic focus in the theories of the Neogrammarians.[2]

Cassirer's philosophically inclined system rounds up the section dedicated to the early evolution of 20th-century semiotics, before Szőnyi turns to the origins of (post)modern iconology.

As with most terms, Szőnyi challenges the reader with a multitude of rivalling definitions for iconography and iconol-

ogy. Though it is not quite clear why he attacks Białostocki's claim that iconology has two types, one "descriptive," the other "interpretive" (60), while he seems to accept Panofsky's very similar distinction of *iconography* as a "descriptive-identifying auxiliary science" and *iconology* as an "interpretive process based on iconographical description" (84), what really matters is that the reader is always invited to carry on with the refinement of definitions, and the dialogue with controversial theories.

Szőnyi finds the key to the connection of semiotics and iconology in the oeuvre of Aby Warburg, who, consequently, also serves as a *leitmotif* in his narrative. Once again taking the historical-biographical path,[3] he sets off by narrating the story of the epoch-making Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek and subsequently discusses Warburg's influence on his colleagues and followers, notably Panofsky and Gombrich. Starting with Warburg's and Panofsky's reaction to Wölfflin's theory, Szőnyi elaborates both on Panofsky's warning that iconography should never fall into the trap of mere "symbol hunting" (97) and Gombrich's awareness of the "dictionary fallacy" (100). The latter implies the irreversibility of polysemous symbols such as the snake. It is on this point that postsemiotics[4] (through the focus on 'polysemy'), Renaissance humanism (through the ambivalence of interpretations *in bonam sive malam partem*, cf. 135), and Warburg's lecture

on the Hopi Indians' snake ritual (203–27)[5] would eventually converge in a single framework.

After laying the theoretical foundations, Szőnyi enters what might at first glance appear a digression into the realm of early modern emblematics (115ff.). On second thoughts, however, one has to realize that there are few areas in which cultural representations and the 20th-century hermeneutics of iconology could meet so felicitously. Indeed, the tripartite structure of an emblem (inscription – picture – subscription) lends itself most readily to iconological analysis. The subchapter dedicated to emblematic cultural representations (129–64) refers most explicitly to both the title and the subtitle of the book. In its first, analytic-theoretical half, Szőnyi outlines an overall classification of emblem types before discussing the hypothetical ways of scanning an emblem in a predominantly oral culture, and the ekphrastic problems raised by the word-emblem. The second half (148–64), a heavily revised and extended version of an earlier article by Szőnyi,[6] investigates the connection between the Renaissance emblematic theatre and Shakespeare's use of rhetoric and imagery. The author's synthesizing power is truly inspiring and his insightful survey of conventional cultural elements in Shakespeare's histrionics leaves nothing to be desired.

Scholars of contemporary literature and theory may find the next chapter,

"Poststructuralist Iconology" (165–202), particularly stimulating. Dialogue is the guiding principle here. On the one hand, different theories and theorists converse (or, rather, argue) with one another; on the other, Szőnyi invites the reader to active participation in the discussion, as well as providing his own personal stance in these matters.

The point of departure is Colin Cherry's information theory, which defines a (correlational) code as a mutually reversible, two-way transformation (165) – and immediately runs into the problem of the irreversibility of metaphor. After several stages of refinement, Umberto Eco came up with definitions of coding, overcoding, and undercoding, from which follows the need for extracoding in the interpretation of any message (168). Whereas coding proper makes grammatical understanding possible, over- and undercoding leaves space for literary and other metalinguistic purposes. It is on this point that Eco has to contend with Culler's deconstructionist and Rorty's pragmatist extremes; the main thrust of their argument is one of the most exciting passages in Szőnyi's book. The conclusion, which Szőnyi quotes in a slightly inaccurate translation, is a synthesis of Culler's and Eco's views: "[The] lack of limits to semiosis does not mean . . . that meaning is the free creation of the reader. It shows, rather, that describable semiotic mechanisms function in recursive ways, the

limits of which cannot be identified in advance."[7]

Another controversy is that between Gombrich and, chiefly, W. J. Thomas Mitchell. Szőnyi contrasts Gombrich's idea of an evolution towards the completely objective, value neutral representation of photographs with Mitchell's view of the political-ideological nature of all representation, regardless of the medium. Mitchell's cyclic system of "iconophobia – iconophilia/fetishism – iconoclasm – idolatry" provides, on the one hand, a forceful tool for the interpretation of many events of cultural history, and on the other, a possible way out from Western logocentrism (177ff.).

In the following, Szőnyi positions himself in relation to the sources he quotes and he points out that the most important criteria for scholarly work are the familiarity with the most up-to-date trends of theory, and the *critical* use of all available developments and methods. It is in this critical spirit that I will enter a *dialo*gue with the author in the paragraphs to follow.

Szőnyi's reliance on secondary materials seems a little too heavy. This is especially evident in his treatment of Panofsky, which at times appears almost a reverberation of Białostocki's very thorough and useful assessment. It is also interesting that in challenging Sándor Radnóti's critique of Panofsky (86ff.), the author draws so heavily on Białostocki that at certain points it is difficult to dis-

cern who is actually arguing. In the introductory part to the chapter on poststructuralist iconology, Winfried Nöth's *Handbook of Semiotics* seems similarly overrepresented. And the technique of indirect citation presents more severe dangers as well. In discussing Albrecht Schöne's definition of tropological sense, Szőnyi quotes Tibor Fabiny's translation. Not only is one page reference in the footnote erroneous, but in this 'third remove' the statement's meaning actually turns into its exact opposite, inevitably leading to a false conclusion.[8]

Otherwise, the author has very conscientiously enumerated what he considers the shortcomings and imperfections of his book (254f.), so there remains very little room for criticism. One formal aspect I have found doubtful is the selectiveness in specifying the translators of various bibliographical items. It is difficult to explain why Barthes's translators are named, whereas Saussure's is not, though she undeniably had great impact on the Hungarian terminology of general linguistics. There are also some painful absences; though the text refers to Genette, Rorty, and Harold Bloom, none of their works have found a way into the bibliography. The Hungarian translations of Walter Benjamin's works are also missing, and so is Henri Bergson, whose aesthetics might have had more impact on the development of early-20th-century semiology than is obvious at first sight. The welcome reference to useful internet links, on the other hand (e.g. the full-text version of Darwin's *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, 58) shows a possible way forward for 21st-century publications.

It is a great pity that the quality of illustrations has not only not improved since the "Iconology and Interpretation" series was launched in 1986, but it has actually deteriorated with the introduction of digital publishing, so much so that certain pictures (e.g. Figure 59) scarcely fulfil their purpose (to illustrate, that is); at best, they move one's inner eye, or their source specification helps one find a better reproduction in another volume.

These, however, are minor regrets in view of Szőnyi's achievement in creating a comprehensive reference book summarizing the multitude of theories of cultural representation and thereby giving a useful tool to scholars investigating different eras and areas of human culture. One can only hope that the publication of the prospective "sequel" will add a practical handbook to the theory outlined in the present volume. The standard set by *Pictura & Scriptura* certainly bodes well for the future.

Boldizsár Fejérvári

Notes

1. All quotations from Hungarian sources are my translation.

2. Cf. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris (Chicago: Open Court, 1986), p. 5. It is also regrettable that Szőnyi uses the 1967 edition of Éva B. Lőrinczy's translation; from the new, re-

vised edition (collated, by Sándor Kiss, with the critical edition of Paris, 1978), it turns out that the notorious tenet attributed to Saussure ("the only true object of study in linguistics is the language, considered in itself and for its own sake," *Course*, p. 230) was added – quite contrary to Saussure's own beliefs and convictions – by his editors (cf. József Herman, "Az új magyar kiadásról," in Ferdinand de Saussure, *Bevezetés az általános nyelvészetbe*, trans. Éva B. Lőrinczy [Budapest: Corvina, 1997], 373–9, p. 375n4).

3. This method is one of the common features of this book and Szőnyi's previous volume in the same series, *"Exaltatio" és hatalom: Keresztény mágia és okkult szimbolizmus egy angol mágus műveiben* (Szeged: JATEPress, 1998); see also Gábor Zemplén's review, "An English Magus Comes at Last to Hungary," *The AnaChronisT* [5] (1999) 244–52, pp. 245f.

4. Szőnyi attributes this coinage to Attila Kiss (199). See also Attila Kiss, *"Cloud 9, Metadrama, and the Postsemiotics of the Subject," The AnaChronisT* [9] (2003) 223–232, which shows how similar principles can be applied to the contemporary stage.

5. The discussion of Warburg's lecture and its poststructuralist reception elaborates on Szőnyi's "Warburg's Intuitions in Light of Postmodern Challenges," *Umeni* (Prague) 49 (2001) 2–9. It runs to an entire chapter and is probably one of the strongest and most unified sections of Szőnyi's book; it is here that all threads seem to be tied up, while the structure of the "case study" anticipates the critical stance that will presumably dominate the "sequel" to this volume. The last chapter, dedicated to Eco's *Kant and the Platypus*, informative and useful as it is, lacks the sizzling intellectual energy the penultimate chapter abounds in. (For lack of space, I also had to condensate my allusion to the chapter on Eco's Alpha and Beta modalities into the title of this review.)

6. "Vizuális elemek Shakespeare művészetében: A 'képvadászattól' az ikonológiáig," in *A reneszánsz szimbolizmus: Ikonográfia, emblematika, Shakespeare*, ed. Tibor Fabiny, József Pál, and György Endre Szőnyi (Szeged: JATEPress, 1987), 67–90.

7. *Interpretation and Overinterpretation: Umberto Eco with Richard Rorty, Jonathan Culler, Christine Brook-Rose*, ed. Stefan Collini (Cambridge: CUP, 1992), p. 121.

8. It is, in fact, Peter M. Daly who translated Schöne's definition into English, but he duly provided the German original as well. It is both fascinating and instructive to observe this transformation: "[Der sensus tropologicus] meint die Bedeutung der Realien für den einzelnen Menschen und seine Bestimmung, für seinen Weg zum Heil und sein Verhalten in der Welt. In solchem Sinne versteht die Emblematik noch immer das Seiende als ein zugleich Bedeutendes" (Peter M. Daly, *Literature in the Light of the Emblem* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979], p. 199n114); "[the *sensus tropologicus*] refers to the significance of things and facts for the individual and his destiny, for his path to salvation and his conduct in the world. In this sense, the emblematic mode still conceives of all that exists as at the same time embodying significance" (Daly, p. 42); "A *sensus tropologicus* a dolgok és a tények jelentőségére vonatkozik, amely az egyén számára nyer jelentést az életvezetésben és az üdvösségre való elkészülésben. Az emblematikus gondolkodásmód számára minden létező dolog egyidőben nyer jelentőséget" (Fabiny quoted 134–5).

Poetically Correct

Tamás Bényei, *Az ártatlan ország: Az angol regény 1945 után* [The Innocent Country: The English Novel after 1945] (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 2003)

Possibly his best, Tamás Bényei's fifth book is certainly his biggest contribution to the study of British fiction. It is one huge book.[1] Not quite as huge as that "Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire," it is big enough to make the title of its own ninth chapter, "A méretek poétikája," or The Poetics of Size, look curiously self-referential. The awe struck by the sheer proportions of *Az ártatlan ország* in the heart of this reviewer and others of his profession on first contemplating this 540-page tome must have been anticipated by the author himself. In any case, Tamás Bényei felt obliged to offer his apologies for the sheer physical dimensions of this massive volume. While his admission of suffering from some temperamental verbosity is as groundless as it is facetiously self-deprecating – Bényei's style is anything but garrulous – Bényei's caveats about the writer's "critical nominalism" and his "doubts about the potentials . . . of literary history" are to be taken seriously (10).[2]

Bényei's qualms seem to concern his own reservations about the ultimate applicability of the most fundamental categories that he uses to give a coherent account of his vast, and vastly complex, subject. How much is gained by pointing out the fact that most, if not all, of the novels of the period discussed display modernist, realist and postmodern features in a combination best conforming to the *telos* of the critical narrative applied? And indeed, to what extent are we justified in assuming that our categories do in fact exist, that postmodernism, realism and modernism are entities with unshakeable ontological foundations – that these terms describe things "out there" (10–11)? But then, such nomenclature is very hard to dispense with. Uncertain as their referents are, arbitrary as their application invariably proves to be, these terms have a heuristic value one could hardly do without. And if the job of charting out a territory as treacherous as that of post-war English fiction is to be done, if our map is to be a map and not a whole empire, then we had better suspend our disbelief and pretend that verbal categories have a rock-solid existence, and that beginnings, ends and boundaries are more than convenient (or inconvenient) inventions. Fictional, historical or critical, grand or little, narratives must eventually conform to certain conventions, conventions of emplotment, archaeology and teleology.

What, then, are the boundaries of Bényei's inquiries? Where does he begin, in what direction does he proceed, and how does he propose to get there? The reader is not left in any unnecessary sus-

pense before these perfectly legitimate questions are answered. The "Introduction" clearly identifies the precise subject matter and states the major critical aims of the author's scholarly enterprise in due course. Bounded by 1945, the year marking the end of wartime carnage and deprivation, at one end, and then the emergence of postmodernism "proper" with the attendant critical discourses at the other, the period surveyed comprises the later nineteen-forties through the late-seventies and some of the eighties, with the two middle decades, the fifties and sixties, receiving the author's most concentrated attention. The novelists whose works are thus submitted to rigorous, but at the same time sympathetic, reading include all the major, and some of the minor, writers of the highlighted era from Angus Wilson and George Orwell to Kingsley Amis, William Golding, Iris Murdoch and Anthony Burgess, to name but a handful of those whose works receive chapter-length treatment, leaving unmentioned many of the "leading," and all of the "episodic," characters in Bényei's embracing narrative.

As for its thematic aspirations, *Az ártatlan ország* undertakes to accomplish something far more liberating than may be suggested by the unpleasant connotations of surreptitious subjection and disempowerment through mechanical linearity and rigid structural hierarchy that the term "narrative" has recently acquired. In the first major section of the book, it is documented how the debilitat-

ing discourses and practices dominating the critical reception of the post-war novel in England have led to the academic marginalisation, or "undercanonisation," of a whole range of exciting texts in the country where they were written and, with the possible exception of the United States, in most other countries, including Hungary, too. Bényei's main culprit is the rigid representational poetic of the Leavis-school predicated on an essentialist ideology of Englishness and grounded in a liberal humanism badly outdated already in the heyday of the powerful cultural politics it supported. Contending critical narratives of a more permissive type – the newer canons constructed by Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge in their respective histories of the contemporary English novel – did little to do justice to whatever failed to conform to their apparently more receptive and up-to-date, but in reality equally convention-ridden and pro-humanist, criteria of novelistic excellence. Where F. R. Leavis and his followers had rejected out of hand all that they found alien and not assimilatable into their "Great Tradition" of the English novel, the two younger critics – Bradbury in particular – desperately tried to naturalise the foreign, domesticate the *unheimlich*, and tame the untameable.

Taking their cue from various posthumanist theories ranging from deconstruction to cultural materialism and the New Historicism, Bényei's English (near-)contemporaries and the generation of North-

Americans immediately preceding his own have certainly done much to improve the situation. Due to the occasional aesthetic blindness caused by the canon-busting zeal of this newest criticism, there is nevertheless much left to be done (or undone) by Bényei himself, and, as he repeatedly suggests, his students and colleagues. This, of course, is not to say that Bényei is unaware of how much valuable work has been done by those who have gone before him. As every other page of *Az ártatlan ország* bears witness, we have very much to thank the North Americans – Robert Scholes, Andreas Huyssen and Lynda Hutcheon come most readily to mind – for enabling us to discover the postmodern tendencies of generic blending, metafictionality, pastiche, metalepsis, and apocryphal historiography in the novels of fifties and sixties writers who had precious little to do with what goes by the name "English postmodernism." Of no less importance is the insight provided by such contemporary British scholars as Steven Connor, whose innovative terminology – particularly his remarks on the "structures of addressivity" in various novels Bényei examines in *Az ártatlan ország* – has done much to help the Hungarian scholar to elucidate the nature of the "linguistic turn" observable in, say, the later works of Kingsley Amis or William Golding.[3] Connor's case is of particular interest in another respect, too. Despite being one of the critics most frequently cited in support of the various points made in *Az ártatlan*

ország – it is Connor's healthy disregard for all forms of canonicity in particular that makes Bényei welcome a kindred spirit in the Englishman – not even the author's favourite is exempt from censure when it comes to matters of principle or issues of preference. That is why Bényei will not let it pass when Connor fails to recognize anything beyond a nostalgic yearning for some Victorian stability in what the English critic perceives to be a return to nineteenth-century habits of reading supposedly promoted by the novel-sequences of the postwar period (294–95). This, of course, does not prevent Bényei from recognizing, and drawing meticulously documented inspiration from, Steven Connor's *The English Novel in History*.

Excellent as Connor's book may be in general, its author is not yet a member of our international pantheon of literary and critical celebrities. However, Bényei is not the kind of critic who would stand dumbstruck in the presence of global fame, either. No person or cause, however venerable, is safe from his book's uncompromising metacritical consistency. That "habitually accurate scholar," Frank Kermode is caught at getting the names of characters wrong when it comes, rather symptomatically, to Alan Sillitoe, a "mere" working-class novelist (245). To be sure, star critics to the left of Kermode's updated humanism are also reminded of their blind spots. Alan Sinfield's historical account in which the modernist "detour" was no more than a

"bourgeois mock-rebellion against the bourgeoisie" carries little enough conviction for Bényei. The post-Marxian critic, we are told, rather badly underrated the resilience of conservative traditions that modernist writers in England were up against throughout the fifties and the early sixties (205). Similarly, the contrast set up and carried through in Evelyn Waugh's postwar novels between the refined sensibilities of a civilized past and the hopeless vulgarity of a dreary present is demonstrated to be badly misread by no lesser an authority on the English novel than Terry Eagleton. Bényei does not mince his words: the equation, made in *Exiles and Emigrés*, of Waugh's complex opposition with a case of naked class antagonism is a clear instance of reductively ideological misrepresentation (342). More insidious than the occasional slip of a highly regarded left-wing critic is a general tendency of aesthetic conservatism, noted by Bényei, in oppositional literature and, by extension, oppositional criticism. The practitioners of these discourses seem to valorise the realist novel at the expense of more innovative modes of narrative fiction (241). The resulting pressure towards a "responsible" documentary approach goes a long way to explain why feminist criticism has consistently ignored some of the most exciting experimental works of women-writers (65n8). In particular, the failure of Muriel Spark and Iris Murdoch to embrace the agenda of women's liberation must have caused

their being overlooked by most leading feminist literary critics (374, 432n3).

This does not mean that the writer of *Az ártatlan ország* has any serious argument with political radicalism in general or critical feminism in particular. On the contrary, although his literary judgements are informed by aesthetic considerations above all, Bényei does have his political sympathies, which invariably lie with the marginalised and the disempowered. He spares no praise when he comes across a novel whose oppositional "message" is successfully expressed by means of advanced novelistic methods. Such is the case with Sillitoe's "best novel" (246), *The Key to the Door*, where radical politics prove, in Bényei's analysis, to be combined with an innovative poetic of fiction, resulting in "an 'experimental' novel," one of the clearest examples in its period of a narrative text organised along modernist principles *and* written by a working-class novelist (247). Similarly, "one of [Muriel Spark's] best novels," *The Driver's Seat*, is an experimental *tour de force* that could also lend itself to a political, in this case feminist, reading.[4]

A related aspect of *Az ártatlan ország* is its strategy of trying to secure a higher position in the changing literary canon for some well-known novelists whose newly acquired reputation as aesthetic or political conservatives has rendered their work suspect in the eye of current theory and criticism. Graham Greene and Anthony Burgess are two cases in point,

whose novels should be submitted, as Bényei convincingly argues, to a post-colonial reading informed by insight derived from the works of Edward Said and Homi K. Bhaba (472–73). As exemplified by the author's relevant observations, such a critical approach would be both feasible and profitable. That the typical setting of the Greene novel was transferred to the Third World after World War II is a clear indication of how Greeneland "discovered itself in these hybrid spaces of amalgamation, unformed shapes and impending danger" (358). The protagonist of Burgess's "Malayan Trilogy" is destroyed by his own misguided liberal humanism in which naïve essentialism blends with Western-style scientific arrogance to form a textbook case of Orientalism diagnosed in Said's analysis of the same title. At the same time, the antics of assimilation performed by the various grotesque figures of all complexions peopling Burgess's East remind the informed reader of Bhabha's concept of mimicry as expounded in *The Location of Culture* (472–73). No doubt, a thorough investigation of the postcolonial implications inscribed in these two novelists' respective works could do much to improve the current canonical status enjoyed by Greene and Burgess as well as provide new evidence of the vitality that postcolonial studies could have even outside their customary areas of application.

Important as Bényei's suggestions are as to what research should be undertaken by others, the interpretative-evaluative work done by the author himself is, after all, what makes *Az ártatlan ország* into what one should not hesitate to call a masterpiece of literary criticism. There is no exaggeration in the claim that each and every one of Bényei's analyses is a classic example of how close textual reading can fruitfully interact with literary history and theory. Choosing one or another of these virtuoso chapter-essays is thus a very arbitrary affair: Bényei's book provides the best possible illustration of what is meant by "the distress of plenty." But as choose one must, it is best to admit that one's choice can be motivated by hardly more than a random set of personal preferences. Thus Bényei's discussion of the role played by certain archetypal motifs in turning Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited* into an ironic combination of Bildungsroman and "novel of nostalgia," his sympathetic rereading of Kingsley Amis's later works as documents of their writer's darkening linguistic humour reminiscent of Beckett's absurdist comedy, or the discovery of the linguistic instability that subverts the genre "educational novel" in Golding's sea trilogy, could perhaps be highlighted as the crown-jewels in the treasury called *Az ártatlan ország*.[5]

Most importantly perhaps, the key to the door of that treasure-house of academic knowledge can be turned with surprisingly little effort by any of Bényei's compatriots, even if their mastery of Eng-

lish is far less impressive than that of the author. Although its very title comes from an English-language study of the English novel, *Az ártatlan ország* is written in its entirety in Tamás Bényei's native Hungarian. To this reader of his work, the finest proof of Bényei's democratic ideals referred to above is to be located in his choice of idiom, an idiom which is not simply Hungarian, but educated layman's Hungarian. For Bényei, words like "dichotomy," "intertextuality," and "defamiliarisation" are not what most of his Hungarian colleagues would blithely translate, or transliterate, as *dichotómia*, *intertextualitás*, and *defamiliarizáció*. Bényei's Hungarian equivalents are the hard-to-invent-easy-to-understand terms of *kétosztatúság*, *szövegköziség* and *elkülönösítő eljárás*. The writer of *Az ártatlan ország* is happy to leave the job of making the reader feel uneasy, or *unheimlich*, to his favourite novelists. Being a born teacher as much as a true scholar, Bényei cannot help helping. For that alone, *Az ártatlan ország* should have a place of honour on every Hungarian's bookshelf who still cares about such old-fashioned things as books and literature, or books on literature. It is another matter that this great book would deserve an even larger readership. His reviewer looks forward to introducing another major work of Tamás Bényei's, a comprehensive study of the postwar English novel to be called *The Innocent Country*.

Ákos I. Farkas

Notes

1. The term "innocent country," whose Hungarian translation serves as the title of Bényei's book, comes from Bernard Bergonzi's *The Situation of the Novel*, as revealed by Bényei himself (146).

2. All translations from Bényei's Hungarian original are mine.

3. Misspelling Connor's first name as Stephen in the list of works cited is one of the few lapses of attention that the meanest reader will find in the 240,000-word corpus of the book (511). Others include the co-opting of Harold Macmillan into the Labour Party (22), the renaming of a painting by Nicolas Poussin (*Balla della vita humana* instead of *Il Ballo della Vita Humana* [306]), and the absence from the bibliography of some major philosophers cited by Bényei (e.g. Pierre Bourdieu and György Lukács). This reviewer hopes to have made no more mistakes than that in his present survey, a mere snippet of a text by comparison.

4. That Muriel Spark has been ignored by feminist scholarship is all the more surprising as her *Miss Jean Brody* is, among other things, "a rereading of *Jane Eyre*," much like Margaret Drabble's *The Waterfall*, which has a pre-eminent position in the feminist canon (374). Bényei obliges with an exhaustive-looking list of *Jane Eyre* variations written after 1945 (128n11), which will be found particularly helpful by prospective thesis-writers. Similar lists help those with an interest in such "genres" as the "war novel" (137n3), the "working-class novel" (240n15, 243n16), and recent versions of the "condition-of-England novel" (143n6).

5. Longer versions of Bényei's studies on Waugh and Golding can be read in English in his *Acts of Attention: Figure and Narrative in Postwar British Novels* (Frankfurt and New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 15–64 and 93–169.

Texts, Theories, and Lives

Philip Tew, *The Contemporary British Novel* (London: Continuum, 2004)

A partisan stance usually makes for vulnerable but enjoyable literary histories: taking strong stands and voicing strong opinions is riskier than the kind of critical equanimity and inclusivity that characterizes most similar ventures, but the risks taken and the inevitable losses are are usually compensated for by the drive of the argument. Philip Tew's new book is no exception to this rule. As in his earlier monograph on B. S. Johnson – who remains an important forerunner and background presence in this survey – Tew is not content merely to introduce the work of a group of writers, but makes his survey of the contemporary British novel scene into a critical/theoretical manifesto. Thus, readers who expect a bland, inclusive overview of the contemporary novel, with the usual token gestures towards the usual beneficiaries of such political correctness (separate chapters on women writers, ethnic minorities) are in for a surprise. In his "Epilogue," Tew expounds his doubts concerning such categorizations: reading texts in terms of gender or ethnicity, he claims, ends up as "ghettoizing or marginalizing such creative efforts in thematic studies" (183). Accordingly, he is careful throughout to avoid the pitfalls of what he sees as critical ghettoizing, and gender, for instance, is practically absent as a key organizing notion.

Philip Tew's principal objective is to "disturb critical shibboleths" (which refers to a polemically but vaguely defined postmodern, poststructuralist or deconstructive strategy) and contribute to the "debate over what constitutes the contemporary, the cultural and the fictional" (xiv). Thus, a polemic against poststructuralist theory, the propagation of a marked critical stance and the introduction of a group of writers coalesce throughout the book. Tew clearly has a vested interest in identifying a tendency in contemporary fiction that that would not so much "support" his views as call forth the critical procedures propagated by him; that is, he needs to be able to diagnose a situation where, as he says, "in part recent movements in criticism ... mirror contemporary practice in the novel that reasserts the real world aspects of fiction" (13). Seeing a radical caesura in literary and cultural processes in the late seventies, Tew identifies a new group of writers who have learnt from the lessons of metafictional experiment and, without discarding the heightened linguistic awareness of postmodern fiction, represent a shift "from heterogeneity and a deconstructive decentering toward apprehensible meaning" (4) and a greater emphasis on experiential reality and the life-world.

So far, Tew's book would seem to be simply yet another manifestation of the British disgruntlement over the hold continental theory appears to have over vast numbers of academics, a disgruntlement that sometimes reaches a hysterical pitch, as for instance in D. J. Taylor's otherwise informative book on postwar British Fiction called *After the War*. Yet, Tew's book is distinguished from Taylor's effort not only because its tone is much too theoretically informed to indulge in such gratuitous militancy (unlike Taylor, Tew knows what he condems), but also because – and this is its real novelty – here, unlike in Taylor and many others, discarding poststructuralist, deconstructionist etc. theory does not entail a dismissal of *theory* as such. Unlike most British accounts of postwar fiction, this one is at pains throughout to theorize its critical position, to identify this position as theoretically defensible, and to describe the critical shift it propagates not as a shift away from theory as such, articulating the return to reality and meaning in sophisticated theoretical terms.

It is largely the result of this innovative strategy that Tew's critical project is fraught with several difficulties – although they are all difficulties the author is very much aware of. The first such dificulty is the direct offshoot of the polemical tone and concerns the identification and definition of what he sees as adversarial critical views.

To be able to define his position more clearly, Tew at times mystifies and demonizes the "adversary", or rather adversaries. Postmodern or poststructuralist critics are very rarely identified or quoted at length: they remain in the anonymous vagueness of the plural, always as a vaguely threatening crowd, a multitude of critics all smugly installed in the prisonhouse of language, receiving with a collective condescending sneer any attempt to reconnect texts to experiential, social or political reality. "Assertive tone" and "plangent certainty" (181), however, are surely not the prerogative of postmodern or poststructuralist critics, and postmodernism or poststructuralism do not strike me as particularly "monolithic intellectual structures" (7). All this, of course, is mainly a question of rhetoric, and given the polemical nature of the book, Tew was probably right to exaggerate a little in order to clarify his own position.

Apart from the perhaps inevitable distortions in the presentation of the adversary, there is a further problem which occasionally weakens the force of Tew's argument. Deconstructive or poststructuralist criticism does not strike me as having dominated the critical evaluation of postwar or contemporary fiction; on the contrary, apart from Alison Lee's not entirely successful effort (*Realism and Power*), most surveys represent an untheoretical, blandly historical perspective, often implicitly or explicitly hostile

to the unhistorical, counterintuitive, clever vagaries of continental theory (e.g. Randall Stevenson, D. J. Taylor, Andrzej Gasiorek, Neil McEwan, even Malcolm Bradbury or Dominic Head), or a radically politicised version of post-structuralist thought (Steven Connor or, most prominently, Alan Sinfield's 1989 *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain*, which, I believe could have been one of this book's allies, even though it is absent even from the bibliography). Thus, Tew's account of the "critical consensus" which he challenges is bound to be brief and vague (36). One reason for this is that, until very recently, serious critical interest in Britain in contemporary British fiction was largely non-existent; Philip Tew's role in altering this situation can hardly be exaggerated.

Partly in consequence of the vague definition of postmodernism, Tew's book is characterised by an ambiguous attitude towards postmodern fiction. He seems to dismiss the first, sixties-seventies canon partly as a version of late modernism and partly as a kind of literature entangled in the pointless and ultimately facile textualizing of reality, but he is careful not to jettison postmodernism as such: many of his preferred writers (Martin Amis, Jeanette Winterson, Salman Rushdie) are also key figures in the second postmodern canon largely defined and codified in the wake of Linda Hutcheon's surveys. In fact,

Tew presents his preferred group of writers as in many ways not refuting but radicalizing the insights of postmodernism, exemplifying, for instance, "not only the instability of the self, but of the self's very dependence upon the framing of others that makes the self always-already vulnerable" (29). In establishing the place of the post-seventies writers, Tew makes no attempt to suggest a revision of the postwar canon. He does not read the canonical writers against the grain, as sites for potential subversion, nor does he try to recuperate forgotten voices from the fifties or the sixties (although novelists as diverse as Henry Green, Colin McInnes, David Storey, Christine Brooke-Rose, David Caute, Alan Burns, John Berger or Robert Nye might have been relevant in a genealogy for the kind of fiction he champions). In Chapter Two, there is a diverse and suggestive "genealogy" of the kind of fiction he prefers, including Woolf, Mansfield, Evelyn Waugh, Wilson Harris, B. S. Johnson and Muriel Spark (55), but what is most evident from this book is that the revaluation of J. G. Ballard's work is in full swing (the admiration for him of writers like Martin Amis and Will Self is well known), and Ballard's fiction continues to emerge with increasing clarity as one that has engaged with postwar reality with the most consistency and artistic originality.

The other edge of Tew's critique is directed against the British literary estab-

lishment, which he sees as continuingly pervaded by middle-class predilections and limitations. In order to present his preferred group of writers as radical, he clearly needs to read the pre-1979 novel monolithically, all its apparently subversive stylistic or thematic initiatives (icluding the 1960s counterculture) succesfully recontained by middle-class liberal culture. Middle-class literary culture is guilty of what Tew calls "the sin of inclusion" and "the sin of exclusion" (61). The latter is clearly the suppression of different kinds of social, political, and generally human experience from the genteel world of British fiction and realism, but it is the former that brings us closer to understanding the direction of Tew's powerful critique: because middle-class liberal writers see their own class as the quintessence of social experience, the crisis of middle-class values and certainties is automatically experienced by them as the breakdown of all certainties (70); thus, for instance, liberal doubts concerning identity and subjectivity are extrapolated as the crisis of subjectivity in general, without acknowledging the class-based limitations of the basis of extrapolation (or the preconditions of such extrapolations: the political and cultural privileges and hegemony of the middle classes). Thus, as his reading of Esther Freud's excellent *Hideous Kinky* testifies, middle-class radicalism is seen by Tew as necessarily undermined and

discredited by its blindness to its own political stakes (47), claiming to be "above politics" when, jealously guarding its cultural and political hegemony, it simply fails to acknowledge its own political situatedness, desperately clinging to a degraded and tarnished Arnoldian and Leavisite elitism (47).

This is a coherent and solid argument in general terms, but when individual writers are mentioned, it invariably loses some of its force, simply because, in order to see Angus Wilson, William Golding, Iris Murdoch or Margaret Drabble as purveyors for the middle-class liberal conspiracy, Tew is forced to simplify. His criticism of Drabble's fiction is perceptive and relevant, but William Golding's name looks rather awkward on Tew's list of writers entangled in middle-class pettiness. The treatment of Angus Wilson raises further problems. To criticize *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* for its uncritical and unreflected acceptance of Arnoldian elitism, for its limited social range and for the caricaturistic treatment of the working-class family (50–1) is perfectly justified, but to use this 1956 novel as representative of Wilson's entire oeuvre and dismiss him on the strength of this is not fair. Breaking new ground both aesthetically and socially in his later novels like *The Middle Age of Mrs. Eliot, No Laughing Matter*, and *As If by Magic*, Wilson was involved in an ongoing a critique of the liberal humanist conception of subjectivity, of

middle-class liberal pieties as well as of "Englishness" in general. In fact, Wilson – like so many British middle-class novelists who were trying to come to terms with the limitations of their vision, including Rosamond Lehmann, Elizabeth Taylor, Iris Murdoch and Barbara Pym – was worried about and repeatedly dramatized in his fiction the consequences of what Tew calls the sin of inclusion. Also, Wilson – like Murdoch, Golding and Spark, for instance – was trying to extend the experiential world of midle-class fiction, realizing that the critique and breakdown of the liberal concept of human subjectivity had its historical and metaphysical background in twentieth-century European history – which could be said to justify the extrapolation of the crisis of the liberal notion of the self as a metaphysical problem.

Ultimately, for a non-English reader, who is perhaps more prone to "class-blindness" in his or her appreciation of British fiction, it is puzzling to see some extremely different writers brought together and summarily dismissed as inauthentic under the sole rubric of "middle-class fiction" (51). The class obsession here seems to override and overwrite all other distinctions, many of them much more conspicuous for the reader who has no stakes in the resuming class war. Also, to dismiss fine writers *tout court* for their unfair treatment of the working classes – or, in many cases, for their failure to include working-class characters in their work – seems like a waste. Iris Murdoch's view of the human personality may well have been limited by "a series of middle-class co-ordinates" (52), and she may have been "unable to transcend the snobbery of her own position in the social hierarchy" (53), but this is to dismiss the entire philosophical and ethical underpinning of her fiction on a class basis, and to reduce the reading of her imaginatively and intellectually rich and demanding world of the novels to her undeniable class limitations. For a Polish, a Bulgarian or a Russian reader (I mention countries where Murdoch has considerable following) the dismissal of a philosophical novelist on the basis of the paucity or treatment of working-class characters might seem to be a legitimate strategy, but they will probably have their own equally legitimate queries concerning its relevance. To see a writer entirely in terms of his/her class provenance is dangerously close to the kind of critical parochialism that is otherwise so alien to Philip Tew's critical stance and that has in the past decades efficiently put so many foreign readers off large chunks of British fiction, including, for instance, the metaphysical writer Anthony Powell.

The ambiguity of Tew's relationship towards postmodernism is duplicated by his equally ambiguous attitude towards some aspects of the middle-class sensi-

bility he criticizes. This is obvious from his many, mainly positive scattered remarks about Woolf, who remains a surprisingly active presence and a constant point of reference in his version of twentieth-century fiction, but especially – and more problematically – from his flat dismissal of popular fiction (for instance, his remark on Welsh's "populism" [113], his dismissal of chick-lit and lad-lit [100], or his decision not to discuss kinds of working-class fiction like the "football fiction" of John King, Kevin Sampson and others). Interestingly, for all his objections to the genteel tradition, Tew remains at least in one sense committed to the elitism he elsewhere criticises: he believes in the primacy and superiority of high art, "literary fiction." No *Bridget Jones*, no *High Fidelity*, no *Chocolat*, no Ben Elton here.

The vagueness in the definition of his "adversaries," however, remains a minor blemish, clearly resulting from his polemical tone, and the only reason one wishes we had less of criticizing Murdoch and Wilson is that in that case Tew would have more space to talk about his preferred group of post-seventies writers, for he is at his best – which is very good indeed – when he is talking about the writers and novels he likes. Tew anticipates the inevitable question of "who's in and who's out" by explicitly stating that his selection of writers is admittedly partisan and reflects his critical agenda and set of predilections instead of going for completeness. Not surprisingly, and very justifiably, the sharp caesura he detects in the late seventies coincides with Mrs. Thatcher's election victory; this shift, he insists, is not simply a generational change, but a "change in the novel's focus and cultural emphasis" (32). Rejecting the "critical crisis, the death of the author syndrome of the mid-1970s" (18), the new novelists accept the novel as politics, and display a "ludic and yet an extrinsic sense of multiple, intersubjective realities" (55), relating insistently to the intersections of fiction with a broader culture and upon its own cultural influence (30).

The figureheads of the new sensibility are, among others, Jonathan Coe, Will Self, Martin Amis, A. L. Kennedy, James Kelman, Jeanette Winterson, Jenny Diski, Angela Carter, Esther Freud, Jim Crace, Caryl Phillips, Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi. What Tew has to say about these and other authors is invariably interesting – that is why one wishes that we had more authors, more novels, especially as several of the authors who seem to be crucial in Tew's new canon are treated only cursorily or not at all – as, for instance, Angela Carter, Esther Freud, or A. L. Kennedy. In recompense, Tew discusses the work of many lesser known writers like Lucy Ellman, Michael Bracewell, Rosalind Brackenbury, Toby Litt and Tim Lott (and his recuperation of the excellent Jack Trevor Story is a gesture by which

at least this particular reviewer is mightily pleased). One would have liked to read more about Scottish writing: Janice Galloway and Iain Banks are two absences (let alone other Scottish writers like Alan Warner, Ali Smith, Duncan Maclean or Ian Rankin), but Alasdair Gray's fiction is also left largely undiscussed, and one feels that Kelman would have deserved a more detailed treatment, especially as what Tew has to say about him is spot on.

Another potential problem besetting Tew's text is caused by his double allegiance: while he makes it clear that for him the ultimate stake of reading and analyzing contemporary fiction is the living of our lives (24), and that he considers the novel as a genre that still offers a symbolic, narrative, and ideological vocabulary by which many people either understand or engage in cultural shifts (7), he is careful not to join the slagging of theory so fashionable in Britain. In short, the problem is that he has to find sophisticated theoretical terms to describe what might easily seem like yet another "return to realism" in the pendulum-like history of postwar British fiction. To avoid this, Tew finds himself compelled to "theorize" the return to realism, to see it as something theoretically innovative: the shift beyond the "irrealist textualized universe" (71) of poststructuralism and the excesses of postmodern theory (xiv) cannot simply be seen as a return to an earlier paradigm. Tew is at pains to distance himself from a simplistic sociological reading or a naïve belief in referentiality, and is careful not to dismiss "theory" as such. This causes certain tensions in his text, for, at least in the first half of his book, the driving force of his argument is unabashedly social and political, and despite his emphasis on aesthetic matters and the considerable density of the language, thematic treatment prevails in the opening chapters.

This, however, is not intended as a criticism against Tew's book. On the contrary, I would suggest that it is precisely these half-acknowledged tensions that make this book theoretically much more demanding and exciting than apparently similar surveys of contemporary fiction. In general terms one could say that, instead of the restitution of referentiality, Tew insists on the multitude of connections between the living of our lives and the reading of fiction. Therefore, throughout these opening chapters, he endeavours theoretically to complicate the shift towards the real. This is, for instance, what happens in the chapter on "Urban identities", where Tew is careful to point out that the new fictional mappings of the city are far from a return to straightforward pedestrian realism, invoking Henri Lefebvre and phenomenological thought in order to account for the imaginary, visionary aspect of the new fictional mappings of urban identities. For instance, three key

urban writers identified by him (Amis, Self and McEwan) are, as he suggests, all more concerned with reworking the patterns of myth and parable than with a sociological or realist pattern (98), and, in the work of Will Self, "the placement of the geographic or spatial provides a psychic-phenomenological grounding and not an expression of a realist paradigm (or ambition) (105). Especially in his readings of Self, Coe, Kureishi and Kelman, Tew argues convincingly for a new type of fictional exploration of urban identities, which makes one interested to see what he might have to say in the theoretical-critical context carefully established in the chapter about such crucial contemporary fictions of urban cartography as *Lanark*, *Other People*, *Arcadia*, *Sour Sweet* or *Mother London* (as well as some of the writers, like Ackroyd and Iain Sinclair, whom Tew discusses in subsequent chapters, and some others, like Iain Banks and Maggie Gee, whom he does not). But this would supply material for a separate book.

The remark quoted above concerning the interplay between the social-geographical and the mythical-parabolic highlights the third kind of "creative tension" in the book: that which follows from the difficulties of connecting the two tendencies Tew discovers in recent fiction: the return to realism (or at least to the real, the experiential), and a parallel return to myth (a tentative suggestion concerning the common denomina-tor could be be that both tendencies could be read as moving toward a restitution of univocal meaning). Although the Neo-Kantian philosopher Cassirer is a constant point of reference, it is in the chapter devoted to history and myth – to my mind the finest section of the book – that Cassirer's (post-)Romantic concept of myth becomes dominant. Offering a clearly argued and well-documented critique of the tired clichés connected with "historiographic metafiction", Tew argues that we are witnessing "a new phase of mythopoeia rather than a new form of historicism" (120). Although he is not the first to suggest that the postmodern implies a return to the premodern, to a counter-rationalist, intuitive mode of relating to the world that thinks "beyond irony", in terms of the symbolic and the numinous, his examples are carefully chosen, and it is in this chapter that his short analyses of the fictional texts seem most powerful: the opening passages on Adam Thorpe's excellent novel *Ulverton* are original and illuminating, as well as his remarks on Winterson's *Passion*, Lawrence Norfolk's *In the Shape of a Boar* and Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*. To me, however, the high point of the book is Tew's discussion of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, a text that has by now been made the object of dozens of predictable and tedious readings through its inclusion and key role in the canon of "historiographic metafiction." Starting out from Sarah's intuitive

grasp of the world and other characters, Tew attempts to salvage the novel from the pieties of the ludic-metatextual kind of reading, treating it as an early example of the "new mythopoeia" (123–4). The point is not whether Tew's reading is objectionable or not; the point is that it is a coherent and thoughtful reading which could have been performed *only* in this particular context. Such moments are precisely what "partisan" literary history is for: by placing well-known texts in new contexts, it is capable of showing up how certain readings have become "deadening" and unproductive, and of exploring these "dead" texts for new critical potential. With Tew's analysis in mind, it is indeed possible to see Fowles's novel as an important precursor of the mythopoeic turn. While other readings are naturally not invalidated, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* has changed as a result of Tew's analysis. After reading Tew's mini-analyses of Iain Sinclair, Graham Swift and especially Jim Crace, one is inclined to give serious consideration to his suggestion that recent "fiction retrieves in history and in metaphor the residue of another symbolic mode, a mythic consciousness, that works toward what might be described as 'historiographic mythopoeia'" (127).

In the final chapter on hybridity, the creative tension or contradiction between a realist pull and a mythopoeic pull is in full swing, the treatments of individual texts moving now towards a new engagement with the experiential world, while at other times towards a mythical-parabolic textuality. In Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (on which he is very good), Tew acknowledges the role of vast allegorical and mythical structures, but stresses the "elements of life world" (162) that situate the abstractions of good and evil which "without this backdrop would be devoid of human meaning" (162). Tew is also interesting on the temporal layering of Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy (167), and in this particular case the introduction of the category of class is indeed illuminating. In general terms, Tew's discussion of multiplicity and hybridity gradually leads him back to the importance of class (discussing, for instance, the way class tensions undermine the illusory cohesion of imperial unity in texts like *Regeneration* and McEwan's *Atonement*), and towards concluding that new writers "edge British narrative away from the centre of traditional literary concerns and create a centrifugal space reaching outwards both in geographic and class terms" (163). In a sense, the final chapter is surprising since, instead of the expected staple postcolonial authors like Rushdie, Ishiguro, Mo, Okri or Gurnah, Tew extends the relevance of hybridity and the "postcolonial metaphor": "What was once perceived as the basis of chiefly a postcolonial consciousness has become a more general one

both in ethnic and other 'communities' or modes of identification of the self" (170). Also, perhaps more predictably, but with good results, Tew extends the meaning of hybridity to discuss "generic, formal and thematic hybridity" (169) in texts like Winterson's *Passion* (176–7).

Although I have mentioned the blending of literary historical and theoretical arguments in *The Contemporary British Novel*, the final stake of Tew's book is pedagogical: one of the most attractive features of his book is the almost personal appeal to his student readers in the "Epilogue," in which his polemical tone and theoretical agenda is seen for what it is: the outcome of "lived experience," years and decades of attempts to discuss contemporary fiction in classrooms in Britain and, incidentally, in Hungary. The critical turn urged by Tew is revealed as a methodological and pedagogical necessity, the inevitable corollary of an attempt to regain the interest of students, to make them see the relevance of fiction to their lives, to "return to the sphere where all fiction is bound to have its ultimate relevance" (181). What he identifies is a very real difficulty of teaching counterintuitive, hypercritical theoretical and critical strategies in the contemporary classroom. He insists already in the opening chapter – and in light of recent changes in the student population it would be difficult to argue with him – that "a return to material referents may be re-quired if students of literature wish to extend their critique beyond textuality" (24). Well, if this return is achieved with the theoretical sophistication of a Philip Tew, it is certainly a welcome phenomenon that ought to be celebrated. Tew's book, which will probably become a key text in the definition of the canon of post-seventies fiction, might also turn out to be important as initiating a new kind of "pedagogical" discourse: not one that pretends to students that theory is easy but a more honest discourse which, through insisting on the relevance of literature to the lived lives of students, propagates a new critical engagement with texts, theories and lives.

Tamás Bényei

Respect and Revolution

Frank Kermode, *Pleasure and Change: The Aesthetics of Canon* (The Berkeley Tanner Lectures) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

"I am close enough to Frank Kermode's generation to share both its early excitement and later discontent," Geoffrey Hartman opens his response to Frank Kermode's two lectures, *Pleasure* and *Change* given in the course of the 2001 Tanner lecture series. And as a (silent) definition of a critical state of mind or position, Kermode calls out well in the opening of his first lecture, "The great turning point [*in criticism*], as most would agree, occurred in the sixties, when I was already in my forties, an age at which it is . . . difficult to change one's whole way of thinking about literature or anything else."

These apparently contradicting, even slightly disturbing lines perhaps well illustrate the delicate tension (and the unquestionable respect) lurking behind the tone of the contributions appearing in the printed version of the discussions: a tension partly caused by the lack of more recent theoretical viewpoints and analogies in the volume – which is perhaps one of its weak points – yet the discussants' arguments also display a shocking similarity with the discontent in the views of younger generations of critics: the newer approaches, like the

essays in the *New Aestheticism* project, seek to find the way out of the same dead end that the modernist generation of critics had to face in their time: though this book both in terminology and in references apparently presents the views of a classical hero of literary theory, ironically enough, the reader has the impression that no matter how distant Kermode remains from the present day status quo, regardless of this or that generation, the aesthetic baby is being thrown out with the bathwater of various new, but still collapsing (counter-) theories. Perhaps the reader of the discussions and the commentators to Kermode's lectures at times (even implicitly) rightly demand a more cautious treatment of the contemporary theoretical conditions, yet this will not solve any of the aesthetical problems rekindled into critical discourse with the thorough contribution of the young Frank Kermode. Ironically, Professor Kermode – who is, one can be sure, well aware of the intellectual currents appearing ever since the *great turning point*, need not make digressions into these waters, as the war of aesthetics is still raging about the basics of the discipline, and not surprisingly, centring around the problem of aesthetic value and aesthetic experience, be it termed pleasure, experience or something else. And quite obviously to these dilemmas, the post-1960s (and especially contemporary) theories have given but shaky answers. And these

shaky answers (let this be a generalizing term here) clearly legitimize the presence of a critical discourse that is explicitly negligent about the so-called latest developments, the present day polemics being as uncomfortable about basic aesthetic notions, like *canonicity* and *aesthetic pleasure*, as were the masterminds of the postwar generation of new critics and early structuralists.

For instance, the young Kermode's counterelitist project is strikingly similar to the recent struggles to "save" aesthetics from other textual and ideological litter, or to bring it back to its spring by simplifying the terminology and demystifying the speculations about the aesthetic experience. Read *this way*, Kermode - who talks about the classics while having grown into a classic himself, is freed from the invisible "charge" of being over-current, even if he casts a blind eye on post-1960s theory. "Take what theoretical help you fancy, but follow your nose," he states in his closing remark.

Also, these talks invite us to a gesture of respect towards the work of Frank Kermode.

This is perhaps best learned from his oeuvre of books, especially *History and Value*, *Forms of Attention* and *The Classics*, to which – due to the limited time of the lectures and the commentaries – but a series of episodic side-notes are made in these two transcripts. (As due to the necessarily hasty argument and spo-

radic information, *Pleasure and Change* may only be adequate for an invitation to the further study of Kermode and the other discussants' works, as the transcripts do not, cannot represent the theoretical arsenal of the lecturers.) Still, even in this unfortunate form of interaction, an inspiring debate is formed on the above-highlighted problems.

Both in terms of aesthetic pleasure and the change of canons, Kermode is seen by the discussants, especially Thomas Guillory, as trying to form his own 'touchstones' – let us remember again, ideas already elaborated on in his other texts. Yet even from this collage of ideas the major arguments of Kermode's work on canonicity and aesthetic pleasure flashes up. As regards pleasure (which he explicitly uses as a critical term), more or less in line with well-known theories by Plato, Freud, and Barthes, Kermode comes to the discussion of the source of literary experience in terms of the "juxtaposition of pleasure and dismay," as presented through the discussion of Wordsworth's *The Leech Gatherer* and the *Immortality Ode*. Though – as ardently criticised, and perhaps partly misunderstood by the discussants, – he even brings up Arnold, Kermode clearly opposes the fin de siècle pseudo-religious, elitist concept of aesthetic pleasure, and facilitates the personal element in the poetic experience. As explained through examples of Wordsworth's correspondence, the "key to

canonicity" is an effect of the amalgamation of "pleasure and the possibility of its repeated disappointment," both an end – "the principal theme of poetry" –and a critical necessity. And about *change* in literary canons, instead of far-fetched theorizing, Kermode calls attention to the element of *chance* (the recent rise of forgotten Monteverdi operas), and more importantly, the personal drives to create and modify a canon. "What is important may be [*is*] a line or two," he writes. The transcript – which flows from one example to the other, brought to an end with unfortunately chipped summaries – comes at its best when Kermode explains the alterations of canon by psychoanalyzing the great canonizers, highlighting sexual archetypal patterns in their attitudes to canon: Arnold's *plaisir* of passages displaying "pathos" and "ever-increasing, irremediable pain," and Eliot's take on texts of "education, ruin, damnation, and the pains of purgatory." Steering dangerously close to "equating high literature with [*a little bit more and less than*] sexual pleasure," Kermode concludes by claiming responsible the pleasures of interpretive communities as well, who – from mostly inexplicable personal motives – keep the flow of texts alive.

The discussants' contributions (besides passages of praise) slightly criticize and refine the theory sketched above. John Guillory rushes to invite Kermode to speak about the abstract, distilled nature of aesthetic pleasure, while Geoffrey Hartman joins him in calling the pleasure of the text vital in the survival of the genre. Hartman even welcomes Kermode's idea about the rise of the personal canon as one way for the "renewal of the critical spirit," thus (surprisingly) bridging the gap between the self-imposed exile of Kermode from post 1960s stretches of criticism, recognizing the Professor's ideas as similar to the currents revolving around the wake of the postmodern wilderness.

Perhaps unwanted, in his remark on Kermode Hartman mingles the promise of an unintended revolution.

Máté Szabó

The Creation of the Other

Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of
Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004)

*"A singularity marks a point where the
curvative of a space-time is infinite, or,
in other words, it possesses zero volume
and infinite density."*[1]

Connecting (if ever so involuntarily)
Stephen Hawking's quantum physics
and Péter Esterházy's *A szavak csodála-
tos életéből*[2] can be considered creative.
That connection is fully subjective on my
part, but induced by Derek Attridge. It
seems that one cannot set out and create
one single thing; it has to be and will be
a universe from the start. And that is
what Derek Attridge is doing. He picks a
set of extensively used literary terms and
redefining them forms a system, an
ecology of their own. The result is a book
that is creative in Attridge's second use
of the term. It provokes thought forcing
the *reader* to be creative.

Almost at the very beginning of his
book, Attridge admits that the ideas he
deals with are not original and attracted
the attention of several scholars before
him. His source is Derrida, but one can
find parallel approaches in, for example,
psychology just as easily. László Mérő[3]
identifies four levels of knowledge in
practically any field, let it be science, art,
craftsmanship, or other. The highest of
these is the level of the "grandmaster"
and its characteristics include translogi-

cal problem solving and intuitive think-
ing style. Basically, this means that when
the "grandmaster" knows something she
or he cannot necessarily tell how they
know it. Attridge is fascinated by, and
most importantly acknowledges this
unfathomable realm of creative thinking.
In fact, he acknowledges many (every-
day) impossibilities. For example, there
is no way to communicate the substance
of literature through the words of a non-
literary, that is non-artistic text. The
other side of the paradox is that creative
reading will frequently result in an in-
ventive outlet of spoken or written
words, a response. And this response,
whether artistic or not, is not entirely
independent of its source and will say
something new about it.

In Attridge's reading an artwork can-
not be labelled once and for all. Whether
a literary piece is "inventive" or "origi-
nal" is relative and depends on historical
situation, on current theoretical out-
looks and many other factors, that is, on
the shifting framework in which it finds
itself / we find it and ourselves. "The
singular work is therefore not merely
available for translation but is *consti-
tuted* in what may be thought of as an
unending set of translations" (73). Lit-
erature is an event, an action in the pre-
sent introducing the other in relation.

As his main enemy he identifies liter-
ary instrumentalism. Literature has no
aim measurable in terms of politics or
ethics. At the same time he fills *ethics* in

literature with a new meaning. Literature should be treated as literature, whatever that may be, with a certain degree of tolerance, or, rather, welcoming patience. "A responsible response to an inventive work of art, science, or philosophy . . . is one that brings it into being anew by allowing it . . . to refigure the ways in which I, and my culture, think and feel" (125).

The Singularity of Literature is an "inclusive" book. When Attridge is talking about a literary piece the essence of what he says can be understood in terms of other art forms, or even sciences. He is inviting us to explore human thinking under the guise of literature, allowing for the subjectivity of our own interpretation which in turn is part of the "event" of literature's two-sided creation. Giving up the demand of specificity to some extent and widening the scope of his terminology, Attridge's line of thoughts is easily accessible. Timothy Clark[4] speaks highly of this quality in his review of *The Singularity of Literature*, but the praise sounds somewhat derogatory. He sentences the book to student use only and it is hard to argue with him. Nevertheless, it should be read by scholars for its exemplary lucidity and consistency. Attridge is moving his matter in quick spirals, and every new round fits finely into the structure of the whole. It could and should be used to freshen up literary theory.

Besides his dubious praise Clark brings up two main critical observations.

The first is that Attridge is not as intellectually challenging and satisfying as Derrida, although he relies heavily on Derrida's work; the merit of Attridge's book, he says again, lies in its readability. The second is "the risk that terms such as 'Same/other,' 'inventive,' and 'singular' may become too alarmingly applicable or empty."[5] Clark might be right in his judgement. It all depends on how we read Attridge's book, what we take it for.

One has the feeling that Attridge did not choose the appropriate title. It is closer to books like the above-mentioned work by Mérő dealing with thinking as such. *The Singularity of Literature* was written parallel with the more practical *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*[6] focusing on prose fiction. Without its other half, *The Singularity of Literature* is not *special* enough to fulfil what the "literature" of the title promises. So, it is not surprising that reading it as an essay on literature, one of the best parts of the book is probably chapter seven, "Performance," which analyses Serote's poem, *The Actual Dialogue*, in detail. Attridge is walking around questions for which there are no absolute answers. A question without answer is alterity itself without the possibility of accommodation, which attracts our inventive capacities. A question perpetually in search of an answer is a singularity, very little, almost nothing, possessing infinite density.

Lóránt Kácsor

Notes

1. Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (London: Bantam Books, 1988).

2. Péter Esterházy, "A szavak csodálatos életéből," in *Mindentudás Egyeteme*, ed. Mária Hitseker & Zsuzsa Szilágyi (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 2004), 7–27.

3. László Mérő, *Új észjárások: A racionális gondolkodás ereje és korlátai* (Budapest: Tericum, 2001).

4. Timothy Clark, "Singularity in Criticism," *The Cambridge Quarterly* (2004) 395–398.

5. Clark, p. 398.

6. Derek Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading* (University of Chicago Press, 2004); see review below.

Theory in Practice or a Practical Theory?

Derek Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004)

"What has mattered ... is the event – literary and ethical at the same time – of storytelling, of testing, of self-questioning, and not the outcome." (205)

Nobody reads Coetzee for "mere entertainment" or if they start out so, they soon drop the book altogether. He is one of the most widely discussed and taught contemporary writers, and scholarship of his work has had as its domi-nant theme what was formulated as portraying "in innumerable guises ... the surprising involvement of the outsider"[1] upon awarding him with the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003. Although his novels do share the motif of the outsider, there is seemingly more to be said about their elusive nature and disquieting quality.

By the recurring, but ever surprising blocks of flow in terms of language, story, and even ideology, Coetzee's writings provoke the reader to come up with an attitude at the least, but also urge for an immediate reconsideration of it as the works themselves re-examine and make ambiguous many discussed theoretical questions of authorship power, character formation, choice and execution of genre, ethical, social or political cases presented. In a peculiar way, these 'primary' works of literature bear and provoke a great deal of 'secondary' or theoretical thought from their very readers.

Reading Coetzee's novels always brings the 19th-century German philosopher Arnold Gehlen into (my) mind, who defined man as a creature best characterised by lack. In his theory, culture as such (in both the material and spiritual sense) is but a making up for what we have lost or did not have to begin with. Coetzee's heroes can stand as the demonstrations of Gehlen's concept: they are placed (and sometimes consciously place themselves) in a gap of

essential qualities, like that of a stabile moral or political system, the ability to love or trust, to feel shame, or even to communicate. Choices made in such a context are far from uplifting or entertaining in their nature, but serve as thought provoking reflections on the fillers (ethical presuppositions) we, the readers, apply automatically in those gaps, and then are forced to reconsider and distrust.

In his *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading* Attridge redirects our attention from customary patterns and studies the forces that form and sustain both the conceptual gaps in Coetzee's novel and the store of possible fillers around. He is – as it were – engaged in drawing and making us aware of the borders of the gap. At the same time, the ethics of reading is far from being a set of values or moral guidelines to be applied to the literary work. It is not even definable, it can only be experienced in the very process of writing and reading – 'literature in the event.' Recognisibly and admittedly Attridge's ethical criticism builds on Derrida's thought.

Apart from the scholarly reflection on Coetzee's ten novels, there is also another strong argument about the – practical – importance of literature and thus a great potential assigned to it in the ethical and political formation of the individual and ultimately, of society. (A significant break from postcolonial thought is that here the ethical overrides the political.) The cohesive texture between the two seemingly distinct traits is Attridge's theory of literature as 'an ethically charged event.' It makes the tasks constantly lend themselves to each other, so much so that it is hard to decide if we read an application of a theory or experience it as being distilled from the very novels. A supporting fact for this observation is that Attridge's approach for discussing Coetzee's oeuvre is the first application of another critical writing of his, *The Singularity of Literature* (2004, see review above), which he wrote in parallel with the work here discussed. The key to his concept is that literature should be considered as a linguistic and social practice, the crucial element in it being the response to 'otherness' (a key term taken from Derrida and Levinas) – characterising both the writing and the reading process of a work of literature. Derrida's 'other' here gets a significant new role that Grant Hamilton praises as the most refreshing and unexpected development that saves the reader from thinking of Coetzee's writing as "always and only a 'postcolonial' literature" but rather as "literature that stages experience," which allows it to "truly become a dynamic event."[2]

Attridge's more or less deconstructionist approach and peculiar close reading are therefore not of the texts in themselves as finished works of literature, and in tracing their historical or autobiographical background and criti-

cal reception he directs the attention to their *making* and *working* as inventive and ethical procedures. A work of literature is more of a process, an event, an action than any kind of result, outcome, or effect. Likewise, the process of reading is characterised as a dynamic event, personal involvement and ever-changing interpretation. Attridge brings this point home by a linguistic analogy: "the meaning of a literary work, then, can be understood as a verb rather than as a noun" (9). Thus literature should be experienced, and a responsive and responsible reading evokes a creative transformation (be it in language, thought or ethics) through its singularity constituted in its inventiveness, its other-directedness. The intimate and highly formative relationship between the literary text and reader (or writer) serves as an ultimate proof for Attridge's basic tenet: 'literature happens.'

Attridge's book therefore offers to find out *how* Coetzee's novels work. Their individual treatments are permeated with Attridge's "trinity" of crucial issues, which themselves undergo a process of conceptual development in his text: the underlying concept of the 'other' (later 'arrivant'), evoking literal innovation or invention (later accommodation), and resulting in the singularity of the artwork (later 'the literal').

The discussion of Coetzee's novels is chronologically and thematically ordered – through them the different traits of the argument are developed in a way that they make very good reading, but give quite a difficult job to the reviewer. In the summary hereafter I try to follow the general pattern of the book itself and highlight some of the main arguments about each novel as well as the parallel theoretical trait.

In chapter one, after a – later disclaimed – attempt at a theoretical placement of Coetzee's work as a "modernism after modernism" with a "reworking of modernism's methods" (5), a discussion of formal singularities starts where the intensity of language, the denial of ethical guidance, conscious mediation through narrating figures, "the aura of something like irony" (7), awareness of the limits of writing are highlighted as contributing to the more intense experience of otherness – all of which lead to the theoretical foundations to Attridge's approach. In the discussion of *Dusklands* (1974) and *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) we find the first demonstration of the 'other' through the puzzling moments of ambiguity in the rendering (a report; numbered entries in a diary) and the flow (episodes retold in a different way, change of mood) of the story, always considered as "a moment in the reader's experience of the work" (18). A characteristic thematic locus where this otherness can be seen as the classical master-servant relation, and the means is a self-reflexive and alienating use of language.

The message of the second chapter is perhaps best paraphrased as showing how openness is the key to a fruitful close reading – and not only – of *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) and *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983). Urging to abandon our tendency to allegorise and "the urge to apply preexisting norms and to make fixed moral judgements" uncertainty and open-endedness gain an important role in reading a literary text. Thus – in the spirit of deconstruction – failure to interpret becomes a valid way of interpretation. Accepting the domination of "perhaps," Coetzee's readers, too, are directed to appreciate "the value of openness to the moment and to the future, of the perhaps and the wherever" (64).

Characteristic arguments of the postcolonial and the postmodern discourses are called into battle if we put together Attridge's third and fifth chapter discussing *Foe* (1986) and *The Master of Petersburg* (1994), respectively. On the one hand, Attridge shows how Coetzee's novels through their allusiveness "offer themselves not as challenges to the canon, but as canonic" (68), and on the other hand, he invites us to discover inventiveness within programmability. The central issue is authorship in the process of writing, which is thematised first as rewriting and later as prewriting, resulting in a reinterpretation of the past and in future-orientedness, respectively. Taking *Foe* (1986) as a

peculiar reworking of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, he shows how it becomes a "representation of writing in writing" (73), where issues of authorship, empowerment, validation and silencing emerge. The well-known story of the island is given the potential to become an independent reality through the main character's story telling. The processes in *The Master of Petersburg* point in the opposite direction: it is Dostoevsky's autobiographical story that produces the plot and main characters of his own future novel, however, they appear with few but significant changes regarding both the life story and the novel. The 'other' of the first story, Friday is also a figure of absolute silence – but only through the oppressors' interpretation, urging us to discover and make conscious the exteriority and conventionality in culturally validated narrative forms (in other words, the canon). In the second novel, Pavel is not only silenced but also a greatly missed and sought figure and at the same time the gateway in interpretation to Derrida's 'arrivant,' a concept that later transforms the entire novel into what Dostoevsky *would have* made out of it were it not for the publisher's objections.

The two important tasks assigned to literature in these chapters are "to fashion new cultural and political structures that will allow us not just to hear each other's stories ... but to hear ... each other's silences" (90), and to show a way

to "expecting the unexpected without even determining the unexpected *as* unexpected" (134).

The chapter analysing *Age of Iron* (1990) examines trust. The main character of the novel has to rely on countless "others" in the last phase of her life: an estranged daughter, a homeless intruder to her backyard, the young black boys involved in the social turmoil of South Africa of the mid-eighties. In her struggle to accept their otherness she realises that it was produced by her own values in the first place, and that she can only accept it rationally, not emotionally. Hence develops a (paradoxical) sense of love and trust that "flows directly from duty" (109) and points to an unknowable future. In Attridge's view, a similar opening to the unpredictable, the future, the other is required when reading or writing a work of literature, which makes the "literary" ethical, its power being "in its enactment, in charged, exploratory, sometimes consciously self-indulgent language, of a number of interrelated struggles in which the reader is invited to participate with sympathy but also with critical judgement" (111).

Chapter six tackles another conventional form turned inside out by Coetzee in discussing his two autobiographical novels, *Boyhood* (1997) and *Youth* (2002) By using the third person and the present tense he contradicts the conventions of confessional writing, but offers an alternative for authentically present-

ing a past phase in terms of ideologies, morals and emotions. By the technique of what Attridge calls "*autre*biography," the above changes are turned into profit by heightening the immediacy of narration and denying any retrospection, thus *attaining* a certain form of truth *in the process* of writing. Even the young child's unconscious racism and the most shaming events of the youth's love life can be presented in a special mode of secular confession where "we sense the unflinchingness more strongly than the forgivingness" (159).

Disgrace (1999) is perhaps the most unsettling novel by Coetzee depicting a phase of moral instability in post-apartheid South Africa by the powerful story of two rapes and the disturbing new ways of accommodation emerging in extreme circumstances. More remarkable is, however, Attridge's treatment of the two motifs interwoven in the story: the role of art and that of animals (especially dogs) constituting a possible – but by Lurie untaken – way out of the state of disgrace. The recognition of the absolute other here, again, leads to that of its singularity, which in turn is one of the constituents of a possible (literary, social and political) state of grace.

The *Epilogue* provides an overview of Coetzee's latest publication to date, *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), and suggests treating the lectures of the elderly woman writer – in spite of the odd form – as works of literature. Through the

different topics of the lectures Attridge highlights aspects of authorship, such as the burden of feeling one's way into other lives, the surprising nature of true artistic devotion or the power of realistic fiction to expose the reader to human evil.

The secret to Attridge's refreshing, but perhaps not altogether new perspective lies in the masterful combination and application of different thoughts in literary theory. It could be counted as a reconciliatory achievement as it transforms a mixture of ethical criticism's terminology with postcolonial issues into a more postmodernist discourse with the help of deconstruction. Within ethical criticism's frame it is best seen if we turn to Wayne C. Booth,[3] who worked with the concepts of "friend," "virtue," and "ethical" to signal fiction's function of fulfilling our desire for companionship, the range of human habits of behaviour (powers, strengths, capacities) and their sum total in any given reader respectively. Adding to them all that Attridge points out in Coetzee's fiction they are shaped into the "other/arrivant," "accommodation" and the "literal" in an even more neutral, dynamic, or perhaps more specifically postmodern set.

Postmodern theories of literature tend to be highly illuminating and well-written, but also quite hard to apply to actual literary works. As noted earlier, here the primary and secondary texts enter into a most fruitful symbiosis,

making it an original commentary and a well-supported argumentation: all in all, perhaps the best introduction to Coetzee so far. It culminates in a brilliant *practical theory*: born simultaneously with the texts it discusses. But can it be called a *theory in practice*, i.e. a theory with more possible applications? Does it work equally well with other authors or works of literature to the same level of efficiency it achieves with Coetzee? If so, it is liable to resolve ethical criticism's rather problematic situation in contemporary academe, where, as Marshall Gregory put it, "there is . . . hardly any kind of criticism more discredited and more resisted."[4]

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Notes

1. "The Nobel Prize in Literature 2003," *Nobelprize.org*. Retrieved: June 22, 2005. <http://nobelprize.org/literature/laureates/2003/>.

2. G. A. R. Hamilton, "Reading the Other: A Review of Derek Attridge's *J. M. Coetzee and the Etics of Reading: Literature in the Event*," *Australian Humanities Review* 36 (July 2005).

3. Wayne C. Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

4. Marshall Gregory, "Ethical Criticism: What It Is and Why It Matters," *Style* (Summer 1998).