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The Boke of Comforte Agaynste All Trybulacyons

An Introductory Study¹

This paper explores the textual history, readership, and the literary and spiritual context of *The Boke of Comforte Agaynste All Trybulacyons*, printed in London around 1505. The *Boke* is the English version of the *Livret des consolacions* printed some years earlier in Paris. I propose that the *Boke* and its French antecedent are the direct descendants of a Latin compilation printed on the Continent, including the works of Jacobus Gruytradius, Petrus Blesensis, and Isidore of Seville. I also aim to point out the *Boke*'s stylistic properties and its place in the tradition of English prose. Both this work and its contemporaries (i.e., early printed material from the 16th century) can contribute greatly to our understanding of early Tudor English literature, spirituality, and book culture.

“[A] wondir olde boke of lytil quantiti the whiche as to the syghte semed as of none reputacion. . .”²

1 Introduction

After Wynkyn de Worde had inherited William Caxton's workshop in Westminster, he soon found that its location was not favourable with respect to business. It was well for Caxton to settle at Westminster, near to his courtly patrons, but for de Worde, whose target clientele consisted chiefly of commoners, Flete Street was a much more advantageous location.³ There he set up his workshop and started his

1. My research on *The Boke of Comforte Agaynste Trybulacyons* has been carefully supervised by Prof. Benedek Péter Tóta; a great part of this article owes its being to his support and guidance. My thanks are also due to Prof. Michael Pincombe at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne for his help. I am also indebted to Dr. Alexandra Gillespie (University of Toronto) and to Fr. Germain Marc'hadour for their comments.

2. *The Seuen poyntes of Trewe Loue and Euerlasting Wisdom*, G1^r.

3. N. F. Blake, *Caxton and his World* (London: Deutsch, 1969), p. 81.

career during which he brought to his readers over 800 books, mostly of a practical and popular nature. As Henry Plomer writes, “he gave the public what would either move it to tears or laughter, cure its ailments both of mind and body, show it how to fish, to hawk, or to cook, or teach it how to speak Latin correctly.”⁴

It was in Flete Street, at the sign of the Sun, that the *Boke of Comforte Agaynste All Tribulacyons* was printed around 1505. This book is one of the least known products of early English printing. It features in two footnote references in the Yale edition of Thomas More’s *Dialogue of Comfort* as part of the devotional tradition of More’s work,⁵ Dr. Alexandra Gillespie mentions it in three of her articles,⁶ and Douglas Gray devotes a few passages to it in his study of 16th century consolatory books.⁷ Apart from these sources, I have been unable to find any mention of it. Listed as nr.3295, it is identified in the *STC*⁸ as the English version of the *Livret des consolacions* (printed in Paris c. 1497). Another edition was printed by Richard Pynson at about the same time (*STC* 3296). There are four surviving copies of the book, three by de Worde and one by Pynson.⁹

4. Henry Plomer, *Wynkyn de Worde and his Contemporaries from the Death of Caxton to 1535* (London: Grafton & Co., 1925), p. 8.

5. Thomas More, “A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulations,” in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, Vol. 12, ed. Louis L. Martz and Frank Manley (New Haven: Yale UP, 1976), p. cxviii.n.2 and 3. All parenthesized references are to this edition, further referred to as *CW*.

6. Alexandra Gillespie, “Caxton and After,” in *A Companion to Middle English Prose*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 307–325.; “Poets, Printers, and early English Sammelbande,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 67:2 (2004) 189–214; “These pruerbes yet do last: Lydgate, the Fifth Earl of Northumberland, and Tudor Miscellanies in Manuscript and Print,” *Yearbook of English Studies* 33 (2003) 215–32.

7. Douglas Gray, “Books of Comfort,” in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G. H. Russell*, ed. G. Kratzmann and J. Simpson (Dover: D. S. Brewer, 1986), 209–20. My attention was directed to Douglas Gray’s article by Professor Alexandra Barratt of the University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand, whose generous assistance I gratefully acknowledge.

8. *A Short-Title Catalogue of books printed in England, Scotland and Ireland and of English books printed abroad 1475–1640*, first compiled by A. W. Pollard & G. R. Redgrave, revised and enlarged by W. A. Jackson & F. S. Ferguson, completed by K. F. Pantzer (London: Bibliographical Society, 1986). Further abbreviated as *STC* in parenthesized references.

9. See H. S. Bennett’s Checklist in his *English Books and Readers*, Vol.2. The copies of Wynkyn de Worde are located in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, Cambridge University Library and the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. Pynson’s copy is held by Durham University Library.

At first sight, *The Boke of Comforte* seems to be one of those “fatherles bokes” Richard Whitforde was so cautious about.¹⁰ The title itself does not promise much novelty, “comfort” and “tribulation” being fairly common catchwords in early Tudor books of devotion. No prologue of recommendation, no versed epilogue is added, as opposed to the more privileged translations of Lady Margaret or Robert Copland. As printed by Wynkyn¹¹ it comes in a neat octavo format, complete with woodcuts scattered over the pages; some follow the printer’s device as *addenda*. Pynson’s copy is not much different save for some points in spelling and his choice of woodcut illustrations: he prefers whole panels where Wynkyn uses small images.

The book is made up of three independent treatises: an elevated dialogue between the “blessyd Jhesus” and the “poore synner” (A2^r–D2^r) is followed by a treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins, their “braunches and doughters,” the Five Wits of Nature and the Twelve Articles of Faith (D3^r–F4^v). A short exhortation by the unnamed “auctour” is inserted between the two texts (D2^v–D4^r). The third piece is a dialogue between “Man” and “Reason,” containing some harsh medicine against tribulation in the form of “Reason’s” snubbing admonitions. It is ascribed to the “ryght venerable doctour Isodore” (F4^v–H8^r).

In this article, I attempt to demonstrate the value of this book of early Tudor piety, at the same time as providing some information on its provenance. Recent studies have enabled me to give it a more definite identity than that of a “fatherles boke.” The “fathers” of this book include monks from the 4th to the 14th century, doctors of the church, and nameless French and English translators. Apart from mere philological facts, the book calls for attention in many other respects. It is a remarkable specimen of popular consolatory literature, and an example of how medieval manuscript material came to a new life and identity through printing. It is also a repository of 16th century English spirituality. Its complicated genealogy makes it a repository of many centuries’ religious thought, while printing, the spread of literacy and devotional reading make it an efficient transmitter of medieval lore. In my introduction of the *Boke* I shall concentrate on these points of interest.

10. *Dyuers holy instructions* (STC 25420) A2^r.

11. All quotations from or references to the book, unless otherwise indicated, are based on the UMI microfilm copy of Wynkyn de Worde’s edition. All italics and emphases are mine.

2 Manuscripts, Printed Treatises, and the Book

A consolatory treatise written in Latin and translated into French and English, the antecedent of the *Boke* is a French incunabulum entitled *Le Livret des Consolacions Contre Toutes Tribulacions*, printed by Guy Marchant in Paris c. 1497, a copy of which is now located at the Pierpont Morgan Library.¹²

I would suggest that the Latin original of this French book is an incunabulum printed many times by different printers in the Low Countries and France, and extant in numerous copies today. (I have examined the one printed by Nicholaus Leeu at Antwerp in 1488, now held in the Bodleian Library.)¹³ It contains three treatises, the first and last of which are identical with the respective chapters of the *Boke of Comforte*.

The first is a dialogue entitled *Colloquium peccatoris et crucifixi Jhesu Christe*. (A1^r–A6^v), written by Jacobus de Gruytrode or Gruytrodius, Carthusian prior of Liège, a close friend of Denys the Carthusian.¹⁴ The second is a short treatise entitled *De beatitudine claustrali* (B1^r–B2^r), attributed to Petrus Blesensis.¹⁵ This is omitted

12. F. R. Goff, *Incunabula in American Libraries: A Third Census of Fifteenth Century Books Recorded in North American Collections* (New York: The Bibliographical Society of America, 1964), L–256.

13. Hence referred to by its shelfmark, Bod. Auct.7.Q

14. On Gruytrode, see Koen Seynaeve, “Jacobus Van Gruytrode,” in *Historia et Spiritualitas Cartusiensis Colloquii Quarti Internationalis Acta, 16–19 Sept. 1982*, ed. Jan de Grauwe (Destelbergen, 1983), 313–36. Useful material is also to be found in K. Emery, *Dionysius Cartusiensis Opera Selecta*, in *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis*, Vols. CXXI and CXXI/A (Turnholt: Brepols, 1991). On Gruytrode, see Vol. CXXI/A, p. 447; on the authorship of the *Colloquium peccatoris et crucifixi*, see pp. 540–565. Emery gives an elaborate description and manuscript evidence on Gruytrode’s dialogues, often attributed to Denys due to their correspondence and cooperation. One of Denys’ writings is a very similar one to Gruytrodius’ *Colloquium*: it circulated in monasteries under the title *Colloquium Jhesu cum puero*. Syon Abbey had a copy of this, alongside with Gruytrodius’ *Lavacrum Conscientiae*. See Mary Bateson ed., *Catalogue of the Library of Syon Monastery* (Cambridge, 1898), p. 106, nr. 40.

15. Other editions of the same book ascribe it to Engelbertus Cultrificis. See *Incunabula Printed in the Low Countries: A Census*, ed. G. van Thienen & J. Goldfinch (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf Publishers, 1999), vol. 36, nr. 1295, 1297, 1298. (Abbreviated as IPLC in the following pages.) The title is often simply *Tractatulus de vita religiosa*, see *Catalogue des Livres Imprimés au Quinzième Siècle des Bibliothèques de Belgique*, par M.-L. Polain (Bruxelles: Société des Bibliophiles & Iconophiles de Belgique, 1932), 1122, 1123, 1124. (Abbreviated as CLIB in the following pages.)

from the French and English editions to make room for a treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins which is definitely more “profytable” to lay readers. The third item is the abridged version of Isidore of Seville’s *Synonima de lamentatione animae peccatricis*, bearing the title *Dyalogus siue synonima ysidori de homine et ratione*. (B2^v–C4^v) The colophon makes reference to the first and second items only: “Expliciunt synonima Ysidori de homine & ratione cum Colloquio peccatoris & crucifixi. Impressa per me Nicholaum leeu. Anno domini MCCCC.lxxxviiij. xvj kalendas junii.”

The *Colloquium peccatoris et crucifixi Jhesu Christi* and other dialogues Gruytrodius wrote to the same pattern were hugely popular in their time. The *Colloquium* resembles Henry Suso’s *Horologium Sapientiae* and the *Imitatio Christi*, both written in the genre of internal conversation or dialogue with Christ, and show a more affective than intellectual attitude to the suffering Saviour. Gruytrodius favoured the compilatory method of late medieval Carthusian authors. His works were, according to Emery, “often made up of extracts from many authors that he has personally ‘collected’ by means of constant copying; these he presents to readers in a disposition to which he gives a personal signature.”¹⁶ Gruytrodius’ ingenuity lies in the form he gave to his compilation: the dialogue form smoothes away all traces of collation, gathering both borrowed and new material in a united structure.¹⁷

The *Colloquium* was also printed as an independent item, notably by Guy Marchant in 1497.¹⁸ Another edition was printed by Marchant for Jean Petit (*CLIB* nr. 1121). A Dutch and a Spanish version survive¹⁹ beside three English translations, one of which is the first part of the *Boke*. The two later ones shall be shortly discussed soon.

The *Synonima* of St. Isidore appeared likewise both independently and in compilation. A single copy was produced by Guy Marchant in 1494. This treatise was widely read throughout the Middle Ages. Written at a turbulent period of history and spirituality when “an intense need was felt for outward penance” and “men were

16. Emery, p. 454.

17. It may be of interest that another work ascribed to Gruytrodius¹⁷, entitled *Speculum Aureum animae peccatricis* reached English readers by the same route. Written in Latin, it was first translated by Jean Miélot, a clerk at the Burgundian court. Another translation survives in four incunabula editions (*Emery*, 452n20 & n21), any of which could be the original upon which Lady Margaret Beaufort’s translation, the *Myrrour of Golde for the Synful Soule* is based. This translation was printed several times both by Wynkyn de Worde and Pynson.

18. *Bibliothèque Nationale Catalogue des Incunables*, (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1985), I-85. (Further abbreviated as BNCL.)

19. Seynaeve, p. 324n3.

vitally conscious of their condition as sinners,”²⁰ the *Synonima* carried on the spirit of fervent penitence into the sixteenth century. Its message transmits the teaching of St. Gregory the Great with a focus on compunction of heart, sincerity and brevity in speech and prayer, and the reading of the Scripture.²¹ Its practical wisdom, crisp *sententiae* that will stick in the memory of reader, writer and preacher, made it an easy and useful reading for generations.²²

I have not been able to identify the author of the middle chapter, the treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins and other elements of faith. Such texts belonged to the most commonplace and ubiquitous genres of popular devotional literature. A slightly ironic sentence from the *Seuen poyntes of Trewe Loue and Euerlasting Wisdom*²³ gives a succinct illustration of the situation:

There ben also so mani bokes and tretees of vices and of vertues and of dyuerse doctrines that thys short lyfe shall rather haue an ende of eury man thenne he maye other studye hem or rede hem. (A6^r)

Yet this tract is similar to Isidore’s dialogue in its frequent use of proverbial sayings. Two such sentences, from the section on Gluttony, will serve as an amusing example. The author is, at times, rather hard upon his readers:

for as to eate one tyme of the day it is a lyfe angelyke and for to ate tho tymes of the day it is a lyfe humayne. But for to eate thre or foure tymes it is a lyfe brutall. (E3^v)

Even by the standards of contemporary asceticism, such advice given to a layman seems to me somewhat beyond the point of achievability. In fact, this sentence owes its origin to one of the Desert Fathers of the 4th century.²⁴ However, the author

20. Jean Leclercq et al., *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages* (London: Burns & Oates, 1968), pp. 60–1.

21. Leclercq, p. 64.

22. Syon Abbey held a copy of it entitled *Dialogus ysidori de spirituali consolacione*, overtly stating the work’s consolatory nature. (Bateson, p. 164 nr. 42)

23. Printed by William Caxton as part of the *Boke of Dyuerse Ghoostly Matters*, STC 3305

24. “Apophtegmes des Pères” tr. par L. Regnault et les moines des Solesmes, in *Les Sentences des Pères du désert* (Solesmes, 1966–85), Eth 14, 1. Quoted in Lucien Regnault, *La vie quotidienne des pères du désert en Égypte au IV^e siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1990), p. 79. The term “angelic life” was the common designation of the monastic form of life, primarily on the basis of Mt 22.29–30 and Mk 12.18–27. See, for example, Vincent L. Wimbush and R. Valantasis, *Asceticism* (New York and Oxford: OUP, 1995), pp. 134–135.

of the treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins may have been quite unaware of this – what he did perhaps was simply look into a collection of devout sayings and admonitions of his time, making use of whatever seemed to fit the purpose. That he sometimes made a not very adequate choice can be seen from the example from the remedies against Gluttony:

For as he the whiche is boden unto souper spareth hym at dyner for too
make good chere at souper / in lyke wyse sholde we spare us from drynke &
from mete in this presente lyfe and we sholde be sober for to reioyse us &
for to fede in the glorye eternall. (E4^v)

Although the parallel between earthly repast and the holy supper is clear, it does seem peculiar to stir devout readers to abstinence by an example of repletion.

There is no reference to the English translator in the book. Pynson adds a commonplace request to the reader in the colophon:

Pray for hym the whych hath translated this present boke out of Frenche
into Englysshe and it caused to be Enprynted for the helthe of soules to the
ende that he myght be partener of the goode dedys the whyche of them shal
procede. (H6^v)

This sounds as if the book had been printed to the translator's personal request. If the attribution to Andrew Chertsey in the Pierpont Morgan Library Catalogue is correct,²⁵ this is not improbable, since Chertsey both translated and supported the printing of several other devotional books of French origin (such as the *Floure of the Commaundements of God*, printed by de Worde in 1510 and 1524).²⁶ However, the absence of his name from the printed text is even more peculiar in this case.

We may see from this that the *Boke of Comforte* grew out of a loose binding together of treatises into an independent title. In this respect, it is representative of a more advanced state of the art of printing: whereas the printer of the Latin incunabulum made these treatises one book by merely making them adjacent, imitating

25. I am indebted to Mr. John Bidwell, Astor Curator of printed books and bindings at the Pierpont Morgan Library who kindly described the Morgan Library's copy of the *Boke of Comforte* and the *Livret des Consolacions* for me.

26. See J. Boffey's article on Chertsey in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5225>. Again, my thanks are due to Mr. Bidwell for drawing my attention to this.

manuscript miscellanea,²⁷ the printers of the French and English books of comfort were more creative in their editorial work by adding a title and some paragraphs of reflection from an “auctour” to connect the treatises. Marchant and de Worde appear to be editors, printers and publishers at a task which Nicholaus Leeu and his colleagues attended to as mere craftsmen. They published a book, whereas Leeu only issued manuscripts in printed form.

The difference between Leeu’s incunabulum and the *Boke of Comferte* is even more significant in terms of the language. It cannot be said with certainty that it was only the literate urban laity (merchants, well-off craftsmen, lawyers and any who could afford buying books to nurture their personal devotion)²⁸ or the parish priest preparing his sermon, who were in need of a vernacular book of comfort. Even better educated people and priests could profit from having these texts in their mother tongue, and indeed, numerous vernacular devotional books printed by Wynkyn are either written or translated by brothers of Syon Abbey, bishops, or Carthusian monks. Yet those groups of society we could tentatively call the middle class could hardly have benefited to the same degree from a Latin book. It was the possibility of catering for the needs of pious laypeople that touched a cord in printers’ mercantile spirituality. Printers even overdid their jobs by creating as well as satiating a reading public.²⁹

An interesting addition to the *Boke of Comferte*’s textual evolution is the ‘after-life’ of its chapters. Isidore’s wisdom continued to be popular in editions like *The Gathered Counsaillies of saynct Isodorie to informe man, howe he shuld flee vices and folowe vertues*, printed in 1534. A collection of wise sayings, it may be regarded as a breviary of “Reason.”

27. Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (New York: CUP, 1993), p. 14. I have found that the *Colloquium* and Petrus Blesensis’ treatise were put right after each other in a volume of printed and manuscript material, once in the possession of Durham Cathedral and now held in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas. I have consulted a microfilm of this collection at Durham University Library. If this arrangement of the two texts was a convention, then Marchant and de Worde were clearly bolder editors than Leeu who did not attempt to break away from it.

28. On the social distribution of reading in early Tudor England, see for example H. S. Bennett, *English Books and Readers 1475 to 1557* (Cambridge: CUP, 1952). On the development of reading habits from the late 13th century to the early 1500s see H. M. Carey, “Devout Literate Laypeople and the Pursuit of the Mixed Life in Medieval England,” *Journal of Religious History* 14 (1987) 361–81.

29. Helen White, *Tudor Books of Private Devotion* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959), p. 169

Gruytrode's *Colloquium* was also printed some thirty years later by John Redman with the title *The Dialogue or comunicacion betwene our sauour Jhesu Chryste and a sinner* (STC 14548). The text is presented to the "Jentyll and loueyng readers that in the merytes of Christes passyon delyteth" (A2^r), and in this sentence the dialogue's two main focuses, spiritual love and meditation on Christ's passion, are summarized. The translation does not come near the *Boke of Comforte's* version of the *Colloquium*: it is shorter and plainer, without the earlier text's refined style, rhythm and shades of rhetoric.

The next English version of the *Colloquium* was published as late as 1638. It is included in Richard Brathwait's *Spiritual Spicerie*, bearing the title *A Divine Dialogue; or a comfortable Conference betwixt our Saviour and a Sinner: with the Life of Gruytrodius, the Author*. Brathwait appears to have been working from the *Divini Amoris Pharetra*, a book containing, besides Gruytrode's *Colloquium*, the work of another Carthusian, Johannes Justus Lanspergius. This book was printed in Cologne by Peter Horst in 1590, and includes the short biographies of both Gruytrode and Lanspergius.³⁰ The biographies of the *Spiritual Spicerie* seem to be word by word renderings of this original. The only difference is one that speaks of the considerable lapse of time between Wynkyn's and Brathwait's England. Brathwait inserts the following apology on behalf of the Catholic author:

Iacobus Gruytrodius, a German, a man singularly versed in divine and humane Learning: And opposite in constancy of opinion, and consonance of doctrine, to those surreptitious Errours of the Time; . . . having his pen ever vers'd in Works of devotion and piety: never in arguments of division or controversy.³¹

The book features prominent medieval authors: passages by Bonaventure, Augustine, Suso, and even Thomas Aquinas are included. Nevertheless, although the author clearly favours the moving and elevated mood of Catholic piety to Protestant texts, and even inserts a confession-narrative of his own life, this preference is not extended to doctrinal matters. There is nothing in the book to suggest that Brathwait had Catholic inclinations beyond his stylistic preferences. He also defends himself

30. I am grateful to Mr Alistair MacGregor from Ushaw College for bringing this work into my attention and allowing me to consult it.

31. The original reads: *Iacobus Gruytrodius Germanus, vir in diuinis & humania literis apprime versatus, ut adolescentiam liberalibus studiis honeste transegit, sic statem reliquam, in Carthusianorum ordine, Domino consecrauit & feliciter impendit. Claruit anno MCCCCCLXXII (Divini Amoris Pharetra, p. 1).*

against “a rigid Precisian, objecting, that flowers from Romish Authors extracted, became lesse wholesome and divinely redolent” (226).

It is beyond the limits of the present paper to investigate how a Carthusian work like the *Colloquium* made its way into England after the dissolution of the monasteries and the Elizabethan Settlement. Let it suffice that its enduring popularity is another support to Louis L. Martz’s argument of a continuous meditative tradition in English prose, reaching well into the 17th century,³² a comforting consummation of More’s wish that laypeople would read “suche englysshe bookes as moste may norysse and encrease deuocyon” instead of controversy³³ and – quoting Chambers’s words – “yet one more protest against the current division into Medieval and Modern.”³⁴

3 “[K]now what thou arte”: A Mirror to the Reader “in fourme of a dyalogue”

Before discussing the book itself in detail, a few words regarding its genre may be useful. Comfort-literature is divided into two main lines by the editors of More’s *Dialogue*: a popular-devotional and a philosophical one, with treatises like the *Boke* in the former and works like the *Consolation of Philosophy* in the latter, and More somewhere in between the two categories. The editors assert that “the only real resemblance between *A Dialogue of Comfort* and other works in the comfort tradition is its shared doctrinal content, its use of Christian themes and traditions, and the fervor of its faith.”³⁵

It is unclear whether More has ever read the *Boke of Comforte*, and the similarity between the two titles as well as the three languages in which the two works are said to have appeared may be only a coincidence. It is also possible that More was building this literary design around his *Dialogue*, imitating the *Boke* and similar works, on purpose. At any rate, More’s definitions of “tribulation” and “comfort” may be helpful in defining the two main categories of the genre. Uncle Antony defines “tribulation” as “some kynd of grefe eyther payne of the body or hevynes of the

32. L. L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation. A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1954.)

33. Thomas More, *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, CW 8/I:37/28–29.

34. R. W. Chambers, *The Place of St. Thomas More in English Literature and History* (London: Longmans, 1937.), p. 24.

35. CW 12, pp. cxviii–cxx.

mynd,”³⁶ stating that every tribulation is caused by man’s fault, brought about either as a consequence or a punishment of trespasses, or a “preseruyng” from sin.³⁷ “Comfort” is identified with the “medisyng”³⁸ given by God alone. These definitions are valid for the *Boke of Comforte* as well: “tribulation” sometimes refers to temptations (the remedies for which are given in the second part), sometimes to remorse and despair (against which the “blessyd Jesus” gives ample consolation), or supposed injustice suffered in everyday life (refuted by Reason in Isidore’s dialogue). As Alexandra Barratt writes in her introduction to the *Book of Tribulation*, a Middle English specimen of the genre, a broad interpretation of the term “tribulation” was one guarantee for the success of a consolatory book: all readers, suffering from whatever pain or conflict in the soul, could find the consolation applicable to their own specific situation.³⁹

The other thing which made these books popular is one readers of today would find more of a disadvantage. Some passages, especially in the third part, may seem to be more oppressive than consolatory. However, these had a practical value to contemporary readers. To quote Barratt again, “human beings do not find suffering itself intolerable; what they cannot bear is the fear that suffering is meaningless and has no purpose.”⁴⁰

The dialogue form provides a natural and involving context to the author for communicating his message. In the *Boke of Comforte* it is employed to such an extent as to enable the reader to ‘read himself’ into the conversation: the “poore synner” and “Man” practically mirror the contemporary lay reader with his questions and worries, and the ways he gives voice to them.

The generic definition in the third chapter’s *incipit* is a telling one: “a ryght consolatory contemplacyon in fourme of a dyaloge” (F4^v). The dialogue between the “poore synner” and the “blessyd Jhesus” is introduced with a similar phrase: “a deuoute contemplacyon and oreyson” (A2^r). The term “contemplation” meant much to its readers – an audience nourished on such classics as Hilton’s or Love’s works that were circulating in manuscripts among the laity of London⁴¹ well before Wynkyn

36. *CW* 12:10/6–7.

37. *CW* 12:21/2–11.

38. *CW* 12:11/29.

39. Alexandra Barratt, “Introduction,” in *The Book of Tribulation* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1983), 7–37, p. 31.

40. Barratt, p. 31.

41. See the colophon of MS Harley 993: “And so be it delivered and committid from persone to persone, man or womman, as longe as the book endureth,” cited in R. W. Chambers,

printed them. “Contemplation” and “oration” were closely associated, bringing the meditative mind into personal conversation with God. An immediate experience of His reality, however, should start with the contemplative’s self-knowledge. It is only through a humble view of the self that one can reach the vision of the humble Son of God, however hard this may be. Contemplating God in his work of redemption, again, results in another kind of self-denial: the solitary becomes a labourer for the salvation of his fellow creatures.⁴²

Both dialogues observe this pattern, yet the “poore synner” and “Man” start their studies in the hard field of self-knowledge from different stances. Their first lines display this difference between the characters’ initial self-image well.

The poore synner begynneth in saynge deuoutly

O My ryght benygne ryght pyteful & ryght mercyful lorde & redemptour
 Jhesu cryst sone of the ryght sacryd vyrgyn mary sauour of al the worlde. I
 pore synner requyre thee ryght humbly that yt may plese thee to gyue me
 grace and wylte pardon me that I so myserable a synner in suche wyse
 sholde presume as to approche unto the. . . (A2^r)

And so he goes on, in the same verbose, timid mood, hiding his request in the folds of his rhetoric. He is apparently in fear of the divine majesty of “the swete sauour Jhesus hangynge on the crosse,” who, however, presently gives proof of his human temper by asking him back: “What arte thou.”(A2^r) Upon which, the “poore synner” repeats the gist of his former words:

I am a poore myserable synner fallen in to the fylthes myseryes and in fely-
 cytees of synne in peryll and daunger to be dampned eternally if the dethe
 take me in my synnes. (A2^{r-v})

A similarly brief absolution is promptly given, very much in the phrasing of the gospel:

“The Continuity of English Prose from Alfred to More,” in *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas More, knight, sometymes Lord high Chancellor of England, written in the tyme of Queene Marie by Nicholas Harpsfield*, ed. E. V. Hitchcock, EETS or. ser 186 (London: OUP, 1932), xlv-clxxiv, p. cviii.

42. René Tixier, “‘this louely blinde werk’: Contemplation in *The Cloud of Unknowing* and Related Treatises,” in W. F. Pollard & R. Boening (ed.), *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 107–37, pp. 110–115.

Leue leue this drede . . . thou wylte do true penaunce for thy synnes that thou hast commytted and from this day forwarde flee theym and kepe the well that thou fall not in them agayne. (A3^v)

This scene is followed by a meditative conversation on the subject of Christ's suffering, the cause of such ready forgiveness of sins. During the dialogue, the "poore synner" has ample occasion to reflect upon his own self in the mirror of Christ's manhood and perfect love for sinners like him. At times, he is carried away by the fervour of divine love, in the wake of Richard Rolle and Dame Julian of Norwich:

Embrace my herte with thy fyre of charyte and make thou it for to be softe & to melte as the waxe dothe before the fyre and as the snowe doth by the hete and feruour of the sonne. (A6^r)

But his voice is more often low-keyed, his nervous conscience remains tense, his self-image determined by compunction. The contemplated mysteries of the passion - all the while visible to him in its full reality, in the form of Jesus hanging on the cross - remind him of his unworthiness, acknowledged in exclamations like this:

I Poore unhappy replenysshed w carnalyte what shal I do that am arested in al dylectacyons pleasaunces and vaytees worldly and am a slepe in them the whiche sholde folowe the. (C1^r)

The most consolatory part of the dialogue serves to mend his anxious self-image. A turn in the meditation on the "blessyd Jhesus" atonement asserts the "poore synner's" dignity in theological terms:

it putte before thyn eyen th ryght hye pryce of thy redempcyon to the ende that thou mayste knowe the dygnyte and noblesse of the soule & soo esteme not thy soule to be a lyttle thyng . . . all the goodes of the worlde yf they were all of fyne golde yet shoulde they not be comparable unto one soule alonly reasonable. (C4^r)

"Man," the oppressed pupil of "Reason" is a very different character. He opens the conversation with a flood of complaints, a variation on Job's lamentations without Job's righteousness. Since this speech, though beautiful in its rhetoric, is much too long to quote at full length, I will only cite the most interesting passages.

Alas my soule is full of bytternes & of heuynes my spyrite is chased & brennyng / my hert hathe no reste / dysease hardly possesseth me I am set aboute with al ylles . . . for oueral where that I go / pouerte & myserye me

oppresseth & persecuteth in al partyes . . . I haue not mysdone to persone ne contraryed another nor hurted neuerthelesse euery man me chaseth unto the ende & gyueth me blame & dyshonour & in the place of helth I am not comforted of persone . . . the iuste ben put in blame and oppressed by fals wytnesses and uniuste Jugementes. (F4^v–F5^r)

His plaintive outcries are uttered with the full passion and relish of self-pity. Utterly disconsolate, his complaints roll on dressed in the phraseology of the psalms and Job:

Of whome may I demaunde counseyll and ayde whan all the worlde in leuyng charyte forsaketh me & oppresseth & fleeth from me whan I meke me & holde me styll without answer unto myne enemyes yet they be not contente. . . . I haue lost al my godes and am constreyned to begge openlye. there is none that hath pyte on me. I am abhominable unto euery creature. My body is meruaylously tormented and tyrannysed of cruel tyrauntes I am torne of a thousande maner of paynes. . . . O I miserable wherfore was I euer borne of my moder. O dethe whiche I desyre & abyde / wherfore comest thou not to gyue an ende to my trybulacyon & mysery. there is no consolacyon for me / for my dolour is infynyte. (F5^r–^v)

“Man,” in his own eyes, is the innocent victim of undeserved affliction. It is “Reason’s” task to make him aware of the fact that he is “himself the cause of his own harm,”⁴³ by some well-directed admonitions:

Thynke not that thou suffrest this alone & that none hath aduersyte but thou . . . it is impossyble that thou beyng a man sholde be without tastynge the bytternesse of thys worlde. For doloure and heuynesse be commune to al people. . . . knowe & confesse thy synne reknowlege thyne offenses and saye in thys wyse I haue not ben punysshed as I haue deserued. . . . knowe that murmure in trybulacyon prouoketh so moche more the Ire of god agaynste the. . . . Thou arte a detractour a rancour. . . . Consyder the greuoussnesse & inormyte of thy synnes. At the leest whan thou arte beten knowe thy defautes. (F5^v–G1^r)

Ultimately, “Man” is overtaken by the truth of his words:

43. *CW* 12:25/5–6

I unhappy and miserable knowe not what I suffer for my demerytes. . . .
 And I understande not that the Justyce of god correcketh myn iniustyce. O
 reason thou hast shewed it me well thou hast it full wel declared unto me I
 knowe it nowe by the clerely I se that that is euydently & manyfestly. (G1^r)

His complaints are diverted into their proper channel of compunction and penitence:

I am not suffycient for to thynke agayne the nombre Innumerable of my
 cursed synnes. . . . O my teres where be ye / you kepe you in / where be ye
 the fountayne of wepynges / water me with waylynge sprynkel myn eyen
 with teres. . . . There is no offence more greuous than myn. I haue so moche
 offended that in regarde of me there is no man a synner and I excede al
 other. . . . I fere the greate Jugemente of god / the derke Journey / the ryght
 harde Journey full of bytternes. . . . O my god haue pyte on me byfore that I
 dye / byfore that dethe take me / byfore that hell deuour me. (G3^{r-v})

Self-pity dies hard: now he is sorry for himself rather than for his sins, more afraid of the consequences of, than regretful for the offence he gave to God. However, even such an imperfect form of compunction is enough to win Reason's sympathy. He now starts comforting "Man" with an almost uninterrupted torrent of good counsel. His sayings take the form of biblical proverbs, compassing the topics of neighbourly charity, good works, the Seven Deadly Sins and the cardinal virtues, discipline in speech and in mundane matters. An especially fortunate passage is worth quoting, in which "Reason" warns against backbiting:

Bacbyte not the synner but haue compassyon on hym and the defaute that
 thou seest in thy neyghbour fere and doubte leest that it be in thyselve. It is
 a meruaylous greuous synne of detraccyon. And therefore Justely euery crea-
 ture it repreueth and blameth and it is compared unto a hounde. For as the
 maner is of a dogge or of a hounde for to byte & for to bay. In lyke wyse is it
 of the detractour to byte & to rente / whan thou wylte backbyte another
 fyrst beholde thyne owne synnes & yf thou consyder thyselve wel & yf thou
 know it wel. (H1^r)

These words are as crude as the woodcuts decorating the book. But just as the gross figures of the crucifixion did not appear repulsive to readers, such chastising might have been as comfortable as the gentle consolation of the "blessyd Jhesus." There is some even stronger medicament in the treatise on the Seven Deadly Sins. A

considerable part of this chapter is on the various “braunches” of *Pride*, the result of erroneous self-knowledge. The “auctour” offers the considering of this as a cure:

when we be borne and al the tyme of our lyfe we be a vessel full of ordure
dunge and fylth and there springeth nought of all our membres but mys-
schefe and stynke. (D5^r)

Surely no one would think of exalting himself above his fellow-creatures after taking this last bit seriously. Yet such a conception of the corruptible human body is very much in context with a poetic adoration of Christ’s human form and suffering in the first chapter, a brief analysis of which is presented below.

4 “[T]he very knyght the whiche hath made the felde”: The Image of Christ

The “blessyd Jhesus” consoling the “poore synner” is introduced as the “swete sauour Jhesus hangynge on the crosse” (A2^r) – the translation of Gruytrode’s spare Latin ‘crucifixus’. The English phrase is more visual inasmuch as it evokes the setting of the dialogue: the poore synner, like a medieval mystic, is standing before the crucified Christ, contemplating His suffering person while listening to Him and asking several questions. One may think of More’s consideration in *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies*: “Nor these two wordes Christus crucifixus do not so lyuely represent vs the remembraunce of his bytter passyon as doth a blessyd ymage of the crucyfyx.”⁴⁴ In this case, the words themselves (many of which are the English translator’s own contributions) make up the “blessyd ymage” contemplated by the “poore synner” and the reader alike. The image is an attractive and detailed picture of Christ, focused on His humanity, His human anguish, bodily and mental.

The first allegory of Christ bears many references to medieval English devotional imagery. After an impassioned talk on Christ’s passion and mankind’s ingratitude, the “poore synner” breaks into a eulogy:

O Blessyd sauour Jhesus . . . thou arte the very knyght the whiche hath
made the felde and foughten valyauntly and borne awaye the vycory
agaynste the greate and myghty puyssaunt and auntyent enemye of man-

44. *CW* 6: 47/15–17.

kynd the deuyll of helle and hath brought agayne the prysoners the whiche were in his prison. (A5^r)⁴⁵

This image of the Christ-knight has a long-established place in devotional allegory. The most obvious association is *Piers Plowman*:⁴⁶ but such texts as the *Ancrene Riwe* or the *Treatyse of Loue*⁴⁷ (a compilation printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1491–3, closely related to the *Riwe* and the *Chastising of God's Children*) also contain extensive allegories on Christ's battle for man's soul, painting it as a knightly tournament. The "poore synner" is also involved in this imagery: once he refers to himself as the "page and seruant" (C2^r). He is exhorted by the "blessyd Jhesus" with the figurative language of feudal obligations:

It is of necessity that those the whiche bere the token of my crosse in theyr forhedes that they bere also in theyr hertes and also that they lyue stedfastly in the law of hym of whome they bere the armes and the faythe. For he bereth in vayne the tokenes of that souerayne lorde unto whome he wyll not obeye ne be seuante. (C2^v)

He the whiche it [he passion] enprenteth in his herte is hardy and prest to fyght with the deuyll of hell . . . wenyng that he be armed with the armours of his lorde and sauour as a knyght the whyche armeth hym for to entre in to batayll / whan he is armed he is the more hardy and fereth nothyng for he hath euermore his refuge at the standarde of the lorde & prynce of whome he awayteth for to be socoured. (C4^v)

But the "token" of Christ is also used in a context reminiscent of the conventions of courtly love as well as of the *Book of Songs* (8:6):

45. Compare this with the plainer Latin wording: *Dominus es, liberans a diaboli potestate & seruitute* in Bod.Auct.7.Q, A2^r.

46. For a detailed discussion of this image in Langland's poem and its Continental sources and connections see Wilbur Gaffney, "The Allegory of the Christ-Knight in *Piers Plowman*," *PMLA* 46 (1931) 155–69. Gaffney cites numerous French examples of the image; not unusual in a chivalric age, when illustrations of knights and ladies, hunters and battles often decorated noblemen's prayer books and missals. See H. M. Carey, "Devout Literate Laypeople and the Pursuit of the Mixed Life in Late Medieval England," *Journal of Religious History* 14 (1987) 361–81.

47. All parenthesized references are to this edition: *Treatise of Loue*, ed. John H. Fisher, *EETS*, or. ser. 225 (London: OUP, 1951).

Put me nowe as a sygne or as a token aboue thyne herte to the entente that thou mayst loue me with all thyne herte and that thou leue behynde all that thou haste loued ryghte dere. (C3^v)

Another image used by the poore synner is a perfect homage to Christ's divinity: it connects the "blessyd Jhesus" person with the Holy Spirit.

Thou arte the fyre of loue and also of charyte the which arte dyscended downe in to this worlde for to rechafe and enflame those the whiche that ben sore a colde & frosen by slouth and dyuysyon of courage. (A5^{r-v})

As opposed to this, the extended simile with which the "blessyd Jhesus" illustrates his foreknowledge of his suffering draws full attention to his humanity, his human weakness:

As a pylgryme the whiche hathe to passe necessaryly a peryllous passage thynkyng nyght & daye howe he myght best escape it & auoyde the daungers the whiche he fereth to fynd in his passage / & thus hathe he no maner of rest in hymselfe neyther daye nor nyghte / unto the tyme that his pylgrymage and voyage be parfayte and ende in lyke wyse is it of me. (B1^r)

At this point, it becomes difficult to see whether it is the blessyd Jhesus or the poore synner who is in need of consolation. There is a shift of emphasis from the "blessyd Jhesus" divinity to His human fears and sorrows in the imagery, accompanied by changes in His tone when addressing the "poore synner." At times, He speaks in a voice of command:

Nowe take hede unto me & thynke well in thyne herte that that nowe I shall say to the. I wyll be byloued. I wyll that man put his trust in me. I wyll be worshipped and requyred by waylynges and profounde dolour of herte in grete haboundance of teres. (A3^r)

In contrast, He shows an almost humiliating degree of human love, a yearning to be loved and comforted by the "poore synner," like in this wooing:

By my dolorous passyon I haue shewed the quantyte of my loue and of my dyleccyon. Nowe one loue desyreth another loue in suche wyse that he the whyche louethe desyreth for to be bylouyd and there is no greater payne than for to loue & not to be louyd. For one loue doth requyre another. (C3^v)

The value of such great love and longing is enlarged by what Gray calls a “quaint piece of devotional physiology”:⁴⁸ an elaborate description of the “blessyd Jhesus” bodily nobleness, a cause of his extraordinarily great suffering.

Certes it is for the noblesse of my body and of my nature that I haue taken and fourmed of the ryght precyous blode of my holy and sacred moder. Now it is so of as moche as the body is more noble and of the more noble blode in as moche is it the more tender for to suffre. . . . For my body was made and formed as it is sayd in the vyrgynalle wombe of my ryght sacryd moder of her ryght pure and precyous blode and haue souked of the mylke of her precyous brestes plentyfull and full of the grace celestyall in suche wyse that my body was proporcyoned & complexyoned for to lyue without synne or more longly thanne lyued. And bycause of this so stronge complexyon the dethe unto me was so horryble and so paynful and the seperacyon of my soule and also of my body so vyolent. And in as moche as my tender flesshe was all pure and all clene without synne of as moche was it the more passy-ble in these horryble tormentes. (B1^v–B2^v)

Given the preoccupation with the suffering Saviour and the visually oriented piety of the age, I would not call this a “quaint” piece. It is certainly orthodox in its doctrinal content, being virtually a poetic paraphrase of Thomas Aquinas’ “Treatise on the Incarnation” in the *Summa Theologica*. To the *Boke’s* readers such a paraphrase was far from unfamiliar: texts like the *Treatyse of Loue*⁴⁹ contain similar passages. Indeed, the passage in the *Treatyse* is so similar as to make one think whether it may not be textually related to Gruytrode’s dialogue, by a possible com-

48. Gray, p. 215.

49. Consider these lines in the *Treatyse*: “There is noo sorow like vnto my sorowe. And it was noo merueyille, For moche more tender is a yonge clene vyrgyne, Innocent wythout synne, than an olde wretched synner. Now was there neuer a more pure vyrgyne, ne more tender, nor soo clene as was the blessyd pure virgyn mary, the fayre moder of our lorde, Jhesu cryste, of whom he took his humanytee, of the most pure dropes of hyr vyrgynal blood wythout synne and ony substaunce of the humayne seed . . . wherof he was soo tender that there was neuer man nor none other creature that in this worlde dyde suffre soo grete sorowes and so hideous tormentes as dyde our lorde Jhesu cryst in his tender body two&thirty yere duryng, alwaye greuouse & more greuouse.” (63–4). Fisher refers to the corresponding places in the English version of the *Riwle*; for the same in the Latin version, see *The Latin Text of the Ancrene Riwle*, ed. Charlotte D’Evelyn from Merton Coll. MS. 44 and British Museum MS. Cotton Vitellius E vii., EETS or. ser., nr. 216 (London: OUP, 1944), 33–4.

mon source, the *Ancrene Riwe*, which was well known in its French and Latin versions in the Low Countries.⁵⁰

Let us remember the second chapter's strong words on the corruptible human body. For a reader so convinced of his own bodily vileness it was perfectly evident to picture Christ the victorious knight as exempt from sinful mankind's abominable nature. The Son could not have taken upon himself *quite* the same humanity the rest was composed of. Devout readers of the age were well aware of the difference between *body* and *corpus*.

It is difficult to define this colloquium as a dramatic piece or as a meditative prose work. Gray maintains that "the possibilities of the dialogue framework are not fully realized, even within the devotional limits."⁵¹ He does not specify what these possibilities are. But if the give-and-take manner of discussion and the ever-changing, varied tone count as such, they are most fully realized. As for the devotional limits, I would say that they do not as much restrict as define the scope of the conversation, giving ample sphere for poetic imagery and ingenious prose devices. One such device is the use of tenses in the passion narrative. The "blessyd Jhesus," disclosing the secrets of his redemptive work and telling the events of his passion uses the present perfect and the simple past according to a specific scheme: when he refers to his suffering as a finished event of the past, with a specific place in time and place, they are told in simple past:

For whan that the hour of it approached. I swete of grete dystresse in all my membres habundantly the swete of rede blode dystyllynge and rennynge fro my body to the grounde ... consyder the secrete of the payne and dolour the whiche crucifyed me from the wombe of my moder inwardly in my herte whiche was shewed by outwarde tokens and sensybles unto my faythfull frendes *at the houre of my dolorous deth* as it was ordeyned. (A4^v–B2^r)

When the significance and result of these events are in focus, when they are referred to as signs of divine love or causes for human gratitude, the present perfect is used:

I haue ben for you meked and *haue* for you *laboured* upon the erth. I *haue ben* tormented for you. I *haue be* spyt on for you. I *haue ben* beten and scourged for you I *haue ben* unjustly condampned to deth for you. I *haue ben* hanged shamefully and dolorously crucifyed for you. I *haue called* you

50. See Fisher's Introduction to the *Treatyse*, esp. p. xv.

51. Gray, p. 214.

my bretheren. I *haue offred* you to God my fader I *haue sent* you the holy ghost. And also unto hym I *haue opened* the celestyall paradise what sholde I more do than I *haue done* for you. to the entente that I might saue you.

(D1^v)

The translator carries out this method consistently; it is obviously a conscious literary solution. It gives the conversation the character of a liturgical drama, where Christ's sufferings are remembered as part of the biblical past and enlivened as an eternal, never-finished mystery of faith.

Gray justly says that the text "makes full use of the traditional images of devotional literature."⁵² It does indeed display the complete palette of devotion, various tinges of style and tone, reconciling patristic rigour to the affective-meditative spirituality of the early 16th century. In its plenty, it reflects the simple complexity of its readers' thinking. They knew that their souls were more precious than gold, though their bodies were but filth, and they themselves but miserable sinners. They could praise their Saviour in raving words of love and fear him as a terrible judge; they were equally receptive to poetic imagery and homespun lecturing. They were capable of a general confession of their sinfulness by calling themselves a "poore myserable synner," but they preferred referring to the manifold "braunches" of the Seven Deadly Sins when it came to self-examination, to get a more acute view of the state of their consciences.

I tried to select as much from the text's treasures as was possible: what I aimed at was to show that it is a carefully made, valuable work of art, a direct descendent of late medieval English religious prose, preserving a continuity of religious thinking and its literary expression which is immune to the artificially drawn dividers between the centuries. To students of book history and the history of religion, or indeed of literature, the *Boke of Comforte* provides ample material to work upon, and remains as "profytable" to modern scholars as it was to its first readers.

52. Gray, p. 214.

Máté Vince

The Accursed Tongue

In what turns out to be one of his last moments, right after learning from Macduff that the prophecy of the Weird Sisters is finally fulfilled, Macbeth curses the tongue. But why does he direct his anger towards “that” tongue, instead of “thy,” that is, Macduff’s tongue? And why does Macbeth curse the tongue *at all*, instead of Macduff himself? This six-line curse is an inventory of all of Macbeth’s misapprehensions. For his misfortune, he accuses the “juggling fiends” who “palter . . . in a double sense.” This paper is a study into how Macbeth’s *intentional misdeeds* and *mistakes in thinking* become evident in the formulation of his speeches. By examining Macbeth’s metaphors and sentence structures, the paper presents how Macbeth (with the help of his wife and the Weird Sisters) drives himself into more and more impenetrable paradoxes. The last of those being that his death is brought about by his recognising one of his misapprehensions: when he becomes aware of the performative force of words, that recognition kills him, in the form of Macduff’s *accursed tongue*.

1 Introduction

It is a frequent strategy to interpret Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* by way of asking who is responsible for all the horror that happens on the stage during the play. A number of analyses claim that there exists a Fate in *Macbeth*’s world that governs every action. However, where this fate originates from is a much-debated issue. The three most widespread answers are (1) that Fate is supernatural and unalterable, already existing before the action of the play begins, and that it is explicitly described by the Weird Sisters; (2) or that Lady Macbeth and her ambition to be queen push Macbeth to commit all the horrible deeds; (3) or, finally, that there are certain possibilities offered to Macbeth at the beginning of the play, and Macbeth chooses the option he prefers.

In this paper I will argue for the third interpretation. My main point will be that although both the prophecies and Lady Macbeth’s persuasive speeches play an important role in the actions that take place, the outcome in fact depends primarily on the decisions Macbeth makes in accordance with his often paradoxical and self-contradictory interpretations of the words and actions that constitute the world of the play. Macbeth struggles hard to alienate his deeds from himself as if they were

done by somebody else, or even by nobody, which has very characteristic marks in his language usage. The paper will examine how Macbeth's relation to his own (and to others') language is coded in his utterances throughout the play. Macbeth's interpretations will be seen as integral parts of a subtle system. It is assumed that every action is interpreted one way or another during a performance. This, in fact, involves three clearly distinct processes. Firstly, when someone says or does something on stage (that is, when any action takes place), it is interpreted by the other characters, who act according to their interpretations. Secondly, the actions are also understood somehow by the audience. Finally, the members of the audience can compare their interpretation to those of the characters and reflect on what agrees and what differs.

These three processes will be referred to throughout the analysis as providing a ground for the audience's judgment of the characters. "Judgment" (or any word below that is connected to it) is not understood in the moral sense but as an ability to determine whether a character's action is true or false (that is, intended to deceive someone). If the audience is acknowledged to know everything that takes place in the play then it is significant that none of the characters possesses the same amount of knowledge. For instance, in the scene when Duncan's murder is discovered, only the audience knows that the Macbeths are pretending. What makes this scene exciting for the audience is that Macduff and the other lords are deceived, and that the audience knows that they are deceived. This double insight is constantly present for the members of the audience during the time of the performance.

Of course, there are certain actions in the play that even the audience cannot judge as true or false. The most obvious of those is, naturally, the status of the prophecies. But, even though the members of the audience do not know whether the Weird Sisters tell the truth or lie, they are aware of this uncertainty. Consequently, they are able to compare their doubt to the decisions of, for example, Macbeth. In short, it is, on the one hand, *the gap between the knowledge of the audience and of the characters*, and on the other, *the audience's reflection on this gap* that provide the basis for the analysis of the play. The method pursued for identifying what is true and what is false, what action is right and what action is mistaken in the play, is to reflect on the *reflection of the audience*.

Finally, the word "character" needs a brief examination. Harold Bloom at one point of his essay on *Macbeth* claims that "Macbeth consistently says more than he knows, but he also imagines more than he says."¹ On the other hand, Fawcner in his

1. Harold Bloom, "Macbeth," in *Shakespeare: Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998), p. 528.

book argues that the conflict between Macbeth and Duncan is perceived by the spectators as a conflict between their language. The tension is “between language and language, rhetoric and rhetoric.”² More specifically, “Duncan’s language is normally boring and Macbeth’s language is usually not boring,”³ and “Macbeth’s character works to constitute itself by pushing language to its most daring poetic limits, and Duncan’s character works to constitute itself . . . by not, as it were, taking such conspicuous linguistic risks.”⁴ However, somewhat contradictorily, Fawcner also declares that “[t]he spectator . . . does not need to grope for any hidden self behind either Macbeth or Duncan to feel the tension between them. Indeed, the spectator does not even have to grasp them as characters in order to sense the tension of character between them.”⁵ This apparent contradiction can be resolved by taking the language of a character *as* the character itself. It will be thus maintained that there is no character as separate from its language, where language involves the verbal as well as the non-verbal expressions of the characters. It has to be added, though, that the aim of the paper is not to discuss what characters are like (that is, to present them as psychological entities), but to illustrate how their relation to *truth* – what they, and what the members of the audience consider true – mirrored in their language constitutes the dramatic action of the play. Therefore, to understand the mechanisms that drive the play, it is the language of certain characters that needs thorough investigation. To begin with, I will very briefly list some arguments why neither the Weird Sisters, nor Lady Macbeth may be taken as the author of Macbeth’s fate.

2 The Language of the Prophecies: Innocent Misinterpretation?

The future as related by the Weird Sisters is not entirely transparent:

MACBETH Speak, if you can: what are you?
 FIRST WITCH All hail Macbeth, hail to thee, Thane of Glamis.
 SECOND WITCH All hail Macbeth, hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor.
 THIRD WITCH All hail Macbeth, that shalt be King hereafter.
 BANQUO Good sir, why do you start, and seem to fear
 Things that do sound so fair? – I’th’ name of truth,

2. Harald William Fawcner, *Deconstructing Macbeth: The Hyperontological View* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1990), p. 131.

3. Fawcner, p. 132.

4. Fawcner, p. 133.

5. Fawcner, p. 131.

Are ye fantastical, or that indeed
 Which outwardly ye show? . . .
 Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear
 Your favours nor your hate. . . .
 THIRD WITCH Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none:
 So all hail Macbeth and Banquo.
 FIRST WITCH Banquo, and Macbeth, all hail. (I.iii.47–69)⁶

Banquo offers an interpretation of the Weird Sisters' words: what they said implied the *fact* that Macbeth is the Thane of Glamis, that he has become the Thane of Cawdor, and the *hope* of him becoming king (55–56). At this point of the play, there is an important gap between the knowledge of the two warriors on the stage and that of the audience, because the audience knows that Banquo's interpretation is correct (in the sense that it coincides with the inferences the spectators are able to make based on Scene ii). Note that so far it is only Duncan who had any impact on Macbeth's future, and specifically through his words that are thus perceived as acts: "go pronounce his death / And with his former title greet Macbeth" (I.ii.65–66), "He bade me, from him, to call thee Thane of Cawdor" (I.iii.105). All the verbs highlighted are performatives⁷ or perlocutionary acts,⁸ which means that the influence Duncan has on Macbeth's life is located in his words.

However, when the Sisters have finished their speech, Macbeth offers a slightly different interpretation: "to be king / Stands not within the prospect of belief, / No more than to be Cawdor" (I.iii.73–75). By this, Macbeth blurs the frontier between what so far seemed to be *fact* and what appeared as *prediction*. This is possible because he does not recognise the difference in the tenses of each part of the prophecy. The sentence "hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor" refers to the present, whereas "hail . . . that shalt be King hereafter" refers to the future, as "shalt" is most probably used here to indicate a marked future tense.⁹ He puts such things to the same ontological

6. All references are to this edition: Nicholas Brooke ed., *William Shakespeare: Macbeth* (Oxford: OUP, 1990).

7. See, for example, J. L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 6–7.

8. John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 25.

9. *Shall* developed into an auxiliary indicating the future in the Early Modern English period, but in some cases it retained its original meaning of "volition, obligation" (as opposed to *will*). As an auxiliary, *shall* was the marked case in the third person singular. Cf. Matti

level that in fact are on three different levels, which is obviously seen as a misinterpretation by the audience. The first level is the title of Glamis, which he had had since his father's death. The second is the title of Cawdor, which he has already gained, although he is not aware of it yet. Finally, the third level is becoming a king, which is mentioned in future tense by the Sisters, even emphasised by "hereafter." It is only a possibility, something that bears the potential to become a fact, that is, it has not yet become a fact, as opposed to the other two.

Somewhat later comes the confirmation: Ross and Angus announce that Duncan has declared Macbeth the Thane of Cawdor. Here, while Banquo tries to conceal¹⁰ from his "cousins" that Macbeth is "rapt," Macbeth tries to give his own interpretation of the prophecy to himself:

Two truths are told,¹¹
 As happy prologues to the swelling act
 Of the imperial theme. — I thank you, gentlemen —
 This supernatural soliciting
 Cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill,
 Why hath it given me earnest of success,
 Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor:
 If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
 Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
 And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
 Against the use of nature? Present fears
 Are less than horrible imaginings:
 My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
 Shakes so my single state of man, that function
 is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
 But what is not.¹²

Rissanen, "Syntax," in *The Cambridge History of the English Language III, 1476–1726*, ed. Roger Lass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 187–331, pp. 210–211.

10. Banquo here seems to be a silent accomplice to Macbeth's future deeds, just like when, according to Arthur F. Kinney, he remains silent about the witches and their prophecies despite his frightening presentiments (II.i.1–30). See Arthur F. Kinney, "Macbeth's Knowledge," in *Shakespeare Survey 57* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11–26, p. 20.

11. If Brooke's note is accepted that this half line completes Banquo's "In deepest consequence" then the order of uttering Banquo's next line (128) and Macbeth's may not coincide with the order the lines are printed in a book.

If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me,
Without my stir. . . .

Come what come may,
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day. (I.iii.127/8–148)

At the beginning of the monologue he recognises that only his first two titles are facts. However, in line 131 he calls the prophecy “supernatural soliciting.” Brooke glosses *soliciting* as “incite, allure” which meanings are weaker than the present day usage of the word as “to urge sy to do sg, to persuade sy to some act of lawlessness, to draw on, to tempt” (*Oxford English Dictionary*), but still stronger than what actually happened. The Sisters told “truths” and “predictions,” but nothing they said so far had anything compelling, demanding or provoking in them: their words were only claims. But this is the starting point for the belief that Macbeth will stick to throughout the whole play: he begins to convince himself that anything he will do in the future is “incited” by the Weird Sisters, who are, in addition, “supernatural.” He persuades himself that what he foresees at this point is his Fate, and not his own actions.

From this point on, accordingly, Macbeth believes he is only a passive executor, “a walking shadow, a poor player.” It is only Macbeth and Lady Macbeth (I.v.29–30) who want to deceive themselves and the audience by supposing the existence of Fate. As Wilbour Sanders points out, the prophecies are in themselves powerless to fulfil what they predict, but Macbeth literally gives them a hand. Yet, his attitude is “equivocal” towards the prophecies: “in so far as he acts, he takes the future on his shoulders and undertakes to create it, thus becoming the accomplice, or even the master of his fate; yet he persists in regarding the future as pre-ordained and Fate as his master.”¹³

In one sense, though, Macbeth is right. The part of the sentence “chance may crown me, / Without my stir” can be a fairly exact paraphrase of the Weird Sisters’ “All hail Macbeth, that shalt be King hereafter.” At this point he does not want to decide whether he has to do anything to become a king, or it will fall in his lap. How-

12. Kenneth Muir’s different lineations (William Shakespeare: *Macbeth*, The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare, ed. Kenneth Muir [London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1979]): “good: – / If ill, why. . .”; “state of man / That function is smother’d in surmise, / And nothing is, but what is not.”

13. Wilbour Sanders, *The Dramatist and the Received Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 280–281; quoted in William O. Scott, “Macbeth’s – and Our – Self-Equivocations,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 37.2 (Washington, 1986) 160–174, p. 172.

ever, there is yet another disturbing sentence: “Give me your favour: my dull brain was wrought / With things forgotten.” (I.iii.150–151). Many critics discussed whether Macbeth is simply lying here (as it was only minutes ago he got the prophecy), or whether he tells the very truth (that is, he has already thought about becoming king before the prophecy).¹⁴ From the point of view of the present analysis that question is irrelevant, because both of the possibilities lead to the same consequence. If he is lying, it means that he recognised a new ambition in himself, the thought of murdering the king (“My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical” probably refers to that), and the lie serves to hide this from the other characters. If he is telling the truth, on the other hand, it only means that he has had that ambition earlier as well. As Knight argues, “[t]his is the moment of the birth of evil in Macbeth – he may indeed have had ambitious thoughts before, may even have intended the murder, but now for the first time he feels its oncoming reality.”¹⁵ What shows an important insight in Knight’s sentence is “may”: whether he thought of it earlier or not, Macbeth reveals the inclination to kill Duncan to himself and to the audience at this point. The inclination comes to life here, simply by being uttered.

It should be added, though, that it is also an important information for the audience that Macbeth thinks his inclination originates from the Weird Sisters. Fawcner compares the Weird Sisters’ scene to a long distance telephone call, to make it clear how the murderous thoughts may be occasioned by the Weird Sisters *and* nevertheless be Macbeth’s responsibility.

The Weird Sisters have called Macbeth, called him up, and he has answered, saying (as we often do on the phone) “yes (?)” But by pronouncing this “yes,” which is at once an answer and *not* an answer (an absent answer, a mere recognition of attentiveness), Macbeth has already opened himself up to the risk of the call. To the calling. This calling that calls him through the call *connects* Macbeth to the call/calling, but also to what is absent in the call, what, already, is absence in it (for instance “Macbeth,” the word “Macbeth” as the Weird sisters sound it, speak it, call it).¹⁶

14. See, for instance, Muir’s note on line 151; S. T. Coleridge from *Remains*, in Jonathan Bate ed., *The Romantics on Shakespeare* (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 417; Kállay Géza, *Nem puszta kép* (Budapest: Liget, 2002), pp. 137–139.

15. G. Wilson Knight “*Macbeth* and the Metaphysic of Evil,” in *The Wheel of Fire* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 174. Cited by Muir in note on lines 130–131.

16. Fawcner, pp. 29–30.

István Géher lays more emphasis on the hero's part when he observes that Macbeth has neither ruler nor enemy, it is only him who exists in his world, and he hears and sees only *himself* in the Weird Sisters.¹⁷ As Harold Bloom very similarly concludes: the Weird Sisters “come to him because preternaturally they know him: he is not so much theirs as they are his. This is not to deny their reality apart from him, but only to indicate again that he has more explicit power over them than they manifest in regard to him.”¹⁸

3 The Language of Lady Macbeth: Lost in Rhetoric

Many critics go even as far as blaming Macbeth's deeds entirely on Lady Macbeth, arguing that it was her ambition that induced Macbeth to become a villain. Two very typical examples are August Wilhelm von Schlegel, who took Lady Macbeth for temptation embodied,¹⁹ and Booth who explained why the audience sympathises with Macbeth by interpreting the conversation in I.vii. as a proof for Macbeth still remaining “noble” while he is driven to the act by Lady Macbeth's eloquence that is “too much for him.”²⁰

At her first appearance, Lady Macbeth provides a dramatised version of the interpretative process which his husband is unwilling to perform. She is first seen reading Macbeth's letter relating the happy news to his “dearest partner of greatness” (I.v.1–30). She does not get confused with tenses, she does not mistake *promise* for *fact*, instead she outlines the situation clearly: “Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be / What thou art promised” (I.v.14–15). She even comprehends that Macbeth may have murder in his mind, that is why she says, a little startled, “and shalt be what thou art promised” instead of, say, “and shalt be King.”²¹ However, Lady Macbeth knows that his husband will need reinforcement (I.v.21–22), therefore, she decides to help him:

Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,

17. István Géher, *Shakespeare-olvasókönyv* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi Könyvkiadó – Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1991), p. 239.

18. Bloom, p. 532

19. A. W. von Schlegel, “From Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature,” in Bate, p. 411.

20. Wayne Booth, “Shakespeare's Tragic Hero,” in *Shakespeare's Tragedies. An Anthology of Modern Criticism*, ed. Laurence Lerner (London, Penguin Books Ltd, 1968), pp. 182–183.

21. Cf. Muir's note on line I.v.15.

And chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round. . . (I.v.24–27)

She is entirely aware of the power of her words. Unlike Macbeth, she knows that her spirits are linked to her utterances, and that she can affect Macbeth by her words. But what kind of spirits is she talking about? It takes only another fourteen lines for her to use the word again, this time in a curse-like invocation:

Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe, top-full
Of direst cruelty. . . .
Come to my woman's breasts
And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,
Wherever, in your sightless substances,
You wait on nature's mischief! (I.v.39–49)

She charms herself in preparation to charm her husband when he arrives at the castle. However, this is rather a self-curse, and, more importantly, this is the first sign of the brutal imagery that is so typical of Lady Macbeth's speeches. They are heavily metaphorical and paradoxical, which she will later use to raise the "illness" in Macbeth that according to her should accompany ambition.

The formulation of her paradoxes and oxymorons in Macbeth's description "[thou] wouldst not play false / And yet wouldst wrongly win" (I.v.20–21), "[thou'dst have] that which rather thou dost fear to do, / Than wishest should be undone" (I.v.23–24) resemble her arguments to Macbeth before murdering Duncan: "O never / Shall sun that morrow see" (I.v.59–60).

Art thou afeard
To be the same in thine own act and valour
As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem.
.....
Nor time nor place
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both —
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
Does unmake you. (I.vii.39–54)

She decides to give up her own womanhood to be able to help Macbeth (“unsex me . . . come to my woman’s breasts and take my milk for gall”). Her almost last argument before murdering Duncan is probably the wildest sentence in the whole play:

I have given suck, and know
 How tender ‘tis to love the babe that milks me;
 I would, while it was smiling in my face,
 Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums,
 And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn
 As you have done to this. (I.vii.54–59)

This is the most obvious example for the way Lady Macbeth uses her speeches to persuade Macbeth: not through his intellect but his irrationality, exploiting the defect in Macbeth’s character that he sometimes acts without proper reflection.

Lady Macbeth’s overwhelming rhetoric succeeds:²² she at last manages to persuade her husband to kill Duncan and thus it is a plausible argument that she is an even greater temptation than the Weird Sisters. This, however, might turn out to be a hasty conclusion. Lady Macbeth uses her tongue to persuade her husband to kill Duncan, but she has no hand (or tongue) in the other murders – except for Duncan’s guards. Not even in the murder of Banquo: when for his husband’s newest concern she says that “in them [Banquo and Fleance] nature’s copy’s not eterne” (III.ii.41), Macbeth has already arranged for their murder. In the remaining part of the play, Lady Macbeth does not have to persuade her husband to do anything, because he acts on his own.

In judging Lady Macbeth’s role in Macbeth’s fate, it is important to determine how the concept “tragic fault” may be applied to *Macbeth*. In a traditional Aristotelian point of view, Macbeth commits an irrevocable mistake when he transgresses the moral laws and kills Duncan, and as a consequence he has to be punished in the end to restore moral order into the world. If the play is perceived that way, then Lady Macbeth bears the greatest responsibility for the tragic events, as she makes Macbeth do the deed through her rhetoric skill. However, as Mack argued, *Macbeth* in fact incorporates two plays. One play “is the familiar morality of crime and punishment; . . . [it] involves . . . an idealized order of kingship, embodied in Duncan, which is attacked and destroyed by the villain-hero.”²³ This is, however, the point of view of

22. Booth, p. 189.

23. Maynard Mack, Jr, “The Voice in the Sword,” in *Killing the King. Three Studies in Shakespeare’s Tragic Structure* (London: Yale University Press, 1973), 138–185, p. 149.

the “secondary males” of the play, who are “wrapped in common greyness,”²⁴ namely Duncan, Malcolm, Macduff and the rest of the lords. Their judgment does not necessarily coincide with that of the audience: “Macbeth is a tragedy only for the audience; for the surviving characters it seems to remain a history.”²⁵ The “dead butcher, and his fiend-like Queen” (V.vii.99), as Malcolm labels the Macbeths, seems to tell us more about the restorers of the moral order than about its disturbers – if there ever existed any. “This is their *Macbeth*; it is not quite ours,” declares Mack.²⁶

On the other hand it seems another plausible interpretation that the wrong decision (not in any moral sense though) was in fact to murder Banquo and to attempt the murder of Fleance. That decision, however, was entirely made by Macbeth alone. Cleanth Brooks argued that “his murder of Duncan, and the plan – as outlined by Lady Macbeth – has been relatively successful. The road turns to disaster only when Macbeth decides to murder Banquo.”²⁷ When Macbeth killed Duncan, he acted in accordance with one possible interpretation of the prophecy. It was promised to him that he will become king, and he only facilitated the fulfilment. But when he attacks Banquo and Fleance, he wants to alter the future against the prophecy.²⁸ As Carol Chillington Rutter formulated: “Macbeth wants both to possess the future – the one the Weird Sisters ‘gave’ him – and to destroy it – the one they ‘promised’ to Banquo.”²⁹ This is paradoxical since he regards the prophecies as *truths*, he believes that fate is already *written*, but he tries to alter it, and he does not even reflect on this contradiction. Though Lady Macbeth undeniably plays an important role in killing Duncan, it seems possible to acquit her, at least partly, of the charge that she is the fourth witch who drew Macbeth to the deed, as some argued, “against will and conscience.”³⁰

24. Bloom, p. 517.

25. Mack, p. 184.

26. Mack, p. 156.

27. Cleanth Brooks, “The Naked Babe and the Cloak of Manliness,” in *The Well-Wrought Urn* (New York: Harper & Row, 1947), p. 32.

28. Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare’s Language* (London: Allen Lane & The Penguin Press, 2000), p. 203.

29. Carol Chillington Rutter, “Remind Me: How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?” in *Shakespeare Survey* 57, pp. 38–53, p. 39.

30. Quiller-Couch, “Shakespeare’s Workmanship (Selected parts from Chapters I & II),” in Lerner, p. 178.

4 The Language of Macbeth — Self-deception

4.1 Inconsistency

As it was argued in the previous two chapters, neither Lady Macbeth's nor the Weird Sisters' power is sufficient to stage such a tragedy as *Macbeth*. It has to be Macbeth then who produces the monstrosity that almost every critic talks of as incomparable to anything.³¹ Therefore, the claim to be developed here is that Macbeth fails during the process of interpretation, and that this is observable by examining his language, that is, *what* he says and *how* he says it.

Macbeth attempts to interpret of the first prophecy. However, this he seems to do only because he notices his strange involuntary (bodily) behaviour,³² which means that the thought of murder is already there in him *before* the reflection (although perhaps *after* the prophecy). Nevertheless, he mentions not just one possible explanation of the prophecy: he doubts whether he has to fulfil it, or it will become true anyway. But by the time he meets his wife, he has already decided on the meaning – he should kill Duncan: “Stars hide your fires, / . . . let that be / Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see” (I.iv.51–54).

The next time he deals with the prophecy is when he orders the murder of Banquo and Fleance. Here, he does not recognise the paradoxical behaviour he gets himself into: even though, by now, he believes that three truths have been told by the Weird Sisters, that is, he thinks that everything the Weird Sisters said *is true* and *must come true*, he also thinks he can change the fourth “truth.” Nevertheless, the Sisters did not make such a distinction between the parts of the prophecy that would suggest that the last bit is “less true” than the others. As Palmer pointed it out: “Having murdered because of his faith in prophecy, it is hardly consistent of Macbeth to believe that another murder will undo prophecy.”³³ This “inconsistency” is the first step in making the play his own, instead of leaving it to be that of the Weird Sisters or Lady Macbeth. This was the first choice he has made entirely on his own.

31. Cf. “most terrifying of Shakespeare’s plays” (Bloom, p. 532), or “No words can quite describe the hard, sombre mood of the ending of this play” (Mack, p.184), and innumerable such instances.

32. D. J. Palmer, “The Self-Awareness of the Tragic Hero,” in *Shakespearean Tragedy: Stratford-upon-Avon Studies* 20 (1984) 129–157, p. 150.

33. Palmer, p. 154.

4.2 Prejudice

Macbeth employs some method to choose between the possible interpretations, but the audience does not see that. In fact, he chooses the interpretation that seems best for his advancement. When, however, he gets the second package of prophecies, the audience sees his process of interpretation at work directly, as this scene is built up of the alternating sequence of short pieces of prophecies and Macbeth's explanations of them.

The First Apparition is not in the least enigmatic: he warns Macbeth to be cautious with Macduff. This Macbeth understands immediately. Or does he, rather, interpret it according to some prejudice he already had in mind? It is clear, on the one hand, that the first apparition is aware of what Macbeth is thinking about: "He knows thy thought: / Hear his speech, but say thou nought" (IV.i.83–84). On the other hand, the line "Thou hast harped my fear aright" (IV.i.88) indicates that he wanted to get rid of Macduff anyway, just in case he had been up to something. So it seems he does not get the idea of eliminating Macduff from the prophecy, he is only reinforced by it. This will become even more obvious when looking at the Second Apparition's admonition and Macbeth's ensuing interpretation: "Be bloody, bold, and resolute: laugh to scorn / The power of man; for none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth. . ." (IV.i.93–95).

This is the prophecy with which Macbeth confuses himself the most. His first reaction is relief: he does not have to be alarmed by Macduff; which means that he does not give a thought to the possibility that maybe Macduff is a "man" "not of woman born." If, however, the first two pieces of the prophecy are interpreted this way, there is a contradiction between them, which Macbeth does not recognise. Moreover, he then changes his mind: he will kill Macduff regardless of what the prophecy suggests. Consequently he will do what he wanted to do even before visiting the Weird Sisters.

Then, Macbeth's response to the prophecy of the Third Apparition comes again from his pre-set ideas: it "will never" happen that "Great Birnam Wood to Dunsin Hill" comes against him. Just like in the case of the difference between the First and the Second Apparition's prophecies, Macbeth disregards an alarming clue again: the branch in the Third Apparition's hand, which is a visual synecdoche³⁴ to warn Macbeth that what the apparition prophesies may become true.³⁵

34. Richard C. McCoy, "'The Grace of Grace' and Double-Talk in *Macbeth*," in *Shakespeare Survey* 57, 27–37, p. 32.

35. Mack, pp. 172–173.

The last piece of prophecy, the show of Banquo with his heirs, is provoked by Macbeth. When he has explained this prophecy to the audience, he asks Hecate if it is true. After Hecate's positive answer Macbeth curses the hour when he was told his future, instead of considering whether all he saw was true. If he had done so, and had come to the conclusion that he had to believe in the prophecy (that is, such a thing as prophecy might exist at all), then two possible inferences would have remained. One is that there is nothing he can do: what he saw and heard *is* his fate. The other possibility is to view the prophecy as being false, and to maintain he has a chance for some other future. It is only later, at the very end, when it turns out that he chose a third option: everything he saw and heard was true and should necessarily happen, nevertheless he will try to change the future.

4.3 Distancing

Macbeth's decisions and actions are not only (mis)guided by others who use language to influence him, but by himself as well. The consequence of mixing up future with present and promise with fact (concerning the first prophecy), or truth with goodness³⁶ is that he does not recognise how mechanisms work in the world of the play. He does not see, and does not *want* to see that things do not *happen to him* but *are done by him*. Many of his soliloquies and monologues are struggles to hide the truth from himself; as he puts it: "Let . . . / *The eye wink at the hand*" (I.iv.52–53). He wishes his hands could gain the crown without his intellect knowing about it. Macbeth's strategy to survive and to fulfil his desires is alienation: he creates a distance between his deeds and himself, between his deeds and his words.

Braunmuller³⁷ and Everett³⁸ alike talk about Macbeth's usage of language concerning the murders as *euphemistic*. Macbeth tends to apply impersonal and passive structures, and the definite article "the" instead of personal pronouns when he talks about himself, and he not only does so in the presence of others, but even when nobody else hears him; consequently these tactics do not serve for deceiving the other

36. Consider, for instance, the "traditional association of truth with good" (Scott, p. 163) in cases like "This supernatural soliciting / Cannot be ill, cannot be good" (I.iii.131–132).

37. A. R. Braunmuller, "What do you mean?": The Languages of *Macbeth*," in William Shakespeare: *Macbeth: an authoritative text, sources and contexts, criticism*, Norton Critical Edition, ed. Robert S. Miola (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 316–328, p. 322.

38. Barbara Everett, *Young Hamlet: Essays on Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 97–98.

characters, but himself. In one of the most famous soliloquies Macbeth, talking of the murder he considers to commit, uses a very typical language:

If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well
 It were done quickly; if th'assassination
 Could trammel up the consequence and catch
 With his surcease, success; that but this blow
 Might be the be-all and the end-all — here,
 But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
 We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases,
 We still have judgement here, that we but teach
 Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
 To plague th'inventor. This even-handed justice
 Commends th'ingredience of our poison'd chalice
 To our own lips. He's here in double trust:
 First, as I am his kinsman, and his subject,
 Strong both against the deed; then, as his host
 Who should against his murderer shut the door,
 Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
 Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
 So clear in his great office, that his virtues
 Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd, against
 The deep damnation of his taking-off;
 And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
 Striding the blast, or Heaven's cherubim, horsed
 Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
 Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye
 That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur
 To prick the sides of my intent, but only
 Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
 And falls on th'other —

(I.vii.1–28)

In lines 1–2 Macbeth uses a passive structure with the subject “it” which stands in fact for “murder,” referring to Macbeth’s future deed. In lines 2–4 the active sentence has “th’assassination” for subject which in fact is not just committed in general as “the” suggests, but committed by *him*. In lines 4–5, “this blow” stands for “the blow *I* will make [with *my* dagger].” From line 6 to 12, the subject is the First Person Plural “we” which might suggest that he is talking as if he were king already, or, in

another interpretation, these lines reveal his fears about the future. But by using “we” as a general subject (involving the audience as well) he implies that these things could happen to anyone in such a situation. Why he is wrong here is that most of the people (in the world of the play, and outside it, among the audience) do not get involved in such a situation he is considering here. This is, of course, also a recurring phenomenon throughout the play. As Everett puts it: “His magnificent reasonings never encounter the one simple fact why most human beings do not commit murder.”³⁹

From line 12, Macbeth describes Duncan’s situation: the subject becomes “he” (i.e. Duncan), which attracts “I” for the first time in the soliloquy (lines 13–14), “[me] as his host” (lines 14–16) and “myself” (line 16), as well as “his” (lines 13, 14, 15). The subject switches back to “Duncan” in line 16, which is followed in the subordinate clause by the abstract noun phrase “his virtues” as the subject (lines 18–20). In lines 21–22 the clause, which is co-ordinated either with the previous one (“that his virtues will”), or with “this Duncan,” has an even more abstract noun as subject: “pity.” While it was still possible to relate “virtue” to Duncan (the personal pronoun “his” also suggested that), “pity,” in Muir’s edition with a capital *P*, is at a significant distance even from Duncan, while it serves as a stepping stone to evoke “Heaven’s cherubim” in lines 22–23. But however apocalyptic that vision may sound, it is very far from the starting point “If it were done. . .” “Damnation” might be on the one hand terrifying to hear, but on the other hand it helps to forget about the present deed. Although the subject of the main clause of the sentence that ends the soliloquy is “I” again, the verb phrase is “have no spur” whose noun is complemented by a phrase with “my intent.” In line 26 the main clause is continued by a co-ordinating clause which has “ambition” corresponding to “spur.” “Ambition” is then extended with “o’erleaps *itself*” and “falls on *th’other*,” which has the consequence that the original subject “I” is practically forgotten. This soliloquy deserved to be quoted in full and analysed so thoroughly, because it clearly shows Macbeth’s tendency “to deceive not only heaven but himself,”⁴⁰ where heaven could stand for the audience. “The passive voice tries to make the nameless act of the hand as impersonal as a deed fated by prophecy,”⁴¹ in order that Macbeth could convince himself that he is *not* the main character, the hero of the play.

There is further evidence in the play that Macbeth would like to distance himself from his actions, as Mangan argues.⁴² Mangan mentions three examples for the dis-

39. Everett, p. 94.

40. Scott, p. 164.

41. Scott, p. 164.

42. Michael Mangan, “Macbeth,” in *A Preface to Shakespeare’s Tragedies* (London & New York: Longman, 1991), p. 201.

tancing. The first of them is “Let . . . / The eye wink at the hand” (I.iv.52–53), already quoted above. The second: “To know my deed, ’twere best not know myself” (II.ii.72). And, finally, that to Banquo’s ghost Macbeth says: “Thou canst not say I did it” (III.iv.50). However, there are other examples to be noted here. When Macbeth learns that he is really the new Thane of Cawdor, he reminds Banquo: “When those that gave the Thane of Cawdor to me / Promis’d no less to them [=Banquo’s children]” (I.iii.120–121). As it was argued above, Macbeth attributes the action by which he became the Thane of Cawdor to the Weird Sisters, whereas it was actually Duncan who appointed him. The Sisters only told him something that has taken place previously and that the audience has known already. However, not even this interpretation is exact. Neither the Weird Sisters nor Duncan did just give him the title out of benevolence, but actually he deserved it by fighting down the rebels. Thus, those two lines are other instances of Macbeth’s struggle to exclude himself from the events of the play.

Muir also talks about the gap between desire and performance, and as an example quotes a passage where “the bloodstained hand is no longer Macbeth’s but Night’s”:⁴³

Come, seeling night,
 Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day;
 And with thy bloody and invisible hand
 Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond
 Which keeps me pale. (III.ii.49–53)

It comes as no surprise that Duncan’s murder is also preceded by Macbeth’s attempt to convince himself and the audience that the murder is not done by him but by supernatural forces. In this, his behaviour is very similar to the earlier one when he distanced his (then only future) deeds from himself by claiming that they were “solicited” with compelling force by the Weird Sisters. Thus, Duncan is, again, summoned to death by superhuman forces: “I go, and it is done: the bell invites me, / Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell / That summons thee to Heaven or to Hell” (II.i.63–65).

It is the distancing carried out by involving the bell in the murder that leads to the next point, the Dagger-monologue. Muir refers to Lawrence W. Hyman who in connection with the Dagger-monologue, in Muir’s words, claims that “Macbeth is

43. Kenneth Muir, “Image and Symbol in ‘Macbeth,’” in *Shakespeare Survey 19* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 53.

able to do the murder only because of the deep division between his head and his hand.”⁴⁴ Despite the fact that, examining the Dagger-monologue from a different aspect, much debate has taken place to find out whether the dagger should or should not be present on the stage, and be visible to the audience,⁴⁵ this question will be disregarded, because from the following respect it has no relevance.

The focus of interest in the monologue is: “Thou marshall’st me the way that I was going, / And such an instrument I was to use.” (II.i.43–44). Macbeth here claims that the dagger knows *how* and *what* he wants to do, and that the dagger leads him exactly the right way to do it. This is clearly only *his* interpretation, something *he* attributes to the dagger. Fawkner claims: “the dagger shows Macbeth the way, but it is of course Macbeth who is showing Macbeth the way.” Fawkner is not only playing with words when he mentions two Macbeths: one of them is the fearless extrovert warrior who defeated the rebels, the other is the introvert “servant of metaphysical truth” made fearful by the Weird Sisters and domesticated by Lady Macbeth.⁴⁶ The latter is intimidated by the gap between the “truth” he sees and the “truth” that is told by the Weird Sister. This Macbeth is the one that decides on killing Duncan, because he hopes that through the physical horror of the murder, the metaphysical (“universal”) horror will disappear.⁴⁷ The Dagger-monologue is important in Fawkner’s analysis exactly from this aspect: it shows the two Macbeths coexisting, the one obsessed with finding “truth” showing the way to the other who lost it, but who might be able to regain it.⁴⁸ This somewhat psychological explanation is efficient in giving a suggestive picture of the inner paradoxes that govern Macbeth, but conceals the fact that there is only one Macbeth. The two sides of Macbeth, as Fawkner claims, cannot be interpreted or recognised without one another,⁴⁹ therefore the tension of the Dagger-monologue lies in their paradoxical coexistence in one body. Thus, the air-drawn dagger interpreted as one Macbeth leading the other, is rather seen as an attempt of Macbeth to create an accomplice for himself to remove at least part of the responsibility

44. Muir, “Image and Symbol,” p. 53. Muir paraphrases parts of Lawrence W. Hyman’s essay in *Tennessee Studies* (1960).

45. Brooke, Introduction, p. 4; Muir’s note on line II.i.33; Mangan, p. 202; Mack, pp. 143–144; Kállay, pp. 87–118; The latter gives a brief overview of the handling of this question in the secondary literature at pp. 89–91.

46. Fawkner, pp. 155–156.

47. Fawkner, p. 99.

48. Fawkner, pp. 96–97.

49. Fawkner, p. 176.

from his shoulders, which places this monologue as well in the group of the means of distancing.

As it has been shown, Macbeth needs the self-deceiving strategy that was called distancing so that he should not have to face the paradoxes he produces, and which he cannot avoid facing in the end. Fawkner, too, considers a strategy which partly coincides with distancing as one of the most important dramatic features in the play, but calls it “rationalization”:

Yet if we interpret all of Macbeth in terms of “power,” we risk creating precisely the kind of self-deception that Macbeth learns to develop in our play. Macbeth is from the outset not motivated by “power” at all . . . but he gradually learns to rationalize his dilemma using “power” as an explanation.⁵⁰

The first point in the drama when this “rationalization” or distancing is set into motion is, of course, when Macbeth calls the prophecy “soliciting.”

4.4 Cursing the Tongue

The pieces of evidence that have been quoted so far may already have been quite convincing in suggesting that it is Macbeth’s way of interpreting the surrounding world that creates the paradoxes governing his actions. However, the speech that makes this statement clear in the most striking way is his six-line exclamation at the end of the play (V.vii.47–52).⁵¹

The last steps leading up to this curse also bear some interesting traits. In Macbeth’s last speeches, there is a constant wavering in how he perceives the world around him. Before the siege he seems to regain his warrior self that he has lost at the first interaction with the Weird Sisters and which seemed to have expired in him during his “incarceration” by Lady Macbeth’s “domesticating power.”⁵² He returns to the stage after a long absence: during that time the audience has witnessed the murder of the Macduff family, represented as the cruellest among all done by Macbeth; they saw the longest scene of equivocation, between Malcolm and Macduff; and finally Lady Macbeth’s last mad appearance. Macbeth now “cannot taint with fear” (V.iii.3), the only thing that makes him outraged is when somebody wants to *tell* something to him. “Bring me no more reports,” he orders his servants (V.iii.1). But his energy seems to sink into despair in a second when the death of Lady Macbeth is

50. Fawkner, p. 40.

51. Muir’s note on V.viii.17–22.

52. Fawkner, p. 156.

announced. He is converted into “the spokesman of all despairs”⁵³ and seems to scorn life as value- and pointless:

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing. (V.v.24–28)

This reminds the spectator of the former Thane of Cawdor's noble last minutes (I.iv.8–11).

However, to the sound of a new messenger he regains his power and fury, and he rightly anticipates that it has serious consequences when the servant comes “to use his tongue.” The prophecy appears in a new light for Macbeth:

I pull in resolution, and begin
To doubt th'equivocation of the fiend
That lies like truth. “Fear not, till Birnam wood
Do come to Dunsinan,” and now a wood
Comes toward Dunsinan. (V.v.42–46)

He recognises that there is no way out from the paradox of this situation (“There is nor flying hence, nor tarrying here” – V.v.48), but he tries to fight against his “Fate,” the “equivocation of the fiend / that lies like truth,” again. He is not afraid of anything anymore until he faces Macduff's sword. Indeed, it is not just any sword “Brandished by man that's of a woman born” (V.vii.17), it has the only thing in it that Macbeth has to be afraid of: “I have no words, / *My voice* is in my sword,” Macduff announces (V.vii.36–37).

This is how the audience and the characters arrive at Macbeth's last two speeches. As anticipated above, one key to understanding the play is Macbeth's immediate reaction to the fulfilment of what he would call his Fate:

Accursèd be that tongue that tells me so,
For it hath cowed my better part of man;
And be these juggling fiends no more believed,
That palter with us in a double sense,
That keep the word of promise to our ear
And break it to our hope. I'll not fight with thee. (V.vii.47–52)

53. Mack, p. 181.

It is probably not very surprising even at a superficial consideration that this should be the most dense and powerful passage of the tragedy: even Aristotle would be content with this speech, because this is exactly what he calls *anagnorisis*. The extreme power of the text here stems from the way misinterpretation, lack of reflection, paradoxical metaphors and thinking and distancing is concentrated into only six lines.

When Macbeth curses the tongue, he in fact curses the speeches that he feels were leading him on his way up to now. He seems to recognise that words can sometimes cause actions directly, something his wife was always conscious of, and that they can even be actions themselves. Macbeth is made Thane of Cawdor simply by Duncan's announcement, that is, the king's word worked as an action (as a perlocutionary act) at the same time.

There are further cases that demonstrate the power of words. Turning now to the instances where Macbeth's speeches are involved, one obvious example is that Banquo is murdered at Macbeth's *order*. Later, when Banquo's ghost appears at the supper, Macbeth desperately cries: "Thou canst not say, I did it" (III.iv.50). This is not just a simple lie (as it may appear at first glance), because obviously Macbeth did not kill Banquo with his own hands, but with his words; therefore the line is another example of distancing, by which Macbeth pretends that only physical action can be considered a "deed." Still in the banquet-scene, Banquo's ghost keeps appearing and disappearing. What is remarkable in this scene is the fact that the ghost always appears as soon as Macbeth mentions Banquo's name. As a consequence, the audience associates the ghost's entries with the name being uttered, like in an ancient invocation ceremony. However, the most striking illustration for the power of words is Macbeth's death. When Macduff says to Macbeth:

Despair thy charm;
And let the angel whom thou still hast served
Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb
Untimely ripped. (V.vii.43–46)

Macbeth understands he has lost the battle. This information "brings Macbeth face to face with his assassin instead of the proclaimed loser."⁵⁴ It is exactly at this moment that he recognises the power of words, and when he finally decides to fight with Macduff, he is sure he will die. Therefore, it would be more accurate to say that

54. Iván Nyusztay, *Myth, Telos, Identity: The Tragic Schema in Greek and Shakespearean Drama* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 140–141.

Macbeth is dead from the time of Macduff's announcement. So, probably it is not even Macduff's sword that kills him, but his words. (Ironically, Macduff uses distancing and de-personalising in this speech in a similar way as Macbeth.)

This is, however, made possible by the fact that Macbeth does not understand every mechanism yet. As opposed to him, Lady Macbeth knows that words not only serve as actions, but as inducements to actions: "Hie thee hither, / That I may pour my spirits in thine ear, / And chastise with the valour of my tongue / All that impedes thee from the golden round. . ." (I.v.24–27). And, of course, the instrument is the *tongue*, or more exactly *her* tongue, because it is not at all by accident that she uses the possessive pronoun both before *spirits* and *tongue*, as opposed to Macbeth who does not curse "thy" (i.e. Macduff's) tongue, but "that" (i.e. "the") tongue. For Lady Macbeth, the connection between herself, her spirits, her tongue and the effect of the latter two is absolutely clear.

Macbeth seems to perceive this connection between the speaker and the speech only in V.vii.47. After cursing the tongue, he turns on the Weird Sisters: "And be these juggling fiends no more believed / That palter with us in a double sense," but in fact what he recognises here is still not the whole picture. Firstly, he is still using the passive voice and the general subject, although the Weird Sisters' "double sense" prophecy was given to him. Secondly, in fact, he is deceiving himself again, because "double sense" does not seem to be the best expression to describe the Sisters' prophecy. The Sisters sometimes use metaphors, in most of the cases visual ones like the bloody child or Birnam Forest, and promise him *a* future, of which nobody knows whether it is *the* future. However, the Weird Sisters never say that he has to do anything in order that the prophecies be fulfilled. Macbeth thinks he has to kill Duncan to become king, but maybe the Weird Sisters were not lying, and he could have become, rather than make himself, king.

This is exactly his way of thinking: he tries to blame the responsibility of his actions on the Weird Sisters. What Macbeth disregards here is that it is not the prophecies themselves that caused the death of Duncan and all the others, but he himself. He chose one possible interpretation of the prophecies, but did not consider that there may be other interpretations as well.⁵⁵ When it turns out that he was not careful enough, because he did not seek other meanings, he blames the Sisters for his failure. To use a somewhat remote metaphor, he commits the literary critic's "inten-

55. This makes it differ from the murder of Banquo: there the murderers got explicit orders, whereas Macbeth, as argued above, received statements about the future that he had the chance to interpret in one way or another.

tional fallacy”: in Macbeth’s mind, any utterance has only one meaning that is placed in it unequivocally by the speaker. Thus, for him, communication is a direct line: the unambiguous message that the speaker intended to communicate is passively received by the addressee.

However, it turns out that this concept is incorrect: an utterance has no one-to-one correspondence with the intention, and the addressee is not a passive recipient. Macbeth is still unaware of his equally important role as a recipient in interpreting the utterance. This is again typical of Macbeth: he thinks that the blunder was in the intentions of the speakers, or in the “meaning” of their utterance.

Paradoxically, in the next two lines he seemingly gives an almost perfect description of the situation: “[be those not believed] That keep the word of promise to our ear, / And break it to our hope” (V.vii.51–52). This is how he perceives the situation. One of the two mistakes in his picture is that the ear–hope distinction is not a real one, just like the alienation of his – and sometimes, others’ – actions from the performer by omitting the personal pronoun: he only heard what he had already hoped. The other inaccuracy is that he talks about “our” ear and hope, whereas there never appeared any “we” in the play, only “he,” Macbeth. The Weird Sisters did not break any promise: the one who tried to break anything was Macbeth. *He* tried to break the line of his Fate (a fate framed by himself for himself) and give it another direction. Nobody can be sure if Fate existed at all in this play, but he believed he had a certain fate, and that it had been revealed to him in the prophecies. But without even noticing it, at a certain point he wanted to “o’er-leap” that fate. He believed in Fate, he justified his initial deeds with it, but wanted to alter it partly: that is Macbeth’s paradox, and that is what he still does not notice.

He claims that the Weird Sisters cannot be believed anymore, and two lines later he says to Macduff: “I’ll not fight with thee.” These two statements of Macbeth are in unmistakable contradiction with each-other. The Sisters (or the Second Apparition) prophesied that Macbeth has to fear only someone who is not given birth by a woman. When Macbeth faces such a person, he says he no more believes the prophecy, because he thought “none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth” (IV.i.94–95) meant “fear nobody.” But if he does not believe anymore that “none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth,” then he thinks

- (1) *either* that *not even* someone who is not born by a woman can harm him,
- (2) *or* that *not only* someone who is not born by a woman can harm him, but anyone.

From (1) it would follow that he does not have to be afraid of Macduff. On the other hand, (2) implies that he has to be afraid of everybody, not just Macduff. If Macbeth means (1), then he could happily fight with Macduff who would have no chance at all. If, however, Macbeth thinks (2), then there is no-one better or worse to fight with than Macduff, because Macbeth will get killed either by Macduff, or by someone else, but will surely die. Then why should he exclude Macduff from the list of his duel opponents rather than anyone else? Macbeth has then the same chances against Macduff as against anyone else, so he could fight with Macduff, as he did with all the others. Thus, when Macbeth says “I’ll not fight with thee,” it contradicts both possibilities he could have thought of.

The paradox in Macbeth’s thinking is finally completed when he at last decides to fight with Macduff. If he does not believe the prophecies, why does he refer to them while drawing his sword? But if he does believe them, that is, he believes them to be unalterable facts, then how can he try to act against them, how can he suppose to change the unchangeable? Of course, this is exactly what he has been trying to do from the minute he decided on killing Banquo and Fleance. He believed the prophecies, and, at the same time, he wanted to alter the future they seemed to describe as a fate marked out for him. This is exactly the paradox Macbeth fails to notice throughout the whole play, and which is at the very end condensed into six lines.

5 Conclusion

Macbeth constantly tries to escape the responsibility of having to interpret the texts that surround him. It is this characteristic of his that provides for the existence of the Weird Sisters and Lady Macbeth who seem to betray him. The Weird Sisters are too metaphorical, too symbolic for him; his wife uses the “valour of her tongue” to confuse him in a way *she* thinks *he* would like to think. When he suspects he was wrong he chooses not to take it as a mistake of his own, but somebody else’s fault. In doing so he fails. But it is this that the spectators are interested in.

The audience has heard the same texts and has seen the same images as Macbeth. They may have their own interpretation, and most probably they would, in such situations, opt for other solutions than Macbeth. But nobody from the audience can be absolutely sure that Macbeth’s interpretation is wrong. In fact “hail that shalt be king hereafter” can equally mean that “chance will crown” Macbeth, and that he has to “do the deed.” So far as *semantics* is concerned. But what answer would *ethics* suggest? Whatever, Lady Macbeth’s charm-like speeches, together with Macbeth’s self-deceivingly ambiguous ones, sweep ethics away: in the dimension of spirits,

angels and Heaven's cherubim, the audience is bewildered, just like Macbeth. Language has mobilising power on Macbeth, and probably on the audience as well: they feel sympathy for the "dead butcher" in the end, although they know that this two-word description of Macbeth is in one sense quite accurate.

Does language rule the play, then? Duncan's tongue makes Macbeth the Thane of Cawdor. The "paltering" of the Weird Sisters awakens ambition in him. Lady Macbeth makes him "bloody, bold and resolute" by the "valour of her tongue." The messenger comes to "use his tongue" to say what cannot be said: what, one could think, is a "tale told by an idiot" about Birnam Wood approaching Dunsinane. And, finally, Macduff uses his tongue to defeat Macbeth. Then, probably Macbeth is right in cursing the tongue. What he, however, fails to understand is that language is not independent from its user. Furthermore, by correctly recognising that the tongue will kill him, he makes a mistake again: probably the tongue could not have had any power over him without that recognition. There is no way out of such paradoxes.

Macbeth had to choose between the (linguistic) dullness, like the life of Duncan, and his own death. What he chose interests the audience, and they know that his choice in such a paradoxical situation was right. But, again, this situation was produced by Macbeth himself. His lack of will for reflection resulted in biased interpretations of the speeches he heard. His tendency to alienate his actions from himself also leads to his not recognising that words not just exist with their meanings as separate from everything else: meaning is born during the interaction of the speaker's spirits, the words, and the addressee's spirits.

These faults are perceived if the audience is attentive enough to the extremely dense, metaphorical and ambiguous language of the play. Such an audience knows that Macbeth has to fall not because what he did is unethical, but because of the inner logic of the paradoxes he got himself into. However, Macbeth's choice to drive himself into these paradoxes was in a sense right: he affects the audience. But he has to fall. That is his choice. That is tragic. That is when the battle's lost. And won.

Katalin Tabi

Syntactically Honest

Iago's Character as Reflected in János Ács's 1989 Play-text

As Professor Géza Kállay once remarked, "the price of precision is the need for reduction," so in this paper the field of examination will be scaled down to one part of one Othello performance: Iago's character in János Ács's 1989 Kaposvár production. This article is an experiment. It leaves behind nearly all the traditional elements of performance criticism to concentrate solely on the role of the cut text in Iago's characterization. In what ways does the transformation of Shakespeare's text change Iago's character? What is Iago in János Kulka's interpretation like? And, lastly, what does a theatrical play-text add to our understanding of Iago? These are the questions to be discussed in this essay with an introduction to a less-known field of Shakespeare research: play-text analysis.

Why then, is Cassio honest? (3.3)

This essay is an instance of an undeservedly overlooked field of Shakespeare studies called – tentatively by the author of the present paper – play-text analysis.¹ I am going to analyse the play-text of János Ács's *Othello*, performed in Kaposvár in 1989, to find out how the director's cuts shape the characterization of János Kulka's Iago: why certain speeches are kept while others omitted, and certain actions left out while

1. The merit of Charles H. Shattuck in the collection and interpretation of Shakespearean prompt-books cannot be questioned. His most important collections are *The John Philip Kemble Promptbooks*, 11 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1974) and *The Shakespeare Promptbooks: A Descriptive Catalogue* (Urbana and London: University of Illinois Press, 1965). G. Blakemore Evans also edited a useful collection of Shakespearean prompt-books (*Shakespearean Prompt-Books of the Seventeenth Century*, published by the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, available online: <http://etext.virginia.edu/bsuva/promptbook/index.html>). Yet it is conspicuous how small the number of scholarly articles in this field is.

others added. Such a scrutiny is necessarily reversed: I saw the production first and analysed the play-text second. Although I will try to rely mostly on the play-text, my results will involve the visual side as well. Certain stage movements will occasionally be described – considering them as stage directions, that is to say parts of the text.

Work, Play-text, Theatre

Shakespeare's plays have always been trimmed for stage productions either for aesthetic or pragmatic reasons. This is sometimes understood as a curse (by scholars), and sometimes as a challenge (by practitioners). Play-text is the printed version of a production as it was recorded at a particular phase of the rehearsal period. Depending on the proximity of the prompt-book that contains the play-text to the time of the premiere, a play-text can reflect the final version of a production to a lesser or greater extent. Ideally, however, the text is accompanied by a video recording of the performance, which can serve the researcher well. In our case, I derived the text from a recording.

In performance criticism, the significance of the play-text is usually dwarfed by other elements of the *mise-en-scène* (e.g. lighting, costume, scenery, actor's performance, sound, proxemics, blocking, etc.). In play-text analysis, our main interest is (maybe not surprisingly) the play-text: how the textual transformations affect the meaning and focus of Shakespeare's work in the theatre-making process. There are two justifications for analysing play-texts: The one is the fact that more people go and see a Shakespeare-play in the theatre than read it, so pragmatically speaking it makes more sense to interpret the text that the majority understands as Shakespeare. The other is the argument that a play-text can be regarded as a derivative version of Shakespeare's work (problematic in its material anyway due to the numerous surviving scripts), and as such, it can be interpreted as a text in its own right.

Let me highlight what constitutes the theoretical ground for considering a play-text a legitimate variant of Shakespeare's work. W. B. Worthen proposes the concept of an authorial *work* which is immaterial and abstract, and which would contain all the elements that the two quartos and the Folio include, exclude or misread. He argues that all the different later versions – no matter whether quartos, editions, or play-texts – derive from this ideal but non-surviving work, and therefore they are all verifiable as legitimate descendants of Shakespeare's work.²

2. W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), esp. pp. 14–16.

Philip Edwards asserts in his introduction to *The New Cambridge Shakespeare Hamlet* (2003) that from the point that Shakespeare entrusted the Chamberlain's men with his play and they started to re-work it for the stage, "degeneration began, and it is at this point that we should arrest and freeze the play, for it is sadly true that the nearer we get to the stage, the further we are getting from Shakespeare." (32) Even if we understand Edwards' concern about Shakespeare's unique poetic style which is necessarily corrupted by pragmatic theatre-makers, we must not forget the good old fact that what Shakespeare was primarily proud of was his sonnets and not his plays,³ and that he was also an active participant in the theatre-making process. Thus, in the light of Renaissance theatrical tradition, the theatrical approach of Shakespeare's plays seems appropriate.⁴

Edition, Translation, Cuts

The production discussed was played with great critical success in István Eörsi's new translation, but this time, due to the language of the paper, the cut text will be quoted according to the 1988 Oxford edition of the *Complete Works*.⁵ For the sake of convenience, the text of the Oxford edition will be referred to as "Shakespeare's text,"

3. Lukas Erne has proposed recently that Shakespeare prepared his plays with the same devotion for the page as for the stage (cf. Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as a Literary Dramatist* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], esp. pp. 131–136), but I believe that his statement does not conclude, only contributes to the page and stage debate.

4. The notion that Shakespearean dramas are primarily written for the stage was rediscovered and highlighted extensively in the second half of the twentieth century (see, for example, the works of J. L. Styan, Stanley Wells, David Bradley, J. R. Brown, or W. B. Worthen). At the same time, the acknowledgement of theatre as an art independent from literature, and not merely a visual translation of drama, evolved due to the achievements of theatre semiotics (see the works of Tadeusz Kowzan, Patrice Pavis, Elinor Fuchs, and Erika Fischer-Lichte). These two tenets seem to point toward the superiority of stage over page even if there will always be scholars who argue for Shakespeare as a literary dramatist – see Lukas Erne's intriguing book mentioned earlier.

5. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor eds., *The Oxford Shakespeare. The Complete Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988). Naturally, some of the meaning will be lost because of the use of English, but, on the other hand, translation is an interpretative medium that would divert our attention from the focus of this article, the results of cutting, to the domains of *poetic* textual interpretation. Since this paper is aiming to give rather a *formal* (syntactic) analysis, the English text can even be called an advantage (but I will, of course, indicate when a phrase or sentence gains special or additional meaning due to the Hungarian translation).

and the play-text as “Ács’s text.” Sometimes Iago will be called “Kulka’s Iago” to distinguish him from “Shakespeare’s Iago.” When both Shakespeare’s and Ács’s texts are quoted for comparison, Ács’s will always come first and Shakespeare’s second.

Cuts can have several functions above which the leading principle is to define the length of the performance. Nevertheless, even cuts intended primarily to shorten the playing time can have interpretive power. Abridgement due to the repetition of information is called “accordion cut” in theatrical jargon. This does not normally affect the meaning, but often does the rhythm of a scene. Other cuts may determine the rhythm of the whole performance (e.g. scene omissions), establish cast dynamics (the weight and importance of characters), help characterization (e.g. by highlighting some dominant characteristics), narrow down or concentrate the plot for the sake of theatrical effect – or all these simultaneously.⁶ Additions and transpositions also belong to the editorial apparatus of a director, but in this analysis the cuts sharpening Iago’s character are going to be in the focus of attention.

Words, Questions, Silences

Shakespeare’s *Othello* starts with a dialogue between Iago and Roderigo. In Ács’s production this is preceded by a “semi-dumb” show. When the curtain goes up, we can see Othello wrestling Iago to the ground surrounded by soldiers. After his victory Othello washes and drinks. He offers a cup to Cassio first, and Iago second. Cassio refuses it politely, Iago accepts it. Everybody leaves except for Iago still standing with the cup in his hand. Some soldiers call from within: “Cassio! Cassio! Cassio!” – he is already a very important man. Iago breaks the cup furiously, his hand starts bleeding, and he says “Damn it!” At this point Roderigo enters. Iago’s despair is obvious from the start. His failure in the wrestling and the echoing of Cassio’s name make him swear and break the cup. He is wounded at the very beginning both physically and emotionally.

If we look at the first conversation between Iago and Roderigo in Shakespeare’s text, it is surprising how much more Iago speaks compared to Roderigo. This discrepancy creates a theatrical effect bordering on the comic. Iago’s too much talk about his own smallish interests make him, similarly to Brabantio, a comic figure lacking dramatic density. This comic tone, however, is missing from Kulka’s Iago

6. It should also be mentioned, however, that in many cases cuts do not tell us anything about the director’s intentions – or there are no cuts at all, but on stage we get an ingenious interpretation.

I am not what I am. [*Pause*]
 Roderigo! Call up her father,
Here he lives.

This speech in the very first scene tells a lot about Kulka's Iago: fragmental thoughts construe his style and make his presence unfathomable. The account of the different types of knaves is omitted, and Ács takes up the line of speech where Shakespeare's text repeats itself. First, Iago establishes that his outward action will differ from his inner intention, and then in a five-line metaphor Shakespeare's Iago continues to muse upon what would happen if he exposed his inner thoughts. He would get defenceless: "I will wear my heart upon my sleeve / For daws to peck at." Kulka's Iago starts this metaphor, but does not finish it. As if the thought itself that he could be revealed made him shiver and more resolute than ever. He pauses in the middle of the sentence, and his thoughts take a turn: "I am not what I am." This famous, yet enigmatic, sentence summarizes the essence of his identity. Introducing it by a half-stifled sentence and placing it between two pauses mark its importance.

Just as unexpectedly as his idea of pretence took shape does Iago realize that he could spoil and ruin Othello's happiness if he betrayed him to Desdemona's father. In Shakespeare's text the idea of calling up the father is preceded by Roderigo's speech. In Ács's text, his lines are omitted, and Iago switches to this new thought without interruption immediately after his self-definition. This way his speech perfectly shows the nature of his cunning mind: he is constantly speculating, calculating and plotting in a nick of time. Kulka's Iago's text reveals expressively how his thoughts are born on the spot.

The same rhetoric can be observed in 1.2 in Othello and Iago's first meeting. Kulka's Iago is seemingly talking about Brabantio's rage against Othello, but in reality he is much more interested in Othello's wedding:

IAGO Nay, but he prated,
 And spoke such scurvy and provoking terms
 Against your Honour. . .
 But I pray you, sir,
 Are you fast married?

Again, he abruptly cuts off the thread of one thought to start another. He leaves the sentence unfinished because he uses speaking only to conceal his ceaselessly working mind, or to summon up courage to take the next step. This Iago is constantly scared and daring at the same time. His half sentences suggest that he is always thinking about something else than what he is talking about – he is meaning

one thing, and saying another. He is constantly speculating and maintaining control. The crucial point for him is that he must not be silent otherwise he might lose control over the situation. (This is what actually happens when in the last act he goes silent, refuses to speak, and this brings about his fall.)

It is commonly known that speaking helps thinking. This is also true when we are alone, although we rarely utter full sentences or elaborated thoughts, but rather fragments. Since James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, this inner ceaselessly buzzing voice has been known as the stream of consciousness. Kulka's Iago's half sentences beautifully display this natural working of the mind: the stream of consciousness that gushes out of him in each and every soliloquy. Shakespeare's Iago puts different thoughts and ideas next to each other seemingly without any logic. This uncontrollable speech-stream is stifled in Ács's text, for instance in Kulka's Iago's first soliloquy at the end of 1.3:

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse –
 For I mine own gained knowledge should
 profane
 If I would time expend with such a snipe
 But for my sport and profit. I hate the Moor,
 And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets
 He has done my office. I know not if't be true,
 But for mere suspicion in that kind. . .
 He holds me well:
 The better shall my purpose work on him.
 Cassio's a proper man. *How to get.* . .
 I ha't!

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse –
 For I mine own gained knowledge should
 profane
 If I would time expend with such a snipe
 But for my sport and profit. I hate the Moor,
 And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets
 He has done my office. I know not if't be true,
 But I, for mere suspicion in that kind,
 Will do as if for surety. He holds me well:
 The better shall my purpose work on him.
 Cassio's a proper man. Let me see now,
 To get his place, and to plume up my will
 In double knavery – how, how? Let's see.
 After some time to abuse Othello's ears
 That he is too familiar with his wife;
 He hath a person and smooth dispose
 To be suspected, framed to make women
 false.
 The Moor is of a free and open nature,
 That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
 And will as tenderly be led by th' nose
 As asses are.

I ha't. It is ingendered. Hell and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the
world's light.

Although natural on the one hand, it is scary on the other how Kulka's Iago explains nothing fully. There are two points where he leaves Shakespeare's text: once when he makes surety out of "mere suspicion" ("But for mere suspicion in that kind. . ."), and three lines later when he states "Cassio's a proper man." After this, his machinations, the birth of the plot – displayed in Shakespeare's text in detail – are just indicated in two fragments: "*How to get. . . / I ha't!*" and, as Hamlet would say, "the rest is silence."

What the director did to Shakespeare's text was that he made it theatrically more effective. Firstly, the lack of information creates suspense and winds up the audience; and, secondly, Iago's plot will become clear enough anyway in the following scenes of the performance, so giving all the details here could even be called unnecessary if we did not feel sorry for the brilliant lines: "Hell and night / must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light."

It is also characteristic of Kulka's Iago that he utters certain words in solo. These words snuggle into Iago's head in Ács's text. At the end of 1.3 he is trying to dissuade Roderigo from drowning himself. Iago believes that Desdemona cannot love the Moor. At a certain point he says:

Therefore put money in thy purse. If thou wilt needs damn thyself, do it a more delicate way than drowning. An erring barbarian. . . a super-subtle Venetian woman. . . a frail vow. . . A pox o' drowning thyself.

Therefore put money in thy purse. If thou wilt needs damn thyself, do it a more delicate way than drowning. Make all the money thou canst. If sanctimony and a frail vow betwixt an erring barbarian and a super-subtle Venetian be not too hard for my wits and all the tribe of hell, thou shalt enjoy her; therefore make money. A pox o' drowning thyself – it is clean out of the way.

Kulka's Iago withholds the details. He ruminates the words, tastes them until the idea is ripe and suddenly pops out. We cannot help wondering what is going on in his mind again.

The way a word gets stuck in Kulka's Iago's mind can be seen in 2.3. Talking of Desdemona's chastity Roderigo uses the phrase "blessed condition," which is followed by Iago's speech:

Blessed! *Blessed!* If she had been blessed, she would never have loved the Moor. Blessed pudding! Didst thou not see her paddle with the palm of his hand? Didst not mark that?

He is playing with the word "blessed," he is tasting it, chewing it, and stores it up in his mind. Then, when Roderigo has left, he carries on with his second soliloquy:

That Cassio loves her?
Desdemona!
The Moor!
He is of a constant, loving, noble nature,
And I dare think he'll prove to Desdemona
A most dear husband. Now I do love her too,
Not out of absolute lust – though peradventure
I stand accountant for as great a sin –
But partly
For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
Hath leapt into my seat.
And nothing can or shall content my soul
Till I am evened with him, wife for wife –
'Tis not enough. Jealousy. Jealousy. . . Blessed. . . Blessed!
[*Noise from within*]

Instead of whole sentences he uses words again: "Desdemona! / The Moor!" and then, just like in his first soliloquy, he drops the half of Shakespeare's text – which is the repetition of his villainous plans anyway – and finishes his speech with Ács's invented words.

From a theatrical point of view, it has to be admitted that Iago's plot is overdiscussed in Shakespeare's text. He displays his plans in his first (1.3), second (2.1) and third soliloquies (2.3), which is more than sufficient (although no doubt all the three speeches are rhetorically excellent). Modern audiences want action, not oration, and prefer solving the puzzle themselves to receiving it ready-made.

In Ács's performance Iago suppresses his intentions in his first soliloquy, then later when Desdemona arrives in Cyprus in 2.1, all we can suspect is that his plans involve Cassio and Desdemona, and it is only his second soliloquy when he utters the

word “jealousy” at last. First this word refers to his own injury (Othello’s alleged affair with his wife), but then the direction of reference turns immediately towards Othello, and the second utterance of the word indicates already that the plot is born. The same thing happens to the word “blessed.” Now, coupling it with the word “jealousy,” the whole conception is mapped out in front of him.

Iago likes asking questions. This is another mischievous device of his verbal repertoire. By asking questions he avoids the charge of lie or libel: he states nothing, he is responsible for nothing. In Shakespeare’s text, the paragon of this device is 4.1 in which Iago entices Othello into the strong suspicion that Desdemona cheated on him with Cassio. Ács, to enhance this element in Iago’s character, adds a few more to the Shakespearean questions. In 1.2, when Othello and Iago first meet, Iago starts the conversation *in medias res* telling Othello the inner conflict between the force to fight and his innate meekness. To wring an approval out of Othello, Kulka’s Iago does not state but asks, “Do I lack iniquity, / Sometime, to do me service?”⁸ – to which Othello replies “’Tis better as it is.” That is to say, it is better that Iago is gentle and submissive.

Later on, in the temptation-scene (3.3), Iago uses questions to make Othello lose his faith in Cassio’s honesty:

OTHELLO Is he not honest?

IAGO Honest?

OTHELLO Honest? Ay, honest. . . .

IAGO I dare be sworn I think that he
is honest.

OTHELLO I think so too.

IAGO Men should be what they seem,
Or none.

OTHELLO Certain, men should be what
they seem.

IAGO Why then, is Cassio honest?

OTHELLO Is he not honest?

IAGO Honest, my lord?

OTHELLO Honest? Ay, honest. . . .

IAGO I dare be sworn I think that he
is honest.

OTHELLO I think so too.

IAGO Men should be what they seem,
Or those that be not, would they might

seem none.

OTHELLO Certain, men should be what
they seem.

IAGO Why then, I think Cassio’s an
honest man.

Kulka’s Iago adds one more to the barrage of questions to increase the effect: “Why then, is Cassio honest?” There is a strange game in this scene: both Iago and

8. Cf. “I lack iniquity, / Sometime, to do my service” in Shakespeare’s text.

Othello are trying to avoid the responsibility of uttering the sentence that Cassio is not honest. It is a kind of Ping-Pong match between them, and Ács plays upon this situation when he makes Iago serve the ball back one more time to force Othello to give a final reply.

There is one more occasion, later in this scene, when Kulka's Iago inserts a question talking of Desdemona's deceiving her father:

She that so young could give out such a seeming,
To seel her father's eyes up close as oak,
He thought 'twas witchcraft! *Do you remember?*
But I am much to blame.

Iago wants to involve Othello in the truth of what he is saying so he asks a yes/no question (a deliberately closed structure!) to which Othello inside involuntarily has to reply "Yes."

There are two more important features of Iago's characterization in Ács's production which express his relation to the other characters. These are his constant disturbance by some noise and his reluctance to join the others. In Shakespeare's text, Iago has a soliloquy at the end of 2.1, and then exits to leave the stage empty for Othello's herald who announces the celebration of Othello's victory and marriage. (This scene, however, is normally left out in performances – in this one, too.) In Ács's text Iago remains on stage completely carried away by the words "jealousy" and "blessed" when noise comes from within that makes him stir and pretend to be there by chance. Montano and Cassio enter to arrange the watch. Iago's third soliloquy at the end of 2.3 is interrupted similarly. He speaks the whole text with only a few cuts, and he is in the middle of his sentence when Roderigo enters unexpectedly:

And by how much she strives to do him good She shall undo. . .	And by how much she strives to do him good She shall undo her credit with the Moor. So will I turn her virtue into pitch, And out of her own goodness make the net That shall enmesh them all.
---	--

Enter Roderigo

These intrusions are the moments when we can witness Kulka's Iago's double nature the best. He has to be alert to his environment all the time during the play so that nobody knows about his secret plans. The only time he cannot control his attention is when he is alone indulging in his vicious enterprise. At this time he simply

switches off, and when someone suddenly enters, we, the audience, cannot help getting excited by the mere thought that he could have been caught. Willy-nilly, we find ourselves in the strange position of worrying about and supporting Iago.

The last thing to be discussed is Kulka's Iago's sly reluctance to join the others. After Othello has been greeted in Cyprus, everybody leaves the stage but Iago and Roderigo. The stage direction says "*Exeunt Othello and Desdemona with all but Iago and Roderigo.*" Ács is right when he inserts two new lines for Cassio and Iago:

CASSIO Ensign! [*He shows Iago that he should follow them*] Ensign!
IAGO *Coming, coming. . . Coming. [Exit]*

It would be natural for Iago to go with them, but he does not want to; he wants to stay behind to continue his business with Roderigo that they started in the opening scene. Although Iago says to an attendant, "Do thou meet me presently at the harbour," which may be interpreted as an excuse for staying behind, Shakespeare's text leaves this scene-change practically unexplained. Ács, by giving a line to Cassio to call to Iago (addressing him by his detested rank!), emphasizes Cassio's superiority and responsibility as well as the tension between Iago and him. Iago repeats his answer several times to disguise his contempt by trying to be funny. In the performance he is even showing the way he is going with his hand as if he said "I'm coming, you dunce, can't you see?" He gets easily frustrated by an innocent call because his mind is already set on dirty thoughts, and any intrusions into these disturb him.

This disturbance can also be observed in 3.2 when Othello sends a soldier to the harbour with some letters and then wants to walk at the works with Iago. In Shakespeare's text Othello sends Iago to the harbour, and walks to the works with some gentlemen. Ács's Othello, by contrast, sends a soldier to the harbour, and wants Iago to go with him. By this, the friendship and trust between Othello and Iago is reinforced:

OTHELLO [*from within*] Hey, soldier!
SOLDIER *Yes, sir.*
OTHELLO *This letter* give to the pilot,
And by him do my duties to the senate. [*He throws a kiss to Emilia*]
SOLDIER *Yes, sir.*
OTHELLO Iago, *we* will be walking on the works. [*Exit*]
IAGO *Yes. [He looks at Emilia]*
OTHELLO [*from within*] Iago.
IAGO *Coming! [Exit]*

Iago, before joining Othello, stays on stage to exchange glances with Emilia to let her know that she should conduct Cassio's request appropriately. When Othello calls again, he answers reluctantly. He obviously does not care about the works or Othello, only his own plans. In the previous scene (2.3) Iago explains that he must make his wife "move for Cassio to her mistress." So this eye-contact between him and Emilia before he joins Othello is about their agreement about Cassio's matter. Even if everybody but Othello can see his hesitation to follow the moor, only we, the audience, understand fully that there is more to his hesitant behaviour than mere benevolence.

The same uncertainty can be seen in his farewell to Cassio earlier in 2.3 when the disgraced lieutenant leaves him with the hope that Desdemona will speak for him. After his seemingly kind advice, instead of the conventional farewell of the Shakespeare-text, Kulka's Iago delays his goodnight:

CASSIO Good night.

IAGO [*Pause, then he shouts after Cassio.*]

Lieutenant! . . . Good night.

CASSIO Good night. *Exit*

IAGO You are in the right. Good night,

Lieutenant. I must to the watch.

CASSIO Good night, honest Iago. *Exit*

Cassio is completely crestfallen, so he does not realize that Iago did not answer his goodnight. Therefore when Iago shouts after him with noticeable delay just to say goodnight, he finds it strange. Iago's goodnight is about something else than the innocent Cassio's. His words imply something like "Thank you for taking my advice and helping my plans." He is grateful that Cassio could be convinced so easily, and this takes him one step closer to his aim. However, his goodnight also insinuates something even darker: Cassio's looming death.

Rhetoric, Syntax, Conclusion

Iago's rhetoric has been thoroughly analysed ever so many times from all sorts of angles.⁹ The present analysis has shown with the method of play-text analysis that the broken sentences, suppressed thoughts, sparkle-like words, well-positioned questions and reluctant replies perfectly shape up and, at the same time, betray Iago

9. One of the latest works in Hungarian is Géza Kállay's excellent book on the language of *Othello* from a language-philosophical approach: Géza Kállay, *Nem puszta szó* (Budapest: Liget, 1996).

in János Kulka's performance. His Iago-interpretation is fundamentally classical. The merit of this stage production lies rather in the fact that Ács's text sharpens up and refines Iago's character not only on the level of semantics, but also on the level of syntax. In Shakespeare's text, Iago does not speak openly about his plans but in the soliloquies. In the group-scenes Shakespeare's Iago always presents a slick and immaculate behaviour. By involving the syntactic element, Ács can achieve that the audience can detect Iago's true nature also in the group-scenes where his attractive way of speaking is betrayed unconsciously by his fragmented sentences. Ács reinforces the theatrical effect by attacking the viewer both semantically and syntactically. The way he cuts the text outlines a forcefully contoured character that rules the performance. Why then, is Iago honest? Although his words and deeds are false and dishonest, the structure of his speeches reflect his fragmented nature – Kulka's Iago is syntactically honest.

Zoe Detsi-Diamanti

Politicizing Aesthetics

The Politics of Violence and Sexuality in Colonial and Revolutionary Representations of America as an Indian Woman

The aim of this paper is to explore the changing aesthetic and ideological connotations of the representation of America as an Indian woman in the sixteenth-century engravings of the discovery and conquest of the New World and the late-eighteenth-century political cartoons of America's national conflict and eventual secession from mother England. In both cases, the male enterprise of colonization and nation-making is aesthetically expressed in the fetishistic and symbolic representation of the female body as the simultaneously alluring and devouring female, seductively naked before the white male European, and as the victim of political violence and the national struggle for independence.

By looking into the 16th-century prints of America and the scene of its discovery and the political cartoons at the time of the American Revolution, it has been tempting to explore the changing iconographic and ideological patterns of the image of the American female Indian and how these patterns eventually become closely linked to the construction of a distinctly American national identity. In both cases, the transition into the New World order involves the symbolic substitution of a woman's body for the male national project. The figure of the female Indian, which is either "very definitely dis-covered"¹ by the European colonizers, or forcefully claimed by the American revolutionaries against the oppressive subjugation of mother England, stands for the New World, a point of mythical, "divine" and "privileged" origin, a site where a national narrative of discovery,

1. Peter Hulme, "Polytropic Man: Tropes of Sexuality and Mobility in Early Colonial Discourse," in *Europe and Its Others*, eds. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen, Diana Loxley (Colchester: U of Essex, 1985), Vol. 2, 17–32, p. 17.

expansion, and progress is to be inscribed.² Underlying this idea, however, is the essential discrepancy between myth and reality, between the myth of colonization and its supposed civilizational power and the reality of conquest and the cultural uncertainty it entails; and, in the case of the political cartoons, between the mythical patterns of the revolutionary rhetoric of republicanism and regeneration and the violence of social upheaval and disruption.

More specifically, in the first pictorial representations of America,³ the female Indian woman, both seductive in her nakedness and threatening in her savagery, embodies questions of power and violence, fantasy, desire, and difference. Drawing on a long tradition of male travel narrative and imagination, these images feature a feminized new land available for male exploration and possession.⁴ In the majority of the 16th-century European prints and paintings, the figure of America is shaped

2. I have borrowed the terms “divine” and “privileged” origin from Edward Said, who makes a most interesting distinction between beginning and origin. See Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985), p. xiii.

3. Stephen Greenblatt is essentially sceptical regarding a collective account of European representations of America and wonders whether we can “legitimately speak of ‘the European practice of representation’? There were profound differences among the national cultures and religious faiths of the various European voyagers, differences that decisively shaped both perceptions and representations” (Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1992], p. 8). It seems to me, however, that all these differences Greenblatt is so rightly concerned about fade away before the striking massive cultural difference between “self” and “other,” “civilized” and “savage,” “colonizer” and “colonized.” And, as Anthony Pagden has argued, “throughout much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Europeans had failed to make very much distinction between different types, and for their heuristic purposes, to speak as if all Amerindians lived in the same condition as the North American, Caribbean or Brazilian tribes” (Anthony Pagden, “Shifting Antinomies: European Representations of the American Indian Since Columbus,” in *Visions of America Since 1492*, ed. Deborah L. Madsen [New York: St. Martin’s, 1994], 23–34, p. 30). For colonial and early American texts, see Carla Mulford ed., *Early American Writings* (New York: Oxford UP, 2002).

4. From Sir Walter Raleigh’s famous description of Guiana as a country that “hath her maidenhead yet,” to the frontispiece of one of the greatest atlases of the 16th-century which described the figure of America as “the nymph in the embrace of gentle love,” the feminization of the land had been a dominant metaphor in the 16th and 17th-century writing, art, and cartography. For more information, see Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine Between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), and Louis Montrose, “The Work of Gender in the Discourse of Discovery,” *Representations* 33 (1991) 1–41.

as much by the power of the imagination as by the multiple interpretations of the actual experience of the colonial encounter.⁵ In most cases, America is depicted as a recumbent woman completely nude with a feather headdress, a bow and arrows. This dominant image, which persisted until the mid-18th century, almost invariably accentuates the erotic qualities of the allegorical figure of America and projects a combination of as many, usually contradictory, characteristics of the new land.⁶ For example, Jan van der Straet's widely disseminated late-16th-century drawing (Fig. 1) of the discovery of America combines the most conventional narrative of European history – the great discovery of the New World – with the cultural anxiety and fear of the colonial encounter.⁷

5. As Denise Albanese has pointed out, “historical narratives are predicated equally on imagined relations and tactical silences. Specifically, they demand an ideological adjudication between what may be comprehended as familiar, and what must be suppressed, or investigated, as alien” (“Making it New: Humanism, Colonialism, and the Gendered Body in Early Modern Culture,” in *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture*, eds. Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, Dymphna Callaghan [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996], 16–43, p. 16).

6. The Europeans quite early had been introduced to the strangeness of the new land as well as its immense riches through the descriptions of Marco Polo and the more vivid accounts of Sir John Mandreville whose “enormously popular mid-14th-century geographical fantasy abounded in islands in the Indian Ocean inhabited by men with no heads but eyes in their shoulders, people with ears so long that they hung down to their knees, with the heads of dogs or the feet of horses, and so on” (Hugh Honour, *The New Golden Land: Images of America from the Discoveries to the Present Time* [New York: Pantheon, 1975], p. 4). A number of woodcuts were originally created as elaborate illustrations in the publications of the letters written by Columbus and Vespucci regarding their first contact and impressions of the New World. Later in the 16th century, several artists issued prints of America recalling these illustrations. Phillippe Galle and Jan Sadeler made engravings of drawings of the New World and, when Theodor de Bry began publishing his *Great Voyages*, he had acquired a large number of drawings that talented artists had brought back from America.

7. Around the turn of the 16th century, Jan van der Straet, usually known as Stradanus, made a drawing of the European discovery of America, which was widely disseminated in print by means of Theodor Galle's engraving. This engraving was later included in Theodor de Bry's *Great Voyages*, a large folio of volumes illustrated by several hundred copperplate engravings, which, according to Bernadette Bucher, “offered a broad view of European conquests in America and the first contacts with the Amerindians” (Bucher, *Icon and Conquest: A Structural Analysis of the Illustrations of the de Bry's Great Voyages*, trans. Basia Miller Gulati [Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981], p. 4). Stradanus' famous picture, like the majority of those that followed by other artists, is heavily influenced by Renaissance representations of women and underlines the contradiction between the attraction and fear of



Figure 1. *Vespucci Discovering America* (c. 1580). Engraving by Theodor Galle

As critics such as Anne McClintock and Shirley Samuels have argued, the personification of America as an Indian woman, who stands naked before the white male European, becomes a metaphor for the Western imperialistic processes and the male militarized invasion of the land. However, her ambiguous gesture of sexual invitation and implicit threat as she rises from her hammock and moves towards the static figure of Vespucci as well as the scene of cannibalism in the background disrupt male fantasies of possession and power. Vespucci stands there looking at a naked America, who represents a whole continent, while their “meeting enacts a colonial paradigm whereby the European subject achieves individuation precisely in opposition to colonized peoples who represent land or nature, ideas, or a group.”⁸

the new land through the “Europeanization” of the Indian woman’s characteristics. For more information on the 16th-century images of America, see Hugh Honour, *The New Golden Land*.

8. Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 76.



Figure 2.
America (early 18th century). De Launay

Vespucci's imperial power, that seeks to legitimize the conquest of the territory, colonial plunder, and sexual possession, is essentially disrupted by the female cannibals in the background who are roasting a human leg. Even in much later representations of America, the image of the naked, voluptuous Indian woman, that invites exploration and exploitation, is sharply undercut by the persistent allusions to violence, savagery, and cannibalism. For example, in De Launey's early-18th-century depiction of America as a young Indian girl (Fig. 2), whose innocence and purity are further enhanced by the presence of the two children and the virgin natural landscape in the background, the fear of dismemberment and death, though obviously played down, is not entirely omitted. The severed human head, that lies at the girl's feet and is pierced with an arrow, and the presence of the alligator, which poses as her pet animal, still reflect the colonial anxiety and fear of the new land and render the colonial encounter an incident of ambivalence. Both this image and the earlier depiction of Vespucci's allegorical meeting with America vividly

project the major contradictions in colonial discourse that extend from the male imperial fantasy of immense riches and sexual gratification to the opposite fantasy of dismemberment and engulfment. These contradictions are embodied in both the new land and the Indian woman's body. In terms of the land, the cannibal trope stands for the violent merging of European imperialism with pre-existing hierarchies of power, customs, traditions and peoples too alien to be reconciled to an absolute idea of "self" and "sameness." The insistence on cannibalism in the early representations of the New World reflects the colonial fear of the unknown at a time when European men boldly pushed the safe boundaries of their own world towards the margins in an attempt to

expand their knowledge along with their power.⁹ The fear that the vastness and “otherness” of the unknown might literally devour the colonizers was quickly translated into a justification of European militarized violence, atrocities, massacres and rapes. It was not long before the process of knowing and taming the unknown was turned into a metaphysics of violence that was sanctioned by the Enlightenment logic of private property and possessive individualism.

In terms of the Indian woman’s body, the cannibal trope projects the persistent gendering of the imperial unknown and the perennial metaphor of female sexuality as a “dark continent.”¹⁰ The representation of America as simultaneously seductive and sexually available, and as resistant, aggressive, and cannibalistic, on the one hand justified the sexual barbarity of the colonizers while, on the other, created a dark gap in colonial imagination and a split in male imperial subjectivity as it threatened the European conquerors with castration, emasculation, and death.¹¹ In almost all of these images, there is a peculiar blending of the emergent European colonialist discourse regarding the essential “otherness” of the inhabitants of the New World with a misogynistic conjunction of cannibalism and the feminine.¹² In one of the illus-

9. For the Europeans, a real knowledge of the “other” became a crucial component of self-understanding. One must remember that the development of Renaissance humanism coincided both with the discovery of the Americas and the beginning of European dominance over the rest of the world. Europe had discovered a world/culture outside its periphery. As Samir Amin explains, “If the period of the Renaissance marks a qualitative break in the history of humanity, it is precisely because, from that time on, Europeans become conscious of the idea that the conquest of the world by their civilization is henceforth a possible objective” (*Eurocentrism*, trans. Russell Moore [New York: Monthly Review P, 1989], p. 72).

10. In his exploration of the ways in which images function in theories about culture, consciousness, and representation, W. J. T. Mitchell talks about the “pornographic beauty of the colonized women . . . whose beauty is mixed with danger” (*Picture Theory* [Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994], p. 310).

11. These images were inspired and sustained by a large body of Renaissance travellers’ tales which abounded in visions of the monstrous sexuality of the far-off lands, to such an extent that, as Anne McClintock has eloquently argued, “Africa and the Americas had become what can be called a porno-tropics for the European imagination” (*Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* [New York: Routledge, 1995], p. 22). And, as Shirley Samuels observes, “it seems necessary to imagine this threatening Indian woman’s body in order to justify slaughtering the bodies of those she represents” (*Romances of the Republic* [New York: Oxford UP, 1996], p. 3).

12. For example, Vespucci, who was much more imaginative and emphatic than Columbus in his descriptions, reports in his *Mundus Novus* that the women of the New World were so



Figure 3. Illustration to Vespucci's letter to Soderini, Strassburg, 1509

trations to Vespucci's letter to Soderini,¹³ a European man is apparently chatting with a group of native women, all completely naked, whose strong sexual appeal is reflected both in their poses and their long unruly hair (Fig. 3). While the man is obviously attracted to the women's sexual charms and is about to give in to their alluring promises of sexual gratification, another woman stealthily approaches him from behind and gets ready to knock him down with a club. The supposed sexual guile of the women of the new land, that enables them to deceive, kill, dismember, and eventually eat a European man, not only feeds the vivid collective imagination of the European world regarding alien cultures, but also becomes synonymous with the dangers inherent in a libidinally excessive and sexually uncontrolled female "other."

Suspended between the prospects of conquest and sexual possession and a dread of engulfment and emasculation, these images haunt male colonial imagination and intersperse European fantasies of the New World as a screen onto which Europe would project its forbidden sexual desires with images of monstrous sexuality. In Phillippe Galle's depiction of America as a stark naked, muscular Indian woman, who holds a spear in one hand and a severed human head in the other (Fig. 4), the peculiar fetishism of the new land is symbolically reflected in the contradiction between the woman's innocent, virgin-like, elusive look, and her threatening sexuality implied by her incongruously long pubic hair, supposedly the

lustful that they caused "the private parts of their husbands to swell up to such a huge size that they appear[ed] deformed and disgusting" (Giles Gunn ed., *Early American Writing* [New York: Penguin, 1994], p. 34). Vespucci appears preoccupied with the subject of cannibalism – which Columbus had merely alluded to – and rather exaggeratedly reports that he had known a man "who was reputed to have eaten more than three hundred human bodies" (Gunn, p. 35). All parenthesized references to source texts are to this edition.

13. *Lettera di Amerigo Vespucci delle Isole Nuovamente Trovate* – known as the Soderini letter – was first printed in Florence in 1505. It was promptly translated into German and provided a vivid account of life among the Indians.



Figure 4.
America (1581–1600). Philippe Galle

source of her unnatural power. Although the Indian woman's body appears essentially seductive, it evokes fears of castration through the woman's ability to behead her enemy and hold his head as a trophy, and through the strange mingling of the threat of cannibalism with the woman's exaggerated monstrous sexuality.

Linked symbolically to the land, it is the female Indian that gives iconic form to the major conflict in Europe's colonial ideology regarding its encounter with the New World: a conflict between fascination and fear, sameness and otherness, assimilation and destruction. The implicit identification of native female sexuality with cannibalism represents not only the European conquerors' fear of displacement onto the dangerous feminized space of the new land, but also, those rhetorical strategies of colonialist ideology employed in order to overcome this fear through the persistent textualization of the body of the woman as a realm beyond history, a blank page onto

which male projects and male national enterprises are to be written. The gendering of the New World as feminine and the sexualizing of its discovery and conquest are emblematic of a distinctively colonialist practice of historical and cultural possession. The male European projects of economic exploitation and geopolitical domination are inextricably integrated into a narrative framework of ideological configurations of gender, racial, religious, and national identities. Behind the essentialist binarism of such abstract terms as European and Indian, Culture and Nature, Self and Other, Male and Female, lies the male European tendency to maintain a privileged relation to origins through the rhetorical – and actual – effacement of the indigenous culture and the symbolic re-writing of European history onto the body of

the New World. As Giles Gunn has eloquently argued, “the world called ‘America,’ both North and South, would ever after be a world dominated and controlled by meanings as much as by facts; it would be a world where fantasy, fear, and fabrication would determine many of the contours of the real” (xviii).

Visibly claimed as male European property, either through naming or representation, the Indian woman, just like the new land, is marked as belonging to the European imperialistic processes of nation-making, passively awaiting, as Anne McClintock has observed, “the thrusting, male insemination of history, language and reason.”¹⁴ And, as van der Straet’s drawing illustrates, America “awakens to discover herself written into a story that is not of her own making, to find herself a figure in another’s dream.”¹⁵ For the Europeans, who had access to writing and representation, the crucial cultural difference between themselves and the native people was filtered through their communicative, symbolic and interpretive skills, and was registered as a new chapter in European history and knowledge.¹⁶ Tzvetan Todorov has pointed out that in possessing the ability to write and bringing into focus the “other,” the Europeans possessed an unmistakably superior “technology of symbolism.”¹⁷ Both the written word and the iconic representations of the New World set the foundations for a new (inter)national narrative invested with new political meanings and cultural definitions. In this process, the Indian woman was charged with the responsibility to carry a rather heavy ideological burden as her inherent contradictory qualities were appropriated to serve different purposes: the savage/alien aspect of her cultural identity was readily transformed into a justification for the destruction of her people and the “unmaking” of her culture, while her seductiveness and proximity to nature became the primary signifiers of a new beginning, a new national and cultural origin. It is precisely this idea of a new national origin that carried the image of the Indian woman onto a different ideological plane in the last part of the 18th century when the explosive tension between America and England eventually led to the American Revolution. In the political cartoons of the time, the oversexed Indian woman of the 16th-century engravings, whose body merged seduction and cannibal-

14. McClintock, p. 30.

15. Montrose, p. 6.

16. According to Hardt and Negri, the Europeans could not see beyond their own Eurocentric view of the Americas, in which the Amerindians were equal to Europeans in nature only in so far as they were potentially European or really potentially Christian. Cf. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2000), p. 116.

17. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 160.

ism, was turned into the image of the undersexed Native American woman, whose body was increasingly identified with the concerted American effort towards the creation of a distinctly American national identity.

The great majority of these cartoons were published anonymously as illustrations in colonial newspapers and were largely copied after British models.¹⁸ According to Ron Tyler, “few Americans had produced cartoons by 1776.”¹⁹ There were, however, qualified engravers in America, like the famous Paul Revere, who copied or adapted British prints. As cartoons became a widely-distributed graphic art, cartoonists readily created significant visual themes, which were soon turned into easily identifiable American icons. In this sense, the image of America as an Indian woman, which had in fact lingered in Europe since the 16th century with very few variations, became the most popular and frequent one in representing the British colonies in the New World. As Philip J. Deloria has pointed out, “between 1765 and 1783, the colonies appeared as an Indian in no fewer than sixty-five political cartoons – almost four times as frequently as the other main symbols of America, the snake and the child.”²⁰ Despite the fact that British prints were initially sympathetic in their treatment of the American colonies and scathingly criticized public officials of the British government for their destructive role in the conflict, their insistence on the depiction of America as a female Indian perpetuated the latent colonialist conception of the New World as both inferior and alien and concealed the vestiges of a colonialist discourse that equated the Indian woman’s body with the new land ready for exploitation. In the eyes of the British, the image of the half-naked Indian woman amplified the “otherness” of the Ameri-

18. According to Michael Wynn Jones, “the American War provided an enormous impetus to engravers and print-sellers of London, both artistically and politically. The inexorable decline of the country’s prestige, the wastefulness of the war, North’s edifice of power founded on privilege and royal patronage all combined, slowly but positively, to crystallize a Parliamentary Opposition more articulate and vehement than any since Walpole’s fall from office” (*The Cartoon History of the American Revolution* [New York: Putnam, 1975], p. 10).

19. Ron Tyler, *The Image of America in Caricature and Cartoon* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1975), p. 2.

20. Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998), p. 29. Although from 1765 to 1775, the years of growing discontent and political dissent between America and England, America was consistently represented as a young Indian woman, throughout the years of military conflict, America was also portrayed as an aggressive Indian man. This identification had been so internalised by Americans that in December 1773, Whigs dressed as Indians tossed the tea consignment to Boston overboard.

can colonies both through her race and sex.²¹ On the other hand, however, the representation of America as an Indian woman acquired new meaning as it was transported onto the American soil, where it was largely maintained and reproduced by American engravers for propaganda purposes. In the American context, the image of the Indian woman was largely defined by a nationalist/patriotic discourse that sought to minimize the provincial outlook of the Americans and project a new national identity distinct from England. Thus, the Indian woman in the political cartoons became part of the general ideological framework of a revolutionary discourse that aimed at mobilizing resistance and securing independence.

If the nation is an “imagined community,” as Benedict Anderson has declared, then that imagining, which appears to be profoundly gendered, is achieved through the explosive convergence of language, power, and representation. As a most effective form of propaganda, the revolutionary cartoons joined the literary and dramatic efforts of the American nation toward social rearrangement and national/cultural redefinition. Their power of persuasion lay in their easily accessible visual symbolism, their immediate impact and, occasionally, shrewd political insight. Like most propagandistic texts of the time, the political cartoons revolved around the conjunction of factual information and an emotional appeal to the people’s sense of right and wrong.²² During the revolutionary years, they constituted a most popular mode of address that sought not only to visually reproduce the political events of the time, but, more importantly, to prompt ordinary people, through their satire and allegory, to view themselves as full participants in the political life and changing ideology of America.

21. According to Olson, it was the “British illustrators who defined, refined, and amplified the pictorial representation of the Indian as the British colonies” (Lester C. Olson, *Emblems of American Community in the Revolutionary Era: A Study in Rhetorical Iconology* [Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1991], p. 77). However, as the colonists incorporated the image of the Indian into their political prints, they retained certain elements of inferiority, but they modified the image so as to reduce or eliminate insinuations that the colonies were alien to British culture. This was more obviously manifested in the American cartoonists’ tendency to cover the Indian woman’s nakedness and whiten her skin (Olson, p. 108).

22. After all, this was the essence of republican ideology: to cloak the American political revolt with the mantle of morality and the national struggle for liberty and virtue. See, Andrew Burstein, *Sentimental Democracy: The Evolution of America’s Romantic Self-Image* (New York: Hill, 1999), and Robert E. Shalhope, *The Roots of Democracy: American Thought and Culture, 1760–1800* (Boston, Mass.: Twayne, 1990).

The image of America as an Indian woman became a national emblem, a political instrument in the emerging rhetoric of republicanism as it provided the necessary sense of connection between an Arcadian, pre-English past and an American future of progress and expansion. Despite the reality of the constant friction, violence, and overt hostility between the whites and the Indians on the American continent, revolutionary Americans, in their effort to project a new national identity distinct from England,²³ prepared the ground for a shift of focus from the historical reality of their relationship with the Indians to the “mythologization” of the Indian as representative of America’s pre-colonial past and the Edenic wilderness of the New World.²⁴ The latent fear of the “other” culture, already imagined and expressed in the contradictions and allegories of European colonialist ideology, was now carefully contained within the abstractions of the American emerging political rhetoric of republicanism. In the rapidly developing concept of American nationalism, a blurring of boundaries separating “self” and “other” became central to the formation of new cultural distinctions that provided a new and crucial framework through which the binary of a European “self” and an American “other” would be essentially redefined. The American colonists sought to articulate a revolutionary identity through the symbolic figure of the Indian that could be rhetorically incorporated into the new society and culture they hoped to inaugurate. In the national conflict between England and America, the line separating the “self”/civilization and the

23. This idea of distinction or difference, which was widely emphasized during the revolutionary years, drew extensively on various ideological sources that ranged from classical republicanism to the millennial aspect of Puritan philosophy and the thought of the Enlightenment. This combination of ideologies framed the political rhetoric of American nationality and marked the progress of America from theocracy to republic.

24. This idea might be regarded as the beginning of the creation of a larger ideological framework, which incorporated the Indian into a politically expedient mythic pattern of American society. By the end of the 18th century, the contradictory representation of the Indian, who somewhat facetiously came to be called “noble savage,” was readily incorporated into the American nation’s political mythology and actually aimed to reconcile the two distinct and sharply contrasted discourses surrounding the presence of the Native Americans. On the one hand, the Indian’s “savagery” was celebrated as a return to America’s Arcadian landscape, while, at the same time, seen as obstacle to progress and civilization. It was the Indian as symbol – the mythologized Indian – that served the political and ideological exigencies of the American nation. The real Indian was already beginning to lose his own cultural identity. For the exclusionary practices of the American political ideology, see Timothy Powell, *Ruthless Democracy: A Multicultural Interpretation of the American Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2000).

“other”/savagery was no longer fixed but shifting and, with it, national self-definition, for the sake of an alternative political discourse that eluded racial identifications and aimed at creating a sense of national unity through the celebration of the new land’s purity, naturalness, and freedom.



Figure 5. *Companion* (1768). Anonymous

In this sense, the Indian woman’s dominant presence in the revolutionary cartoons and the emerging national consciousness of the Americans bridged the liminal space of cultural difference between a colonialist “self” (white) and a colonized “other” (Indian). At once “self” and “other,” the Native American woman functioned as both sign and spectacle in the national imagination of social and moral regeneration. By elaborating on the image of America as a virgin land, a “New Eden” and a

“New Canaan,” the political theorists of the revolution underscored the universal role of the new nation as arbiter of liberty, justice and morality, while they successfully played up the distinction between a freedom-loving, virtuous people and a tyrannical, corrupted European political system. This notion is consistently reflected in the revolutionary cartoons as the moral energy that lies in the subtext of their visual rhetoric justifies the American revolution on the basis of a great contrast between a decadent, European civilization and a natural, uncorrupted America whose domestic values of simplicity, virtue and liberty are at stake. For example, one of the earliest cartoons, which was published anonymously in 1768 as “Companion” to the “Colonies Reduced” (Fig. 5),²⁵ juxtaposes an innocent America with the cunning and manipulative political forces of Europe. This cartoon shows a sinister amalgamation of aggressive acts that revolve around the feminized representations of America and England. More specifically, Lord Bute exposes Britain by holding up her skirt while stabbing her at the back of her neck and inviting Spain to “strike home.” At the same time, Britain has grabbed America by one of her feathers and is about to attack and impale her with her raised spear. The innocent America runs apprehensively into the arms of France, who has only been waiting for this opportunity to become “de grande Monarque indeed.” In the foreground, a snake, symbolic of America after Benjamin Franklin’s famous 1765 “Join or Die” cartoon, tries to bite Britain.²⁶ This explicit iconography of violence may be traced to the cartoon’s obvious aim to propagandize as well as interpret political scenarios.²⁷ As we focus on the allegorical codes of the cartoon’s political meaning, the physical violence directed against the female

25. “The Colonies Reduced” was published in *Political Register* in August 1768. It is not clear, though often asserted, that Benjamin Franklin designed the cartoon himself. It presents England lying on the ground with her severed arms and legs – all named after American states – around her. The political message contained in the cartoon is that in the long run it would be Britain herself who would suffer from alienating her colonies. She would “slip from her perch on top of the world and reduced to beggary” (Jones, p. 32).

26. B. Franklin’s best-known print was designed as a warning to the colonies to stand united both in the struggles against the Indians and in the political conflict against England. This idea was imitated by a number of cartoonists. For example, in 1782, Thomas Gillray created “The American Rattle Snake,” which shows a snake coiled around British soldiers.

27. As has already been argued, these images correlate political issues with threatened sexual violence. Political theorist Anne Norton explores the concept of sexuality as political in nature and argues that the source of those passions, appetites, and institutions that bind the individual to politics is sexuality. Cf. Anne Norton, *Reflections on Political Identity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1988), p. 38.

body becomes the aesthetic representation of precisely this political meaning. For example, the violated body of Britain stands for the national vulnerability of England and her political fate if she wages a war against her colonies. On the other hand, the bewildered America, who seeks the protection of France and Spain in her attempt to avoid the fury of Britain, jeopardizes her own future as an independent nation as she unconsciously yields to eventual victimization and exploitation by European forces.



Figure 6. *The Able Doctor, or America Swallowing the Bitter Draft* (1774). Anonymous

The persistent representation of the Native American woman as the victim of physical violence in the majority of the political cartoons of the time, substantially ameliorated her 16th-century image as a threatening, cannibalistic “other,” and largely justified the Americans’ decision to rebel. Here, the violence and coercion that characterized the colonial invasion of the new land takes on nationalist connotations and a new political meaning. Still representing the major conflict between Europe and the New World, the Indian woman is increasingly becoming closely identified with an American “self” that struggles for national independence from the tyranny of an English/European “other,” while her body is no longer regarded as the source of both fascination and fear but as the living incubator of the uniquely Ameri-

can values of innocence, virtue and liberty. In the American imagination, the Indian woman is transformed not only into the symbolic register of national conflict but also into the site where the American changing political ideology would be inscribed. For example, in one of the most popular cartoons of the revolutionary period, *The Able Doctor, or America Swallowing the Bitter Draft* (1774), the figure of the Indian woman presents the essential conflict between America and England not only in political terms but also in terms of right and wrong, virtue and vice (Fig. 6). The ethical connotations are obvious as a decadent, over-civilized Europe surrounds and victimizes the innocent, uncorrupted America. In this cartoon, which was inspired by the Parliamentary passage of the Tea Act (1773), America, as an Indian woman, lies helpless on the ground, her arms held and her legs restrained, while Lord North, who has grabbed her by the neck, forces tea down her throat. The prospect of impending political/military violence, conveyed through the image of Boston being cannonaded in the background and the torn Boston petition for the removal of Hutchinson in the foreground, merges with the explicit physical/sexual violence against the body of the Indian woman in a scene that resembles a gang rape. As America is immobilized on the ground, the man who holds her feet lifts her skirt and appears to be peeking at her genitals. The kings of France and Spain look on with interest, while Lord Bute wields his sword, a phallic object that suggests a conjoining of military and sexual violence.

The symbolic violence and sexuality that accompany America's national image become the primary means of signifying power relations and competing ideologies. From her position as the prostrate victim of violence and voyeurism, as the silenced object of exchange – not so much between colonizer and colonized, but between Europe/England and a more abstract concept of “Americanness” – the Indian woman enacts elements of the emerging republican thought of the Americans in terms of ideological commitment and ethical conduct. As an increasingly domesticated “noble savage” image, the Indian woman becomes the bond that ties the Americans to the potential of the new land and unites them in their search for a new beginning, a new national and cultural identity.

This is probably the reason why, with the outbreak of the military conflict with England, America began to be portrayed as essentially assertive and unyielding. As the nation moved toward the longed-for independence, the image of the Native American woman gained both physical power and speech. In the anonymous *The Female Combatants* (Fig. 7), one of the first major military events of the revolution, the battle of Bunker-Hill, is symbolically transferred onto the powerful conflict between the female figures of America and England. The iconography of

this cartoon conjoins political and familial tensions in the stressful business of national violence.²⁸ America as an Indian woman punches her mother in the face, thus showing her growing power and asserting her independence, while vehemently declaring “Liberty Liberty for ever Mother while I exist.” England, on the other hand, appears more static and on the defensive, though verbally abusive: “I’ll force you to Obedience you rebellious Slut.”

America is the daughter who has grown insolent and disobedient, and Britain the mother who tries to discipline and control her. In the British context, the representation of the national conflict as a family quarrel falls within the colonial paradigm of parent-and-child relationship. Moreover, the use of the word “slut,” to indicate the daughter’s increasing boldness and impudence, has a direct reference to the sexual licentiousness and loose morals of a female “other.” The sexuality of the Native American woman is closely linked to a colonial scenario of political or revolutionary license. For the British, the racial and sexual connotations of this cartoon underscore the essential “otherness” of the Native American woman and, by inference, the continent itself. On the other hand, for the Americans, rebellion becomes more readily justifiable within the context of this powerful mother-daughter conflict as England has proved an oppressive mother who repeatedly tyrannized her child. The symbolic violence and the sexuality of the female Indian are screened through an understanding of the Americans’ undisputed family bond to England in terms of heritage and civilization, as well as an acknowledgement of their right to filial disobedience against an abusive mother. As England increasingly becomes the “other,” America, as an Indian woman, becomes the “self,” an image that absorbs race, gender, and sexuality into the emerging concept of a distinct national identity.



Figure 7. *The Female Combatants* (1776). Anonymous

28. By figuring the national bodies through those of a Native American woman and her European (m)other, the cartoonists successfully combined politics with domesticity, apparently aiming at enhancing emotionalism and bounding up domestic concerns with the national project.

Unlike her 16th-century counterpart, the female Indian in the revolutionary mentality of the Americans is turned into a figure that cannot be easily subdued by the thrust of European power and culture, but appears determined to resist the inequitable imperialistic schemes of Europe/England. Her increasing power and aggression no longer stem from her threatening cannibalistic nature, but are the result of a painful process of development and national awareness. It is the Indian woman's struggle for the higher ideals of freedom and independence from European oppression and victimization that transforms her image and, with it, the Americans' identity from colony to nation. It is within this context that the Americans managed to work toward an expiation of any vestiges of guilt for the colonial invasion of the New World as they increasingly considered themselves an integral part of their natural environment. In the American national mythology, the image of the Indian woman began to serve as a critique of European social and moral decadence, as a celebration of the innocence and purity of the new land and the triumph of the ideals and values of the new nation.

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- Figure 2. *America* (early 18th century). De Launay. See Honour, p. 111.
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Gabriella Hartvig

János Batsányi's Early Translations of Ossianic Poems

"The Death of Oscar"

The translation of "The Death of Oscar" is János Batsányi's second Ossianic work published in *Magyar Museum* (1788/1789), and the only one among the altogether seven extant fragments in which he experimented with the hexametric form. Although two Hungarian scholars of Ossian in the early 20th century, Gusztáv Heinrich and Sándor Maller, do point to Michael Denis's rendering as a possible source, the critical editors of Batsányi's complete works, Keresztury and Tarnai, believed the poem could not be found among Denis's Ossianic translations and thus located two German prose translations as source-texts. This paper, besides offering an explanation of why Batsányi chose this poem, aims to prove through a close textual analysis that the main source for his translation was Denis's Latin hexametric poem, "Mors Oscaris." As the textual analysis shows that even if Batsányi, despite his own established rules of translation, followed Denis almost verbatim, he did enrich and paraphrase the original and probably made the poem more available to the Hungarian reader.

To the pages of the printed version of his translation of "The Death of Oscar" in the literary quarterly *Magyar Museum* (1788–89) Batsányi attached a postscript with the following remark:¹

As regards this little piece of translation: I myself do not find it perfect. I only wanted to make an attempt to see how the Hungarian *hexameter* suits Ossian's poems. Perhaps it would be best to translate the whole of Ossian

1. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Howard Gaskill for his invaluable and timely professional help throughout my work, and for providing me with Petersen's text; to László Jankovits, for his help with the Latin text and also to Mária Kurdi and Noémi Najbauer for a careful reading of my paper. All the English translations in the text are mine.

(as Denis did) in this metre. Thus the dignity and unparalleled beauty of our language would shine out most nicely. However, even though I may have the skills, I do not have the time for it.²

Later he wrote the following note on the margin of the poem, in his own copy of the journal: “It was a mistake! I learned only too soon how wrong I was.”³ What happened between the printed hexametric version and Batsányi’s private withdrawal of his translation? It is the debate about the poetic form of translation which the present essay discusses focussing on Batsányi’s hexametric translation of “The Death of Oscar,” a poem which is originally attached to “Temora: An Epic Poem” in *Fingal* in James Macpherson’s 1765 edition, *The Works of Ossian*. I would like to highlight the shift in Batsányi’s concept of his translating the Ossianic poems, which also marks the transition from what is called Latinized Classicism to a new trend, one that we may label early Romanticism. The fact that he never turned to the hexametric form in his Ossianic translations again may prove that this form was judged as anachronistic and ill-fitting in the Romantic phase of the European, especially German, reception of Macpherson’s works.

Scholars have identified various possible source-texts for the translation. The editors of Batsányi’s complete works, Dezső Keresztury and Andor Tarnai, believed the poem could not be found among Michael Denis’s Ossianic translations and thus located two German prose translations as source-texts. To support the above view on the paradigm shift in the concept of Ossianic translations, this paper also aims to prove, through a close textual analysis, that Batsányi in fact relied most heavily on Michael Denis’s Latin hexametric translation of the poem in his own translation of “The Death of Oscar” and decided only later to employ more modern poetic forms in his translations. The oddity of the first published translations of Ossianic poetry in Hungary is that neither “Ossian’s Last Song” nor “The Death of Oscar” belong to the official corpus of the *Works of Ossian*: the first is an invention by Edmund von Harold, the second appears in a note in the 1765 edition, only to disappear from later editions even as Macpherson himself questioned its being an authentic piece.

2. János Batsányi (trans.), “Oskár’ halála,” *Magyar Museum* 1.3 (1788/89) 197–200, p. 200.

3. Quoted in Sándor Maller, *Ossian Magyarországon 1788–1849* (Debrecen: Tisza István Tudományegyetem, 1940), p. 11; Dezső Keresztury and Andor Tarnai, eds., *Batsányi János összes művei*, vol. 1 (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1953), n. 532; Dezső Keresztury, “The First Hungarian Translator of Ossian,” *The New Hungarian Quarterly* 4.12 (1963) 163–72, p. 167; also quoted in Sándor Varró, “Batsányi János születési napja,” *Vasárnapi Újság* (1869), p. 703.

"The Death of Oscar"

When in the autumn of 1759, John Home asked James Macpherson to choose a poem from his collection of Gaelic verse and translate it into English, he was rather reluctant to carry out the task. Finally persuaded, he chose a poem from the large storehouse of his memory, the one in which Ossian relates the story of Oscar, who kills his best friend Dermid then, unable to bear the burden of his shameful act, asks his love, Dargo's daughter, to kill him. She then pierces her own heart. Macpherson's talent in translating "The Death of Oscar" secured his future fame. Home was so enthusiastic about the translation that he immediately showed it to his friends and travelled to Edinburgh to present it to Hugh Blair, among other literary figures. Despite Macpherson's emphatic refusals, Blair insisted that the young poet continue translating Gaelic poetry. As Fiona Stafford quotes, "The popular image of Macpherson as a skilful swindler, setting out to make a fortune from a literary hoax, is hard to reconcile with the descriptions of what actually happened."⁴ Macpherson's unwillingness can partly be attributed to his fear that the "high spirit," genius and crudity of Gaelic poetry can neither be reproduced, nor enjoyed in the English language. Another reason for his refusal may have been, that his "Highland pride was alarmed at appearing to the world only as a translator,"⁵ a fear that haunted the first Hungarian translator of Ossian's complete works, Ferenc Kazinczy, as well. "The Death of Oscar," the very first piece that he handed over to Home, thus became a milestone in Macpherson's literary career procuring him the ambiguous title of the greatest literary "charlatan" as well as the greatest mediator between Gaelic and English culture.⁶

The *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, fifteen pieces altogether, appeared in June 1760, "The Death of Oscar" being the seventh fragment. Blair notes in his Preface that the translated fragments have their authentic sources in Gaelic poetry and Macpherson offers a faithful rendering of them.⁷ The significance of the seventh

4. Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), pp. 79–80. Stafford quotes from a letter, dated January 18 1762, by George Laurie, minister of Loudon, originally quoted in Malcolm Laing, ed. *The Poems of Ossian* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1805), vol. 1, p. xv.

5. Also quoted in Stafford, p. 80.

6. See Fiona Stafford, "Introduction," in Howard Gaskill, ed. *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003 [1996], hereafter: *PO*), v–xviii, p. xv.

7. *PO*, p. 6.

fragment is that it reappears, in a revised form, again as a footnote in “Temora,” a poem inserted as a lesser piece in Macpherson’s first coherent composition *Fingal* (1762) compiled after his journeys to the Highlands. At the same time, it is missing from the completed epic *Temora* published the following year in eight books⁸ and is also left out in the famous 1773 edition, the *Poems of Ossian*⁹ probably because, by that time, Macpherson himself found this version of the story inauthentic and not of Ossian’s own composition. Nevertheless, “The Death of Oscar” lived on in foreign translations, so much so, that it was the second piece to be translated into Hungarian.

Oscur appears as the son of Ossian in the seventh fragment, however, in the poem “Temora” Oscar is presented in a different manner and with a different lineage.¹⁰ Macpherson’s explanation of this change in a note is worth recalling because parts of it will later be quoted verbatim by foreign translators: “One of the Fragments of Ancient Poetry lately published, gives a different account of the death of Oscar, the son of Ossian. The translator, though he well knew the more probable tradition concerning that hero, was unwilling to reject a poem, which, if not really of Ossian’s composition, has much of his manner, and concise turn of expression. ... Though the translator thinks he has good reason to reject the fragment as the composition of Ossian; yet as it is, after all, still somewhat doubtful whether it is or not, he has here subjoined it.”¹¹ Howard Gaskill finds it extraordinary that Macpherson “should still have been ignorant of the authentic traditions about the death of Oscar when he presented the poem to John Home in the autumn of 1759.”¹² The source-texts of Batsányi’s translation by Michael Denis, Edmund von Harold, and Johann Wilhelm Petersen are all translations of the later “official” version, not the original fragment. Macpherson’s last sentence about the possible inauthenticity of “Oscar’s Death” might explain why the poem is placed separately from the rest of Ossianic poetry, either in an appendix as in Harold’s or Denis’s translation or among other, non-Ossianic poems such as in Joseph von Retzer’s collection of Denis’s own poems.

8. *PO*, p. 415, note 25.

9. In fact, the poem as a footnote to “Temora” is missing from all subsequent editions: I am grateful to Howard Gaskill for these pieces of information.

10. For the authentic ballad sources of the first Book of *Temora* and “The Death of Oscar,” see Derick S. Thomson, *The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson’s ‘Ossian’* (Edinburgh, London: Oliver and Boyd, 1952), pp. 59–67, and also Donald E. Meek, “The Gaelic Ballads of Scotland,” in Howard Gaskill, *Ossian Revisited* (Edinburgh: EUP, 1991), pp. 19–48.

11. *PO*, p. 156, note.

12. *PO*, p. 459, note 36.

Macpherson's note might also explain the fact why Denis decided to translate it into Latin instead of German, which may, in turn, have inspired Batsányi to choose this poem over others in order to try his hand at hexametric translation.

"I wanted to be the bard of my Hungarian nation. . ." **Batsányi's Rules**

By the Hungarian reader Michael Denis (1729–1800), or "Sined" (Denis read backwards), as he was perhaps better known in his time through his adopted bardic name, a Jesuit poet and bibliographer, is remembered today as the earliest translator of the complete poems of *Ossian* into German. His hexametric rendering served as a source for quite a few Hungarian translators. The first two volumes of his *Die Gedichte Ossians eines alten celtischen Dichters* appeared in Vienna in 1768 with Trattner, the third volume, in which the Latin translation "Mors Oscaris" can be found,¹³ in 1769. Dávid Baróti Szabó, one of the editors of *Magyar Museum* writes in his memoirs that he began to write metrical poetry in 1773, after being encouraged by one of his fellow Jesuits "to follow the example of Klopstock and Sined."¹⁴ He was surprised to see how much better suited the Hungarian language was to hexameters than was the German.¹⁵

Why Denis chose to render the rough and sublime prose of Macpherson's poems into the smoothly flowing metres of Virgil he explains in his often quoted "Vorbericht."¹⁶ By placing Ossian side by side with Homer and Virgil, he expresses his wish to elevate Macpherson's poems to the heights of heroic poetry. Impressed by their sublimity, he insisted that only the most solemn poetic diction would convey their resemblance to the greatest of the epic poems. Being a student of the Latinate-Humanistic tradition he could not but follow the strict rule of the hierarchy of poetic forms in which the 'epopeia' is defined as the most heroic genre to be represented in the highest poetic form, the hexameter.¹⁷ As Rudolph Tombo remarks, "The hexame-

13. Michael Denis (trans.), *Die Gedichte Ossians, eines alten celtischen Dichters*, 3 vols, (Wien: Trattner, 1768/69), vol. 3, pp. 181–85.

14. Quoted in András Kecskés, *A magyar verselméleti gondolkodás története* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1991), p. 131.

15. Kecskés, p. 131.

16. Quoted, among others, in Rudolph Tombo, *Ossian in Germany* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1901), p. 125.

17. Ruprecht Wimmer, "Michael Denis und seine Ossianübersetzung," *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 28 (1987) 27–47, p. 34.

ters lend an air of stateliness and dignity to the poems and give them more the air of a classic. What is more, the novel introduction of hexameters evoked a lively discussion and so stimulated the popular interest in Ossian. The translation became a model for the school of the bards, most of whom derived their knowledge primarily from the version of their revered confrère.”¹⁸ In Hungary, Ossian’s hexametric translation is inseparable from the traditions of Latinate Classicism, the Jesuit circle of Austrian poets to which Denis belonged, and Milton’s Austrian and Hungarian reception. Denis’s admiration for Milton and Klopstock is well known; he chose the hexameter in imitation of Klopstock’s *Der Messias* as the most appropriate poetic form for the German *Ossian*.¹⁹ Batsányi’s, and later Kazinczy’s ambitious project to translate the whole of the poems of Ossian grew out of the aspiration to follow the example of first the Austrian then the German reception of Macpherson’s work. One of their earliest steps was to start a literary journal in 1788 modelled on *Deutsches Museum*²⁰ with the purpose in mind of cultivating the Hungarian language.

When founding *Magyar Museum* together with Ferenc Kazinczy and Dávid Baróti Szabó, Batsányi, inspired by Denis,²¹ asked the latter – Szabó was an ex-Jesuit poet and could thus be expected to approach the clerical subject with heightened sensitivity²² – to translate Milton from Ludwig Bertrand Neumann’s abridged Latin hexametric version. This same Neumann had also translated *Der Messias* into Latin hexameters.²³ Batsányi kept the task of translating *Ossian* for himself, and Kazinczy decided to render Klopstock’s epic poem into Hungarian. Milton and Ossian share the features of sublimity, both of them fall outside the conventions of classic epic poetry and their reception in Hungary conforms to the different theories of translation partly voiced on the pages of *Magyar Museum*. Batsányi explains the principles (in “Tóldalék,” an Appendix) of his own translation of the first Ossianic poem that he publishes, “Ossian’s Last Song”:

18. Tombo, p. 125.

19. Tombo, p. 120; see also Wolf Gerhard Schmidt, ‘Homer des Nordens’ und ‘Mutter der Romantik.’ *James Macpherson’s Ossian, zeitgenössische Diskurze und die Frühphase der deutschen Rezeption* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), Vol. 1, 545–68, p. 548.

20. Kecskés, p. 127.

21. See Sándor Fest, *Angol irodalmi hatások hazánkban Széchenyi István fellépéséig* (Budapest: MTA, 1917), p. 66.

22. Keresztury, p. 166.

23. Andor Tarnai, “A deákos klasszicizmus és a Milton-vita,” *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 63.1 (1959) 67–83, p. 77.

If ever I can achieve any success, I owe it to my rules or, better said, to my inclination led by those rules. That is, before I set out to prepare my translation, I tried to learn about and become familiar with all the features of Ossian. Then, during my translation, I adopted the different translations in a way that, when comparing them, I would possess each of his thoughts, each of his feelings and expressions, inasmuch as possible in my own language, word by word, phrase by phrase: to translate *Ossian* so authentically, faithfully and well that anyone, having read and known him in another language, would find in him a similarly sublime, pathetic, intense and forceful singer.²⁴

An earlier essay by Batsányi, "On Translation," appears in the first quarter of *Magyar Museum*, introducing "Ossian's Last Song." His rules reflect the precepts of Latinate Classicism, the adoption of antique verse forms.²⁵ The most debated principle among his rules was that a worthy translation ought to be "the exact and best grasped image of the original, that is, all that is in the original, no less, no more, must be translated and in the same order. Thus the translator ought not to add nor take away from the original."²⁶ It also means, as his opponents pointed out, that the translation should never improve on its original. In his defence in the third quarter of the journal, Batsányi draws a parallel between the original and its translation: "I commonly consider the translation of books from one language into another similar to preparing a copy of a painting."²⁷ In other words, the copier should add nothing to the painting because then he would produce a different picture, not a copy of the original. Baróti Szabó's translation of Milton from the Latin elicited severe criticism from Batsányi's opponents who questioned the form and also the quality of the translation. As it appears from his essays on the nature of good translations, this quarrel influenced his own Ossianic renderings as well. Batsányi, when defending both Baróti Szabó's Miltonic translation and his above mentioned principle about the necessity of a faithful translation, sets his method against József Rájnis's borrowed concept of emulation according to which the translation purports to compete with the original. However, Batsányi, as Tarnai remarks, identifies this kind of competition as imitation not translation.²⁸

24. János Batsányi, "Tóldalék," [Appendix] *Magyar Museum* 1.3 (1788/89) 271–348, p. 321.

25. Keresztury and Tarnai identify Batsányi's main source to his essay in Johann Christoph Gottsched's *Ausführliche Redekunst* (Leipzig, 1759).

26. János Batsányi, "A' fordítástról," *Magyar Museum* 1.1 (1788/89) 6–19, p. 10.

27. Batsányi, "Tóldalék," p. 306.

28. Batsányi, "Tóldalék," p. 316, also see Tarnai, p. 78.

In his Ossianic prose translations Batsányi faithfully and avowedly followed his own rules: as he explains in his defence, he published the translation of “Ossian’s Last Song” with the express purpose of illustrating his principles through an example.²⁹ His concept of translation, to revise his own text as soon as he could get hold of a newer foreign translation, complied with the contemporary method of consulting all the available foreign editions. Maybe that is the reason why, as he hints several times in his letters, the full publication of the poems never materialized although he was possibly ready with the whole of *Ossian* in prose as early as the 1790s. What we now have is seven pieces, four of which he prepared in his Kassa years. Out of these four three were published in *Magyar Museum*, and Keresztury and Tarnai found an additional piece, a few lines from the first book of *Fingal*, in manuscript. As Batsányi always signed his own copies, his critical editors knew which foreign editions he possessed: the second, revised edition of Denis’s translation which also contains his own bardic songs, *Ossians und Sineds Lieder* (6 vols. 1784), the second edition of *Die Gedichte Ossians des celtischen Helden und Barden* by Edmund von Harold (1782), and Johann Wilhelm Petersen’s *Die Gedichte Ossians neuverteuschet* (1782).³⁰ We can reconstruct, based on his correspondence with the Baron Gedeon Ráday, when and in what order he got hold of the copies in his possession during the period he spent in Kassa. The two earlier pieces appearing in *Magyar Museum* may have been of special interest for him, each for a different reason. “Ossians Letztes Lied” was published in an “Anhang,” together with “Bosmina” and “Ossians Lied nach der Römer Niederlage,” with Harold’s claim that they were newly discovered Ossianic pieces. “Der Tod Oscars,” found at the end of the second volume of Harold also has a footnote in which he calls attention, after Macpherson, to the assumed inauthenticity of the poem.³¹ Denis, however, explains in a footnote why he decided to translate the piece into Latin rather than German:

29. Batsányi, “Tóldalék,” p. 320.

30. Keresztury and Tarnai, pp. 527–30. The critical editors find it improbable that Batsányi possessed Melchior Cesarotti’s Italian translation when translating Carthon (see Keresztury and Tarnai, p. 532): I have discovered two copies in the National Library with Batsányi’s own signature on the title pages, the 1772 edition of *Poesie di Ossian* (4 vols, under the classification number of “P. O. rel. 307 w”: it even contains Batsányi’s handwritten notes on pages xvii to xxii) and a newer edition from 1805 (“P. O. rel. 311 d”).

31. Edmund von Harold (trans.), *Die Gedichte Ossian’s eines alten Celtischen Helden und Barden*, vol. 2 (Mannheim, 1782), pp. 286–93.

Ich habe dieses Gedichtchen ins Latein übersetzt. Es ist kurz, und am Ende des Bandes. Lesern, die kein Latein verstehen, oder lesen wollen, verschlägt nichts. Kenner werden vielleicht mit mir begierig seyn zu sehen, wie einem celtischen Barden die römische Toga lasse. Sie werden aber auch gleich bemerken, dass mir der Stoff mehr den Ton der ovidianischen Verwandlungen, als der Aeneis angegeben habe.³²

In an undated letter, in which he talks about the preparatory works of the second quarter of *Magyar Museum* (it means that it must have been written sometime in the first half of 1788) Batsányi adds in a postscript that, “I have not gained enough confidence yet to lay my Ossian before your judgment. I have only translated a part from its old [edition] and it is not sufficiently polished yet.”³³ This might mean that he had only Harold’s 1782 edition, *Die Gedichte Ossians* but already learnt about his *Neu-entdeckte Gedichte Ossians* (Düsseldorf, 1787). On 23 June, 1788, he writes that, “Your Lordship will see from ‘Ossian’s Last Song’ that I am translating his works from Hárold. I will take Denis only as an aid” (89). He also adds that the Count Joseph Teleki and the Baron Orczy had already approved of the poem in May. In September 1788 he asks for “the fourth volume,” “erga remissionem,” to be borrowed, because it cannot be found in Pest (89). Seven months later (11 April, 1789) he sends the first version of “Oscar’s Death” to the Baron: “I cannot yet send more of Ossian to your Lordship than these few hexametric lines which I was preparing these days. And this is only an early version of it” (90). He also adds that, “it would be nice to translate Ossian in Hexameters if it did not consume so much time” (90). Two months later he asks the Baron for “the fragments of Ossian” (93), probably meaning Harold’s new edition again, the *Neu-entdeckte Gedichte Ossians* (1787) because in its “Vorrede” Harold himself calls his poems “Fragmente.”³⁴ The following month, 4 July, 1789, he writes that he is going to find “Harold’s fragments in Pest or Buda.” Half a year later (7 May, 1790) he informs the Baron that he has already got hold of “the Fragmentary Works of Ossian” (209). In a footnote appended to his translation of “Ossian’s Last Song” he introduces his source in the following words: “Harold

32. Denis, 1768/69, vol. 3, p. 181.

33. Quoted by János Molnár, “Bacsányi János levelei id. Báró Ráday Gedeonhoz,” *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 17 (1907) 82–93, 206–15, p. 84. János Molnár had discovered twenty of Batsányi’s manuscript letters addressed to the Baron Gedeon Ráday and published them on the pages of *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* in 1907.

34. Harold, 1787, p. IV.

recounts of himself that, as he was born in Scotland,³⁵ the present *dialect* of the Celtic language is his native language, and he translated the poems of Ossian into German directly from that [language], namely, “Ossian’s Last Song,” which, together with the other poems, were translated by an anonymous poet of Tübingen who followed his translation.³⁶ It was translated neither by Macpherson nor Denis (who closely followed him). – yet this piece, although it is beautiful, can hardly belong to Ossian’s own work. The same Song, completed with other poems was newly published by Harold, see: *Neu-entdeckte Gedichte Ossians. Düsseldorf. 8. 1787.*³⁷

Batsányi may have chosen this piece to be published as the earliest Ossianic piece in Hungarian for various reasons. For him, it showed the main characteristics of Ossian, the sublime and the pathetic and he probably considered it as authentic as any of Macpherson’s Ossianic transcriptions. Since it was published as a key text to prove his own points in the hottest literary debate on translation, he may also have been careful to choose a piece where the faithfulness of his translation could not be checked against the language of the original, Macpherson’s English (where he was not going to find the poem anyway), which he most likely did not grasp nearly as well he did the German text. As for the supposed original of Harold, even if he thought that there was one, he was safe from the chance of any of his opponents being able to check a Gaelic source. Knowing that the Macphersonian text in itself was merely a translation and in accordance with his views on the correlation between original and copy, he may also have reasoned that translating a newly invented poem from Harold was one step less away from the original than translating from a German rendering of Macpherson, itself a mere copy of the original. That he faced many difficulties and was not a little uncertain about the success of his translation is expressed in his letter to the Baron Ráday: “Ossian has sentences sometimes so difficult that they exhaust one when he tries to express them in his own language. They have the potential of doing the language great service but also of injuring it. I wish someone had translated at least a few lines from his more complicated parts so that I could proceed with mine with greater courage.”³⁸ He also adds that many of the difficulties that can be found in the other poems, cannot be found in “Ossian’s Last Song.”

35. “Harold-is azt mondgya magáról, hogy ónéki, mint született Skótziainak...”: Harold was of Irish origin.

36. The “Anonymous of Tübingen” is Johann Wilhelm Petersen and his 1782 edition. I owe this piece of information to Howard Gaskill.

37. János Batsányi, “Tóldalék,” p. 320, note 38.

38. Quoted by Molnár, p. 89; also quoted in Keresztury and Tarnai, p. 531.

The Comparative Translation of "Mors Oscaris"

Contrary to what the critical editors supposed, a translation, albeit in Latin, of "The Death of Oscar" does appear not only in the first edition of Denis's *Die Gedichte Ossians* (3:181–85) but also in Retzer's *Nachlese zu Sineds Lieder*³⁹ after some odes and elegies with their Italian or German translations.⁴⁰ The poem here is preceded by a Latin elegy on Germany's new poets, side by side with Retzer's German prose translation, "Deutschlands neuere Dichter" in which German bardic poetry is praised.⁴¹ Retzer may have wanted to give an example of the bardic poetry of Austrian Latinate Classicism when he presented "Mors Oscaris" in this context, in the company of a German hexametric version by Anton von Rehbach, possibly a "student" of Denis who also wrote bardic songs.⁴²

What is also characteristic of the choice of "Ossian's Last Song" and "The Death of Oscar" is that one cannot miss the political overtone. Batsányi's oft recalled expression, "I wanted to be the bard of my Hungarian nation"⁴³ shows not only his attachment to Austrian bardic poetry and to Michael Denis, but his political aim as well, which was to support the national opposition against Joseph II. He ends his dedication (part of which is a direct borrowing from Hugh Blair's *Critical Dissertation* via Harold)⁴⁴ to the Baron Orczy, one of the leading figures of the opposition with the following words:

I dedicate [this poem] to your Lordship to show the world that I pay the same deep respect which is paid to you by every patriot in whose veins Hungarian blood runs. I, who have your Lordship's more than fatherly care and encouragement to thank for that in me, which serves or will serve the good of my country, and who can express my own feelings best with the words of *Alpin*.⁴⁵

39. Joseph von Retzer, *Nachlese zu Sineds Lieder* (Wien: Ch. Fr. Wappler, 1784), Vol. 6, pp. 201–205.

40. Tombo lists both appearances in his bibliography: Tombo, pp. 7, 24.

41. Retzer, pp. 186–99.

42. See Karl Goedeke, *Grundriss zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*, vol. 4 (Dresden: Ehlermann, 1916), p. 200; also see J. W. Nagl and J. Zeidler, *Deutsch-Österreichische Literaturgeschichte. Ein Handbuch zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung in Österreich-Ungarn* (Wien, 1914), Vol. 2, p. 71.

43. Quoted in Tarnai, p. 166.

44. See Keresztury and Tarnai, p. 530.

45. Keresztury and Tarnai, p. 180.

There must also be a personal attachment in his choice of the poem: the reason why he went to Kassa was that his “fellow student” and close friend, István Orczy died at the age of eighteen. Batsányi’s earliest poem was written “To the Dying István Orczy” (1785). Alpin’s words might well express the sorrow of the father through the mourning words of Gellamin over the loss of his son, Kolulla and his daughter Sulvira.

“Ossian’s Last Song” and the fragment from *Fingal* were translated in prose, together with his third sample translation “Carthon.” Batsányi may have decided to turn to “Oscar’s Death” because Denis offers it in a Latin hexametric translation and the Latin hexametric line is more familiar in the Hungarian language. In accordance with Hungarian prosody, the accent falls on long syllables, not on stressed ones as in the German language. “The Death of Oscar” remained the only piece in which Batsányi experimented with the hexameter. Having consulted the 1784 edition, he may also have been inspired by the opening dialogue in *Ossians und Sineds Lieder* entitled “Gespräch von dem Werthe der Reime” where in an Appendix Denis offers examples of hexametric verses in various national literatures, Italian, French, Spanish, or English. Surprisingly enough, the third language that he mentions is the Hungarian language: Mihály Vilmányi Líbecz, a sixteenth-century poet, addresses the author, István Székely, on the occasion of his newly published work *Chronica* (1559) in a foreword and recommends the book in hexameters.⁴⁶ Denis’s other Hungarian example is János Molnár, a contemporary of Denis and a fellow Jesuit who wrote the earliest history of art in Hungarian. Denis cites five hexametric lines from his *A régi Jeles Épületekről* (1760).⁴⁷ Molnár appeared in Hungarian neo-Latin poetry as the first to utilize the Hungarian hexameter, even if he was not the one to invent it. The introduction to Molnár’s work, “Bévezető levél,” appeared to be the Catholic manifesto of what later became known as the “versification reform movement.”⁴⁸

Batsányi’s translated fragment is a rendering of the first thirty lines, three passages from Denis’s Latin poem. In April 1789 he sent the first few lines of his verse translation to the Baron Ráday. After citing his own translation of the first two stanzas, sixteen lines, Batsányi concludes his letter with the words, “it would be nice to translate Ossian in hexameters if it did not take up so much time.”⁴⁹ Keresztury and Tarnai establish the sources for this piece in Harold (1782, 2:281–83) and Petersen (1782, 451–53) adding that, besides “Ossian’s Last Song,” “it is missing from Denis as well.”⁵⁰ This

46. Denis 1784, vol. 5, p. xxxii.

47. Denis, 1784, vol. 5, pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

48. Kecskés, p. 132.

49. Quoted in Molnár, p. 90.

50. Keresztury and Tarnai, p. 532.

is rather strange since earlier Ossian scholars such as Gusztáv Heinrich or Sándor Maller do point to Denis as a possible source although the earlier refers to him as a general source to most of his translations besides Harold, and the latter means the hexametric form which Batsányi borrowed.⁵¹ A careful comparison with the sources, however, can prove that he in fact used Denis as the main source-text for his translation and hardly ever turned to Petersen. “Mors Oscaris,” partly because of the verse scheme partly out of poetic freedom, deviates from the original of Macpherson many times whereas the prose translation of Harold is a literal one which follows the original much more closely.⁵² Similarly to Denis, Batsányi also prepared a verse translation therefore it can be expected that his would be a freer translation, too. Thus, whenever he closely follows any of his source-texts closely, it has a greater significance in the identification process than would be the case had he prepared a prose translation. Let me point out some of the most telling parts of Batsányi's translation by offering a few examples:

Macpherson (PO 2003, 530): Why openest thou afresh the spring of my grief, O son of Alpin, inquiring how Oscar fell?

Harold (1782): Warum öfnest du wieder, Erzeugter von Alpin, die Quelle meiner Wehmuth, da du mich fragst, wie Oscar erlag?

Petersen (1782): Warum öfnest du wieder, Sohn Alpíns, die Quelle meiner Wehmuth, da du mich fragst, wie Oskar, Karuths Erzeugter, gefallen?

Denis (1769, 1784): Alpino Sate! Quid refricas mea vulnera quaerens / Oscaris interitum? [Offspring of Alpin! Why do you again tear up my wounds inquiring / Oscar's destruction?]

Rehbach (1784) Meine Wunde, die wird mir geöffnet, Erzeugter von Alpin! / Wenn du mich um den gefallenen Oscar befragest.

Batsányi (1788/89):⁵³ Álpínnak Magzattya! sebem' m'ért szaggatod újra? – / Íme, megínt bánatba hozál, Oskárnak halálát / Kérdezzén töllem! – [Offspring of Alpin! why do you tear up my wound again? / See, you torment me with grief again, / inquiring about Oscar's death!]

51. Gusztáv Heinrich, *Ossian énekei* (Budapest: Franklin, 1903), 71–72; Maller, p. 11.

52. For *Ossians und Sineds Lieder* (1784) Denis used the revised, 1773 edition of Macpherson, *Poems of Ossian* (See Howard Gaskill, “‘Aus der dritten Hand’: Herder and his Annotators,” *German Life and Letters* 54.3 (2001) 210–18, p. 213, note 8; also see Gaskill, 2004, p. 15) and Harold also translated from the 1773 edition (Schmidt, vol. 2, p. 1135).

53. Debreczeni Attila, ed., *Első folyóirataink: Magyar Museum I.* (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 2004), p. 122.

Both Denis and Batsányi cut the first sentence into two, turning the first half of Macpherson's rhetorical question into an address of Ossian. In his first sentence Batsányi follows Denis verbatim. His choice of the vocative sentence as well as the expression "offspring" (Hung. "magzat") is identical with Denis's choice of the Latin "satus" ("offspring") and his address of Alpin. Both Harold and Petersen follow Macpherson in their interrogatory sentence.

In his second sentence, Denis's text differs from Macpherson's in that "grief" becomes "wound" (Lat. "vulnus") and "open afresh" is translated as "tear up again" (Lat. "refrico"). Batsányi gives a verbatim translation of Denis and also follows the Latin text in his rendering the present participle form, "inquiring" (Lat. "quaeror") into an adverbial participle, "kérdeztvén" whereas Harold substitutes the participle form with a subordinate clause, "that you ask me" ("da du mich fragst"). Batsányi's phrase, "Oscar's death," cannot be found either in Denis or in Harold but is closest to Denis's "destruction" (Lat. "interitus"). In his choice of the phrase "torment me with grief" Batsányi may have turned to Harold's "Wehmuth" thus trying to combine the two versions. Petersen, as these examples show, follows Harold so closely in places that are significant from Batsányi's viewpoint that, here at least, there is no sense in differentiating between their texts. Batsányi must have seen Rehbach's text, but in these first sentences, his rendering seems to rely on Denis.

In the first half of Macpherson's second sentence we can find further evidence that Batsányi adheres most faithfully to Denis:

Macpherson: My eyes are blind with tears; but memory beams on my heart.

Harold: meine Augen sind von Thränen erblindet. Aber Erinnerung strahlt an meinem Herzen.

Petersen: Meine Augen sind in Thränen erblindet, aber Erinnerung strahlt in meine Seele.

Denis: Lacrimae mihi luminis usum / Eripuere quidem, / sed mentem tempora prisca / Collustrant. [Though tears took away the use of my eyes / but old times illuminate the mind.]

Rehbach: Die Thränen / Haben mir zwar den Gebrauch des Gesichtes geraubet / doch kehret / Oft das Gedächtniss der Vorzeit in Ossians Seele zurück.

Batsányi: Már könnyeim' árja szememnek / Látását el-vette ugyan, / de az hajdan' időknék / Képe világított elmémben. [Though the flood of tears of my eye / took away its sight / the image of those ancient times beams in my mind.]

Denis, Rehbach, who evidently follows Denis here, and Batsányi deviate from the original of Macpherson in that they translate this part in past tense, use active voice instead of the passive, add “though,” and choose a longer phrase to describe the state of the eyes instead of simply calling them blind. Perhaps for metrical reasons, to make out the six feet of the line, Denis describes tears as taking away “the use of my eyes” instead of sight. Batsányi translates the sentence as “took away the sight of my eye.” However, Batsányi adds one phrase which cannot be found in any of the sources: the addition of “flood” to tears is his own poetic invention – perhaps it is a reminiscence of Harold’s earlier use of “die Quelle.”

In both Macpherson and Harold we can find the expressions “memory” and “heart” whereas Denis and Batsányi use the expressions “ancient times” (Lat. “tempora prisca,” Hung. “hajdan idők”) and “mind” (Lat. “mens,” Hung. “elme”). Denis may have chosen “mens” instead of the heart because it is etymologically cognate with “memoria.” It is interesting that Denis’s choice of words, “tempora prisca” refers to the subject of remembrance, whereas Batsányi’s expansion of the phrase, “the image of ... old times,” is the result of the operation of the mind, that is, remembrance, which recalls Harold’s expression, “Erinnerung.”

The question-word in the third sentence again is identical with the Latin of Denis:

Macpherson: How can I relate the mournful death of the head of the people!

Harold: Wie kann ich den traurigen Tod des Führers der Krieger erzählen!

Petersen: Wie kann ich des Helden kläglichen Tod erzählen?

Rehbach: Ach! wie kann ich dir doch das traurige Schicksal erzählen, /
Welches den Führer des Volkes betraf.

Denis: Quanam potero ratione referre / Tristia fata Ducis populi! [In what way can I relate the fate of the leader of the people!]

Batsányi: Oh Bárde! mi módon / Adgyam elődbe azon Bajnoknak gyászos el-estét? – [O, bard! In what way / shall I relate to you the mournful fall of that champion?]

Batsányi’s “mi módon” is a close translation of “quanam ratione.” Unlike others, with the exception of Rehbach, Batsányi begins this sentence with an apostrophe, “Oh bárde!,” where “bard” is put into the Latin vocative case, as the “e” ending shows, although this case is an example of Latinism in the Hungarian language.

Macpherson’s “the head of the people” becomes “the leader of warriors” in Harold (“Führer der Krieger”) and “the leader of people” (“dux populi”) in Denis and

Rehbach (“Führer des Volkes”), whereas in Batsányi “leader” becomes “bajnok,” a lonely warrior, which creates a totally different atmosphere from any of the other variants, perhaps not without a political overtone. “Death” becomes “fate” (Lat. “*fatum*”) in Denis and “fall” (“*eleste*”) in Batsányi, although a direct translation, “*gyászos halálát*” (“the mournful death”) would also conform to the metrical requirements set up by himself in the note attached to the translation in *Magyar Museum*. Batsányi, in an attached note to the poem, writes about the metrical position of the sound “h”: contrary to the opinion of his opponents, he considers the sound as a fully pronounced consonant, not a mute sound.⁵⁴

In another line, Batsányi again follows Denis so closely that he, rather artificially, upsets the natural word order of the Hungarian language when he sends the beginning of the sentence to the very end:

Macpherson: He fell as the moon in a storm; as the sun from the midst of his course, when clouds rise from the waste of the waves, when the blackness of the storm inwraps the rocks of Ardannider.

Harold: Er fiel, wie der Mond in einem Sturm, wie die Sonne in der Mitte ihres Laufs; wenn Wolken vom Schoose der Wogen sich heben; wenn das Dunkel des Sturms Ardanniders Felsen einhüllt.

Petersen: Gesunken bist du, wie der Mond in einem Sturm, wie die Sonne in der Mitten ihres Laufs, wenn Gewitternacht Ardanniders Felsen umhüllet.

Denis: Ut nimbi lunam rapiunt, ut, ab aequore vasto / Dum surgunt nubes, et rupibus Ardannidae / Nox atra incubuit, medio sol conditur axe: / Sic cecidit. — [As the clouds tear away the moon, as from the vast surface of the sea / then rise the clouds and on the rocks of Ardannida the black night settles on, and hides on the middle axis of the sun: / so fell he.]

Rehbach: So wie die silberne Scheibe des Mondes ein jähes Gewitter / Aus den Augen uns reisst, wie wenn aus den Fluten des Meeres / Wolken sich heben, die schwärzeste Nacht auf Ardannidas / Felsen lieget, die Sonne sich birgt am Himmel: so fielst du, / Oscar!

Batsányi: Szinte miként az homályba-borúlt Hóld el-tünik Égről: / Mint a' Nap, pályája' felénn, el-enyészik előllünk, / 'S Ardannid' szikláji setét felhőkbe merülnek: / Úgy el-esett! — [As the obscured Moon disappears from the sky: / As the Sun, in the midst of its course, vanishes from us, / And the rocks of Ardannid sink into dark clouds: / so fell he.]

54. Batsányi, “Oskár’ halála,” p. 200.

Batsányi faithfully adheres to the sentence structure, built upon a simile, of Denis who, observing the rules of Latin syntax, places one part of the simile, the verb “fell,” at the end of the sentence. The Hungarian rendering of the verbal structure, “úgy el-esett,” follows the Latin in its word order as well as its metre; the foot contains one long and two short syllables (Lat. “sic cecidit”). It should, however, also be mentioned here that in the earlier version, which Batsányi sent to the Baron of Ráday, he puts the verb in the second person singular (Hung. “úgy elesél”) in which he follows Rehbach (“so fielst *du*”). Since this verbal form can only be found in Rehbach’s text one suspects that here, Batsányi relied on Rehbach first, and when he revised his poem, he replaced it with Denis’s use of third person.

The other part of the simile is an ekphrasis, a lengthy description, which is translated by Harold quite faithfully but adapted in various ways by the poets translating in classical metres. Denis is more expansive than Macpherson. Batsányi, similarly to Rehbach, sometimes reduces, sometimes extends the description: Denis interprets Macpherson’s “fell as the moon” through expanding it by an additional verb (Lat. “rapio”). Batsányi follows Denis but also deviates from him in his own version in that he gives the expression “clouds” (Lat. “nimbi”) back in a qualifying adjective, “obscured” (Hung. “homályba-borúltt”), and “tear away” (Lat. “rapio”) with “disappear” (Hung. “el-tűnik”). The part “when clouds rise from the waste of the waves” in Macpherson’s text is missing from Batsányi’s text although he makes use of the motif “cloud” in his description of the darkness covering the rocks of Ardannider.

Macpherson: The blast hath lopped my branches away; and I tremble at the wings of the north.

Harold: Der Windstoß hat mir die Äste entrissen; mich schrecken die Flügel des Nords.

Petersen: Der Windstoß hat mir meine Zweige weggeschlagen; mich verheeren die Flügel des Nords.

Denis: Furore / Turbinis interiit ramorum honor omnis, et alae / Me Boreae exterrent! [In the furious windstorm all the honours of the branches perished, and the wings of Boreas frighten me!]

Rehbach: der Winde / Wüten beraubt sie der Blätter, sie schrecken die Flügel des Nordwinds.

Batsányi: Le-verte / Ágaim’ a’ zivatar; rettentnek az Éjszaki Szélnek / Szárnyai! [The storm has beaten down / my branches; the Wings of the Northern Wind / frighten me!]

In this allegorical description Denis's translation, when compared with his previous renderings, contains less additions. Batsányi's alternates between following Denis' additions and those of Harold. For example, Macpherson's expression "lopped my branches away" is literally translated by Harold, whereas Denis changes it into the longer "all the honours of the branches perished." Batsányi here seems to follow Harold in the simpler rendering. Macpherson's metaphor, "the wings of the north," becomes personified in Denis by turning it into the wings of the pagan-antique god Boreas who symbolizes the North. In the Latin text Boreas can be understood as a common noun, but in the vulgar languages, its variants bring into the text such mythological overtone altogether alien from the world of Ossian. That may be the reason why all the other translators choose the expression "wings of the northern wind" (Germ. "die Flügel des Nordwinds," Hung. "éjszaki szélnek szárnyai"), the demythologised variant of the name Boreas.

The next example might be interesting for a different reason: in this instance, Batsányi adds to the text and offers another understanding of the expression "Morven" which cannot be found either in Harold or in Denis.

Macpherson: But, son of Alpin, the hero fell not harmless as the grass of the field; the blood of the mighty was on his sword, and he travelled with death through the ranks of their pride.

Harold: Der Held, o Alpins Erzeugter, fiel nicht friedlich, wie Graß auf dem Feld, der Mächtigen Blut befärbte sein Schwert, er riß sich, mit Tod, durch die Reihen ihres Stolzes.

Petersen: Mein Jüngling, Sohn Alpins, starb nicht ruhig, wie das Gras auf dem Felde. Der Starken Blut befärbte sein Schwerdt; mit Tod, riß er sich durch ihre stolze Schaaren.

Denis: Non tamen, o Proles Alpini! ut falce resectum / Gramen, iners cecidit. Clarorum sanguine cuspis / Oscaris immaduit, perque agmina robore fisa / Mors Iuveni dabat usque viam. [Fear not, oh, offspring of Alpin! Yet he did not fall so cowardly as the grass cut by the scythe. Oscar's sword was moistened by the blood of the mighty, death made way for the youth through the army trusting in its own strength.]

Rehbach: Aber er fiel nicht unrühmlich, wie Gras durch die Sichel geschnitten, / Alpins Erzeugter! es glänzte die Lanze von Oscar vom Blute / Vieler Tapfern. Er drang sich durch Schaaren der Starken. Verderben / War vor ihm her.

Batsányi: Oh Álpin' Magzattya! nem olly torlatlan halállal / Múlt-ki az éni deli Oskárom, mint a' le-metéltt fű / Morvának mezejénn. Az Erőssek

vére piroslott / Kardgyárol; azokat seregenként vágta halomba, / És valamerre repült, az halál vert útát előtte. – [Oh offspring of Alpin! My fine Oskar did not die an unrevenged death as the cut grass on the field of Morva. The blood of the strong shone red on his sword; he cut them into heaps and wherever he flew, death made way before him.]

The name Morven, the realm of Fingal and his ancestors, etimologically signifies “a ridge of very high hills”⁵⁵ so Morven designates a geographical area, the North-west coast of Scotland. Ossian describes himself using the simile “like an ancient oak on Morven.” Batsányi, although he knew the Macphersonian context, because he explains the name of the place as the home country of Ossian in a footnote in “Ossian’s Last Song,”⁵⁶ translates Morven into the Hungarian “Morva,” which also designates another geographical area to the north of Hungary, Moravia. The second use of “Morva” in Batsányi’s text cannot be found anywhere else; it is his own paraphrasing. For the Hungarian reader, the expression “Morva” possibly recalled the name of the territory “Morvaország,” “Morva country,” situated on the north-western border of contemporary Hungarian Kingdom. “The field of Morva” or “Morvamező” is a historical place where several battles were fought between the period of the Roman times and the Napoleonic wars. In one of these battles “Ladislas [IV.] ... allied himself with Rudolph of Habsburg, the new German king, against Ottokar [Premysl II.]... The defeat and death of the Czech king in the battle of Dürnkrut in 1278 put an end to the imperial pretensions of the Premyslids and established those of the Habsburgs, who now became Hungary’s neighbours.”⁵⁷

It is possible that Batsányi uses “the field of Morva” with a political overtone: the victory of the Habsburgs with the help of the Hungarian king opened the way to Austrian monarchs, centuries later, to become kings in neighbouring Hungary as well. In the 1780s, at the time of Batsányi’s preparing his Ossianic translations, the Holy German-Roman emperor’s, Joseph II’s Germanizing tendencies promoted the vision of the death of the nation, and this may have given rise to the Ossian-cult. Thus Batsányi re-interpreted Morven by alluding to the early beginnings of the prophesied extinction of the nation and simultaneously enriched the metaphoric structures of the Ossianic text. If there exists a hidden meaning in “Oskár’ halála,” it might have been understood by the political opposition: a possible reading of it might have been that the autonomy of the

55. See *PO*, p. 567.

56. Keresztury and Tarnai, p. 181, note.

57. László Kontler, *Millenium in Central Europe: A History of Hungary* (Budapest: Atlantisz, 1999), p. 83.

Hungarian kingdom will not cease without resistance as did that of the Czech kingdom which lost its status as an autonomous province. The final example can be of interest because it again shows, yet again, how much Batsányi relied on the Latin version:

Macpherson: They came on the foe like two rocks falling from the brows of Ardden. *Harold:* Sie fuhren gegen den Feind, wie zwey Felsen, die von Arddens Stirne sich stürzen.

Petersen: Sie stürmten gegen den Feind, zween Felsen ähnlich, die von Arddens Stirne sich stürzen.

Denis: utque / Ardueniis duo saxa iugis excussa feruntur, / Sic illis conferre manum mos. [as when two rocks falling from the brows of Arduen / so they used to fight [the enemy].]

Rehbach: Der Nachdruck / Ihrer Gefechte war so, wie zween der geschleuderten Steine, / Wenn sie sich über die Hügel von Ardden mit Ungestümm wälzen.

Batsányi: 's olly módra rohantak / Ellenségöknek roppantt seregére, miként az / Árdua' bértzéről le-szakadt két szikla. [So they broke in / on the vast army of their enemy / like two rocks fallen from the brows of Árdua.]

Only in Denis and Batsányi do we find the Latinate form of the Scottish mountains, Ardden. Denis's "Arduen" is copied by Batsányi in his use of "Árdua." He also knew the meaning of the Latin expression "arduum," "a steep place" and employed the word counting on its meaning as well.

These above examples serve to prove that Batsányi relied on Denis and used Harold only as an aid. To best describe Batsányi's translation of Denis's Latin poem, we might as well apply Hugh Blair's words of approval of the literariness of Macpherson's translations in the Preface to *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*: "The translation is extremely literal. Even the arrangement of the words in the original has been imitated; to which must be imputed some inversions in the style, that otherwise would not have been chosen."⁵⁸ Petersen does not deviate from Harold in significant places and Rehbach's hexameters, for the most part, could not possibly have been of much help when forming the Hungarian hexametric lines.

Batsányi translated only the first thirty lines of the poem then gave up his hexametric endeavours probably because, as his above cited note testifies, he found the task too demanding: "Even though I may have the skills, I do not have the time for

58. *PO*, p. 6.

it.”⁵⁹ As regards the literary merits of “Oskár’ halála”: we might conclude that the poem is an example of the attempt to prepare Hungarian translations from neo-Latin poets in the period of Latinate Classicism, in this case, from Denis. He probably wanted his translation to even suggest his Latin source. The rendering of “Ossian’s Last Song” from a forged German source and “The Death of Oscar” from a hexametric Latin poem exemplifies what unexpected turns reception can take, the further we move from the place of conception: when Ossian reaches Hungary, an exemplary piece of his poems becomes a hexametric bardic song only to illustrate Batsányi’s skills in translation and to prove that the Hungarian language, similarly to the Latin, is capable of providing metrical poetry. That he wanted to adopt this poetic form of the bardic song and thus to domesticate antique versification in his mother tongue precisely through an Ossianic song was perhaps an unfortunate idea. He himself found the attempt unsuccessful: under the influence of Johann Gottfried Herder, Batsányi later experimented with the iambic form in his Ossianic translations.

Batsányi’s admiration for Herder is well documented: in a letter from 1797–98 to his friend whom he met in Vienna, the Swiss historian Johannes von Müller, he welcomes the news about Herder’s Ossianic translations with an outburst of joy: “Ausserst angenehm ist mir dass Herder den herrlichen Gedanken hat, meinen Geliebten Ossian zu übersetzen – und zwar aus dem Original selbst! – Welch ein Gewinn für mich! für Deutschland! für die ganze litterarische Welt!”⁶⁰ After his Kassa period, when in Vienna, Batsányi not only kept an eye on the latest events in the Ossianic discourse, but he wanted to belong to this company as well, and it was probably Herder’s death that prevented him from becoming part of the European current of reception.⁶¹ Through the influence of the Herderian criticism of Denis’s translation and his own opponents, and the appearance of newer editions in Vienna, he changed his mind: he understood that, when translating the whole of Ossian, his classicist views would not hold. In 1802 he already writes about his conforming to the principle of domesticating in translation: “I want to translate Ossian as the author would have sung had he been Hungarian and lived now (regarding the present

59. Batsányi, “Oskár’ halála,” p. 200.

60. Quoted in Tivadar Thienemann, “Herder és Batsányi,” *Egyetemes Philologiai Közlöny* 38 (1914) 146–48, p. 146. For his friendship with the Swiss historian Johannes von Müller and his letters to Karl August Böttiger and Herder see Thienemann’s invaluable discoveries (1914). Through the mediation of Böttiger Batsányi wanted to order drawings from James Macdonald for his Ossianic translations (147).

61. Batsányi wrote his last letter to Herder on December 25, 1803, not knowing that he had died on the 18th (Thienemann, p. 148).

state of the language).”⁶² Although these shifts in Batsányi’s own views about translation during his Ossianic adventures cannot be assigned to his adherence to a well-defined school, this assimilatory method was characteristic of the French school.⁶³

In the translation of “Mors Oscaris” he deviated from his main rule at the time, namely, that the translator should never add to the text, only copy the original. Despite his conviction, even if he largely followed Denis almost verbatim, he enriched and paraphrased the original in quite a few places and probably made the poem more meaningful in the Hungarian reception, which indicates the power of the Ossianic corpus to inspire complex and intriguing national responses. Batsányi’s “Oskár’ halála,” unknowingly, asserts the autonomy and cultural significance of the translator. Howard Gaskill, in his famous article on “Ossian in Europe” summarizes the early European reception with the following words: “There is certainly some force to the argument that the Ossian which influenced Europe was not in fact Macpherson at all, but respectively Cesarotti, Denis, Le Tourneur, Bilderdijk, etc.: in other words, a hybrid creature mediated through Italian hendecasyllabic *sciolti*, German hexameters, French poetic prose, Dutch alexandrines, not to mention Greek fifteen-syllable lines or Russian four-foot trochaics with dactylic endings.”⁶⁴ Perhaps we may rightly add that János Batsányi’s poetic experiments and the early Hungarian reception of Ossian fully exemplify the contemporary European tendency.

62. Quoted in Keresztury and Tarnai, p. 537.

63. See Gaskill, *The Reception of Ossian in Europe* (London: Thoemmes, 2004), p. 12.

64. Gaskill, “Ossian in Europe,” *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* (1994) 643–78, p. 647.

Júlia Paraizs

Received Text versus Authentic Text

Late Eighteenth-century Choices in Editing Shakespeare

This paper focuses primarily on the editorial activities of George Steevens and tries to answer the radical change in his editorial theory and practice in his Shakespeare edition of 1793. The two editors who dominated Shakespeare editing from the last third of the eighteenth century to the second half of the nineteenth were George Steevens and Edmond Malone, both of them working in the Johnsonian tradition. They also collaborated on a number of Shakespeare editions until the early 1790s, when their new editions became a site of contest. I argue that while Malone stands for the recently established criteria of modern textual scholarship, i.e. the quest to determine the authentic text, the editorial principles of Steevens's 1793 edition embody a recognition of the merits of the received text and the genre best fitting it – the tradition of variorum editing. I suggest that the sudden break may be read as Steevens's attempt to show an alternative to the scholarly editing principles he had helped establish, as well as reinforce the idea that editions are discursive constructs.

The eighteenth century is characterised in the literature as the emergence of a scholarly and theoretically self-conscious tradition of Shakespeare editing.¹ At the heart of this tradition lies Samuel Johnson's Shakespeare edition of 1765. The legacy of this landmark edition lasted for the next fifty years since the two editors who dominated Shakespeare editing from the last third of the eighteenth century to the second half

1. Simon Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen: Shakespearean Textual Criticism and Representations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Barbara Mowat, "The Reproduction of Shakespeare's Texts," in *Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History, from the Restoration to the Present* (New York: Weidenfeld, 1989); Paul Werstine, "Shakespeare" in *Scholarly Editing: A Guide to Research*, ed. D. C. Greetham (New York: Modern Language Association, 1995).

of the nineteenth, George Steevens and Edmond Malone used Johnson's edition as a base text. The first variorum edition (as Johnson's Shakespeare edition of 1765 is often called) generated a number of variorum editions combining the contribution of previous editors and commentators. The first Johnson/Steevens variorum came out in 1773, to be followed by the 1778, 1785 and 1793 editions of Samuel Johnson, George Steevens, and Isaac Reed, culminating in the monumental twenty-one volume edition, in the so called fifth variorum, published in 1803. Edmond Malone published his edition in 1790 which grew into in the equally twenty-one volume Boswell/Malone variorum of 1821 completed by James Boswell after Malone's death.²

Steevens and Malone also collaborated on a number of Shakespeare editions. Malone contributed notes, corrections and his groundbreaking chronology to Steevens's 1778 edition, and in 1780 he published two supplementary volumes (Supplement) to Steevens's 1778 edition. As Andrew Murphy notes "Malone's conception of the Shakespearean editorial process was moulded, in the first instance, in work that he undertook under Steevens's auspices."³ Malone thanked Steevens in his Supplement (1780) for Steevens's commentary on the plays and sonnets, and Steevens also contributed a few notes to Malone's 1790 edition.⁴

The cooperation ended when the 1793 Steevens edition came out as a reply to Malone's Shakespeare edition published in 1790, and Steevens directly attacked Malone's editorial principles. Malone in turn charged Steevens with rejecting the earlier editing principles they both shared. While Malone's 1790 edition is considered to be "the greatest momentum of eighteenth century Shakespearean scholarship" (Walsh), whose editorial work Margreta de Grazia identified as a paradigm shift marking the rupture in the editorial tradition that separates today's editions from the ones preceding him,⁵ the 1793 Steevens edition is seen as an edition ruining Steeven's reputation as a textual critic.⁶

2. Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 323–352 (chronological appendix).

3. Murphy, p. 94.

4. See Arthur Sherbo's and Peter Martin's entry on George Steevens and Edmond Malone respectively in the *Dictionary of National Biography's* online database.

5. Marcus Walsh, *Arguments of Wit and Sense: Eighteenth-Century Literary Editing and the Problem of Textual Knowledge* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2000), p. 12. Margreta de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 6.

6. *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature in 18 Volumes (1907–21)*, Volume V: The Drama to 1642, Part One, "XI. The Text of Shakespeare," ed. A. W. Ward, A. R.

As Andrew Murphy observes “Steevens’s clash with Malone represents, in a sense, the final collision of two different visions of textual scholarship, as the century drew to a close.”⁷ Following this line of thought I argue that while Malone stands for the recently established criteria of modern textual scholarship, the quest to determine the authentic text, the editorial principles of Steevens in his 1793 edition embody a recognition of the merits of the received text and the genre best fitting it, the tradition of variorum editing.

There is a consensus in the literature that both editors contributed to the creation of modern scholarly editing in the late eighteenth century characterised by a systematic collation of recent editions with the early prints (the First Folio and the early quartos), a strong sense of historicity, a reliance on documentary evidence and on the literature of Shakespeare’s age, all in the Johnsonian fashion. Their editorial principles postulated a belief in scientific objectivity and method resulting, in Malone’s words, in “true explication.” Steevens had followed the same principles from the 1760s to the early 1790s and as Nick Groom notes in his introduction to the reprint of the Johnson/Steevens variorum (1995) Steevens’s 1778 edition established “the canons of modern critical method and literary-historical editing.”⁸

Steevens’s rift with Malone in the 1790s, his preference for the Second Folio, for more emendations, a more poetic and interpretative approach as described by Joanna Gondris, Nick Groom and Andrew Murphy may be read as Steevens showing an alternative to the scholarly editing principles he had helped to establish.⁹ This playfulness with editorial principles would certainly fit the profile of the “Puck of Commentators” who is mostly remembered for his hoaxes, mistakes and fabrication of sources as Arthur Sherbo remarks.¹⁰

Therefore instead of interpreting the break with his earlier principles as an orthodoxy I suggest to see Steevens’s return to the tradition of the received text as an

Waller, W. P. Trent, J. Erskine, S.P. Sherman, and C. Van Doren (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons; Cambridge: CUP, 1907–21) <<http://www.bartleby.com/215/1118.html>>; date of acquisition: 21 September 2006.

7. Murphy, p. 94.

8. Nick Groom, “Introduction,” in *The Plays of William Shakespeare* [in ten volumes, with the two supplementary volumes of Edmond Malone, published in 1780], Vol. 1 (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1995), p. v.

9. Joanna Gondris, “‘All This Farrago’: The Eighteenth-Century Shakespeare Variorum Page as a Critical Structure,” in *Reading Readings: Essays on Shakespeare Editing in the Eighteenth Century* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997).

10. Arthur Sherbo, *The Achievement of George Steevens* (New York: P. Lang, 1990), p. 217.

early alternative to the idealisation of the First Folio as an authentic text. The tradition of the received text allows us to see the various early prints and successive editions as constructs conveying varying interpretations. Paul Werstine commended Margreta de Grazia for observing that the First Folio is a discursive construction since she “concludes that in constituting Shakespeare’s canon, the Folio and its preliminaries are not to be read referentially, that is, as delivering ‘information [about the contents of Shakespeare’s canon] that is understood to have an existence prior to and independent of its documentation [in the Folio].”¹¹ Reading Steevens’s return to the received text in a constructivist way will show him as an editor grasping something of the difficulties of reading any Shakespeare edition referentially. This way, exhibiting some traces of non-referential reading, Steevens may also find his way into post-structuralist editorial theory.

What are the main differences between the textual visions of Malone and Steevens by 1790? Malone formulates his charges against Steevens in a letter to Percy, fellow Shakespearean, claiming that Steevens,

after maintaining for near 30 years, that the settlement of the text by a diligent collation of the original copies was a matter of the utmost moment, and that all arbitrary and capricious changes were to be carefully avoided, he on a sudden wheeled round; and finding that by collating the original quartos and the first folio, word for word, I had established a text beyond all controversy, and discovered some 1600 deviations from it, in his and all former editions, he then for the first time maintained, that collation was of no value; that it only served to restore the *blunders* of the ignorant printers and editors of the quartos and folio; that it was impossible Shakespeare should ever have written a line not perfectly smooth and metrical, according to *our* ideas of smoothness and metre; and that therefore, whenever we find a line defective in this particular, we may *add* or *expunge* at pleasure. – Proceeding on this new principle, he has made his last edition the most unfaithful perhaps that has ever appeared.¹²

Steevens is also explicit about the “wheel around”: he declares that “it is time instead of a servile and timid adherence to the ancient copies, when (offending against

11. Paul Werstine, [Book Review on Margreta de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Re-production of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991], in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45.2 (Summer 1994), p. 232.

12. Groom, p. lxiv.

sense and metre) they furnish no real help, that a future editor, well acquainted with the phraseology of our author's age, should be at liberty to restore some apparent meaning to his corrupted lines, and a decent flow to his obstructed versification."¹³ Speaking about the change occurring by 1793 Andrew Murphy notes that Steevens "directly attacked Malone's editorial principles in his "Advertisement" to the edition. Like Capell, Johnson, and indeed Steevens himself in his earlier incarnations, Malone insisted on the priority of the First Folio and he strongly rejected the notion that the Second Folio had any authority. Steevens now reversed his own earlier position, arguing against the elevation of the First Folio and making a case for recognising the merits of the Second."¹⁴

Steevens "in his earlier incarnations" had valued the early prints, the First Folio and quartos and criticised the practice of earlier editors, such as Nicholas Rowe who as Steevens wrote "did not print from the earliest and most correct, but from the most remote and inaccurate of the four folios."¹⁵ In his 1778 edition Steevens pointed out the problem of not choosing the proper base text and not collating it systematically with the early prints "as every fresh editor continued to make the text of his predecessor the ground-work of his own" and collated only when difficulties occurred and therefore "some deviations from the originals had been handed down."¹⁶ Steevens by systematic collation promised a better result: "the number of which [deviations] are lessened in the impression before us, as it has been constantly compared with the most authentic copies."¹⁷ However, as Murphy observes Steevens had not returned to the early prints as a base text like Edward Capell (1767–8) but followed Johnson's tradition of collating the received text passed down by generations of editors with the early prints.

Andrew Murphy points out that after the rift Steevens also defended eighteenth-century scholarly emendations as opposed to Malone's preference of the First Folio readings. Steevens challenges the authenticity of the First Folio readings when he points out the role of the other actors in the process of textual transmission: "we have sometimes the suggestions of a Warburton, a Johnson, a Farmer, or a Tyrwhitt,

13. *The Cambridge History*.

14. Murphy, p. 94.

15. Murphy, p. 91.

16. George Steevens, "Advertisement to the Reader," in *The Plays of William Shakespeare in Ten Volumes with the Corrections and Illustrations of Various Commentators; to which Are Added Notes by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens; The Second Edition, Revised And Augmented* (London, 1778), p. 69.

17. Steevens, p. 69.

in preference to the decisions of a Hemings or a Condell, notwithstanding their choice of readings might have been influenced by associates whose high-sounding names cannot fail? to enforce respect, viz. William Ostler, John Shanke, William Sly and Thomas Poole.”¹⁸ Moreover both Murphy and Steevens catch Malone sleeping: “Despite his heavy emphasis on what he styled the ‘authentic’ text, Malone was still willing, like his predecessors, to make a number of silent changes aimed at regularising the text.”¹⁹ Steevens notes himself in his ‘Advertisement’ that in defense of the Second Folio “no stronger plea can be advanced than the frequent use made of it by Mr. Malone.”²⁰

Questions such as which text to edit and what is the nature of the text to be edited, which is more authentic: a First Folio or a quarto version of a play, what is the hierarchy between the early prints, and the question of the Shakespeare manuscripts are central to the history of Shakespeare editing. It is not surprising that the focal point of both Malone’s and Steevens’s argument centers around it. Paul Werstine points out that successive editions are inevitably sites of competition as “[e]ach editor stages the contest as if it were between the text made familiar to readers by earlier editors (the received text) and the text about to be presented, which is said to be the one that Shakespeare intended.” He continues that “[c]ast in such terms, the process of textual renovation is potentially limitless since there is no documentary record of the plays’ genesis or transmission in manuscript, which might fix limits on the idealized author’s purposes.”²¹ This lack of a metaphysical origin results in the construction of an origin by textual theory producing various hypotheses about the nature of the “lost manuscript” like those of the representatives of New Bibliography in the first half of the twentieth century.

However, as Paul Werstine remarks in his article outlining the editorial history of Shakespeare, “until the twentieth century, most editors and textual critics held out little hope of recovering from the early printed versions what Shakespeare actually wrote.”²² Steevens, for example, in his “Advertisement to the Reader” to the 1778 edition was not concerned with the origin of the prints when he proudly asserted that “the text of Shakespeare is restored to the condition in which the author, or rather

18. Quoted in Murphy, p. 94.

19. Murphy, p. 97.

20. Quoted in Murphy, p. 94.

21. Paul Werstine, “Shakespeare,” in *Scholarly Editing: A Guide to Research*, ed. D.C. Greetham (New York: Modern Language Association, 1995), p. 253.

22. Werstine, p. 253.

his first publishers, appear to have left it.”²³ The statement of Steevens demonstrates that his, and his contemporaries’ focus was laid on the received text, on the way “it was left” to us by Shakespeare or his publishers in its condition(ality).

While, as Barbara Mowat observes, New Bibliography aimed at finding authorial intention and tried to form hypotheses about the lost original manuscript the eighteenth century regarded authorial intentions in a less metaphysical sense.²⁴ As Stephen Orgel argues it was understood more in terms of authenticity, which was bestowed upon Shakespeare. Orgel suggests that the authorized collection of Shakespeare’s plays in 1623 resembles the canonization of the Vulgate by the Council of Trent as “it separated the authentic from the original.”²⁵ The notion of the original is problematic as there are no surviving Shakespearean manuscripts and no evidence that the author oversaw or had full control over the printed edition and yet centuries of scholars bestowed authenticity on the early prints.

One of the fundamental principles of modern textual editing, starting with New Bibliography in the early twentieth century, is to use the early prints, the First Folio of 1623 and the early quartos as copy texts. The presumption is that the closer the text is to the actual production, the more accurately it reflects authorial intentions producing that text. Therefore “printed texts can be arranged into a logical sequence and that the text presumed to be closest to the author’s own original has an authority which outweighs that of all other editions.”²⁶ This proposition was first articulated by Samuel Johnson. As Andrew Murphy points out no wonder that a prominent scholar of New Bibliography, R.B. McKerrow hailed Johnson as the scholar “alone of all the early editors . . . to have seen clearly the principles on which textual criticism of printed books must be based.”²⁷

Despite its claims the Johnsonian editorial tradition followed a different logic. As Murphy notes Johnson did not necessarily follow the principles he articulated and “[t]hough he registered the primacy of the First Folio, he nevertheless did not use it as the foundation for his own edition.”²⁸ Reprints of the First Folio in the sev-

23. Steevens, p. 70.

24. Barbara Mowat, “The Reproduction of Shakespeare’s Texts,” in *Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Margreta de Grazia and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 20.

25. Stephen Orgel, “The Authentic Shakespeare,” *Representations* 21 (Winter 1988), p. 5.

26. Murphy, p. 82.

27. Kerrow quoted in Murphy, p. 82.

28. Murphy, p. 83.

enteenth century and eighteenth-century editions are based on the received text, taking part in a cultural transmission and dialogue of successive editions.

The history of the textual transmission is, at least in the eighteenth century, is the history of the received text. The greatest achievements of late eighteenth-century editing, the editions of Steevens and Malone, have a clear line of succession to the First Folio, which was reprinted with variants as the Second, Third and Fourth Folio (published in 1632, 1663–64, and 1685 respectively). As Paul Werstine reminds us the first major eighteenth century editor, Nicholas Rowe marked up a copy of the Fourth Folio in 1709. Alexander Pope based his edition on Rowe, Theobald used Pope's edition. Johnson turned to Theobald's fourth edition of 1757.²⁹ Steevens used Johnson's, and Malone's 1790 edition relied on the Steevens–Reed edition of 1785. As Simon Jarvis points out Malone used this Steevens edition as a base text and this was collated line by line with the First Folio and those quartos, which Malone regarded as authoritative.³⁰

As much as Malone could not fully detach himself from the tradition of the received text Steevens also saw the drawbacks of basing his edition on the received text as he remarked in his Advertisement of 1778: "Mr Rowe did not print from the earliest and most correct, but from the most remote and inaccurate of the four folios."³¹ We also find that according to Steevens "the first duty of the editor" is "adhering to the old copies," which is, however, not a return to the early prints as copy texts in the sense of New Bibliography but a principle that requires a collation of these early folio and quarto editions with, in most cases, the most recent edition.

Steevens despite his scornful remark about Rowe did not break with the tradition of the received text even though he was aware of the textual importance of the early prints (as Steevens himself published twenty early quartos from the collection of David Garrick in 1766). His 1793 edition is a marked return to the tradition of the received text because it exhibited some apparent advantages in the cultural transmission of the text, and in its capacity of appropriating Shakespeare to the readers. The received text envelopes a recognition of textual change, the changing sensibilities of readers, and the appreciation of accumulated knowledge of successive scholars.

The form which best reflects the cumulative nature of knowledge in the tradition of the received text is *variorum* editing. Steevens from the start of his career advocated a way of collaborative editing, which meant a reliance not only on the work of

29. Werstine, p. 256.

30. Jarvis, p. 185.

31. Steevens, p. 68.

previous editors but also on the expertise of the reading public. In issuing a proposal (dated February 1, 1766) to publish yet another Shakespeare edition only a few months after Johnson's Steevens's strongest argument highlighted the importance of the contribution of the public to editing Shakespeare. Steevens claimed had Johnson "met with the assistance he had reason to expect from the Public, in aid of his own great abilities, all further attempts at the illustration of [Shakespeare], had been as unnecessary as vain" and he continued that "[a] perfect edition of the Plays of Shakespeare requires at once the assistance of the Antiquary, the Historian, the Grammarian, and the Poet" and asked the public to direct their contributions to the publisher.³²

The form which best represents, in the words of Joanna Gondris, the "interpretive comprehensiveness" of eighteenth-century editing is the variorum edition, the peek of the received text tradition as it collects the best attempts of readings, emendations, conjectures in the practice of collaborative editing.³³ As opposed to individual editing the variorum edition testifies to the belief that the editors' contribution to universal neoclassical knowledge is partial. The sense of completeness, argues Joanna Gondris, is sought to be achieved through the variorum form, in the work of one or two editors, aided by several contributors, who published their editions of Shakespeare *cum notis variorum* containing their own editorial insights and commentary from previous editors.

Johnson's 1765 edition has been characterised as the first variorum edition for two reasons. First, while he recognised the competitive edge of Shakespearean textual commentaries of Pope, Warburton and Theobald as Andrew Murphy notes he also "recognised the value of a great deal of the work produced by his predecessors. For this reason, his edition seeks to provide a 'summation' of the best of that material; he includes in his text the prefaces of Pope, Theobald, Hanmer and Warburton, together with Rowe's 'Life' and as many of his predecessor's notes as he felt were useful to his reader. . ."³⁴ This type of collaboration is a more diachronic one aiming at a synthesis of Shakespearean textual scholarship preceding him. Yet the collaborative nature of the variorum edition had also taken a more synchronic dimension since George Steevens contributed forty-nine notes to the appendix of Johnson's 1765 edition.³⁵

32. Quoted by Murphy, p. 90.

33. Joanna Gondris, pp. 123–139.

34. Murphy, p. 84.

35. Sherbo, p. 1.

One characteristic of this editorial method was the bulky nature of the editions as a result of the comprehensive reproduction of previous arguments on textual cruces. As Joanna Gondris shows in her study of eighteenth century variora editions, the variorum page triggered mocking reviews already in the 1780s and 1790s. An article from the *English Review* (1784) charged Johnson with engendering this plenitude of commentary and the bulky volumes ensuing from this practice and laments the consequence of it: “Dr. Johnson, from an excess of candour, and perhaps from a diffidence of the industry he had employed upon the subject, adopted a multiplicity of notes from various writers into his edition. Mr Stevens (sic) has carefully preserved all this farrago, and beside it, we are now treated with the annotations of himself, Dr. Farmer, Mr. Tyrwhitt, Mr Malone etc . . . each of them contradicting him that went before him.”³⁶ The accumulation of notes over time grew exponentially: from the 8 volumes of Johnson 1765 to 21 volumes of Johnson–Steevens–Reed 1803 and Malone–Boswell 1821.

The variorum editions of the second half of the eighteenth century, however, are not characterised by the personal rivalry typical of the first half of the century as in the editions of Pope, Theobald and Warburton. The reproduction of previous commentaries in collaborative editing postulates that knowledge is cumulative, therefore it reproduces the process of reaching (or not reaching) a conclusion, facilitating further discussions in the accumulation of our knowledge about the Shakespeare text. Marcus Walsh also argues that the variorum commentary is by no means additive:

Their methods are based at best on a rigorous dialectic of hypotheses formulation, validation and falsification. That dialectic involves a process of selection of the most pertinent lines of argument, and the most exactly relevant supporting contextual knowledge; what matters is not so much the source of authority – the “voice” – of an argument or of a piece of information, as its hermeneutic cogency and propriety.³⁷

Another fundamental characteristic of the variorum is the lack of an exclusively authorial voice. By reproducing contradictory commentaries, by not always reaching a conclusion the modality of the variorum edition is multivocal and the outcome is many times tentative. Steevens in his Advertisement (1778) explicitly states that “When examples in favour of contradictory opinions are assembled, though no at-

36. Gondris, p. 123.

37. Walsh, p. 15.

tempt is made to decide on either part, such neutral collections should always be regarded as materials for future critics, who may hereafter apply them with success.”³⁸

Groom’s analysis of the debate over the authority of *Pericles* in the *Supplement* of Malone’s to the 1778 Steevens variorum also sheds some light on the importance of process, on articulating diverging opinions and the primacy of dialogue to individual decisions (especially in the light of their repeated experience of being wrong in their editorial practice). Malone thought *Pericles* was written by Shakespeare while Steevens disputed its inclusion in the canon. Malone wrote at the end of the commentary that he and Steevens had “set forward with an agreement to maintain the propriety of our respective suppositions relative to this piece, as far as we were able; to submit our remarks, as they gradually increased, alternately to each other, and to dispute the opposite hypothesis, till one of us should acquiesce in the opinion of his opponent, or each remain confirmed in his own.”³⁹

It seems that the eighteenth-century variorum editor does not assume a position of omniscience. As Arthur Sherbo, the author of the monograph *The Achievement of George Steevens*, points out Steevens could admit “I am dissatisfied with my former explanation;” “in my original attempt to explain this passage, I was completely wrong;” “my conjecture, however, deserves not much attention,” and “I can offer no legitimate explanation of this passage.”⁴⁰ A few of these self-reflective phrases show that Steevens was engaged in a dialogue not only with other editors but also with his own previous editions. The variorum form itself perpetuates the self-reflective commentary. As Joanna Gondris remarks this results in “an extraordinary evenhandedness in these notes, a willingness to admit, or even to supply counterevidence to an editor’s own reading.”⁴¹ This kind of discourse is mostly missing from the editorial tradition we are familiar with, which is more authoritative and result-centred in its practice than today’s theorists would like it to be.⁴²

38. Steevens, p. 71.

39. Quoted in Groom, p. lvii.

40. Sherbo, pp. 208–9.

41. Gondris, p. 125.

42. Stephen Orgel provides a very interesting insight to his own editorial practice as a post-modern textual theorist, to the discrepancy between theory and practice. He confesses in his article “What is an Editor?” “I am the first one to admit that my own practice in my Oxford *Tempest* and *Winter’s Tale* hasn’t done much to take into account my own arguments in “What is a Text?” and the “Authentic Shakespeare,” beyond a determination in the commentary to be true to the genuine obscurity, even incomprehensibility of much of the text, and a

This permissiveness to acknowledge alternative hypotheses about Shakespeare, and openly presenting these dilemmas for the reader, however, should not be interpreted as indeterminacy or a complete lack of authorial voice. As Marcus Walsh asks “Must we really, however, celebrate the variorum editing of Johnson, Steevens and Malone as the tragedy of men who could not make up their minds? These late eighteenth century variorums are not inevitably merely additive, or decidedly multivocal.”⁴³ The stance and voice of the editor in assembling the notes of various commentators, and in making textual and interpretative choices is authorial by definition.

Steevens’s call for the assistance of the reading public in compiling the notes to his editions of the 1770s might also seem to enhance the multivocal nature of his edition. However, he himself declares in the Advertisement to the edition of 1778 that he has the upper hand in editorial matters: “Mr Steevens desires it may be observed, that he has strictly complied with the terms exhibited in his proposals, having appropriated all such assistances as he received, to the use of the present editor, whose judgement has, in every instance, determined on their respective merits.”⁴⁴ He firmly asserts his authority by explaining his rationale of rejecting certain notes: “[t]he majority of these were founded on the supposition, that Shakespeare was originally an author correct in the utmost degree, but maimed and interpolated by the neglect or presumption of the players. In consequence of this belief, alterations have been proposed wherever a verse could be harmonized, an epithet exchanged for one more apposite, or a sentiment rendered less perplexed.”⁴⁵

To illustrate the above dynamics of the variorum page, the oscillation between authorial and multivocal, Gondris draws our attention to the fact that Malone’s authorial claim that he has established the correct reading “beyond a doubt” is made within the confines of a single note. On the page itself, where it is only one of the notes, it plays a part of the rhythm of interpretative alternatives.⁴⁶ I should add

stubborn refusal to emend if I can get any sense at all out of the folio.” He himself contemplates an idea very close to eighteenth century critics that “in one sense I should be arguing that since Renaissance dramatic texts are designed to be unstable, we are in fact not being true to them by religiously preserving what happened to come from the printing house” (Stephen Orgel, “What is an Editor?” in *Shakespeare and the Editorial Tradition*, ed. Stephen Orgel and Sean Keilen [New York, London: Garland, 1999], p. 25.).

43. Walsh, p. 15.

44. Steevens, p. 73.

45. Steevens, p. 74.

46. Gondris, p. 138.

that a further twist in the dynamic is that the last note reflects the latest (and most authoritative) note on the crux, many times (but not always) a contribution by the editor.

In the conflict of Steevens with Malone and with his own earlier principles two textual visions collide: on the one hand, the principles of collation and historicity, and on the other hand conjectural emendations and aesthetic considerations. Nick Groom argues that Steevens's 1793 edition "was an attempt to make a poetical variorum of conjectural emendation, and he reassessed the old Tonson editions of Rowe, Pope and Warburton. He also developed his aesthetic Shakespeare criticism."⁴⁷ Sherbo pointed out that literary criticism of Steevens had been rare until 1793 when he "emerges as an original and (presumably) influential critic of singular sensitivity."⁴⁸ It is difficult to explain why Steevens, with his pre-eminent role in textual scholarship in the 1773 and 1778 editions, returned to the old-fashioned principle he himself condemned earlier. Although I readily accept Nick Groom's assessment that we should "forgive his final editions as either a last, desperate experiment – or perhaps simply a reminder that Shakespeare was after all, a poet"⁴⁹ I would rather maintain that Steevens tested an alternative solution to contrast his earlier editorial principles. His "backward" turn which Malone considered as a betrayal of the editorial principles they had shared may envelop the recognition that editions are constructs and can be constructed on different principles. Steevens is a unique example that an editor may have shared two editorial traditions in two different phases of his professional life if playful enough about the constructed nature of those principles.

There are reasons to treat Steevens as a poetic editor by the end of his career. He left more room for conjectural emendations, included more literary criticism in his notes, allowed for more liberty regulating line and metre. Steevens could also be labelled as an editor who according to Malone professed principles such as "we may *add* or *expunge* at pleasure" therefore to label him as old-fashioned by the end of the century. Yet, Malone's textual theories were later dismissed by New Bibliography, a school that was undermined by a new school of textual criticism emerging in the 1970s and 1980s. What Steevens had recovered in his 1793 edition was a neo-classical sense of Shakespeare's universality, not to think of "Shakespeare" as a mere piece of antiquity or textual archaeology but poetry shaped by the sensibilities and understandings of the age.

47. Groom, p. lxiv.

48. Quoted in Groom, p. lxiv.

49. Groom, p. lxvi.

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This appropriation by necessity entails the appreciation of tradition, of received text and of received knowledge. However, as Steevens's example shows the received text is treated critically and the editor is aware that it is exposed to change. In methodology the emphasis is on hypothesis – testing in dialogue with earlier editors and on the process of articulating an argument in its evolution, which is best illustrated in the variorum form. The practice of relying on the opinion of previous editors, the publication of contradictory arguments, the admittance of being wrong or not knowing enhance the primary importance of the idea that knowledge is cumulative, and the contribution of the individual editor is partial. Seen from the point of view of cultural history the tradition of the received text is a *memento* of the non-referentiality of any Shakespeare edition.

Edna Rosenthal

A Certain Comparison

Lessing's and Eliot's Use of the *Poetics**

The comparison of Eliot's implicit use of the *Poetics* in his critical essays with Lessing's radical reinterpretation of the treatise in his critique of Neoclassical drama in *Hamburg Dramaturgy* shows that their views converge on *formal affectivism*, a concise formula for Aristotle's conception of tragedy. Their agreement on the nature and limits of aesthetic discourse, critical terminology, and drama far outweighs the divergence in their views of later classicisms, reinforcing the validity of Aristotle's criteria and their applicability to the verbal arts in different cultural milieux. But Eliot goes further than Lessing: he reinstates formal affectivism as the foundation of modern criticism by extending Aristotle's dramatic principles to poetry and to literary history. Eliot rehabilitates Aristotle in a post-Romantic age by using his principles to transcend earlier canons – the Romantic, Neoclassical, Renaissance, and classical – and concomitantly invents a modernist critical canon. To him the implications of misconceiving Aristotle's organicist aesthetics and object-centered criticism surpass aesthetic considerations per se. The *Poetics* informs his attempt to unify the European cultural tradition – its literature and its criticism – which, starting in ancient Greece, culminates in his paradoxical notion of an avant-garde classicist modernism.

What we really want, to solve aesthetic puzzlements, is certain comparisons – grouping together of certain cases.
(Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Lectures on Aesthetics")

It has been argued that in the first half of the twentieth century, T. S. Eliot was the most insistent defender of a new agenda of art and criticism. René Wellek, to quote one among many writers, saw him as "by far the most important critic of the twentieth century in the English-speaking world"; it was only to be expected that for the

* I am grateful to Professor Jeffrey Perl for lending me some of Eliot's uncollected materials – all very useful for the present work – and for his helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper. I also thank Dr. Rita Horváth for her help.

next generation, Eliot assumed the status of dictator rather than liberator.¹ Despite these fluctuations in Eliot's fortunes, his task as a young critic was to introduce to the public his own works and those of his fellow-writers. Having discovered "that there is a significant relation between the best poetry and the best criticism of the same period,"² Eliot realized that the reception of avant-garde works depended on justifying them historically. My aim is to explore the apparent contradiction or "aesthetic puzzlement" in Eliot's agenda – seeing himself simultaneously as an avant-garde poet and a classicist – an Aristotelian classicist at that³ – by uncovering the Aristotelian principles that he adapted to modern criticism. To isolate these principles, I compare his use of the *Poetics* with G. E. Lessing's interpretation, which, by reclaiming the notion of *formal affectivism*, offsets Eliot's Aristotelian assumptions. Eliot, I conclude, unlike his eighteenth-century predecessor, extends the use of formal affectivism from tragic drama to both poetry and literary history, thereby defining the modernist agenda as the interdependence of avant-gardism and classicism – a necessary marriage of opposites.

On the Difference between Rules and Laws

As a critic and dramatist, G. E. Lessing was immersed in the debate between the Ancients and Moderns that dominated the intellectual life of his time. In this debate he sided with the Ancients, admitting only one modern dramatist – Shakespeare – into the classical canon. By examining current and earlier notions of drama against the *Poetics*, Lessing undermined them one by one and produced a wholly new reading of the *Poetics* in which Aristotle was purged of any vestige of Platonism. For Lessing, what Homer is to literature, Aristotle is to the understanding of Homer's world – the father of aesthetic discourse and its ultimate arbiter; the *Poetics*, he says,

1. René Wellek, "The Criticism of T. S. Eliot," quoted in Mario Praz, "T. S. Eliot as a Critic," in *T. S. Eliot: The Man and His Work*, ed. Allen Tate (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 262–276, p. 262; Delmore Schwartz, "The Literary Dictatorship of T. S. Eliot," *Partisan Review* (February 1949): 119–137. See also Donald Davie, "Eliot in One Poet's Life" *Mosaic* 6.1 (Fall 1972): 229–241.

2. T. S. Eliot, introduction to *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England* (London: Faber & Faber, 1933, rpt., 1964), 13–36, p. 30; hereafter cited as *UPUC*.

3. T. S. Eliot, "Mr. Middleton Murry's Synthesis," *The Monthly Criterion* 6.4 (1927): 340–347, p. 346.

is “as infallible as the Elements of Euclid”; Aristotle is not a lawgiver, but the law (condition) itself.⁴

By wielding the conventional Neoclassical distinctions – civilized vs. barbarous, the beautiful *vs.* the ugly, talent *vs.* genius, and Greek *vs.* Roman – Lessing exposes common misconceptions of Aristotelian aesthetics that have led the public to accept as classical what is merely mediocre art. Neoclassicism, because it is enthralled with Reason, seeks to subsume Art under one universal Truth. In this Platonist order, the artist was not expected not seek the subject of art in ordinary experience, which would betoken particularism, but to copy classical masterpieces to attain artistic universalism. Art is seen as a subspecies of philosophy, and the objects of imitation are the ideas, the forms that can be transposed from one medium to another. According to Lessing the outcome of this reductive conception of art is the loss of originality and authenticity and, when these are lost, art cannot produce any affect. Methodically undermining the Neoclassical ideal expressed by his French contemporary Boileau – “Love reason then; and let whatever you write / Borrow from her its beauty, force, and light” – Lessing declares that it is not the light of reason that art seeks but the fire of emotion.

Lessing's critique of Neoclassicism – the attempt to copy classical models – is based on a radical reinterpretation of Aristotle's *Poetics*: the aim of art is to produce beauty, for beauty appeals to the imagination and produces pleasure; this pleasure or aesthetic affect is not a demonstration of truth but is intrinsically meaningful. It is the product of a teleological conception of art – the interaction of parts bound by an inner logic to produce a unified whole. Lessing's classicist stance exposes the fault line of *neoclassicism* as the failure to distinguish between the two incompatible phases of classicism, the Greek and the Roman, underlying which he detects the graver fault of conflating Aristotle's aesthetics with Plato's metaphysics – which double failure fundamentally distorts Aristotle's conception of tragedy.

Like Lessing, Eliot found in Aristotle the voice of practical wisdom:

One must be firmly distrustful of accepting Aristotle in a canonical spirit; this is to lose *the whole living force* of him. He was primarily a man of not only remarkable but universal intelligence. . . . in whatever sphere of inter-

4. All parenthetical references are to this edition: G. E. Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy* (1769), trans. Helen Zimmern (New York: Dover, 1962), p. 263; hereafter cited as *HD*. Cf.: “The kind of literary law in which Aristotle was interested was not law that he laid down, but law that he discovered” (Eliot, “Apology for the Countess of Pembroke,” in *UPUC*, 37–52, p. 45).

est, he looked solely and steadfastly at the object; in his short and broken treatise he provides an eternal example—not of laws . . . but of intelligence itself swiftly operating the analysis of sensation to the point of principle and definition.⁵

What is striking here is the interdependence of “intelligence” and “analysis of sensation.” It is not ideas that are analyzed but sensations, and intelligence apprehends the object not as an intellectual problem but as an experiential process. Aristotle’s *Poetics* is an example of disinterested attention, where to be objective is to be true to one’s experience and to conduct “the analysis of sensation to the point of principle and definition” – an apt description of Eliot’s own critical method. The poet, and by implication any artist, struggles, Eliot says, “to transmute his personal and private agonies into something rich and strange, something universal and impersonal.”⁶ What Eliot meant by “universal and impersonal” appears to be closely tied to his view of the European tradition, beginning in ancient Athens and culminating in modernism as the reaffirmation of Aristotelian aesthetics. He was convinced “that literature cannot be understood without going to the sources; sources which are often remote, difficult, and unintelligible unless one transcends the prejudices of ordinary literary taste.”⁷ And one of the more obscure sources Eliot had in mind were the works – mainly the *Poetics* – of Aristotle:

We need someone . . . to explain how vital a matter it is, if Aristotle may be said to have been a moral pilot of Europe, whether we shall or shall not drop that pilot. And we need a number of educated poets who shall at least have opinions about Greek drama, and whether it is or is not of any use to us.⁸

Lessing and Eliot, each in his own way, tried to revive Aristotle’s “whole living force.” While Lessing was motivated by the Neoclassical misapprehension of the *Poetics* (specifically of *mimesis* and *catharsis*), Eliot may be said to have adopted

5. T. S. Eliot, “The Perfect Critic,” in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1920), 1–16, pp. 10–11 (my emphasis).

6. All parenthetical references are to this edition: T. S. Eliot, “Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca,” in *Selected Essays*, 3d enl. ed. (1932; London: Faber & Faber, 1951), 126–140, p. 137; hereafter cited as *SE*.

7. T. S. Eliot, “The Beating of a Drum,” *The Nation and The Athenaeum* (October 1923): 11–12.

8. Eliot, “Euripides and Professor Murray,” in *SE*, 59–64, pp. 60–61.

Aristotle's manner of approaching objects in their particularity. Compared to Lessing's focused discussion of the *Poetics*, Eliot's Aristotelianism is more diffuse, extending to objects beyond the aesthetic, although the terms and method appear to derive from it. But what Eliot and Lessing more specifically share is an attitude: anti-metaphysical and skeptical; a method: empirical and comparative; and an aesthetics: formal affectivism. Their aim was to defend art as an autonomous activity, as neither the handmaid of philosophy and science in the Enlightenment model, nor the handmaid of social reform or a substitute for religion in the Romantic model. Eliot uses Aristotle to free aesthetics from the excesses of Romanticism in much the same way that Lessing used Aristotle to free it from the rationalistic excesses of Neoclassicism. To counteract these excesses, Lessing and Eliot try to redirect critical attention to the effects of concrete works of art, proposing aesthetics as the only defense of art against philosophy. Their comprehensive rereading of Aristotle is itself an Aristotelian move: to understand the function of an object one must grasp the context or discipline of which it is a part. "Aristotle," Lessing notes, "always requires to be interpreted through himself," and he advises anyone who reads the *Poetics* "to read the complete works of the philosopher from beginning to end. He will find explanations of *Poetics* where he least expects them, most especially must he study the books of *Rhetoric* and *Ethics*" (179).

Defending the *Poetics* is the Best Defense of Art

Lessing and Eliot, like Aristotle, initiate their defense by separating art from other disciplines. Aristotle grouped the fields of knowledge according to their function. He placed philosophy and science, the object of which is knowledge of first principles, in the theoretical sciences; and he placed politics, ethics, rhetoric, and economics – the aim of which is action – in the practical sciences; but art, that which involves 'making,' he placed in a category all on its own: the productive. Lessing and Eliot refuse to elevate art above or to lower it below its Aristotelian mid-position – ranging and mediating between philosophy (universal truths) and history (particular cases) – and like him they separate aesthetic experience from the kind of knowledge offered by other disciplines. "Poetry," Eliot maintains, "is not a substitute for philosophy or theology or religion . . . it has its own function. But as this function is not intellectual but emotional, it cannot be defined adequately in intellectual terms. We can say that it provides 'consolation.'"⁹

9. Eliot, "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," pp. 137–138.

Art “provides” something by eliciting an emotional response or inducing a state of mind. In proposing what art “gives” in answer to ‘what is art?’ Eliot aligns himself with the Aristotelian psychological value of art.¹⁰ And if neither philosophical nor theological terms will do, he implies that the terms best suited to aesthetic discourse are those that arise from the art object itself. In the same way, Lessing separates pleasure (art) from truth (philosophy) and exempts art from any overt social function, insisting that the “nature of the subject” should determine how it is to be studied.¹¹

Though the theoretical, practical, and productive disciplines are separable, they are linked by language. In his semantics, Aristotle always qualifies his terms in a given context. He does this throughout his works, and in the penultimate chapter of the *Poetics* turns it into a critical principle: apparent contradictions or errors of composition may be traced to changing uses of specific words. One example of this semantic adjustment is seen in his discussion of perhaps the most problematic pair of all, the ‘universal’ and ‘particular.’ ‘Universal’ is used in a non-metaphysical sense to describe the freedom of the poet to range beyond historically established facts for poetic ends and refers to the potentiality of tragedy to treat the probable rather than the factual. There is no reason to assume that because poetry can express probabilities (he uses the phrase “tends to”), Aristotle saw it as a subspecies of philosophy or that because history treats what actually happened, it lacks philosophical significance. The difference is one of degrees, arising from how each discipline conceives its subject. Thus, insofar as poetry realizes its potential to treat the probable, it is, he says, “a more philosophical and a higher thing than history” (9.1451b).¹²

But art, and especially poetry, also had to be defended in face of Plato’s suspicion of its medium, the poet’s verbal wizardry or his being a mere versifier lacking real knowledge. Aristotle’s answer is that art is not the imposition of form (e.g., beautiful words) on some previously detachable content (e.g., a historical fact). In the case of tragedy, the artist can only be the maker of plots, plot being the organic

10. Eliot rarely used the word ‘catharsis’ but often described the effect or ‘use’ of poetry. See the conclusion to *UPUC*, 143–156, p. 153; and “Poetry and Drama,” in *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber & Faber, 1957), 72–88, p. 87; hereafter cited as *OPP*.

11. All parenthetical references are to this edition: G. E. Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766), trans. Edward Allen McCormick (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), pp. 14; 55–56; 51.

12. All parenthetical references to the *Poetics* are to this edition: S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle’s Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, with a critical text and translation of the *Poetics* (1894), 4th ed. (New York: Dover, 1951).

unity of form and content, and the poet's aim is not to succeed as a rhetorician or to offer a lesson in philosophy but to affect the feelings of his audience. And because moving the audience is cathartic and healthy, according to Aristotle, affect is the end of tragedy. As the maker of plots, the poet deals with objects that are categorically different from those of the historian because his invented chains of events are connected by imaginative necessity: verbal compositions

will differ in structure from historical compositions, which of necessity present not a single action, but a single period, and all that happened within that period to one person or to many, little connected together as the events may be. (23.1459b)

Lessing, in much the same words, repeatedly emphasizes the teleological nature of drama:

For the dramatic poet is no historian, he does not relate to us what was once believed to have happened, but he really produces it again before our eyes, and produces it again not on account of mere historical truth but for a totally different and a nobler aim. Historical accuracy is not his aim, but only the means by which he hopes to attain his aim; *he wishes to delude us and touch our hearts through this delusion.* (32; my emphasis)¹³

History is for tragedy nothing but a storehouse of names. (63)

The distinction Lessing and Aristotle make is one of degrees of probability conceived as "inner necessity" (25.1461b). Aristotle famously says that the poet should prefer "probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities" (24.1460a), which becomes a criterion in dealing with various objections: "Things are censured either as impossible, or irrational, or morally hurtful, or contradictory, or contrary to artistic correctness" (25.1461b). And he goes on to suggest that the only real difficulties arise from errors in composition that the critic cannot justify.

Art is finally also separated from its maker, for it is primarily an activity that terminates in a made thing. Once made, the artist can have no further claims on it, nor should we seek its meaning by recourse to the artist's life and personality. Homer, for Aristotle,

admirable in all respects, has the special merit of being the only poet who rightly appreciates the part he should take himself. The poet should speak

13. Lessing repeats these points in *HD*, pp. 51–52; 56–64.

as little as possible in his own person, for it is not this that makes him an imitator. (24.1460a)

Lessing repeats this point: “I incline to believe that the real reason why we know so little of the person and the life of Homer is to be sought in the excellence of his poems” (103). And Eliot puts even greater emphasis on impersonality: “The emotion of art is impersonal,” the product of the combination of elements in the poem, arising from the poem, and not from the person who wrote it. His insistence that poetry is not the expression of emotion or of personality, but an escape from them negates the Romantic conception of art and biographical criticism.¹⁴

By separating art from history and philosophy, Aristotle founded a new discipline – aesthetics – with its own self-reflexive laws, and exhibited his unique analytic strategy of demarcating and ordering natural and human phenomena and undertaking their study in terms that are adequate to them. His philosophical procedure is rooted in conventionalism, which implies that those who accept his aesthetics are necessarily conventionalists. “We should reflect,” Lessing observes, “that all things in the world depend on custom and opinion” (44). Eliot, more succinctly, simply says: “Reality is a convention.”¹⁵ But Eliot is a radical skeptic, his relativism surpassing Lessing’s or Aristotle’s. This is partly because Aristotle was an ancient philosopher and Lessing a Neoclassical critic, whereas Eliot was a modern poet-critic with an interest in a multilayered history. It is Eliot’s historical sense that differentiates him from the other two, although, as I will argue, his historical sensibility appears to grow out of his Aristotelian approach.

Lessing’s Aristotelian stance is categorical: the test of authentic art is whether it produces an emotional effect, which he calls beauty. Eliot, a post-Romantic, changed his initially purist aesthetics to a more accommodating view: in itself the work of art

14. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” in *SE*, 13–22, p. 22. Eliot’s concept of tradition and “of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written” is complemented by his attack on subjectivity; the poet does not have “a ‘personality’ to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways” (20). In his introduction to *UPUC*, Eliot similarly denies the “subjective” ontology of the poem: “If poetry is a form of ‘communication,’ yet that which is to be communicated is the poem itself, and only incidentally the experience and the thought which have gone into it” (30); this is so because, “the poem has its own existence, apart from us; it was there before us and will endure after us” (34).

15. T. S. Eliot, *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley* (London: Faber & Faber, 1964), p. 98.

has only an aesthetic aim, but as an object in the world it may have other uses.¹⁶ Although Aristotle says little directly about criticism, it seems reasonable to suggest that, given the interdependence of the universal and the particular in the concrete work of art, he saw aesthetic discourse as mediating between philosophy and history, bringing them into a relationship. The *Poetics*, *De anima*, and the *Rhetoric* are together a powerful retort to Plato's condemnation of art and artists. Aristotle's approach allows him to concentrate on a select number of tragedies by avoiding decontextualization and over-contextualization. He avoids the temptation to over-philosophize a work and deduce from it a set of ideas, which Lessing sees as the fundamental mistake of Neoclassicism, and he avoids the tendency to over-contextualize it by recourse to the biographical, sociological or religious aspects of the life and times of the artist, which Eliot sees as the perversion of Romanticism.¹⁷ For as would happen in a tug-of-war, either extreme may obliterate the art object itself. But if art is autonomous, it follows that the task of the critic is to deal with works of an established genre and to set forth their distinctive features by comparing them with other works/genres. Thus the questions the Aristotelian critic asks are: 'is this work well-made?' 'what is the effect of this work?' and, 'how does this work produce this effect?' Lessing and Eliot advocate an object-centered criticism with the aim of acknowledging what the artist has accomplished. For all three, the critic's main tool in surmising the nature, quality, and value of a given work is comparison with other works.

The "Essentials of Drama" and the Western Canon

The agreement between Lessing and Eliot on the aims of art and criticism provides the background for discussing their views of drama and specifically tragic drama,

16. For Eliot some distinctions are necessary, as they were for Aristotle: "It is essential that a work of art should be self-consistent, that an artist should consciously or unconsciously draw a circle beyond which he does not trespass: on the one hand actual life is always the material, and on the other hand an abstraction from actual life is a necessary condition to the creation of the work of art" ("Four Elizabethan Dramatists," in *SE*, 109–117, p. 111). Yet, as a modern skeptic, Eliot suggests that it would be wrong to isolate "poetry from everything else in the world" ("Shelley and Keats," in *UPUC*, 87–102, p. 98). Elsewhere he explains: "the 'greatness' of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards; though we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards" ("Religion and Literature," in *SE*, 388–401, p. 388).

17. Eliot comments on the limitations of these "two extremes" in "The Age of Dryden," in *UPUC*, 53–66, p. 64.

which they regarded – as did Aristotle – as the highest form of verbal art. Apart from being critics, they were both dramatists for whom the *Poetics* was the foundational treatise on the “essentials of drama.”¹⁸

But beyond their personal motivations, Lessing’s and Eliot’s interpretation of Aristotelian aesthetics undermined, respectively, the Neoclassical and, more than a century later, the late Romantic and Victorian notions of “art as mimesis.” At their most extreme, both tendencies expressed an exclusivity – formalism (pure objectivity) and emotionalism (pure subjectivity) – the methodological weakness of which arose from a misapprehension of the Aristotelian principle of the organic “objecthood” of art. Lessing’s critique of mimesis resurfaces in Eliot’s critique of the relationship between tradition and originality, and together they may be seen to continue Aristotle’s critique of Platonism. A simple illustration of this continuity – which suggests a fundamental agreement on language, genre, criticism, and aesthetics – may be traced to Aristotle’s comments on metaphor. By saying that for the poet “the greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor. This alone cannot be imparted by another; it is the mark of genius, for to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances” (22.1459a),¹⁹ Aristotle subverts Plato’s concept of mimesis as the mere copying of a pre-existing object. His subversion centers on the ability of the poet to make “good metaphors” which externalize a resemblance – not an identity – between things; mimesis therefore entails a process of imaginative recreation that places things in a relationship. For Lessing the clash between Aristotelian and Platonist mimesis underlies the debate between the Ancients and Moderns; for Eliot, this clash assumes various guises – realism *vs.* symbolism, Romantic *vs.* classical – but derives mainly from the absence of a unified literary tradition, which lack his modern criticism attempted to address.

Lessing solves this problem (and along with it the Ancients-*vs.*-Moderns conflict) by distinguishing between two forms of mimesis. Negative mimesis, akin to literal translation, deals with the parts rather than the whole; it demands a slavish imitation of an original rather than an original creation, which is the product of Aristotelian mimesis: “that general imitation which is the very essence of his art, and whether his subject is a work of other arts or a work of nature, he creates as a gen-

18. Eliot, “The Beating of a Drum,” p. 12.

19. Aristotle discusses metaphor also in *The “Art” of Rhetoric*, trans. John Henry Freese (London: Heinemann, 1926), 3.2.1405a. His view of metaphor derives from his theory of the soul, described in *De anima* as a series of interlocking functions in which the imagination has a central role.

ius.”²⁰ To illustrate this difference he compares Greek (genuine) with Roman (mediocre) art as presented in Homer’s and Virgil’s descriptions of Achilles’ shield. In Homer’s description, “we do not see the shield, but the divine master as he is making it” (*Laocoön*, 95); the shield “is the natural growth of its own fertile soil” (97). But Virgil’s shield is artificial, “an insertion, intended solely to flatter the national pride of the Romans” (96–97). The test of the former is not whether it is “a faithful realistic representation of a shield” (negative mimesis), but the intensity of its effect on the reader (transformative mimesis). Translation is therefore an inspired recreation as shown by Greek artists in their reproduction of scenes from Homer’s epics: “the fire of his enthusiasm kindled their own; they saw and felt as he did; and so their works became reproductions of Homer’s, not as a portrait is of its original, but as a son is a reproduction of his father – similar, but different” (118).

Eliot rarely used the word *mimesis*, as it carried a Platonist aura and was too close to naturalistic reproduction, one of the styles he was reacting against, although he used it for historically precise purposes when, for example, he praised certain Aristotelian aspects in the work of Wordsworth and of Dryden (to which point I shall return). But Eliot accepted Aristotle’s explanation of mimesis as the foundation of learning: “It is not from rules or by cold-blooded imitation of style, that we learn to write: we learn by imitation indeed, but by a deeper imitation than is achieved by analysis of style.”²¹ And Eliot’s “deeper imitation” bears a close resemblance to Lessing’s “positive” notion of mimesis.

Like Lessing, who regarded the theater as “the school of the moral world” (*HD*, 8), Eliot saw drama as the stylized reproduction of lived experience: “We are human beings, and in what are we more interested than in human action and human attitudes?”²² Both writers emphasized its unique importance and in effect endorsed Aristotle’s teleological definition of tragedy in chapter 6 of the *Poetics*:

Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament . . . in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions. (6.1449b)

Each of the six components of tragedy, which Aristotle then discusses – plot, character, thought, diction, song, and spectacle – is an element in a hierarchy, but none

20. Lessing, *Laocoön*, p. 45.

21. Eliot, “The Music of Poetry,” in *OPP*, 26–38, p. 28.

22. Eliot, “A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry,” in *SE*, 43–58, p. 51.

operates in isolation. This hierarchical division functions as no more than an abstract approximation of the mechanism underlying a tragedy. Aristotle does not tell a writer how to write a tragedy, as some of his commentators have thought, but describes what a well-made tragedy tends to exhibit and why.

Lessing and Eliot accept Aristotle's general theory of tragedy, but dwell on particular aspects of it as a way of redressing the imbalances in the drama and literature of their respective times. Lessing's critique of French Neoclassical tragedy centers on the inadequacy of the subject and manner of imitation. If the subject is unworthy there can be no proper catharsis of pity and fear – the sole aim of classical tragedy. What Neoclassical tragedy conspicuously lacks is a conception of human action and character that warrants Aristotle's description of the subject of tragedy as "an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude." In *Hamburg Dramaturgy* Lessing examines, through the lenses of Aristotle's *Poetics*, numerous plays that were performed in the theater of which he was director, explaining why they fail dramatically. A tragedy that is non-cathartic (or a poem or painting that fail to produce a clear emotional effect, as he argues in *Laocoön*) is a contradiction in terms: at best it is mediocre and at worst unworthy of being called art.

Of the four leading Neoclassical French dramatists – Corneille, Molière, Racine, and Voltaire – it is Voltaire who is the chief object of Lessing's attack. Presented as the symbol of French vanity, Voltaire is criticized for his inability to grasp the essence of tragedy. French talent is contrasted with Shakespeare's genius, for it is "always and eternally Shakespeare who understood everything better than the French" (41–42). By comparing the ghost in *Hamlet* with its counterpart in *Semiramis*, Lessing exposes Voltaire's superficial notion of tragedy. Shakespeare's ghost is dramatically probable; it appears at night and, seen by no one but Hamlet, serves to characterize the protagonist: it is therefore "a natural occurrence" and "a real active personage." In *Semiramis*, the ghost appears in broad daylight and is seen by a group of people; it is no more than an artificial imposition. Rather than serving a dramatic purpose, it is merely a means to unravel the plot, the sole object of which is didactic (31–36).

But it is not only in rendering the supernatural that Voltaire fails; he fails, too, in his conception of love. By juxtaposing *Zaire* with *Romeo and Juliet*, Lessing bitterly unleashes his sarcasm: "Voltaire perfectly understands the – so to speak – official language of love; that is to say the language and the tone love employs when it desires to express itself with caution and dignity, when it would say nothing but what the prudish female sophist and the cold critic can justify" (41). Love, in Voltaire's play, is therefore rhetorical rather than dramatic. What Lessing never tires of show-

ing are the dramatic inanities of decorum in contrast with authentic human feeling, and the dramas he criticizes reinforce his view that “the only unpardonable fault of a tragic poet is this, that *he leaves us cold*; if he interests us he may do as he likes with the little mechanical rules” (45; my emphasis).

Because they misunderstood the purpose of tragedy, these French dramatists failed to grasp that the unity of time and place springs from the unity of action – “the first dramatic law of the ancients” (141).²³ The tendency to prefer superficial formal perfection to the essentially dramatic stems from the misconception of the teleology of tragedy, the awakening and releasing of pity and fear. But only characters who are better than us and who appear in “an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude” can ever arouse “high pathos” (199). Voltaire’s *Merope*, considered by some “one of the most perfect tragedies” (102), is a pale copy of the Italian version by Maffei (itself a subversive copy of the extinct original by Euripides), from which Voltaire borrowed “fable, plan and manner” (104) as well as the plot and the denouement (157). In a long detailed examination of these plays, their sources, and the commentaries on them, taking up more than a quarter of *Hamburg Dramaturgy* (102–60), Lessing delivers his *coup de grâce* to Neoclassical mediocrity. Applying the test of cathartic effect to Maffei’s and Voltaire’s tragedies, he demonstrates how they substitute decorum, artificial surprises, and artistic tricks, for the tragic conception of action and character, thereby perverting tragedy into romance.

Corneille, too, is shown to have misapprehended the nature of catharsis and to have understood only “the mechanical rules of dramatic art” (181). Lessing explains that Corneille read Aristotle after writing his plays, and then set about adjusting Aristotle to his own creations. What Corneille more specifically misunderstood was that pity and fear were aroused in the audience together, not sequentially or alone. Aristotle, Lessing argues, used ‘pity’ and ‘fear’ as relative terms but used ‘philanthropy’ to designate compassion devoid of fear for ourselves. Catharsis, in Lessing’s view, arouses and releases our own deepest fears:

It is the fear which arises for ourselves from the similarity of our position with that of the sufferer; it is the fear that the calamities impending over the sufferers might also befall ourselves; it is the fear that we ourselves might thus become objects of pity. In a word this fear is compassion referred back to ourselves. (179)

23. For Eliot’s criticism of the three unities, essentially the same as Lessing’s, see “Apology for the Countess of Pembroke,” pp. 42–48.

Tragedy, he says, is not supposed to release all the passions but only our pity and fear:

Pity and fear are those passions which we, not the acting personages, feel in tragedy; they are those passions through which the acting personages touch us, not those which draw upon them their own misfortunes. (191)

Lessing thus adheres to Aristotle's view that "each art ought to produce, not any chance pleasure, but the pleasure proper to it" (26.1462b), and that the proper pleasure of tragedy is to arouse our pity and fear and thereby to bring about their release (191–193; *Poetics*, 6.1449b).

His critique is uncompromising. At the end of *Hamburg Dramaturgy* he affirms that his investigation of "the essence of dramatic art" is true to its source: "I acknowledge it exactly as Aristotle deduced it from the countless masterpieces of the Greek stage" (263). His aim was to free German writers from their idolization of French dramatists:

No nation has more misapprehended the rules of ancient drama than the French. They have adopted as the essential some incidental remarks made by Aristotle about the most fitting external division of drama, and have so enfeebled the essential by all manner of limitations and interpretations, that nothing else could necessarily arise therefrom but works that remained far below the highest effect on which the philosopher had reckoned in his rules. (264)

The upshot of his interpretation was to release artists from their fixation on rules and decorum. Lessing's assumption throughout was that to understand the classics, one should recover the meaning of Aristotle's terms, for by turning him into a lawgiver, the whole force of his aesthetics was lost by being Platonized. The major French Neoclassical dramatists had failed to question their own philosophical bias, taking Reason as the sole arbiter of art, which explained their unpardonable arrogance in claiming that they had surpassed the Ancients. For Lessing neoclassicism is therefore a fake: one cannot copy the ancients; one can only discover their art anew.

* * *

Although more than a century and a half separates Eliot from Lessing, they had a common aim: Lessing tried to revive the unknown Aristotle in the Neoclassical context and Eliot to revive him in a post-Romantic age. Lessing's critique paved the way for Romanticism, which, like any self-conscious movement, ran its course, and it was

Eliot, along with other early modernists, who reacted against its excesses. In turning away from certain Romantic canons, Eliot used Aristotelian principles – as these had been interpreted by Lessing – to construct a modernist aesthetics. Viewed thus, Lessing and Eliot stand at the beginning and end of Romanticism, but despite this difference in historical context, their poetics are grounded in common Aristotelian principles.

Like Lessing before him, Eliot was disillusioned by the drama of his own time. If Lessing complained of French Neoclassical drama, Eliot's condemnation went further: "the European stage does not stimulate the imagination," he wrote in 1917.²⁴ If Lessing attacked the shallow psychology of Neoclassical drama, Eliot attacked the Romantic overrating of subjectivity. For Lessing, Neoclassical form was inflated; for Eliot, Romantic content. Both held firmly to the Aristotelian notion that to produce an aesthetic effect a dramatic work must function as a unified whole. But it was more than contemporary drama that Eliot found lacking. He saw in the absence of *poetic drama* a symptom of cultural decay, because only such drama could produce what Aristotle perhaps meant by catharsis and what Eliot recast as the moments of greatest intensity, when "we touch the border of those feelings which only music can express."²⁵ To bring about a modern classicism thus necessitated a return to poetic drama: the craving for poetic drama as the expression of intense feeling and of the fundamentals of human life cannot be satisfied by the tendency to realism of the contemporary stage, he explained.²⁶ If Lessing wanted to revive classical Greek tragedy by referring directly to Aristotle's *Poetics*, Eliot proposed to return to the matrix of drama – to ritual and dance, to what he called "religious form."

Drama as ritual could clearly not be revived without reducing the Romantic emphasis on subjectivity, expressed as the elevation of character above plot. Eliot's "objective correlative" demolishes in a single phrase the Romantic idolization of Hamlet and at the same time takes a fresh look at the play *Hamlet*.²⁷ The term is a further elaboration of the doctrine of impersonality and is closely allied to Aristotle's notion of plot and the function of art. To speak dispassionately of *Hamlet* was Eliot's way of furthering the separation from Romantic canons, which tended to seek artistic value

24. T. S. Eliot, "The Noh and the Image," *The Egoist* (August 1917): 102–103, p. 103.

25. Eliot, "Poetry and Drama," p. 87. Like Lessing, Eliot believed that as spectators we should be unconscious of the medium: the most intense moments would not lead us to escape from the world – "on the contrary, our own sordid, dreary daily world would be suddenly illuminated and transfigured" (82); see also pp. 72, 75.

26. Eliot, "A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry," p. 46.

27. Eliot, "Hamlet," p. 145.

in terms of *content*. Eliot's explanation of the play's failure points to Hamlet's characterization – the hero's emotional state is not fully realized – so the parts of the play do not combine into a necessary whole: "It would be hard to say in what the clarity and sharpness and simplicity of *Hamlet* consists."²⁸ By calling it "an artistic failure," Eliot was attempting to show that "honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry."²⁹ The choice of *Hamlet* allowed him to take a fresh look at what the Romantics saw as the supreme work of English drama and to correct their tendency to isolate character from its formal context. It was a means of reintroducing the Aristotelian notion of formal affectivism, for Eliot wanted a dramatic character, even a Hamlet, to be "interesting because it [the play] is a work of art."

Hamlet is one among several examples (notably *The Aeneid* and *Paradise Lost*) of a divergence in critical judgment between Eliot and Lessing. For Lessing *Hamlet* was closer to Greek drama than anything written in his time, for it dealt with the substance of all great drama – with human conflicts.³⁰ The fact that both Eliot and Lessing referred to Shakespeare and Milton, Homer and Virgil, Dante and Goethe, though at times differing on these writers, suggests that disagreements do not necessarily imply a radical difference in aesthetic criteria; rather, it suggests that their ranking of past masterpieces was a way of correcting certain faults in the present. One way of reconciling their divergent critical opinions is to identify their use of a common precursor, and it is perhaps in this sense that Aristotle's *Poetics* – by providing a starting point and a common measure – binds their views into a single classicism.³¹

We may speak of this classicism as one insofar as an anti-Platonist Aristotelian aesthetics underlies Lessing's and Eliot's conception of art. However, Lessing's view of classicism is exclusive – the Greeks rather than the Romans – are the standard of all art, whereas Eliot's classicism is inclusive and historicist: the classical tradition as a whole is the standard. Compared to Lessing, and certainly to Aristotle, Eliot's ap-

28. Eliot, "Ben Jonson," in *SE*, 147–160, p. 152.

29. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," p. 17.

30. Jeffrey Perl, *Skepticism and Modern Enmity*, p. 10; and "The Manufacture of Disagreement," *Common Knowledge* 2.2 (fall 1993): 122–134, p. 124.

31. Unlike Lessing, Eliot did not need to interpret Aristotle, for he had assimilated his method. If he betrays any emotion towards him it is one of professional jealousy, for Aristotle, he says, lived in a simpler world ("A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry," pp. 43–44).

proach is more sensitive to literary history and historical context.³² Eliot's philosophical stance is also more skeptical than Lessing's. There are no longer just two points of view, one right and the other wrong, but multiple – even an infinite number of points of view: although a work of art should be approached aesthetically, other approaches are unavoidable because it is related in one way or another to everything else in the world. In aesthetics, Aristotle is the starting point but his categories are conventional, open to interpretation, and adaptable to changing contexts. Aristotle's authority does not derive from his "rules" but from his methodological assumptions, formulated as a set of simple terms with which to explore artistic phenomena. Eliot, I suggest, applies Aristotle's teleological aesthetics, as understood by Lessing, to poetry and to literary history, and it is this extension and diversification that cumulatively defines his modernist concept of the mind of Europe. But what Eliot affirms in his modernist classicism (not *neo-classicism*) is a continuity and development, stretching further back in time and enlarging the context from a national to a trans-cultural view of Western civilization that would have been incomprehensible to Lessing.

For Lessing there was one historical Athens and, except for Shakespeare, even the most imaginative work of later ages could never rise to its standard. For Eliot history is more complex, for our views of it also undergo change. So although there was only one historical Athens, its achievements could be kept alive in the present, and the fact that Aristotle gave us the "essentials of drama" meant that his terms could be adapted to new forms. Eliot, in contrast to Lessing, took from Aristotle a way of ordering and assimilating Europe's cultural past. While his essays are a record of the development of his individual taste, in their entirety they present "one of the most synthesizing minds of the twentieth century."³³

"It is essential," Eliot wrote in 1918, "that each generation should reappraise everything for itself," for he believed that the creation of a modern literature required the critic to bring "the art of the past to bear upon the present, making it relevant to the actual generation through his own temperament."³⁴ His aim was to forge vital links between the present and the past:

32. Ronald Schuchard argues that Eliot's teaching experience "was crucial in his development as a poet-critic. . . . [It] required him to articulate his developing critical concepts, to exercise his taste, and to reorder the poets of the English tradition into his own aesthetic and moral hierarchy" ("T. S. Eliot as an Extension Lecturer, 1916–1919," *R.E.S.*, n.s., vol. 25, no. 98 [1974], pp. 302–303).

33. Schuchard, "Eliot as an Extension Lecturer," p. 304.

34. T. S. Eliot, "Observations," *The Egoist* (May 1918): 69–70, pp. 69–70.

It is part of the business of the critic to preserve tradition – where a good tradition exists. It is part of his business to see literature steadily and to see it whole; and this is eminently to see it *not* as consecrated by time, but to see it beyond time. To see the best work of our time and the best work of twenty-five hundred years ago with the same eyes.³⁵

To steadily see literature as a whole and see it “with the same eyes” or standards, Eliot had to adjust the ancient lenses of Aristotle to a post-Romantic age by discovering the historical continuity between Lessing’s Aristotelian emphases on dramatic affect and the Romantics’ emphasis on poetic imagination. He resolved the implicit contradiction in his stance as a *classicist avant-garde* poet-critic by developing a unique historical attitude that defined avant-garde works as contributions to a continuous tradition, to “literature as a whole.”

Restoring the Tradition

Tradition, for Eliot, was a conscious attitude to the past and a way of “affirming forgotten standards, rather than setting up new idols.”³⁶ He saw it as an effort of restoration which demanded the superposition and juxtaposition of past and present; his aim was to reconstitute literary history as a continuity, a teleology, which he described as “a digestion which can assimilate both Homer and Flaubert.”³⁷ *Tradition* was less a revision than an adjustment of the literary canon, in light of Eliot’s growing recognition that modernism, as Jeffrey Perl has argued, was a culmination of a historical process.³⁸ Eliot, according to this view, saw Romanticism as a form of classicism, but like all such general terms, these too required some adjustment. Because these terms – classicism, Neoclassicism, Romanticism and modernism – make up one intricate process of interdependent and overlapping aspects they are not easily distinguishable in Eliot’s criticism; but it is only by trying to follow his changing uses of them that we may apprehend his dual use of Aristotelian principles – their simultaneous extension to poetry and to literary history.

35. Eliot, “Introduction” to *The Sacred Wood*, pp. xv–xvi.

36. Eliot, “Wordsworth and Coleridge,” in *UPUC*, 67–86, p. 71.

37. Eliot, “Euripides and Professor Murray,” p. 63.

38. Jeffrey Perl, “Classicism, an Historical Explanation,” in *The Tradition of Return: The Implicit History of Modern Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 58–111, esp. pp. 68–69.

Eliot, I suggest, sought to bring poetry back into drama and drama back into poetry as a way of recovering Aristotle's formal affectivism. As early as 1919 he asserted the essential identity of poetry and drama, saying that in contrast to Rostand's, Maeterlinck's dramatic work "in failing to be dramatic, fails also to be poetic." The separation of poetry from drama was "the ruin of modern drama," and about twenty years later, he stated simply – "the difference [between prose and verse in drama] is really not that great."³⁹ From his earliest pronouncements on poetry and drama, Eliot sought the "image" as the antidote to abstraction and used Music as the test of the ordered disposition of images and words – the unified structure – displayed in a poetic composition. In this, he may have been following Pater's formulation of what centuries before had been suggested by Aristotle:

Rhythm and melody supply imitations of anger and gentleness, and also of courage and temperance, and of all the qualities contrary to these, and of the other qualities of character, which hardly fall short of the actual affects, as we know from our own experience, for in listening to such strains our souls undergo a change. The habit of feeling pleasure or pain at mere representations is not far removed from the same feeling about realities.⁴⁰

Eliot's formula for the inseparability of form and content became "the musical structure of the whole." "A play of Shakespeare," he observed, "is a very complex musical structure." Reading poetry is a training of the ear rather than the eye, he continued, softening his earlier emphasis on the visual image, for a poem had to appeal to both if it was to affect the reader: "if we are moved by a poem, it has meant something, perhaps something important, to us." The paradox of language was that "while poetry attempts to convey something beyond what can be conveyed in prose rhythms, it remains, all the same, one person talking to another."⁴¹ By attending to the rhythmic movement of images as the medium of drama, Eliot was denaturalizing Aristotle's plot or action and adjusting it to a post-Romantic symbolist sensibility. Neither action nor recognition and reversal, its characteristic aspects, need be manifestations of physical movement (the 'mistake' of naturalism): action could be the

39. Eliot, " 'Rhetoric' and Poetic Drama," in *SE*, 37–42, p. 41; "Four Elizabethan Dramatists," p. 110; "Poetry and Drama," p. 73, respectively.

40. Aristotle, *The Politics*, ed. Stephen Everson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 8.1340a.

41. Eliot, "The Music of Poetry," pp. 36, 30, 31, respectively. "The poet," according to Eliot, "is occupied with frontiers of consciousness beyond which words fail, though meanings still exist" (30).

manifestation of the movement of feeling and consciousness. By conceiving the origin of action in gesture, mime, and sound, he revived Aristotle's grounding of art as the direct presentation of "character, emotion, and action," "by rhythm, language, or 'harmony,' either singly or combined" (1.1447a).

In "The Three Voices of Poetry" Eliot similarly reaffirms Aristotle's conception of dramatic character in explaining why a "dramatic monologue cannot create a character. For character is created and made real only in an action, a communication between imaginary people."⁴² Unlike Lessing, who analyzes the dramatic adequacy of characters by measuring them by explicit Aristotelian criteria, Eliot did not need to justify Aristotle. What he wanted to justify was the use of a single criterion – the dramatic – for poetry.

Classicism ("affirming forgotten standards"), towards which the early modernists and their precursors turned, was characterized by "*form* and *restraint* in art."⁴³ It was a partial reaction against the two tendencies of Romanticism – realistic literature and unrestrained expression of emotion – both of which denied aesthetic distance and autonomy. The work of restoring the tradition necessitated a deliberate return to "our classical heritage," because only such a return could yield the standards by which to determine permanent value. *The Aeneid*, the consummate example of a classic, exhibited maturity, comprehensiveness, and universality, and Virgil stood "at the centre of European civilization, in a position which no other poet can share or usurp." Eliot was convinced that "the maintenance of the standard is . . . the defence of freedom against chaos." Art required traditional forms without which there would be no freedom, which "is only truly freedom when it appears against the background of an artificial limitation."⁴⁴ Romantic excess was illusory precisely because it defied formal limits.

Romanticism derived from Rousseau, according to Eliot, and underlay the two mutually exclusive literary currents of nineteenth-century literature: the "escape

42. Eliot, "The Three Voices of Poetry," in *OPP*, 89–102, p. 95.

43. T. S. Eliot, "A Commentary," *The Criterion* 2.7 (1924): 231–235; "The Idea of a Literary Review," *The New Criterion* 4.1 (1926): 1–6, p. 5; Schuchard, "Eliot as an Extension Lecturer," p. 165, respectively.

44. Eliot, "What is a Classic?" (1944), in *OPP*, 53–71, pp. 68, 70; and "Reflections on *Vers Libre*," in *TCC*, 183–189, p. 187, respectively. See also "Virgil and the Christian World" (1951), in *OPP*, 121–131; "Modern Education and the Classics" (1932), in *SE*, 507–516; and "The Classics and the Man of Letters" (1942), in *To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings* (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), 145–161; hereafter cited as *TCC*.

from the world of fact, and devotion to brute fact.”⁴⁵ The first implies the introversive escape from the world, from social realities and embodied experience to an idealized aestheticism (culminating in Symbolism) and, the other, an extroversive escape, a devotion to and inability to transcend physical existence (culminating in Naturalism).

Eliot used ‘romantic’ in different ways for different purposes. He sometimes used it in its negative connotation, as a synonym for the absence of what he associated with ‘classical’ – denoting immaturity and partiality – but he was aware that no writer was ever purely classical or purely romantic. The two were tendencies of a writer’s temperament and style and could be at variance with the general tendency of the given historical context: “We do not mean quite the same thing when we speak of a writer as romantic, as we do when we speak of a literary period as romantic.”⁴⁶ In the notes to his first two lecture series in 1916, Eliot used ‘classicism’ and ‘romanticism’ as historical tags, which definition he later said had the advantage of “never stretching their meaning beyond the acceptance of the intelligent reader.” As descriptive terms they could point to general period characteristics, but when applied to individual works, they lost their usefulness by distracting attention from looking “steadily for the intelligence and sensibility which each work of art contains.”⁴⁷

Eliot’s unique perception of history is already apparent in “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” his most influential essay, where he redefined the ‘new.’ By disrupting the Romantic illusion of the unity of the poet’s life and work, by insisting that without the creation of other selves there is no drama, and that without drama there is no affect, Eliot was reinstating an Aristotelian aesthetics. He proposed two meanings for “tradition”: the common meaning, like Lessing’s negative mimesis, was to imitate one’s predecessors; but the more adequate meaning was to see the originality of a writer as a function of continuity with his predecessors. Thus for Eliot the “historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional” (14). “Culture,” he noted elsewhere, “is traditional, and loves novelty.”⁴⁸

45. Schuchard, “Eliot as an Extension Lecturer,” p. 165.

46. Eliot, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934), p. 26. Eliot makes the same point in “From Poe to Valéry,” in *TCC*, 27–42; and in “Baudelaire,” in *SE*, 419–430.

47. T. S. Eliot, “A French Romantic,” letter in the *Times Literary Supplement* (London) (October 1920), p. 28.

48. T. S. Eliot, “London Letter,” *The Dial* (March 1921): 448–453, p. 451.

This essay manifests Eliot's typical skepticism: on the one hand, he rejects Romantic assumptions of art, calling for a return to classical forms; on the other, he insists on the continuity of tradition – of classical and Romantic poetics. In claiming in his later essay on Wordsworth and Coleridge that “in the matter of mimesis his [Wordsworth's use] is more deeply Aristotelian than some who have aimed at following Aristotle more closely,” Eliot was drawing attention to the interplay of traditional and innovative elements in a writer's style. Artistic criteria are said to provide a standard by which to determine that “any radical change in poetic form is likely to be the symptom of some very much deeper change in society and in the individual.”⁴⁹ Thus the recognition of change in terms of significant developments of style enables us to reconcile Eliot's praising of Wordsworth's use of mimesis, on the one hand, with his antipathy to Romantic descriptions of Nature and the elevation of the poet's personality, on the other.

Eliot found in Wordsworth's experiment (as Wordsworth called the *Lyrical Ballads*) a revival of lyric poetry, one of the lost strands of tradition. As Lessing had argued a few decades before Wordsworth, poets were expected to imitate past masterpieces. Wordsworth's originality was that he sought his subjects in “incidents from common life” and, more importantly from Eliot's perspective, attempted “to imitate, and, as far as possible, to adopt the very language of men.”⁵⁰ Poetry swerved back to the life of ordinary people, and Eliot, himself a modern revolutionizer of poetry, understood precisely what “the fuss was all about.”

However, Eliot rejected Wordsworth's Romantic conception of the poet's social role. Wordsworth saw the poet as a specially endowed individual: “He is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love” (509). Eliot would have agreed that the poet deals with the fundamental realities of human experience, but his interest was in what the poet *makes* rather than in what he happens to think of them. He saw the historical irony in the Romantic rebellion against Neoclassicism: the terms had changed – nature replacing culture, ordinary language replacing formal decorum, feelings replacing ideas – but the new subject matter and freedom were potentially as dogmatic as the Neoclassical rules they had supplanted. So from Eliot's perspective, Wordsworth was

49. Eliot, “Wordsworth and Coleridge,” pp. 74–75.

50. All parenthetical references are to this edition: William Wordsworth, “Observations Prefixed to *Lyrical Ballads*” (1800), in *The Great Critics: An Anthology of Literary Criticism*, ed. James Harry Smith and Edd Winfield Parks, 3d ed. (New York: Norton, 1967), 498–518, p. 505.

“only saying in other words what Dryden had said, and fighting the battle which Dryden had fought.”⁵¹

But what Eliot appreciated selectively was the new Aristotelian note – the emphasis on poetic affect – in Wordsworth’s aesthetics. Wordsworth’s reference to Aristotle brings out the vestigial Platonism concealed in the shift from Neoclassical ideas to Romantic feeling:

Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that Poetry is *the most philosophic* of all writing: it is so: *its object is truth*, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature.

(508; my emphasis)

Here Wordsworth was retrieving Aristotle’s notions of mimesis and affect: the imaginative reproduction of feelings and events that “do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than anything which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves” (506–507). Lyric poetry clearly had cathartic potential – whereby the reader’s understanding is “in some degree enlightened, and his affections strengthened and purified” (502).

But Eliot also had to adjust the Romantic concept of the imagination in order to revive Aristotle’s view of the imagination as embodied knowledge rather than as the escape to transcendent truth. He rejected Coleridge’s division between the primary imagination and the fancy, so as to reintegrate the Romantic imagination with Dryden’s Aristotelian definition of imagination, conceived as aspects of a single process of poetic invention. By analyzing the hidden hierarchy in Coleridge’s distinction, whereby the imagination is the rarefied ability to reach transcendent heights and fancy the subordinate ability of merely playing with matter conserved in memory, Eliot saves Coleridge from altogether “drugging himself with metaphysics,”⁵² on the one hand, and realigns him with the critical tradition of his predecessor, Dryden, on the other. By doing so, Eliot could position past critics in one coherent literary tradition, while maintaining their novelty as a function of their traditionalism.

By isolating the Aristotelian elements in the poetics of the early Romantics, Eliot not only acknowledged their aims but deflated their Platonist concerns to promote a

51. Eliot, “Wordsworth and Coleridge,” p. 71.

52. Eliot, “Wordsworth and Coleridge,” p. 68.

modernist aesthetics and, what is more, to establish a continuity where a rupture had been posited. This continuity, as Perl has argued, conceptually connects Lessing's classicism with Romanticism by isolating certain strands of late Romanticism as a perversion of its earlier reaction to Neoclassical rationalism. Eliot's revision of literary history may be said to be a simultaneous correction of both Romantic *and* Neoclassical conceptions of art, and his notion of tradition, of "the mind of Europe," thus becomes an incremental historicist synthesis of various "lost strands" of art and criticism.

Eliot applied the same method and criteria to all writers he turned to, major and minor, from past and present, as becomes clear if we trace his uses of the key terms, 'romantic' and 'classical.' When 'romantic' was used to describe a turning away from the classical tradition it was derogatory; when it referred to writing that advanced the tradition by revitalizing lost strands or unexplored possibilities, 'romantic' had a positive meaning, becoming a variant of 'classical.' Similarly, he altered his initial use of 'classical' to accommodate what he found to be truly new in the style of the early modernists and their precursors. When it came to style, 'classical' was no longer the opposite of 'romantic': " 'classicism' is not an alternative to 'romanticism,' as of political parties. . . . it is the goal toward which all good literature strives, so far as it is good, according to the possibilities of its place and time."⁵³ To call a work 'classical' was tantamount to saying it had achieved a perfection of a kind, within the limits of time and place of the writer, and within the limits of the genre and its medium. This use differed from the Neoclassical use, in allowing for degrees of excellence, thus releasing artists from the compulsion of the (Neoclassical) Moderns to copy and outdo the Ancients; and it differed from the Romantics' definition of excellence, in shifting attention from the writer's subjectivity to the formal aspects of art. Eliot used 'classical' less as a correction of earlier misconceptions of the term than as a synthesis of earlier uses, incorporating old meanings with new emphases without giving up old associations. His careful appropriation of earlier uses enabled him to apply the term to the new experimental forms of writing of his fellow-modernists. Looking back over the five decades of writing criticism, he admitted that he was "implicitly defending the sort of poetry that I and my friends wrote."⁵⁴

53. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), 175–178, p. 176; hereafter cited as *SP*.

54. Eliot, "To Criticize the Critic," p. 16.

What Eliot meant by 'classical' and 'romantic' becomes somewhat clearer once we place his comments on classical writers alongside those on his contemporaries.⁵⁵ "James's critical genius," he says, "comes out most tellingly in his mastery over, his baffling escape from, Ideas. . . . He had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it." Again the emphasis falls on James's sensuous apprehension of ideas: "instead of thinking with our feelings . . . we corrupt our feelings with ideas . . . evading sensation and thought."⁵⁶ For Eliot, as for Lessing and Aristotle before him, the imagination is the poet's true stock-in-trade, images being the vehicles of strong affect and the very proof of the truly new work of art:

When a work of art no longer *terrifies* us we may know that we were mistaken, or that our senses are dulled: we ought still to find *Othello* or *Lear frightful*. But this *attractive terror* repels the majority of men; they seek the sense of ease which the sensitive man avoids, and only when they find it do they call anything 'beautiful' (my emphasis).⁵⁷

Similarly, in *Ulysses*, James Joyce had discovered the mythical method as an alternative to realistic narrative, which to Eliot was no less than "a scientific discovery": "Art has to create a new world, and a new world must have a new structure. Mr Joyce has succeeded, because he has very great constructive ability; and it is the structure which gives his later work its unique and solitary value."⁵⁸

The 'classical' qualities Eliot found in James and Joyce were comparable to those he found in Flaubert, Stendhal, and Baudelaire, whom he considered pre-eminently European. He used 'European' as the highest praise, along with 'catholic,' 'Latin,' 'traditional,' and 'universal' – all of which implied a vibrant relationship with the past, with Homer, Aeschylus, Virgil, Dante, and Shakespeare. Whereas Virgil provided him with the *criterion* for European literature, it was Dante who was Eliot's true mentor, from whom he drew "the lessons of craft, of speech and of exploration

55. Eliot comments on Valéry and Joyce: "Of both of these writers it may as cogently be said that they belong to a new age chiefly by representing, and perhaps precipitating, consummately in their different ways the close of the previous epoch. Classicism is in a sense reactionary, but it must be in a profounder sense revolutionary" ("A Commentary," pp. 231–232).

56. T. S. Eliot, "In Memory of Henry James," *The Egoist* (January 1918), 1–2, p. 2; a shorter version appears in *SP*, pp. 151–152.

57. T. S. Eliot, "Contemporanea," *The Egoist* (June–July 1918): 84–85, p. 84.

58. T. S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," p. 177; and "London Letter," *The Dial* (July 1921): 213–217, p. 216, respectively.

of sensibility.”⁵⁹ And in attempting to explain his devotion to Dante, Eliot reaffirmed the traditional as the mark of a writer’s greatness. It is because Dante built on the foundations of Aquinas and before him of Aristotle, lived when “Europe was still more or less one,” wrote a language that was “the perfection of a common language,” and used the allegorical method, “which was common and commonly understood throughout Europe,” that Eliot described him as the most universal, the most European.⁶⁰

So for Eliot ‘classical’ stood for the tendency of a writer’s style towards a dense unified complexity characterized by clarity of structure, clarity of image, and clarity of language. Dante represented the apogee of formal affectivism: “Dante’s is the most comprehensive, and the most *ordered* presentation of emotions that has ever been made. . . . [He] does not analyse the emotion so much as he exhibits its relation to other emotions.”⁶¹ This emphasis on the parts constituting a unified whole, we recall, is how Aristotle described plot, the soul of tragedy. But for a *modern* writer to be classical it was no longer enough to construct a perfect form; it required an awareness of past influences, a comprehensive knowledge of the classical heritage of Europe, which Eliot perceived as a single living tradition.

Although Eliot regarded his criticism as the workshop of his poetry, I have tried to delineate the historical order he constructed in response to the Romantic excesses that underlay “the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.”⁶² His return to Aristotelian principles was instrumental in his attempt to rescue literature from this general trend: “The general effect in literature of the lack of any strong tradition is twofold: extreme individualism in views, and no accepted rules or opinions as to the limitations of the literary job.”⁶³

By “grouping together of certain cases” – Lessing’s and Eliot’s use of Aristotelian principles – I have tried to show that Eliot’s modernist classicism was an attempt to revive a “strong tradition” and to create a consensus on what literature could and could not do. Like Lessing before him, Eliot believed that without a strong critical tradition there could be no continuity and ultimately no great literature. This depended on going back to the Greek dramatists, which, in turn, entailed the rediscovery of their first critic and defender, Aristotle.

59. Eliot, “What Dante Means to Me,” in *TCC*, 125–135, pp. 127, 135.

60. Eliot, “Dante,” in *SE*, 237–27, pp. 242, 252, 242.

61. Eliot, “Dante,” in *The Sacred Wood*, 159–171, p. 168.

62. Eliot, “*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth,” p. 177.

63. Eliot, *After Strange Gods*, p. 32.

Réka Mihálka

Traduttore, Traditore?

The Creative Translations of Ezra Pound's *Cathay*

This paper focuses on Ezra Pound's Chinese creative translations or adaptations in *Cathay* (1915). Evidence is given why the poems in this volume should not be considered to be regular translations, failing to obey the most evident requirements of "translation" proper. Although adaptations of *Cathay* retain foreign peculiarities of the original poems, some additional features of Western 20th-century literature are also infused into them. After some preliminary theoretical considerations about Pound's translation theory, a few exemplary poems of the volume will be analysed with respect to the techniques of adaptation Pound applied. The Fenollosa manuscripts Pound used as a source will be taken into account for comparative purposes.

1 Introduction

"Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou art translated."¹

Shakespeare's characters call attention to a crucial problem of translation theory by mixing up the words "translate" and "transform": is translation necessarily transformation? In Ezra Pound's case, the translational process frequently implied transformation, indeed. This paper will present the major peculiarities of Ezra Pound's method of "creative translations" or "re-creations"² in *Cathay*, using Willis Barnstone's system of

1. William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Harold Brooks (The Arden Shakespeare, London and New York: Methuen, 1990), 3.1.113–4.

2. This paper will use the terms "re-creation," "creative translation" and "adaptation" as synonyms to denote the distinct phenomenon of the Poundian translation as opposed to "translation proper." Both "re-creation" and "creative translation" appoint creation as the crucial characteristic of Pound's method. The former indicates that the repeated act of creation is more emphatic than actual translation (*re*-creation), the latter rather balances the weight of the two processes (creative translation). Through the occasional use of the term "adaptation," we want to suggest that the Poundian translations are rather "adaptations" than "translations proper." On the other hand, by "translation proper" (this term is borrowed from the translation analyst Achilles Fang (cf. Achilles Fang, "Some Reflections On the Difficulty of

translation analysis as a point of reference. Each of the three levels of Barnstone's chart (register, structure and authorship) correlates with one or more of Pound's innovations in *Cathay*. Firstly, in the section dealing with register, the libertine handling of images will be investigated: how Pound utilised images in his sources to create imagist poems. The analysis of "Leave-Taking Near Shoku" will illustrate the intensification of images that determine the symbolism of the poem. Secondly, in relation to structure, ample examples will be provided to show Pound's varied arsenal of poetic restructuring. The initiation of dialogicity both throughout the volume and between single poems will be treated in detail, together with the elliptic structures Pound advocates and the actual reshaping of poems. Besides alluding to these features in other poems, "The Beautiful Toilet" and "The River Song" will occupy the centre of attention in this chapter. Thirdly, the invention of undertones incongruent with the original tone of poems will be studied concerning authorship. Relying on the conclusions from the previous section, the discussion of "The River Song" will be elaborated. Lastly, to give a more detailed picture of how these features (invented or intensified images, dialogicity, ellipsis, reshaping, undertones) really form an intricate system in a poem, "The River-Merchant's Wife: a Letter" will be analysed at length. Thus, this paper attempts to identify the main tools of the Poundian creative translation.

2 *Cathay*: "A maundarin tongue in a poulderin jowl"³

"I will get you a green coat out of China. . ."
(Ezra Pound, "Further Instructions")

In *Cathay*,⁴ using Ernest Fenollosa's⁵ notes, Pound published fourteen poems, mostly by Rihaku (the Japanese name of Li Po that Pound and Fenollosa used), an

Translation," in *On Translation*, ed. Reuben A. Brower [New York: Oxford University Press, 1966], 111–133) we mean a kind of translation that is scholarly, very precise and justifiable, having equivalence as its primary aim. The reason why creative translation is contrasted with translation proper throughout this paper is that Pound's translations were condemned more often than not on the grounds of translation proper.

3. James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (New York: The Viking Press, 1976), p. 89.

4. Robert Kern in his study about Pound's oriental interest gives the etymology for the title: "Cathay" is "Marco Polo's name for the country whose fabulous image he largely created in the narrative of his travels" (Robert Kern, *Orientalism, Modernism, and the American Poem* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996], p. 190). In fact, "Cathay" is Marco Polo's name of Northern China, while he refers to Southern China as "Manji." Thus, the title connects Pound's literary excursion implicitly with Marco Polo's adventures.

eighth-century Chinese poet. This collection, though, was as modern and European as it was ancient and Chinese. In Pound's renderings of the Chinese poems through Fenollosa's English transliteration, we shall try to enumerate the most typical in(ter)ventions of Pound.

Willis Barnstone in his *The Poetics of Translation – History, Theory, Practice* established a categorisation for translation analysis that is based on the traditional notion of "fidelity." Since the outrage against Pound's translations was mainly due to his "unfaithfulness" or loose adherence to the original texts, this may be an appropriate scheme to follow. Barnstone leaves ample space for creativity in translation, acknowledging that translation involves more than just transferring a linguistic message. To establish Pound's position in the realm of translation, Barnstone's chart is of great assistance:

- 1 Register, or translation level
 - literalism
 - middle ground
 - license
- 2 Structure, or degree of source text in translation
 - retaining structure of source text in target text
 - naturalizing structure of source text in target text
 - abandonment of original structure and creation of new one
- 3 Authorship, or dominant voice
 - retaining voice of source language author in target language
 - yielding voice of source language author to translator's voice in target language⁶

5. Ernest Fenollosa taught at the Imperial University in Japan. In addition to his professional duties, he studied Chinese and Japanese literature under Japanese instructors. Meanwhile, he wrote several volumes of notes. Since he did not speak or read Chinese, he used his instructors' Japanese guidance for understanding Chinese, too. After his death in 1908, his widow let the first two volumes of his notes be published (*Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art*, 1911), then sought a suitable person for further work. Finally she chose Pound and entrusted the poet with the literary estate of her late husband. Pound examined the Fenollosa manuscripts and edited some volumes from the notes and drafts (Noel Stock, *The Life of Ezra Pound* [Reading: Penguin Books, 1985], p. 185). Now Fenollosa's papers can be found at the Beinecke Library at Yale University, New Haven.

6. Willis Barnstone, *The Poetics of Translation: History, Theory, Practice* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1993), p. 25.

Subsequently, Pound's stance in translation shall be allocated with respect to these criteria. Evidently, register, structure and authorship form an intricate system: a distinctive feature in one poem may result in the appearance of another. Consequently, the analyses of poems can be divided along the above categories only artificially and imperfectly, with the need of numerous cross-references. Yet, in this way we can investigate the individual characteristics of the Poundian inventions methodically. Finally, we shall also study the aggregation of these phenomena in one poem, without enforced dissociation.

2.1 Register

Barnstone's first criterion in translation analysis concerns the literality of the text: to what extent the words in the target text differ from the source text; whether the translation is approximately verbatim or significantly libertine. As a first step, we shall summarise Pound's observations on this problem, to give theoretical evidence why we consider Pound a middle-ground translator. Afterwards, in "Leave-Taking Near Shoku" we shall illustrate a major innovative tendency in *Cathay*: how Pound intensified the presence of images in the volume, along his Imagist doctrines.

For Pound, a faithful translator's duty was to preserve the artistry of a text, so that contemporary readers would enjoy it as much as the original audience could. Hence, in his view, a translator's victory depends merely upon his poetic talents, not upon his reliance on a dictionary. As Pound wrote in "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris": "In the translation . . . I give that beauty – reproduced, that is, as nearly as I can reproduce it in English – for what it is worth."⁷ The superiority of transferring beauty instead of words is affirmed in "Notes on Elizabethan Classicists" as well: "We have long fallen under the blight of the Miltonic or noise tradition . . . a state of mind which . . . has long ceased to care for the beauty of the original; or which perhaps thinks 'appreciation' obligatory, and the meaning and content mere accessories."⁸ Similarly, in his essay "Early Translators of Homer" he praises those whose translation could amount to beauty comparable to that of the original: "in each of which books [Latin translations] a great poet has compensated, by his own skill, any loss in

7. Ezra Pound, "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris," in *Selected Prose 1909–1965*, ed. William Cookson (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 19–43, p. 26.

8. Ezra Pound, "Notes on Elizabethan Classicists," in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber, 1966), 227–248, p. 232.

transition; a new beauty has in each case been created.”⁹ Elsewhere, in “Cavalcanti,” he defined faithfulness as a preservation of emotional intensity. “It is even doubtful whether my bungling version of twenty years back [of Cavalcanti’s poems] isn’t more ‘faithful,’ in the sense at least that it tried to preserve the fervour of the original.”¹⁰

Pound also advocates scholarly thoroughness so that he could “preserve the fervour of the original.”¹¹ However, this did not imply that he was bound to infuse all his knowledge into his poetry. Even if he knew a little about Chinese literature while he was translating the poems later to be published in *Cathay*, he dared to deviate from the principles governing Chinese poetry.¹² His impeachment by Achilles Fang for his ignorance seems unjust because it does not consider his artistic motifs. For Fang, a translator must be an extremist “translator proper,” who attains a possible maximum knowledge of (what Pound called) *logopoeia* as well – although, as Pound wrote about *logopoeia*, it “does not translate.”¹³ Note that *logopoeia* is a concept of Pound’s later essays, e.g. “How to Read.” In this, he defines the term: it is

“the dance of the intellect among words,” that is to say, it employs words not only for their direct meaning, but it takes count in a special way of habits of usage, of the context we *expect* to find with the word, its usual concomitants, of its known acceptances, and of ironical play. It holds the aesthetic content which is peculiarly the domain of verbal manifestation, and cannot possibly be contained in plastic or in music. It is the latest come, and perhaps most tricky and undependable mode.¹⁴

On the other hand, Fang writes, “a translator must comprehend not only his text but also its numerous glosses, actual and possible.”¹⁵ The difference of the two approaches, though a simplification it may be, can be grasped in this contrast: in Fang’s understanding translation is primarily an intellectual challenge, in Pound’s case rather an artistic one. Fang apparently wants to retain the semantic structure of original works, i.e. the signified; while Pound’s focus is on the sign.

9. Ezra Pound, “Translators of Greek: Early Translators of Homer,” in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, 249–275, p. 249.

10. Ezra Pound, “Cavalcanti,” in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, 149–200, p. 200.

11. Pound, “Cavalcanti,” p. 200.

12. Besides, at the time of his translation he did not speak or read any Chinese.

13. Ezra Pound, “How to Read,” in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, 15–40, p. 25.

14. Pound, “How to Read,” p. 25.

15. Fang, p. 115.

To preserve the artistic prominence of the texts even at the cost of libertine modifications, Pound approximated the original poems to his literary convictions: to imagism and its later derivations. Imagism was started in the latter part of 1912, by several poets including Pound, Hilda Doolittle (H. D.), Richard Aldington, and F. S. Flint. Their main goal was the presentation of images stripped of authorial commentary; further aims included a return to ancient or exotic, aboriginal arts, a simplification of poetic diction, the abandonment of any attached excrescence, and precision in handling the objects of poetry. Therefore images gain more emphasis in Pound's creative translations. In "Leave-Taking Near Shoku," the central requirement for imagism, the presentation of images will be analysed in detail.

The third of four departure poems, "Leave-Taking Near Shoku" abounds in images not present in Fenollosa's rough translation,¹⁶ hence it provides an opportunity for insight into Pound's workshop.

"Sanso, King of Shoku, built roads"
 They say the roads of Sanso are steep,
 Sheer as the mountains.
 The walls rise in a man's face,
 Clouds grow out of the hill
 at his horse's bridle.
 Sweet trees are on the paved way of the Shin,
 Their trunks burst through the paving,
 And freshets are bursting their ice
 in the midst of Shoku, a proud city.

Men's fates are already set,
 There is no need of asking diviners. (199)¹⁷

Anne S. Chapple claims that since Pound omitted most of the allusions to fate and nature found in the original poem, the composition lost its integrity, the coda (the last two lines) just following the rest as an inorganic part. Although Pound really eliminated allusions, and changed the original meaning of the poem, we shall argue that he simply replaced it with a different sense. The pedestrian paraphrase in the Fenollosa notes reads as follows:

16. It is reprinted in: Anne S. Chapple, "Ezra Pound's *Cathay*: Compilation from the Fenollosa Notebooks," *Paideuma* 17.2–3 (Fall–Winter 1988) 9–46, pp. 32–33.

17. All parenthesised references are to this edition: Ezra Pound, *Cathay*, in *Translations* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978), 189–204.

The whole tenor of the poem is "You are going to Shoku. They say it is hard and yet do not be alarmed. For it is spring (lovely). (As in nature there is dark and light) so in men's life there is rise as well as fall. . . need not ask fortune teller. . . i.e. you may rise again. . ."¹⁸

Subduing the encouraging atmosphere of the original poem, Pound – through the systematic modification of images – alters the tone.¹⁹

First of all, the second line "Sheer as the mountains" has no equivalent in the text provided by Fenollosa; it is an invention of Pound.²⁰ Neither has "walls," "bridle," "paved," "Their trunks burst through the paving," and "a proud city." Moreover, instead of Fenollosa's line "And spring brooks must be encircling the shoku [sic] city"²¹ stands the new line "And freshets are bursting their ice / in the midst of Shoku, a proud city." Following the thread of Pound's alterations we shall construct our interpretation.

The first five lines depict man as a creature who has to face obstacles, both natural ("Clouds grow out of the hill" or the image of mountains) and artificial ("the roads of Sanso are steep," "The walls rise in a man's face").²² Meanwhile, when this man looks around, what does he see in nature? In lines 6–9, the "sweet trees" that fringe the way may "burst through the paving," defending their freedom against man-made constructions. "And freshets are bursting their ice / in the midst of Shoku, a proud city," fighting back again. Comparing these to Fenollosa's notes, no trace of the above is there: "(But at the same time) (this being springtime) Fragrant woods / must be covering up the supported paths of Shin / And spring brooks must be encircling the shoku [sic] city."²³ Note that the whole passage by Fenollosa is a description of nature at peace; there is no hint of "bursting," which appears twice in Pound's text, making it maybe the most emphatic single word in the poem.

18. Quoted in Chapple, p. 32.

19. Instead of the original encouraging farewell, Pound's re-creation gains a definitely resigned tone. This phenomenon (undertones and altered tones) will be exemplified in other poems as well in Section 2.3, Authorship, as a further tendency in *Cathay*.

20. Though, it has to be noted that the next line, which Pound also transformed, replacing "mountains" by *walls*, included the image of mountains. In Fenollosa's transliteration it read as: "(because) mts. rise up in the very face of a man" (Chapple, p. 32).

21. Quoted in Chapple, p. 33.

22. A person hindered by outer forces will be an image recurring in the cage-metaphor of both "The Beautiful Toilet" and "The River-Merchant's Wife: a Letter."

23. Quoted in Chapple, p. 33.

The personification in the expression “proud city” alludes firmly but unmistakably to human beings, in the middle of a natural scene. This might be the moment of an inner comparison in the speaker’s mind between one’s own possibilities and those of unanimated creatures. The speaker (or writer, but not in the sense of “author,” just as one capable of using typography for purposes of poetry) of the poem utilises space between two units as an indication of ellipsis:²⁴ a train of thought is withheld. However, it can be deduced fairly easily: the apparent contrast of the first two units, between the situation of human beings and creatures of the flora poses a question whether it is possible also for humans to rebel against their fate. Thus, in our interpretation the last two lines do not stand as an inorganic attachment as Chapple perceived it but, having their antecedents in previous lines, rather as the climax of understanding. Visiting diviners, the mediators between humans and the divine, is vain: our fate is already set; we have to defer to it. Henceforth, the invention and modification of images defines the mood of the Poundian poem, reversing encouragement to resignation.

To sum up, Pound is a middle-ground translator concerning register because he did not adhere to the literal text of the original poems; however, he wished to retain as much of the artistic virtues of the source texts as possible. To achieve this, the poet assists the translator as mentioned before: “a great poet has compensated, by his own skill, any loss in transition; a new beauty has in each case been created.”²⁵ The “new beauty” is, in this case, the invention of images, which has been illustrated in “Leave-Taking Near Shoku.”

2.2 Structure

Pound claims even more licence where Barnstone’s second perspective, structure, is concerned. He does not hesitate to discard the original structure of a poem or invent a new one as he also did in “Sestina: Altaforte,”²⁶ to ensure that the form and logic of a poem matches the subject material in the target language as well. As Xie remarks he was able

24. This is to be echoed in the structure of “The Beautiful Toilet.” Ellipsis will also be a kind of re-structuring that is one of the three analysed tendencies.

25. Ezra Pound, “Translators of Greek: Early Translators of Homer,” in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, 249–275, p. 249.

26. Ronnie Apter describes the restructuring of “Sestina: Altaforte” in detail. It is a translation of the “Sirventes in Praise of War,” though it does not even remind one of the original poem’s structure (cf. Ronnie Apter, *Digging for the Treasure: Translation after Pound* [New York: Peter Lang, 1984], pp. 69–72).

to penetrate through the literal surface . . . to grasp the integrity of a poem as a whole and then to transmit his insight and understanding into the artifice of a new medium, thus enabling the structure of feeling to generate itself, organically, according to its own inner compulsion and momentum.²⁷

Re-structuring is realised by several methods in *Cathay*. Firstly, there is a tendency to establish a dialogue between poems in the volume, to create a unity in this selection of Chinese literature: the interaction of texts thus suggests a conscious instead of a haphazard gathering of poems. Secondly, ellipsis is a frequently occurring poetic device in Pound's renderings that is also emphasised by formal peculiarities (e.g. the detached lines in "Leave-Taking Near Shoku"). "The Beautiful Toilet" will be the case-study of ellipsis in the discussion. Thirdly, the actual re-structuring of poems (for instance, merging texts, omitting parts, inserting stanzas etc.) will be studied in "The River Song." The analysis of this last poem will be elaborated on in the section on authorship.

2.2.1 The relations of content and structure in *Cathay*

Analysing the structure of the volume, we can see the creation of unity through the interplay of poems that were not meant to constitute a tightly linked system originally. One may remember that *Cathay* appeared during the First World War in 1915. Hence the tenor of the volume is defined by the presentation of the miseries of soldiers and civilians alike. At the beginning of the book concealed accusations of leaders (kings, emperors and generals) alternate with songs of lament and sorrow. The first, third, fifth and seventh poem ("Song of the Bowmen of Shu," "The River Song," "Poem by the Bridge at Ten-shin" and "Lament of the Frontier Guard") present supposedly male narrators who articulate their feelings against the splendour of the rich, against the opaque and unintelligible purpose of war, against the soldiers' inhuman suffering and the hopelessness of their situation. On the other hand, these poems are juxtaposed to accounts of the situation of female characters ("The Beautiful Toilet," "The River-Merchant's Wife: a Letter" and "The Jewel Stairs' Grievance"). These personae are deserted not necessarily because of a war but still they are left "too much alone" ("The Beautiful Toilet," 190).

The alternation of the poems sketches a grotesque dialogue between poems of men and women, representing the genre of epistle at a meta-level. Note that the letter form is emphatic in the volume: two of the fourteen poems are – male- or female-

27. Ming Xie, "Pound as Translator," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ezra Pound*, ed. Ira B. Nadel (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), 204–223, p. 210.

written – letters²⁸ (from which the second one, “Exile’s Letter,” ends the above sketched dialogue of the initial poems). Even the volume can be regarded as an epistle to the soldiers who, according to a letter of the young sculptor, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, a friend of Pound’s, could perceive its reference: “I keep the book in my pocket. Indeed I use [the poems] to put courage in my fellows. I speak now of the ‘Bowmen’ and the ‘North Gate’ [i.e. “Lament of the Frontier Guard”] which are so appropriate to our case.”²⁹

Another train of thought is discussed between the poems: the possibilities of communication in time of war. The very first poem of *Cathay*, “Song of the Bowmen of Shu” poses a question:

When we set out, the willows were drooping with spring,
We come back in the snow,
We go slowly, we are hungry and thirsty,
Our mind is full of sorrow, who will know of our grief? (189)

which is repeated in “Lament of the Frontier Guard” as well:

Ah, how shall you know the dreary sorrow at the North Gate,
With Rihaku’s name forgotten
And we guardsmen fed to the tigers. (195)

and is answered in the last part of the last poem, creating a framework for *Cathay*:

“It is not that there are no other men
But we like this fellow the best,
But however we long to speak
He can not know of our sorrow.” (204)

The questions are raised by the soldiers; but who is the addressee? In the first quotation (“who will know of our grief”), the soldiers seem to seek for a mediator, a poet who, like ancient bards reported the events and battles of wars, should inform the ensuing generations about their terrible, inhuman conditions. However, the second question seems to be aimed at the reader (“how shall you know”) with the poet (Rihaku) forgotten, the soldiers dead; or is this *you* the translator, the rejuvenator of the text, who should make account of the events, and not let the audience

²⁸. As described later on in this paper, “The River-Merchant’s Wife: A Letter” was not a letter in the Chinese poem by Li Po: it was Pound’s invention.

²⁹. Ezra Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska* (New York: New Directions, 1974), p. 68.

forget Rihaku's name, hence the soldiers' grief? Either way, the demand for reaching out for an audience and sympathy is urging; however, the paradoxical conclusion of the booklet (which, in fact, does commemorate the soldiers): "But however we long to speak / He can not know of our sorrow" seems to deprive the soldiers of this ultimate relief (also note that in this last quotation instead of the previous *you*, we can read about a *he* – this increases the distance between the speaker and the audience, and foreshadows the inability for establishing contact). Adding that in the last poem of *Cathay* the words are uttered by birds (a traditional metaphor for poets – cf. "The River Song"), a new problem is posed: is poetry or is a poet an able channel for historical ages to communicate through? Is a poet still able to reach his audience in order to create myth or legend, or just interpret events, or at least report them?

So far, the dialogic relationship between poems has been sketched. Furthermore, one can also find less overt dialogues in *Cathay*: the twin imagery of certain poems ties texts closer together as in the case of "The Beautiful Toilet" and "The River Merchant's Wife: a Letter." In these two, the imagery of an enclosure is developed markedly similarly. The atmosphere of outer forces hindering a person also associates "Leave-Taking Near Shoku" with these poems.

2.2.2 "The Beautiful Toilet"

An illustration of Pound's method of re-structuring, elliptic translation can be found in "The Beautiful Toilet," a tableau of a lady, trapped in her marriage to a drunkard.

Blue, blue is the grass about the river
 And the willows have overfilled the close garden.
 And within, the mistress, in the midmost of her youth.
 White, white of face, hesitates, passing the door.
 Slender, she puts forth a slender hand;

And she was a courtesan in the old days,
 And she has married a sot,
 Who now goes drunkenly out
 And leaves her too much alone. (190)

Wai-lim Yip claims that the topos of "the estranged wife" of Chinese literature that is presented in this poem is subject to Pound's method of "ironical play."³⁰ What

30. Cf. Wai-lim Yip, *Ezra Pound's Cathay* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969), pp. 128–138.

he means by this is the juxtaposition of emotions of the persona of the poem: gaiety and desolation. He argues that the title represents the undercurrent tone of gaiety which is covered by the melancholy of the body of the poem:

First, the title “The Beautiful Toilet” taken from the fifth line³¹ enforces the paradoxical gaiety which is to be undercut by the reversal of the situation. . . . Second, Pound spaces out the last four lines, allowing the second impression to play against the one captured in the previous five lines and the title.

In reaching the effect of the “ironical play,” Yip states, the governing structural element of the poem is “unexpectedness”: “as we understand it, *unexpectedness* rather than *expectation* is the clue of the poem.”³² In my view, however, the last four lines are not as unexpected as Yip claims but are the explication of an undertone of grief or complaint, the traces of which are detectable also earlier in the imagery. Consequently, instead of the ironical play, we shall propose that the structure of the poem is defined by another central poetic tool: ellipsis.

The beginning of “The Beautiful Toilet” is hard to account for: “Blue, blue is the grass about the river.” In Fenollosa’s transliteration both “green” and “blue”³³ appear as possible translations; however, as in the case of “The River-Merchant’s Wife: a Letter,” a twin poem of “The Beautiful Toilet” in terms of emotional content, subject matter and in the means of expression, where the same problem arises in the fourth line, Pound chose “blue.” Reasons and explanations are plentiful, yet, none of them is indubitable: first, “blue” has connotations that express moodiness (“I feel blue”); second, concerning the spectrum blue is a colder colour than green, and one may associate cold colours with less positive feelings; and third, green grass is supposed to be the sign of life-force. For the feeling of delusion and desolation, Pound may have had his reasons to pick “blue” – maybe with something akin to the above sketched ideas in his mind. Three lines later, a similar structure becomes a counterpoint to the colour blue: “White, white of face.” Yip notes on the whiteness very sensitively: “is ‘white’ to mean ‘pale’ or ‘powdered’ white?”³⁴ Both interpretations seem to be valid: it either intensifies the effect of despair or that of unusual beauty that is already indicated in the title.

31. In Fenollosa’s crib the fifth line went “beauty of face, beauty of face, red, powder (or berry), toilet”; quoted in Yip, p. 131. Pound cut it out of the poem and rendered it as a title.

32. Yip, p. 134.

33. Fenollosa’s translations and notes on “The Beautiful Toilet” are reprinted in Yip, pp. 172–173. The original Chinese text is reprinted in Yip, pp. 131–132.

34. Yip, p. 137.

Willows, again, are traditional symbols of lonesomeness and grief; hence they enhance the effect of the first line. The word “overfilled”³⁵ may exhibit an undercurrent of disillusionment on the part of the woman: there are too many willows and too much grief. The expressions “the close garden,” “within,” and “in the midmost of her youth” create imaginary barriers around the precious woman. Yip quotes another translation (by Giles) that Pound read and that ends: “Ah, if he does not mind his own, / He’ll find some day the bird has flown.”³⁶ Pound must have adopted the bird-imagery from Giles by creating a cage around the woman in his poem.

Subsequently, however, the lady of “The Beautiful Toilet” sees and seizes the opportunity to flee. She “hesitates, passing the door,” and (several lines later) “Slender, she puts forth a slender hand.” We expect to find explanation about what is happening, but a semi-colon finishes the first unit abruptly. Still, we can presume that she most possibly left her house – she finally escaped. Thus, instead of the ironical play (which is based on unexpectedness), *ellipsis*³⁷ is the clue to the poem (the preceding imagery partially resolves the enigma, hence the turn is slightly expected or at least suspected): from the culminating point of drama we are forbidden to see the events any longer. The next part with its ostensible unrelatedness to the previous lines explains the reasons for her deed rather vehemently, creating the effect of spontaneous speech. She used to be a courtesan, who had enjoyed the company of men, but after her marriage to a drunkard, her life of pleasure was cut off, she was left just “too much alone.”

“The Beautiful Toilet” can also stand as an example of how Pound’s innovations are folding out of each other eventually. The intensification of images (barriers around the woman) creates an undertone of desolation already in the first stanza that was not detectable in the Chinese text or Fenollosa’s transliteration. Thus unex-

35. Cf. the later discussion of “By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses, / Too deep to clear them away!” in “The River-Merchant’s Wife: A Letter,” where the same device of emphasis creates an undertone of grief.

36. Quoted in Yip, p. 138.

37. Ellipsis is only partially Pound’s invention. The text of the original Chinese poem also included a certain amount of allusiveness and implicitness; yet, ellipsis in Pound’s version is also accompanied and made emphatic by formal features: inserted blank lines signify ellipsis visually as well, making it the central poetic tool of the poem. On the other hand, the Chinese original was written in the five-character regulated form. This means that each line contained five characters, and the flow of the lines was not broken by spacing out stanzas, creating a pleasing matrix-like look. Similarly, in “Leave-Taking Near Shoku,” Pound reshaped the poem so that ellipsis would become the most striking structuring element.

pectedness that operated in the source texts is eliminated, and ellipsis becomes the dominant structuring poetic device. The innovative tendencies in the next poem, “The River Song” are also tightly intertwined; hence, the aspect of restructuring will be examined in this section, while another perspective will remain to the section on authorship.

2.2.3 “The River Song”

After having dealt with dialogic relations and ellipsis, our focus will be now on the actual restructuring of poems. Pound stitched together two different poems to create “The River Song.” The implication of the merging will be accounted for in the next section.

This boat is of shato-wood, and its gunwales are cut magnolia,
Musicians with jewelled flutes and with pipes of gold
Fill full the sides in rows, and our wine
Is rich for a thousand cups.
We carry singing girls, drift with the drifting water,
Yet Sennin needs
A yellow stork for a charger, and all our seamen
Would follow the white gulls or ride them.
Kutsu’s prose song
Hangs with the sun and moon.

King So’s terraced palace
is now but barren hill,
But I draw pen on this barge
Causing the five peaks to tremble,
And I have joy in these words
like the joy of blue islands.
(If glory could last forever
Then the waters of Han would flow northward.)
And I have moped in the Emperor’s garden, awaiting an or-
der-to-write!
I looked at the dragon-pond, with its willow-coloured water
Just reflecting the sky’s tinge,
And heard the five-score nightingales aimlessly singing.

The eastern wind brings the green colour into the island
grasses at Yei-shu,
The purple house and the crimson are full of Spring softness.

South of the pond the willow-tips are half-blue and bluer,
 Their cords tangle in the mist, against the brocade-like palace.
 Vine-strings a hundred feet long hang down from carved rail-
 ings,
 And high over the willows, the fine birds sing to each other,
 and listen,
 Crying – “Kwan, Kuan,” for the early wind, and the feel of it.
 The wind bundles itself into a bluish cloud and wanders off.
 Over a thousand gates, over a thousand doors are the sounds
 of spring singing,
 And the Emperor is at Ko.
 Five clouds hang aloft, bright on the purple sky,
 The imperial guards come forth from the golden house with
 their armour a-gleaming.
 The Emperor in his jeweled car goes out to inspect his flowers,
 He goes out to Hori, to look at the wing-flapping storks,
 He returns by way of Sei rock, to hear the new nightingales,
 For the gardens at Jo-run are full of new nightingales,
 Their sound is mixed in this flute,
 Their voice is in the twelve pipes here. (190–191)

Many scholars claim that in “The River Song” Pound fused two separate poems not noticing the beginning of the second one, using the (unusually long) title only as a stanza of the poem.³⁸ Yet, the “notorious conflation,”³⁹ as Hugh Kenner addresses the phenomenon, may lay claim to defence. Sanehide Kodama describes the manuscript minutely:

The last page of “Kojogin” is filled to the bottom, and the next page, with the title of the second poem, “Jiju Gishunyen. . .” looks, at first glance, like the continuation from the previous page. Pound penciled “#129” to “Kojogin,” but he did not assign any number to “Jiju Gishunyen. . .”⁴⁰

38. The stanza that originates from the title of the second poem can be found now in lines 19–22.

39. Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 204.

40. Sanehide Kodama, “Cathay and Fenollosa’s Notebooks,” *Paideuma* 11.2 (1982) 207–244, p. 229. Fenollosa’s complete transliterations and notes on this poem are reprinted here (pp. 230–236).

Thus – at a superficial, surveying reading – it might be easy to overlook the beginning of the new poem. Yet, it challenges all plausibility that Pound would not have noticed later on that Fenollosa wrote a comment at the end of the first poem: “having come to conclusion,”⁴¹ apparently indicating the ending. Moreover, if Pound was unaware of the beginning of the new poem, it also entails that he, while doing his translations, did not attribute importance to the fact that the two poems are written in different form: the first in the so-called five-character form (five Chinese characters make up a line), the second in the seven-character form (seven characters in a line). Hardly can we also imagine that he should not have been taken aback by the radically different tone of the two poems. Moreover, as Kodama pointed out, Fenollosa jotted down a note under the title: “All this is name, or rather description of circumstances of production, instead of name.”⁴² Faithfully to Nagao Ariga’s (Fenollosa’s Japanese professor’s) awkward English, Fenollosa wrote “name” meaning “title.” Still, Pound was well acquainted with the literary tradition that the explication of the details of production appears either at the beginning, or at the end of a poem – like in Chinese poems. Should we presume that Pound could have been so utterly mistaken in a dozen of things simultaneously, without the least suspicion? I prefer to assume that the “notorious conflation” is rather due to some poetical consideration.⁴³ Since the whole volume contrasts the loud pageantry of the aristocracy (even in wartime) and the sullen pauperism of common people: I propose that the “River Song” is focused on these extremes (this issue will be settled in the next section).

To sum up, Pound’s tailoring of the texts could have aimed to juxtapose the worlds of the two Chinese poems: that of nature and art and that of vanity. To reach this end, he definitely needed the title of the second poem as a stanza, and the ending of the first poem as a criticism of the second unit, to express the vanity and fragility of the former by the latter.

2.3 Authorship

Concerning Barnstone’s third perspective, authorship, Pound developed a novel technique that we shall refer to as co-authorship. Hugh Kenner in his “Introduction” to Pound’s *Translations* grasped the essence of this method:

41. Quoted in Kodama, p. 229.

42. Quoted in Kodama, p. 229.

43. The consciousness of the technique can also be evidenced by recalling that Pound applied the same device in “Homage to Sextus Propertius,” where he melted two poems into one; for a more detailed explanation see Apter, p. 98.

A persona crystallizes a modus of sensibility in its context. It derives from an attempt to enter an unfamiliar world, develop in oneself the thoughts and feelings indigenous to that world, and articulate them in English. A translator, by extension, is a rendering of a modus of thought or feeling in its context after it has already been crystallized, by a Cavalcanti or a Rihaku.⁴⁴

As we have seen, for Pound translation did not mean a mechanical process in which the translator is an impersonal medium between two languages. On the contrary, he approached it as an alternative way for self-expression.

John W. Maerhofer, Jr. claims that an interpretative and an assimilative function are at work as the base processes of re-creation.⁴⁵ The first urges the poet-translator to internalise the state of mind of the original author. The second function, however, is the key factor to the appearance of the poet-translator's mind in the recreated poem. In Pound's case, however, the translator's personality does not obtrude in the poem; he rather puts on one of his numerous personae.⁴⁶ Maerhofer calls it the paradox of self-expression: Pound wants to realise his self-expression through masks.

The opening poem of the volume ("Song of the Bowmen of Shu," 189) can illustrate the appearance of a dominant foreign voice that can even surmount the original tone. In the original, "Song of the Bowmen of Shu" is an encouraging song written for soldiers at war. In Pound's adaptation, however, it became a Jeremiad-like lament, a definitely discouraging song. For example, Pound changed "tied" systematically into "tired" (189) as far as horses are concerned in the poem, giving the basis of mood. The line "That [*sic*] four horses are tied: they are very strong."⁴⁷ is adapted into "By heaven, his horses are tired" (189). Hence, interpretation is reversed in the line that went in Fenollosa's transliteration as "The generals are on their back, and the soldiers are by their side," (in Pound's version: "The generals are on them, the soldiers are by them," 189): it is not praise for braveness (that high ranked officers and com-

44. Hugh Kenner, "Introduction," in [Ezra Pound's] *Translations*, ed. Hugh Kenner (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 9–14, p. 11.

45. John W. Maerhofer, Jr., "Towards an Esthetic of Translation: An Examination of Ezra Pound's Translation Theory," *Paideuma* 29.3 (Winter 2000) 85–109.

46. As Pound acknowledged this in *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir*: "I continued [after a book of poems called *Personae*] in long series of translations, which were but more elaborate masks" (Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska*, p. 85).

47. Kodama, p. 211.

mon soldiers are fighting shoulder to shoulder) but accusation for lack of human feelings and tender sympathy (the generals can ride horses, while soldiers have to walk along). Pound apparently does not want to encourage soldiers to fight till death (among them a few of his close friends) but wants to express his sympathy.

Yet, it is rather rare that the undertone eventually supersedes the original tone. Mostly, the co-existence of voices characterises the poems in *Cathay*. Consequently, co-authored texts are often less homogeneous than their sources because undertones invented by the poet-translator that are discrepant with the primary atmosphere blur the solidity of the world view of the source text. In the next subsection, we shall study the emergence of such an undertone in “The River Song.”

The blending of the poems in “The River Song” has been outlined in the previous section. Re-structuring imposed consequences on authorship, too, because the compound provided new and immediate context for both previous texts. Both the differences between the Fenollosa⁴⁸ and Pound versions and the contextual relation of the two parts of “The River Song” will be taken into account.

At the beginning, sumptuousness, glittering and music are more intense in Pound’s poem than in Fenollosa’s line; compare for example: “jewel flute gold pipe instrument of wood sit both heads = both sides; Jeweled [*sic*] flute, and gold pipe, and (musicians) sitting in row on both sides”⁴⁹ with Pound’s line: “Musicians with jewelled flutes and with pipes of gold / Fill full the sides in rows” (190). The phrase “Fill full the sides in rows” implies much more musicians than Fenollosa’s transliteration. Sensual music, splendour, and rejoicing in gold and jewellery are accompanying the poet persona of the first part. Meanwhile, an undertone emerges in the middle part of Pound’s poem (right where Pound merged the two poems, lines 17–22) and makes the speaker reconsider his initial values. First, in brackets the reader encounters a self-reflective side-remark “(If glory could last forever / Then the waters of Han would flow northward.)” (190) which means, backward. This reminds the persona in the poem of the temporality of fame and how fast an author’s laurels wither. Afterwards, the narrator recalls a memory that reveals he is a paid poet (“awaiting an order-to-write,” 191) to entertain the Emperor. Contrasting the images of luxurious civilisation, nature utters the key word: “aimlessly” (191).⁵⁰ In the garden of the Emperor, the nightingales were singing aimlessly, without any hope of benefit, just for pleasure: “for the early wind, and the feel of it” (191), as a later line

48. Fenollosa’s version of “The River Song” is reproduced in Kodama, pp. 230–236.

49. Quoted in Kodama, pp. 230–231.

50. This is Pound’s invention (cf. Yip, p. 152).

puts it. This counterpoint incites the persona of the poem to admit the vanity of his ambitions and start an artistic purgation.

The middle part of the poem is a highly artistic description of nature, a very sensitive and emotional representation: in nature, the poet finds his true voice in solitary contemplation. Nature incorporates *ab ovo* all the beauty art can create – references to art forms can be found in lines 24–28:

The *purple* house and the *crimson* are full of Spring softness.
 South of the pond the willow-tips are *half-blue and bluer*,
 Their cords tangle in the mist, against the *brocade-like* palace.
Vine-strings a hundred feet long hang down from carved railings,
 And high over the willows, the fine birds sing to each other,
 and listen. . . (191)

Here the words “purple,” “crimson,” “half-blue and bluer” evoke visual art, painting, “brocade” may stand for crafts, while “strings,” in its secondary meaning related to musical instruments, would represent music, together with the subtle virtuosity of the line “Vine-strings a hundred feet long hang down from carved railings,” where the repetition of the nasal sounds [n] and [ŋ] anticipates the image of singing in the next line (191). Thus, nature is the source of all art, while it is also its product: the present depiction, the image of nature was conceived in and by poetry. Nature is hence overwhelmed by art: “Over a thousand gates, over a thousand doors are the sounds of spring singing” – but at this point the word “singing” recalls again the poet’s present miserable state and the repartee is coming in the form of a strikingly quick, declarative, almost cynical statement: “And the Emperor is at Ko” (191). The image of the ignorant Emperor juxtaposes the firmness of Nature: he, lacking the least artistic inclination, is *inspecting* flowers instead of admiring them, *looks at* the wing-flapping storks, and finally, *hears* the new nightingales. Art is merely flattering glitter, sheer entertainment, “to keep a drowsy Emperor awake” – as Yeats wrote in “Sailing to Byzantium.”⁵¹ In Pound’s poem, the garden is “full of new nightingales”: (191) swarms of ambitious poets are crowding to entertain the Emperor, to sing aimlessly, and the poet persona of the poem is present among them. The vanity of their art is acknowledged in the last two lines: “Their sound is mixed in this flute, / Their voice is in the twelve pipes here” (191).

In conclusion, the second part of the poem juxtaposes the world of the first part: their opposing values reveal the gap between the courtly parade of arts and the unaf-

51. W. B. Yeats, “Sailing to Byzantium” at <http://www.online-literature.com/yeats/781>.

fected inhabitancy of poetry in nature. Through the combination of two texts in “The River Song” and the invention and insertion of certain expressions, Pound introduced an undertone contrary to the original tone, indicating co-authoring. Thus a perceptible modification in register (e.g. intensive images, inserted words) and a crucially significant re-structuring (melting two poems) results in or is the means of creating an undertone, a token of co-authorship. The three aspects of Barnstone’s translation analysis are profoundly interwoven in any of Pound’s Chinese creative translations. The next section will study the interrelations and interaction of the three perspectives in “The River Merchant’s Wife: a Letter.”

2.4 “The River-Merchant’s Wife: a Letter”

In “The River-Merchant’s Wife: a Letter,” the interrelatedness of register, structure and authorship can be evidenced through a comparison of the original poem by Li Po in Fenollosa’s notes⁵² and Pound’s “The River-Merchant’s Wife: a Letter.”

While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead
 I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.
 You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,
 You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.
 And we went on living in the village of Chokan:
 Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.
 At fourteen I married My Lord you.
 I never laughed, being bashful.
 Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.
 Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.

At fifteen I stopped scowling,
 I desired my dust to be mingled with yours
 Forever and forever and forever.
 Why should I climb the look out?

At sixteen you departed,
 You went into far Ku-to-yen, by the river of swirling eddies,
 And you have been gone five months.

52. All citations of Fenollosa’s notes and references to the original Chinese text of “The River-Merchant’s Wife: a Letter” are based on “Other Translations of ‘A River-Merchant’s Wife,’” in *Modern American Poetry*, ed. Cary Nelson, University of Illinois (20 October 2006) <http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/m_r/pound/othertranslations.htm>.

The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.
 You dragged your feet when you went out.
 By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,
 Too deep to clear them away!
 The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.
 The paired butterflies are already yellow with August
 Over the grass in the West garden;
 They hurt me. I grow older.
 If you are coming down through the narrows of the river
 Kiang,
 Please let me know beforehand,
 And I will come out to meet you
 As far as Cho-fu-sa. (192–193)

Li Po's title was "The Song of Ch'ang-Kan," which in Fenollosa's Japanese reading of the Chinese text was transformed into "Chokanko" about which he explains that Chokan (Li Po's Ch'ang-Kan) is a "name of town/place" and "ko=uta=narrative song." Pound, however, discarded this title altogether, and called the poem "The River-Merchant's Wife: a Letter." The genre was thus also altered: an oral genre, the song of a community ("The Song of Ch'ang-Kan"), which does not have an addressee, was transformed into written communication using the word "letter" in the title: the poem thus gains a more personal perspective. Furthermore, since the original does not speak about a river in the title, Pound calls attention to an image invented as a complex psychological metaphor for the relationship between husband and wife. The river with its "swirling eddies" (in Li Po's poem: half-visible rocks under the surface of the river – a wonderful image for the cold and unmoveable threat; Pound's image has rather an emphasis on the depth of the problem) creates a feeling of uncertainty and hidden danger, while the "narrows of the river Kiang" suggests a sort of limitedness of possibilities. These assumptions are reinforced by other images and the undertone of the poem.

Concerning the persona of "The River-Merchant's Wife: a Letter," Robert Kern suggested an interpretation that would distinguish between two wives in the poem. According to him, the first wife, the one present also in Li Po's original is characterised by "her charming evocation of her own innocence as a child, her complete devotion to her husband, and her restrained assertion of feeling."⁵³ Pound allows the

53. Kern, p. 198.

second wife “to keep her self-effacing, ‘oriental’ manner but creates an undercurrent of critical feeling in his version that is apparently foreign to the original.”⁵⁴ In consequence of this critical undertone, she is removed from her former passion (“I desired my dust to be mingled with yours / Forever and forever and forever”) and expectations (e.g. expecting persistency: “Why should I climb the look out?”), and locked up in her bluntness. Yip’s previously discussed term, the “ironical play”⁵⁵ would be more appropriate here as the original tone and the emerging undertone in the translation start an ironic, though schizophrenic dialogue: the new persona mocks the naivety of the “oriental” wife.

There were two allusions to Chinese legends about faithful lovers (“I always had in me the faith of holding to pillars / why should I think of climbing the husband looking out terrace?” – Fenollosa) that got lost in the translation. Yu Zhang describes the first: “holding to the pillars” was based on the story of a man who promised a girl to wait for her under a bridge at a pillar. However, the maid was late in coming, and the tide was rising; the man clung to the pillar, and finally drowned, keeping his word.⁵⁶ The origin of the second legend (the “husband looking out terrace”) can be found in Sanehide Kodama’s essay: “According to one legend, a woman watching from the terrace for her husband’s return for many years was finally petrified.”⁵⁷ The advantage Pound took from the omission is that the question of being left alone does not even arise at the beginning of the poem, before the actual departure. Since the lovers of the legends had to pay with their life for their faithfulness, it is arguable that in Pound’s adaptation no suspicion about a tragic outcome appears before the departure of the husband.

A newly born imagery expressing cruelty can also be found in Pound’s poem, in the very first two lines. In Fenollosa’s notes the first line went as follows: “mistress, hair, first, cover, brow – My hair was at first covering my brows (Chinese method of wearing hair),” which became in Pound’s version “While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead.” Similarly in the second line, instead of Fenollosa’s plucking or “breaking flower,” which reflects an instinctive, ordinary, egotistic carelessness of children, Pound applied a phrase owing less innocence, rather an amount of intentional destruction: “pulling flowers” (the phrase most probably refers not to picking flowers but to pulling them up by the roots). These

54. Kern, pp. 200–201.

55. Yip, pp. 128–138.

56. Yu Zhang, “Ezra Pound’s ‘The River Merchant’s Wife: A Letter’: On Mistranslation of the Two Allusions,” *Paideuma* 27 (1998), 185–194, p. 188.

57. Kodama, p. 221.

images of cruelty and force correspond closely with the break in the love of the woman: her passion is also cut straight across.

The first line foreshadows another tendency of the poem. The abundance of vertical and horizontal lines in the images support the sense of being locked in, of being hindered by barriers in the territory of marriage. All the three dimensions gain an additional meaning by representing the lack of possibilities. First, there are images that are concerned with the vertical limitedness: "bamboo stilts," "Two small people," "Why should I climb the look out?," "leaves fall," and "lowering my head, I looked at the wall." This last one is already a mixture of horizontal and vertical limitations: lowering her head diminishes her vertical angle of seeing, while the wall limits her sight in a horizontal way. The first line ("While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead") was another example for the horizontal segmentation of space, and so is the gate. The very ending of the poem is also a note on spatial limits: "As far as Cho-fu-sa." Limits of space are metaphorical representations of the impossibility of their reunion, of their being locked in the self. She is a bird not to escape from her cage, unlike the more venturesome lady of "The Beautiful Toilet." In both poems, imagery creates the barriers surrounding the women, summoning an undertone; furthermore, the parallelism of the two situations initiates a dialogue between them.

The hierarchy between the later husband and the wife is established also visually by the first appearance of the boy: on bamboo stilts. Afterwards, he walked about the girl's seat (who must have been sitting), being higher again. Finally, when his wife wants to get to know whether he is coming, she has to climb up the look-out tower: her desire for height would make her being elevated onto the level of her husband, so that she could get information about her Lord.

The third stanza confronts the wife's former passionate, mature love for her husband and the first sorrow upon the inevitable departure, and reveals the frightening gap between the two. The wife in Pound's adaptation is a flesh-and-blood, erotic woman, burning with love, rather a traditional character of a lover than a wife ("I desired my dust to be mingled with yours / Forever and forever and forever"), while her Chinese counterpart has a rather restrained love of an ideal, abstract, well-behaving wife ("And so I desired to live and die with you even after death, I wish to be with you even as dust, and even as ashes – partially together / I always had in me the faith of holding to pillars," Fenollosa's notes read). The modifications Pound applied in this stanza reveal that the wife in the Poundian version is rather self-concerned, while her Chinese counterpart is more worried about her husband. Sanehide Kodama accounts for the differences in detail: "The young wife in Pound's version says the monkeys cry

over the head, not his. [While Fenollosa's transliteration was "Monkeys cry sorrowful above heaven," referring to the "swirling eddies" where the husband is.] She does not give directions to her husband or warn him not to touch the rock 'in the fifth month.' But, instead, she laments that he has been gone 'for five months.'⁵⁸ Thus, a passionate, slightly egotistic woman is left alone in Pound's poem, not a persevering, humble wife: the latter is more likely to feel only loneliness and pain, as she does in the Chinese version, while the former shall cry out in grief and disillusionment.

The last stanza has the most references to hidden disappointment. Its second line has a postpositioned phrase, "the moss is grown, the different mosses," which does not have equivalent in Fenollosa's text ("[the footsteps] one by one have been grown up into green moss"). Emphasising that the mosses are not simply green but she observed their being varied in colour (note the stress put on it by its syntactic position) suggests that she must have spent lots of time staring at the last reminder of his. These are "too deep to clear them away." Concerning symbolic reading, Pound gave the clue himself to the understanding of his poetry. As he wrote in his "A Retrospect":

I believe that the proper and perfect symbol is the natural object, that if a man use 'symbols' he must so use them that their symbolic function does not obtrude; so that a sense, and the poetic quality of the passage, is not lost to those who do not understand the symbol as such, to whom, for instance, a hawk is a hawk.⁵⁹

We may conclude that the mosses are "perfect symbols" in the sense they do not "obtrude" but *may* add something to the interpretation. While in the Chinese context it is rather a domestic talk about the state of their home and about the lack of his presence, in the Poundian net of allusions it is pure disillusionment.

The next lines include very subtle hints for ageing, early mortality, all present in the version by Fenollosa, too ("Fallen leaves autumn wind early," "8th month butterflies yellow"⁶⁰ – before time came, they are changing their colours, "West garden" – where the sun disappears from the earth at the end of the day). Afterwards, as if

58. Kodama, p. 223.

59. Ezra Pound, "A Retrospect," in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot (London: Faber, 1966), p. 9.

60. It was Fenollosa's misunderstanding of the last character of the 23rd line that caused the appearance of the word "yellow" – originally, it was "come." Fortunately, the appearance of "yellow" could form a sharp contrast to the blue plums in the first stanza, emphasizing the progress of time and the loss of the innocent old days together, as Wenxin Li pointed out ("The Li Po that Ezra Pound Knew," *Paideuma* 27.1 [Spring 1998] 81–91, p. 84).

juxtaposing Pound's dramatic line "They hurt me. I grow older," both the original and Fenollosa's notes are quite talkative (talkative enough even for two lines), which immediately dissolves the sorrow at least partially. However, the modern version's wife is alone not only physically but also spiritually, left in the trap of her one-person marriage.

The farewell of the letter is formed according to these feelings: the Chinese wife's impatience and insistent love cannot be hidden ("For I will go out to meet, not saying that the way be far," Fenollosa writes), while the other one cannot pretend generous eagerness about his returning, either ("And I will come out to meet you / As far as Cho-fu-sa").⁶¹

To sum up, the invention and intensification of images (e.g. images of cruelty, creation of barriers, indication of hierarchy and symbolic natural images) contributes to the appearance of an undertone of disillusionment notably. Similarly, restructuring devices (e.g. replacing the title, omitting allusions and initiating a covert dialogue with other texts by means of the invented imagery) also support the effect of the imagery: they stress personal involvement and sharpen the contrast between the two sides of the speaker's personality. Consequently, the undertone of the co-authored text pervades all aspects of the poem, and is inseparable from the subtleties and alterations of register and structure.

3 Conclusion

Following Willis Barnstone's threefold system for translation analysis, this paper has outlined the major innovations of Ezra Pound's creative translations in *Cathay*. Examining the register of the texts firstly, we demonstrated that the intensification and invention of images characterises the discussed poems, which tendency is a consequence of Pound's preoccupation with the transmission of artistic qualities instead of a verbatim rendering of the source text. "Leave-Taking Near Shoku" has served as an

61. Since the Chinese text ("each other, welcome, not, say, far" in Fenollosa's translation) might be interpreted the other way round too, as David Hinton did ("I am not saying I'd go far to meet you, / no further than Ch'ang-feng Sands" (Li Po, *Selected Poems*, trans. David Hinton [New York: New Directions, 1996], p. 13), it would be arguable that Pound simply accepted that the wife does not want to put much effort in greeting her husband. However, Pound used only Fenollosa's notes, which accepted without ambiguity the first version of the text, thus we can conclude that it was Pound's alteration of the source to make it fit for his conception.

illustration for this feature of the adaptations. Nevertheless, as later discussion also has noted, “The River Song,” “The Beautiful Toilet” and “The River-Merchant’s Wife: a Letter” also utilise the potentials in the modification of images substantially.

Secondly, alterations in the structure of both the volume and the poems have been investigated. Pound established dialogic relations between texts, enhancing the coherence of the volume and providing immediate context for the poems. Another device of restructuring in *Cathay* is ellipsis. The structure of both “Leave-Taking Near Shoku” and “The Beautiful Toilet” is defined by this poetic tool. Afterwards, a radical re-structuring method has been analysed in “The River Song” where two separate poems were fused.

Thirdly, the notion of co-authorship has been invented to denote the special case of Poundian translations. Undertones that cannot be traced back to the source texts and that blur the homogeneous world of the original poems have been identified as markers of co-authorship. “The River Song” has been taken as a case-study for the problem. In extreme cases, the undertone can even supersede the original tone of the poem, as shown in “Leave-Taking Near Shoku” and “Song of the Bowmen of Shu.”

Lastly, to prove that the above tendencies of Pound’s re-creations are thoroughly intertwined, their simultaneous presence and interrelations have been exemplified in “The River-Merchant’s Wife: a Letter.” Imagery of cruelty, hierarchy and separation invaded into the former realm of naivety, creating a strong critical undertone for the speaker’s personality. Re-structuring methods (omission and establishment of dialogic relations with other poems on the basis of parallel imagery) also enhanced the effect of the inventions of images. Therefore, imagery and re-structuring, mutually supporting each other, introduced the undertone of disillusionment in the poem.

Bálint Szele

Language and Ritual in T. S. Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes*

T. S. Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes* is one of the most important pieces in modern drama. The purpose of this study of *Sweeney Agonistes* is to explore the fertilising forces that made it possible for the play to bring new colours to the language of the theatre; another aim is to look at the background of the fragments, exploring the different elements of ritual, religion, and literary sources working in the play. Although the play is fragmentary, it can be regarded as a key to Eliot's dramatic art. The way Eliot used the language of Jazz is unique in early 20th century literature; the lack of characters, plot and settings naturally draw our attention to language, which is characterised by an unprecedented vitality and dynamism. Eliot clearly succeeded in establishing a new vehicle for dramatic expression. The rituals providing the background in *Sweeney* are closely connected with Greek drama and the religious turn in Eliot's life leading to the birth of the Ariel Poems, one of which, "The Journey of the Magi," opens up to further analysis if we approach it from the direction of *Sweeney Agonistes*.

Introduction

If we say that T. S. Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes* is one of the most important pieces in English poetry and drama, we commit the mistake of not answering an essential question about it. The very first thing we must clarify in connection with this short fragment is whether it is a poem or a play. Its author, T. S. Eliot, is widely considered to be one of the most inventive poets of the 20th century. His ideas are recognised to have brought new life to the genre of poetry, whereas his achievements in modern theatre are less frequently referred to. Although *Sweeney Agonistes* finally appeared in Eliot's collection of his own works as a poem (among the "unfinished poems"), we can argue that it is definitely a play as it satisfies the basic formal requirements of drama. According to its subtitle, it is a "melodrama," with characters speaking in turns, divided into two acts and several scenes. And there are lists of persons appearing in the beginning of the scenes, a phenomenon not common in poetry.

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The play is written in the traditional Greek form, and has largely been acknowledged as a forerunner to modern English drama. Its real importance, however, has not yet been fully assessed. Few critics – among them Hugh Kenner, Bernard Bergonzi, Andrew Kennedy – have examined this short piece. While they all seem to agree that in this fragment of a play there is something new in the prosody and in the musical features of the language employed, they do not go further. Ronald Hayman, in his essay “The Timid Pioneer” claimed that Eliot had invented something quite new but he then abandoned the play and “it was left for later playwrights to develop the mineral resources of the territory Eliot had pioneered.”¹ The “mineral resources,” apart from the new imagery, were not described in more detail. Others observed the novelty of the dramatic language in the play. Bergonzi and Kennedy speak about “good dramatic language”² and “revitalised dramatic language,”³ but they fail to detail why they use these terms.

As opposed to its language, one cannot find much novelty in the basic idea and content of the play. Eliot’s traditional attraction to mysticism and rituals, to textual references and hidden meanings is well-known to anyone; what the critic can best do is to find these separate elements and put them together, thus revealing some meanings of the text. The aim of this study is to explore the language of *Sweeney Agonistes* and to provide a glimpse on the elements constituting the background of the play.

Language and Jazz

The purpose of this study of *Sweeney Agonistes* is partly to explore the fertilising forces that made it possible for the play to bring new colours to the language of the theatre. It is widely known that one of Eliot’s major ambitions was to renew the language of the theatre and that, to achieve this, he “drew on available material, popular song, or cabaret turns, or . . . Jazz-poems, while still transmuting everything he touched.”⁴ Eliot incorporated the Greek tradition, music hall elements, the minstrel

1. Ronald Hayman, “The Timid Pioneer,” in *T. S. Eliot: Plays*, ed. A. Hinchliffe (London: Macmillan, 1985), 81–82, p. 82.

2. Bernard Bergonzi, “Language, Theatre, And Belief,” in *T. S. Eliot: Plays*, ed. A. Hinchliffe (London: Macmillan, 1985), 77–79, p. 79.

3. Andrew Kennedy, “Ritual And Dramatic Speech Effects,” in *T. S. Eliot: Plays*, ed. A. Hinchliffe (London: Macmillan, 1985), 79–81, p. 79.

4. Robin Grove, “Pereira and After: the Cures of Eliot’s Theater,” in *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. David Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 171–175, p. 173.

show, and jazz music into *Sweeney Agonistes*. He did so in order to facilitate the establishment of a new vehicle for poetic and dramatic expression.

It has been observed that jazz music is a major contribution to his efforts in renewing theatrical language. Eliot lived and wrote in a world where jazz was a most popular and widespread form of entertainment. Carol H. Smith saw jazz as the musical expression of “a modern society of materialistic automatism . . . the primitive side of man’s nature in its throbbing rhythms.”⁵ This description clearly outlines the general features of the Jazz Age, which became the symbol of modern life, sexual freedom, and quickly deserved the adjectives “unholy,” “sinful,” “devilish.” Famous musicians like “Jelly Roll” Morton or Louis Armstrong were Eliot’s contemporaries, and he must have been aware of the social importance of jazz after the Great War. In one of his essays, “The Music of Poetry,” and in *Sweeney Agonistes* too, he gives us convincing evidence of his knowledge about the age he lived in; the “moral relativism” (an expression often used by Paul Johnson⁶) of a post-war society is clearly exposed in the play. Dusty and Doris, the two lower class prostitutes, meet Sam, one of their acquaintances, and his friends Krumpacker, Klipstein, and Horsfall. These men obviously want to have a good time, and the girls are ready to give them what they want. Two other characters, Swarts and Snow, who very rarely speak in the course of the play, seem to be jazz-musicians, perhaps of African origin.

In “The Music of Poetry,” Eliot states that “the rhythms of Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, Norman French, of Middle English and Scots, have all made their mark upon English poetry, together with the rhythms of Latin, and, at various periods, of French, Italian, and Spanish.”⁷ It must also be noted that all popular dances and musical fashions in the Western world originated from cultures alien to the countries of Western civilisation. Dances like polka or tango came from quite different cultures but became extremely popular. Jazz, the origins of which are retraceable to black folk music, brought a very intense change because the development of the mass media and the social and moral changes in the post-war period helped unfold its influence. In *Sweeney Agonistes* we find quite a few references to music: there are jazz songs, there are technical terms connected with music (*tambo, bones, diminuendo*), all in organic unity with the texture of the play. The play itself is a melodrama, by defini-

5. Carol Smith, “An Alliance Of Levity And Seriousness,” in *T. S. Eliot: Plays*, ed. A. Hinchliffe (London: Macmillan, 1985), 73–76, p. 75.

6. Paul Johnson, *A modern kor: A 20. század igazi arca*, trans. Gábor Berényi (Budapest: XX. Század Intézet, 2000).

7. Thomas Stearns Eliot, *Selected Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber, 1975), 107–114, p. 109.

tion a play combining drama and music – the latter has been integrated into *Sweeney Agonistes* in the form of complete songs.

The first step of our analysis brings us to the most obvious elements: sounds, onomatopoeia, rhyme, and rhythm. The phenomenon of “language as sound” – i.e. the use of language to create musical effects – appears frequently in the play. Sound phenomena, and also moods and feelings, are represented by onomatopoeic words (e.g. “Ting a ling ling,” “KNOCK KNOCK,” the Hoo-ha’s), but the change in the dynamics of the last song (indicated by *diminuendo*) is also very suggestive. In addition to this, the songs in the *Agon* and the final Chorus abound in references to different sounds. There are also rhymes. Rhyme is a specific form of repetition, and if we consider the sequences of rhymes spanning the whole length of the play – do, who, true, do, through, too, knew, etc. – it is easy to see how consciously Eliot manipulated language to create phonic play.

While sound-repetition is a prominent feature in *Sweeney Agonistes*, it is not only sounds that are repeated. Repetition is clearly a central phenomenon in the drama (it is important to note that rhythmic patterns are the result of the repetition of certain elements). From the multitude of examples I have picked “*Birth, and copulation, and death,*” which is repeated five times, “*that don’t apply,*” repeated three times, and there are short, frequently recurring repetitions in the dialogues (names, questions, greetings) or in Sweeney’s monologues. It is necessary to note a fact that will prove very important later on in this analysis: these repetitions – while creating coherence in the text – remind us of something which has already been heard. They are recurring themes, elements of the rhythm-of-thoughts in the drama. A similar kind of rhythm is observable in the following extract:

DUSTY How about Pereira?
 DORIS What about Pereira?
 DUSTY I don’t care.
 DORIS You don’t care!
 DUSTY Who pays the rent?
 DORIS Yes he pays the rent
 DUSTY Well some men don’t and some men do. . . (115)⁸

The repetitions form part of a dialogue made up of short question-answer sequences (resembling the call-answer structure of jazz), displaying an uncommon

8. All parenthesised references are to this edition: Thomas Stearns Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays* (London: Faber, 1969).

vitality and a gripping flow of language. Rhythm becomes an overall governing feature of the play – just like in jazz music, where the drums and the double bass provide the beat for the soloists. In this excerpt, there are unusual broken lines that add an atmosphere of uneasiness and incompleteness.

Rhythm does not only appear in the form of recurring linguistic elements in *Sweeney Agonistes*. Audible rhythm, “beat,” the alternation of accented and unaccented syllables, which is closest to rhythm in music, can be heard in most of the lines. Eliot turns language into rhythmic sound effects:

X x x Xx X x x X
 nothing to me and nothing to you
 x x xX x x X x x x X
 When you're alone in the middle of the night. . . (125)

This phenomenon can be clearly seen in the final Chorus (2nd example). There, the abundance of rhythmic patterns and their variations remind us of drum-taps and the steady monotonous rhythms of the African tribal musicians, the origins of jazz. Another feature of jazz can be found in the accentuation of speech used by the characters in the play. The word and sentence stress of the characters sometimes remind us of the rhythmic patterns of jazz; their accents correspond to the unpredictable, short but loud peaks we often hear in jazz music. These peaks, or accents, are put on stressed notes in jazz music, and on stressed syllables in speech, where they make it more dynamic, expressive, and unusual. They cause the rhythm to halt for a fragment of a second, then let it carry on:

DUSTY *I* like Sam
 Yes and Sam's a nice boy too.
 He's a funny fellow
 DORIS He *is* a funny fellow
 He's like a fellow once I knew.
He could make you laugh.
 DUSTY Sam can make you laugh. . . (115–116)

It is obvious by now that *Sweeney Agonistes* is a play full of musical elements, onomatopoeia, and rhythm. As jazz is considered to have acted as an important “fertiliser” in the development of the dramatic language of the play, it is useful to refer briefly to the philosophy of jazz. Jazz is a form of expression that is based upon traditional themes, tunes and individual improvisation. Improvisation is such an organic part of jazz that it becomes a natural idiom, a mode of existence for it: jazz involves

the improvisative use of sounds based on the laws of music, confined by traditional regulations. The phenomenon behind the name “improvisation” is different in consecutive stages of jazz. In early jazz, improvisation means “improvised variations on a tune.”⁹ Later, improvisation became “ad hoc creation of music.”¹⁰

Language has a lot in common with music in this sense. Language is, according to linguists, the combination of a finite number of elements to produce an infinite number of utterances – the ad hoc creation of language. As Noam Chomsky put it: language consists of “a set . . . of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements.”¹¹ The use of language, therefore, can be seen as an improvisative combination of linguistic elements based on linguistic rules. But there is a significant difference that cannot be ignored: in language it is a general rule not to mention something more often than necessary – speakers usually strive to achieve economy and reduce redundancy. If the question is “Where are you going?” an elliptical answer suffices: “To the shop,” and we can omit “I am going” without any consequences because the mental processes at work during conversation can fill the gap.

In music, the notion of redundancy is unknown. We cannot leave a tune just because it is already known. As improvisation is always based “on” something, that “something” – a theme or a set of harmonies – has to reappear several times in it, just as the same sound segments recur in speech. The base theme must always be there in a tune – variations are allowed, but omission is not. If the theme were simply omitted by a player, music would become chaotic and incoherent. (This means that one musician would not know what the other is doing. By analogy, we could say that they would be speaking different languages.) In music, the key terms are, therefore, repetition and variation. Here is an example from the play where Doris and Dusty are talking:

DORIS There’s a lot in the way you pick them up
 DUSTY There’s an awful lot in the way you feel
 DORIS Sometimes they’ll tell you nothing at all
 DUSTY You’ve got to know what you want to ask them
 DORIS You’ve got to know what you want to know
 DUSTY It’s no use asking them too much
 DORIS It’s no use asking more than once
 DUSTY Sometimes they’re no use at all. (118)

9. János Gonda, *Jazz: Történet, elmélet, gyakorlat* (Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1979), p. 511.

10. Gonda, p. 400.

11. Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague: Mouton, 1957), p. 13.

In this extract, we can see the exceptionally high proportion of repetitions. Words that are not in bold print are repeated at least once. Repetition gives coherence, an unprecedented vitality, and dramatic flow to the dialogue. The fact that elements already known have not been omitted is important. The pairs of similar sentences (lines) are structured as follows: A A B C C D D B. We must be aware, however, that repetition here is the repetition of lines from which something is taken and to which something is added. If we assume that the first line of each pair is an “original,” a theme, the second can be regarded as a “variation” on that theme: A A^v B C C^v D D^v B^v. If we compare it with a typical jazz-song structure: A A^v B, C C^v D D^v, we immediately recognise the striking similarity. This makes it clear that Eliot – consciously or unconsciously – incorporated structures typical of early jazz (variations on lines) into the text of *Sweeney Agonistes*. The dialogue cited is quite like that of a pair of jazz musicians playing their instruments and answering to, improvising on each other’s themes. Of course, it is difficult to speak about “improvisation” in the case of a written play, but on the stage the whole can be seen and heard in real time thus creating the illusion of improvised or natural language. And this is a feature that makes *Sweeney Agonistes* similar to a jazz composition that incorporates jazz music in its language and uses the Jazz Age as its background.

Characters and Action

From what has been said to this point, we can justly conclude that in *Sweeney Agonistes*, the primary focus is on language. In traditional plays, character, action, and language are usually of the same importance, although some deviations might occur. *Sweeney* does not fit in this line. Put squarely, we can say that there is no action in the play; what is more, the characters do not seem to be characters – in the old sense of the word – at all. Neither can we speak about a visible and realistic setting.

The characters of the play can be divided into two main groups. One “group” is Sweeney, and all the other persons belong to the other. Doris and Dusty are two common lower-class prostitutes: they are flat characters, types without individuality. The same can be said about Swarts and Snow, who almost never speak in the course of the play. They are in fact two characters from the traditional minstrel show (*Tambo* and *Bones*). The former soldiers, Wauchope, Horsfall, Klipstein, and Krum-packer are also types, with funny speaking names. At the end, these four characters are integrated to make up the Chorus, which justifies the supposition that they are no more than “tokens,” symbolic characters; they are easily identified with the corpora-

tive Greek Chorus. Eliot himself, in his 1976 Ben Johnson essay, stated that characters of such plays “are flat to fit the world they move in.”¹²

The other side of the coin is Sweeney himself, who is the only character who can be considered round in the play. This Sweeney is radically different from Eliot’s early Sweeney in *Sweeney Erect*, or *Sweeney Among the Nightingales*, not to mention the Sweeney seen in *The Waste Land*. This Sweeney has something to say, he knows something the others do not; his tragedy arises from not being able to convey his message. His complaint that he “gotta use words” is one foreshadowing Beckett’s complaints.

But in a drama there must be characters who are speaking and acting in a confined space. (Here, and throughout this essay, we speak about the “play” as we know it; it would be impossible to analyse the unwritten parts.) A basic problem with *Sweeney Agonistes* is that – as it has been referred to – there is no action or setting in the drama, which makes it impossible for characters to unfold. The play, in the strict sense of the word, does not have a plot. Relationships between characters do not change. And even if we consider that the play is a fragment, it is conspicuous that there is a lack of action in the play.¹³ Critics have also noted that Eliot could not project an appropriate action to accompany the language of the play, that is why it remained a static one.¹⁴ The characters do not *act* in the traditional sense of the word – the sole example of movement is when the girls cut the cards or when Dusty leans out of the window – they stick to speaking instead. In fact, characters in the play seem to be *voices*, not persons. Voices can only act through speaking. But at least, they are present. At this point, we cannot avoid the question: where? Are they coming from a realistic background, or are they suspended in timeless space?

To the fact that there is no action, we can add the observation that there is no setting in the play. What we know is that they are in some kind of a flat (because it has a window); we know that it is a kind of a house because there is a reference to the street by Sam (“Wait till I put the car round the corner”); but this is all. There is no door in its physical reality; it is only indicated by “KNOCK KNOCK” that there is one.

12. Thomas Stearns Eliot, “Ben Johnson,” in *T. S. Eliot: Selected Essays* (London: Faber & Faber, 1976), 147–160, p. 159.

13. In one of his essays, David Galef argues that *Sweeney Agonistes* does have a plot and “the play’s fragments cohere in what amounts to a progression . . . to a journey that, as with most of Eliot’s religious rites, must be performed in isolation.” Galef presents a convincing description of the plot of the unfinished play. See David Galef, “Fragments of a Journey,” *English Studies* 69.6 (1988) 497–508, p. 497.

14. Bergonzi, p. 77.

This lack of action and place makes the reader feel that the characters are present in an empty space, suspended between being and non-being – just as later in *The Family Reunion*. The Jazz Age – which the superficial observer might consider as a topic of the play – does not in fact solidify into an adequate setting, it only remains the background to what is going on. We can think of Swarts and Snow here, two prototypical representatives of the Jazz Age, who contribute to the play of forms giving us a parody as background characters, but, apart from that, add nothing substantial to the setting of the play.

Rituals in the Play

If – as we have seen – there is virtually nothing in a play, only voices and language, it seems obvious that it is they (not the persons or actions) whom the reader focuses on as a subject with which communication is possible. And after the “how’s,” it is the “what’s” the readers’ attention is naturally drawn to. T. S. Eliot is famous for his abundant use of “the tradition” – as he understands it – in his poetry and drama. We know that from his very first poems on, Eliot frequently drew on his predecessors for material and he – as he described his poetic method in his essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent” – considered familiarity with poetic tradition and a historical sense necessary for being able to write good poetry. As he was familiar with the importance of rituals and myths in human culture, Eliot frequently turned to them in his work.

Sweeney Agonistes is no exception. The very title is one full of meaning. “*Sweeney*” previously represented the natural man, the man driven by his instincts; in this sense, the play is closely connected to Eliot’s previous work. “*Agonistes*” refers to Milton’s famous poem and Samson’s spiritual dilemma. The putting together of the two gives “a comic-ironic impression of the incongruities of Sweeney in Samson’s place and the meaning of such a possibility.”¹⁵ Samson feels compelled by divine will to pull down an alien world. Sweeney is a spiritual exile who must destroy a part of himself if he wants to break with his old life.

The subtitle “*Aristophanic Melodrama*” gives us another context for the interpretation of the text. “*Aristophanic*” implies a combination of a comic surface of social satire with the ritualistic celebration of death and rebirth. “*Melodrama*” in its original sense puts an emphasis on plot and situation; flat characters, coincidences and surprises of life are utilised for emotional effect, and it also involves a post-

15. Smith, p. 73.

ponement of a conclusion which is inevitable and wholly foreseen.¹⁶ *Melos* also implies music, which, in this case, is jazz.

The two epigraphs – one from *Choephoroi* and the other by St. John of the Cross – which put the play in a broad literary context (the basic literary precedent to the play is the *Oresteia*, a history of sin and expiation), are also organically connected to the content of the play. They both deal with rituals of death and rebirth; sin, pursuit, and purgation. The link between the two epigraphs is the penitent (in *Sweeney* exemplified by the man who “did a girl in”), who – after committing a sin – has to achieve purgation, which can lead him to rebirth – either a rebirth in society, as in comedies, or spiritual rebirth. Birth–death–rebirth: the cycle the penitent has to run through. There have been guesses that Sweeney might have been the sinner, but my reading excludes such an explanation: “I’ve been born and once is enough. / You don’t remember, but I remember, / Once is enough.” He does not want another birth as it would involve death. This suggests that Sweeney is a moral person, who does not have to – or at least does not want to – be born again. Sweeney is the one in the play who has discovered morality and who knows that someone who kills a woman, “for the brief space he has to live, he is already dead. He is already in a different world from ours. He has crossed the frontier.”¹⁷ In the re-written version of *Sweeney Agonistes*, *The Family Reunion*, Harry can be identified as the penitent: “Harry has crossed the frontier / Beyond which safety and danger have a different meaning. / And he cannot return.” (342). Harry can, of course, by no means be identified with Sweeney, as we cannot prove that Sweeney has killed anyone. The important thing is that he possesses the knowledge, no matter how he obtained it: “Sweeney has passed through some fire on the other side of which telephones, gramophones, and motor cars, the enduring things of life, have become as shadows.”¹⁸

This, interestingly, leads us to religion as a possible source of knowledge. According to most religious teachings, we do not have to experience everything directly; the Word is always there for us as a source to rely upon. Sweeney, who has become a moral person, can to some extent be identified with Eliot, who – during the very period he wrote *Sweeney Agonistes* (around 1927–28) – performed a volte-face and became a member of the Church. Eliot thus once again acknowledged the importance of tradition in his life and work. This is best represented in the re-written version of *Sweeney Agonistes*, which contains explicit references to religion and church, sin

16. Smith, p. 73.

17. Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot* (London: W. H. Allen, 1960), p. 197.

18. Kenner, p. 195.

and expiation, while the “sinful” jazz-elements are omitted. Some of them survive, though:

IVY	I have always told Amy she should go south in the winter.	A
	Were I in Amy’s position, I would go south in the winter.	B A
	I would follow the sun, not wait for the sun to come here.	C
	I would go south in the winter, if I could afford it. . .	A B ^v
		(285)

1928 is traditionally considered the year Eliot abandoned his ironic-satiric style and began to write more philosophical literature. The first part of *Sweeney Agonistes* is closely connected to his *Poems* (1920) and *The Waste Land* (1922), whereas the *Agon* is a direct forerunner to *Journey of the Magi* (1928), the first piece of the famous Ariel Poems.

The first epigraph describes an episode from the pursuit of the penitent, Orestes: “*You don’t see them, you don’t – – – but I see them: they are hunting me down, I must move on.*” The final Chorus is also a reference to this. In *Choephoroi*, The Furies hunt Orestes after he killed his mother and her lover until he has achieved purgation. Eliot uses almost the same words in *The Family Reunion*:

HARRY	Look there, look there: do you see them?
GERALD	No, I don’t see anyone about.
HARRY	No, no, not there. Look there!
	Can’t you see them? <i>You</i> don’t see them, but I see them,
	And they see me. This is the first time that I have seen them. (291–292)

The penitent is haunted by powers that ordinary mortals cannot perceive. The Furies are the ones who help the penitent achieve purgation (hence the name Eumenides, benevolent goddesses). In *Sweeney Agonistes*, however, Eliot does not deal with the process of purgation. What he concentrates on is the state of the sinner, his existence, his being neither alive, nor dead (“Life is death”); the compunction he feels, the spectres he sees. The basic problem in Sweeney is not a religious or moral one, but the impossibility of communicating the personal concept of metaphysical purity that Sweeney wants to achieve by suggesting a move to a cannibal isle. On this island, there is “nothing at all” that could remind us of “created beings.” Purity for Sweeney, who is aware of the cyclical hopelessness of a life lived wholly in biological terms without the possibility of transcendence (“Birth, and copulation, and death”), can be achieved by getting away from his life of automatic mechanisms represented

by Doris, Dusty, and the others. Ironically, birth, copulation and death are the three major events in the jaded lives of Sweeney's listeners.¹⁹

Transcendence means leaving the body and the needs of the body behind, "killing desire in order to bring birth to the spirit."²⁰ This also involves Stoicism, i.e. the pursuit of virtue and the disregard for worldly goods and mundane pleasures. The extreme example of losing physical substance is dissolution in a Lysol bath: a violent murder of human desire and a dissolution of old life.

It is obvious that if "old life" is ended, something new should come in its place; and new begins with some kind of rebirth as a starting point. This is where the second epigraph comes into our interpretation. St. John of the Cross (or San Juan de la Cruz) is the patron saint of Spanish poets and a master of mystical literature. In "*The Ascent of Mount Carmel*" he describes the mystical path to union with God: "the soul cannot be possessed by the divine union, until it has divested itself of the love of created beings." This means that the distance between the creator and the creature is irrecoverable (and spiritual rebirth is impossible) unless the creature is purged of all human affectations and desires; this is what Sweeney refers to. Cannibal isle is a place where purgation can go on its way and the pious soul (in our case, a missionary) can find his way to rebirth. Eliot's famous poem, *Journey of the Magi*, refers to a similar situation: the magi have seen something after which they are "no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation, / with alien people clutching their gods" (104).

And they have lost desire for "The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces, / and the silken girls bringing sherbet." They "had seen birth and death," but "this Birth was / Hard and bitter agony" for them, like their own *death*, as they say. They have died once. Death and (re)birth, in their case, are basically the same: this death is the birth of morality, the beginning of a new age in the experiencer's life. They are willing to kill desire in order to bring birth to the spirit. That is one possible explanation of why they would be "glad of another death."

In *Sweeney Agonistes*, this experience is only known to Sweeney. As he tries to share it with the other characters, he finds a wall that he cannot get through. First of all, he cannot really convey the message and meaning of being neither alive, nor dead. Those who have never looked beyond an ordinary world can understand nothing of what he speaks about. Harry in *The Family Reunion* has the same problem when he says

19. Galef, p. 502.

20. Smith, p. 75.

But how can I explain, how can I explain it to *you*?
 You will understand less after I have explained it.

 You have gone through life in sleep,
 Never woken to the nightmare. I tell you, life would be unen-
 durable
 If you were wide awake. (293)

This implies that once the subject has seen reality, he wants to escape from it. This can either be done by striving for spiritual rebirth (divesting themselves of the love of created beings), or by trying to play down and evade its urging imperative. But "Sweeney . . . articulates an experience which falls within his own circle, a circle closed on the outside; and, with all its elements alike, his sphere is opaque to the others which surround it."²¹ As Eliot puts it in *The Family Reunion*, "the circle of our understanding / Is a very restricted area. . . . What is happening outside of the circle?" (348). And what is happening inside another circle? This is a question no one can answer. Sweeney tries to give a sort of explication

He didn't know if he was alive
 and the girl was dead
 He didn't know if the girl was alive
 and he was dead
 He didn't know if they were both alive
 or both were dead. . .
 When you're alone like he was alone
 You're either or neither. (125)

This, Galef says, means that Sweeney is struggling with words to express how he feels trapped in modern damnation.²² He says "I gotta use words when I talk to you," but he knows his efforts are futile: his speech abounds in utterances that make uncertain everything he says: "That's nothing to me and nothing to you," "it don't apply," etc. He cannot reach the others, who might think "we must insist that the world is what we have always taken it to be," as they say in *The Family Reunion*. The missionary does not achieve his goal, although he already knows what he has to do is "not to run away, but to pursue, / Not to avoid being found, but to seek." The others are still trying to run away.

21. Kenner, p. 199.

22. Galef, p. 498.

Sweeney, by forcing his message, impinges on the territory of the others. As they cannot understand him, they follow their own ways: “nothing is strange to them, nothing appals, because everything drops into familiar categories, and forms the substance of familiar songs” and newspaper articles.²³ They do not want confrontation with reality. The most important event of the Great War is a poker-game; murderers can only be found in newspapers and “always get pinched in the end.” Sweeney’s first-hand experience shocks them. As an escape, they interpret the cannibal isle as a Gauguinesque paradise and the “birth, copulation, and death” ritual as irresponsible flirting.

There are other telling examples of evasion; first of all, the episodes from the girls’ life. In the beginning, they try to evade Pereira; the telephone seems to be the messenger of the Greek legend bringing bad news who must be executed: “Well can’t you stop that horrible noise? / Pick up the receiver.” They can evade the actual menace by telling lies. And they can also evade the future by manipulating the meaning of the cards they pick. It is important to remember that if cards can predict the future, future must be preordained. The girls want to know about the future but they want to avoid future events at the same time. The two girls, therefore, feel panic when they pick the King of Clubs – “That’s Pereira” – but they immediately change to “It might be Sweeney.” When they pick the Coffin, they soften it to “it needn’t be yours, it may mean a friend.” Is it possible that the cards *really* tell the future? Or do they ordain it? “Well I’m not going to draw any more, / You cut for luck. You cut for luck. / It might break the spell. . .” The two girls are in their own quasi-closed world, which does not bear incertitude.²⁴ They need the retentive force of civilisation to be able to function: “I don’t like life on your crocodile isle.” “That’s not life, that’s no life / Why I’d just as soon be dead.” The girls, who are spiritually “dead” according to Sweeney’s Christian view of life, do not want spiritual rebirth. That is part of why Sweeney – the missionary – cannot make himself understood. Sweeney – just as the other persons in the play – remains in a closed circle. There can be no direct spiritual osmosis through language, as Galef summarises.²⁵

23. Kenner, p. 191.

24. In Galef’s essay, the card-sequence “comes across as clear prophecy regarding the events to come,” which were unwritten by Eliot, and are only referred to in his letters (Galef, p. 499).

25. Galef, p. 498.

Conclusions

The failure of Sweeney to communicate his ideas does not diminish the importance of his knowledge. And Eliot's failure to finish the play does not lessen his achievements. "The growth of *Sweeney Agonistes* into a completed play appears to have been inhibited by Eliot's two interrelated difficulties with the drama, his reluctance to conceive drama as primarily an orchestrated action, and his bias toward a poetry that exteriorises but does not explicate the locked world of the self."²⁶ The language that Sweeney was unable to use for conveying messages might have proven similarly inadequate for Eliot to be a vehicle for his thoughts. Its strong points: the new dramatic language, and what critics call "jerky energy and effervescence"²⁷ is still there in the play. What is more, *Sweeney Agonistes* was a forerunner to modern drama. The ideas of being and non-being, of nothing happening were later fully developed by Beckett and Pinter, who, nevertheless, could not avoid using flesh and blood actors. The brilliance which enables *Sweeney Agonistes* to rise beyond the need for flesh and blood performers,²⁸ is at the same time a sort of death: it annuls actors, the body of actors, of whom only the voice remains. If we accept the supposition that *Sweeney Agonistes* is a play, and we realise that there is no real action or plot, no real characters, no realistic setting in the play, we might well ask: what remains then? The answer to this question is "language." It is language that carries and embodies the action, and carries the characters and the setting.

In *Sweeney Agonistes*, therefore, the primary focus is on language itself: playing with it, exploiting its musical, onomatopoeic, rhythmical, improvisative capacities, while heavily relying on the possibilities of jazz. Eliot and his modernist contemporaries tried to ignore old traditions, and find new ways in poetry. They managed to eliminate poetic and dramatic forms and conventions – the only "tradition" they could not ignore was language itself. (Beckett, Mrozek and the others later tried to eliminate it completely.) Eliot, in his search for new ways, gave the main role to language, leaving action, character, and plot in the background. This fact might explain why Eliot himself later put *Sweeney* among his "unfinished poems" instead of insisting on its being a play.²⁹ *Sweeney Agonistes* became a jazz-song out of the Jazz Age.

26. Kenner, p. 201.

27. Andrew Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 535.

28. Grove, p. 173.

29. I am suggesting here that Eliot surely knew the piece he had written was good, and he consciously decided to leave it a fragment and categorise and also canonise it as a poem.

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Eliot incorporated the whole play into its own language, exposing what language alone is capable of. He also broadened the musical capacities, which only belong to language itself, and are not dependent on any other dramatic component. Thus he gave language a new, marked, separate form of existence, and made it a means of complete dramatic expression. That is why we can speak about the rebirth of dramatic language in the unfinished *Sweeney Agonistes*.

Robert Ward

Imprisonment in Nelson Algren's *The Man with the Golden Arm*

This essay treats the differing paradigms of imprisonment that I argue are prevalent in Nelson Algren's novel *The Man with the Golden Arm*. My argument explores the motifs of confinement through an analysis of the two central characters. I focus on Frankie Machine, whose incarceration functions as a sanctuary, which stimulates his "escape" from morphine addiction, and his wife Sophie Majcinek, whose figurative entrapment in the tenement room shapes her psychological and physical paralysis. I ask if the apparent development of the way prison dealt with prisoners in mid-century America, by focusing more on models of treatment than punishment, informs our understanding of Machine's gradual regeneration and empowerment. I also question whether the sphere of the tenement room also serves as a symbol of absolute enclosure. My argument is that such conflicting representations of confinement reveal the schism underlying the motif of imprisonment within *The Man with the Golden Arm*.

On the opening night of Jack Kirkland's theatrical adaptation of Nelson Algren's *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1949)¹ in 1956, the audience filling Cherry Lane theatre in New York were confronted with a small eighteen foot stage that compressed the landscape[s] of the novel together in "three cell-like sections piled on one another."² With this semiotic of prison cells, the set was reviewed as grounding the unfolding drama upon a narrative of confinement. Judith Crist, for example, wrote that the spectacle articulated "the feeling of being trapped."³ In the same manner, Saul Levin-

1. All parenthesised references are to this edition, Nelson Algren, *The Man with the Golden Arm: 50th Anniversary Critical Edition*, ed. William J. Savage Jr. and Daniel Simon (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1999).

2. Ohio State University, Rare Books and Manuscripts, the Bettina Drew Archive of Nelson Algren, Jack Kirkland, "The Man with the Golden Arm: unpublished playscript," 1956, p. 1.

3. Judith Crist, "Golden Arm to Be a Play," *The New York World-Telegram*, 22 May 1956, p. 1. See also Bettina Drew, *Nelson Algren: A Life on the Wild Side* (London: Bloomsbury, 1990). Drew suggests that "the tiny Cherry Lane, with only 189 seats, gave the audience the feeling of being crowded in by the circumstances trapping Frankie Machine" (p. 276).

son understood the claustrophobic *mise en scène* as establishing “an enormous peephole through which we may view the lot.”⁴ In the course of this essay, I will draw upon such a conceptually loaded “peephole” in order to read the differing paradigms of imprisonment that, I argue, are prevalent in Algren’s novel. My argument explores the motifs of confinement through an analysis of the two central characters. I focus on Frankie Machine, whose incarceration functions as a sanctuary, which stimulates his “escape” from morphine addiction, and his wife Sophie Majcinek, whose figurative entrapment in the tenement room shapes her psychological and physical paralysis.

To begin to locate the theme of imprisonment within the narrative’s construction of character, I have set the following in two parts. The first part considers both the addiction and incarceration of Frankie Machine within a wider historical and penal context of post-Second World War America. The second part evokes the domestic sphere of the tenement room as a symbol of absolute enclosure for the female protagonist Sophie Majcinek. I contend that this experience of enclosure springs from, and is enforced by, the paths of escape and renewal that are available to her husband Frankie Machine. In my view, the conflicting representations of confinement reveal the schism underlying the motif of imprisonment within *The Man with the Golden Arm*.

* * *

I didn’t die with Frankie Machine. I didn’t hang there with him. You made me care about everybody. . . . But what happened to Frankie didn’t make me as mad as what happened to everybody else because everybody else was caught, fixed . . . but Frankie had some loopholes. . . . I ended up blaming him a little and removing some of my profound sympathies from him.

This passage is taken from a letter written by prisoner Bob Lowry to Algren in November 1949.⁵ In my view, the suggestion that “loopholes” are given to Frankie Machine touches the surface of some issues underlying *The Man with the Golden Arm*.⁶

It is worth considering at the outset the “reemphasis” on rehabilitation that pervaded the American prison system at the same historical moment as the incarceration

4. Saul Levinson, “Golden Arm at Cherry Lane,” *Chicago Daily News*, 22 May 1956, p. 28.

5. Rare Books and Manuscripts, Nelson Algren MSS, fol. 636, Bob Lowry to Nelson Algren, 4 November 1949.

6. Rare Books and Manuscripts, the Bettina Drew Archive of Nelson Algren, Sammy Cahn and James Van Heusen, “The Man with the Golden Arm” score and lyrics. Cahn’s lyrics show that Lowry was not alone in his interpretation of Frankie Machine: “But there’s a chance that he – can shake the mis-er-y. – That’s if he’s strong e-nough, -and fights it long enough” (p. 3).

of Frankie Machine.⁷ The end of World War II on September 2, 1945 is registered in *The Man with the Golden Arm* with “every tavern radio . . . blaring triumphantly” (GA, p. 68) of America’s detonation of atomic bombs upon the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After struggling through both economic depression and military conflict, post-war America was initially seen as an era gradually driven by what Edgardo Rotman calls “a general rehabilitative thrust.”⁸ In *False Starts: A Memoir of San Quentin and Other Prisons* (1976), Malcolm Braly records the nature of this model of rehabilitation through his own experience of imprisonment after the war:

Roughly, Custody was the old way, Care and Treatment the new. Custody was usually represented by a captain or lieutenant of the guards, and Treatment sent an associate warden. One of the Chaplains would be present, as well as a psych, or sociologist, or, later on, a correctional counselor, and, usually, some one from Education came in.⁹

The war had stimulated the influx of many European social scientists and psychologists, many of whom took up positions within institutional settings. These professionals nurtured a penological consensus of the importance in devising models of treatment and cure for individual offenders rather than maintaining custodial programmes *en masse*.¹⁰ This drive to implement therapeutic models in institutional environments also represented an attempt to tackle the increase in narcotic use and the wave of drug-related crimes that swept through American cities. In 1949 over five thousand addicts were imprisoned.¹¹ Yet the number of arrests merely touched the tip of the problem. By 1955 over one million Americans were addicted to narcotics.¹²

7. I use the word “reemphasis” here in order to suggest that the rehabilitative programmes after the Second World War were not new but, rather, existed within the theoretical grain accompanying the history of the penitentiary. For an insightful account of this history in an American context, see Adam Jay Hirsch, *The Rise of the Penitentiary: Prisons and Punishment in Early America* (London: Yale University Press, 1992).

8. Edgardo Rotman, “The Failure of Reform: United States, 1865–1965,” in *The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society*, ed. Norval Morris and David J. Rothman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 151–177, p. 169.

9. Malcolm Braly, *False Starts: A Memoir of San Quentin and Other Prisons* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1976), p. 166.

10. Rotman, p. 169.

11. “Narcotics Arrests Show Sharp Rise,” *The New York Times* (5 March 1950), p. 17.

12. See the estimate in Edwin M. Schur, *Narcotic Addiction in Britain and America: The Impact of Public Policy* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1963), p. 44.

In terms of Frankie Machine, the need for morphine resulted from a medicine administered to numb the pain of “wound fever” (GA, p. 17) received whilst he was a soldier in the war. Arriving back in Chicago, he finds that “a heavily cut grade of morphine” is readily available in his own Division Street neighbourhood from the “pusher” known as Nifty Louie. (GA, p. 26) The fact that the price of a fix steadily increases for the junkie – “That stuff cost me more than the last batch” (GA, p. 61) – shaped Louie’s realisation that Machine will at some stage be forced into crime in order “to steal enough for another fix” (GA, p. 61). Later, caught within the pain of withdrawal and yearning for a fix of morphine, we see Machine taking part in a bungled caper that involves the theft of electric irons from a Chicago department store. The character’s desperate attempt to obtain the price of a fix leads instead to his imprisonment.

Since the creation of the Federal Narcotic Act in 1914, addicts tended to be treated as criminals and as such subject to penal punishment.¹³ However, in the eightieth annual Congress of Correction, which brought penologists together in 1950, President Truman outlined the new “American way of handling social problems.”¹⁴ Within a social context that started to view the figure of the addict as a “dangerous individual,” Truman informed prison administrators that they must “work out the most effective means of rehabilitating men and women so that they might again become useful members of society.”¹⁵ The post-war era defined the addict as a “sick individual,” one who required urgent medical and psychological treatment.

Otto Preminger’s 1955 film of *The Man with the Golden Arm* reflects such a context of penal treatment.¹⁶ Where Kirkland’s play, mentioned earlier, dramatises the absolute confinement of characters, Preminger’s film constructs a bridge between the penal models of custody and therapy, and it is this that prefigures the hero’s escape from addiction. In the opening scenes we see Machine, played by a young Frank Sinatra, returning from “prison” as a “new man;”¹⁷ his first words are triumphant with

13. Schur, p. 57.

14. Quoted in Lucy Freeman, “Work of Prisons Hailed by Truman,” *The New York Times*, 10 October 1950, p. 45.

15. Freeman, p. 45.

16. *The Man with the Golden Arm*. Dir. Otto Preminger. United Artists. 1955. It should be noted here that Algren’s relation with Preminger and his film was a difficult one. For further reading on this see H. E. F. Donohue, *Conversations with Nelson Algren* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 101–167.

17. The Bettina Drew Archive of Nelson Algren, Walter Newman and Lewis Meltzer, “The Man with the Golden Arm: Screenplay,” 1955, p. 1.

the knowledge that “the monkey’s gone.”¹⁸ In the character’s own words, prison is “more of a hospital” than a penitentiary.¹⁹ Here, the only jailer that we are informed of is Dr. Lennox, who has helped Machine give up drugs, learn a new skill, and plan for a new role as a drummer in a big band. These details are drawn, perhaps with a little gloss here and there, from the novel itself. However, the film does alter the end of the novel quite radically. Where the book ends with Machine’s re-addiction and eventual suicide, the film offers him complete freedom, from his wife and from his narcotic habit. Preminger’s celebration of treatment and cure, which underpins the film’s reference to the penal system, certainly evokes and affirms Truman’s demand for an effective policy that productively engages with the “deviant individual.” In doing so, the film effectively ignores Algren’s aesthetic position: to critique political systems that, he believed, promise a great deal to help people out of poverty and apathy, but actually deliver very little.

If the sentiments espoused by politicians like Truman were to be believed, the emphasis on the criminal as a sick individual to be treated and cured, rather than the “traditional” method that defined the criminal as sinful and punishable, situates the prison within the guiding principle of the hospital. Perhaps in order to augment these credentials of reform during this period, the American Prison Association commenced with what they saw as a radical overhaul of the penal system. Therefore, the architecture of new institutions, such as California Treatment Facility (known as Soledad Prison to its critics) was designed and built with the idea of rehabilitation in mind. Set in relatively pleasant surroundings, Soledad contained libraries, gymnasiums, and bigger cells, together with spaces to facilitate the practice of psychologists and social workers. But the problem of providing individual therapy for a growing body of convicted felons was exacerbated overall by a lack of investment and long-term political commitment.²⁰ In *The Prison: Policy and Practice*, Gordon Hawkins studied a number of investigations into the prison system and programmes of rehabilitation during this post-war era. His conclusions show that, apart from a small number of “model” institutions, “there is a consensus to the effect that rehabilitative treatment has not been shown to be effective.”²¹

Indeed, many prisoners themselves drew on a direct experience of this problem in order to expose the hidden world existing behind the official narrative, or what

18. Preminger, I have taken this quotation directly from the film itself.

19. Preminger, I have taken this quotation directly from the film itself.

20. For further discussion see Rotman, 168–74.

21. Gordon Hawkins, *The Prison: Policy and Practice* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 48.

Eric Cummings calls “rhetoric,” of reform.²² The publication of *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (1970), for example, undercuts the utopian model of the new penological era and its so-called model institutions. In these letters, Jackson paints a picture of a nightmare world where a “maddening intensity” underpins all aspects of life.²³ The total isolation that Jackson experiences, often being locked in his cell for twenty three hours a day, reminds us of “the regular abnormal monotony of jailhouse days and nights” (GA, p. 206) within which Frankie Machine experiences “sheer boredom” (GA, p. 202). The impression we are left with is of the concept of rehabilitation as, according to the prison film *The Shawshank Redemption* (1996), “a made-up word, a politician’s word.”²⁴ But Machine does experience prison as a sanctuary of sorts, because it allows him to free himself from his narcotic habit and, also, from his wife Sophie. This said, “where,” as George Bluestone asks for Frankie Machine, “does redemption lie?”²⁵

In Algren’s earlier books, *Somebody in Boots* (1935) and *Never Come Morning* (1942), the actuality of the pains of incarceration is punctuated by the symbolism of rejuvenation and empowerment. In both these narratives the metaphor of the prison cell as a chrysalis, where we view the captive “like a butterfly, emerging to try the brand new wings,” to extend Erving Goffman’s analogy, is somewhat prevalent.²⁶ In terms of *The Man with the Golden Arm*, the imaginative possibilities encoded into this landscape of confinement offers a means to interpret the individual empowerment of Frankie Machine, which I now wish to address.

A fundamental aspect of imprisonment, even in a context shaped by an idea of treatment, was the removal of the individual from a relatively open society into a closed world. Consequently, as the prison writer Jack Henry Abbott knows, the nature of immured existence represents a “truly living death.”²⁷ This death-like state underpins Machine’s initial impression of his surroundings. Here, the image of the tomb shapes the perception of the cell, the walls of which “were closer now than they

22. Eric Cummins, *The Rise and Fall of California’s Radical Prison Movement* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 12.

23. *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1971), p. 78.

24. Frank Darabont, *The Shooting Script: The Shawshank Redemption* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1996), p. 111.

25. George Bluestone, “Nelson Algren,” *Western Review* 22 (1957) 27–44, p. 38.

26. Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 79–80.

27. Jack Henry Abbott, *In the Belly of the Beast: Letters from Prison* (London: Hutchinson, 1982), p. 44.

had ever been; they bent together above him till the door seemed a part of the walls" (GA, p. 181). The structure reminds Machine that the "loopholes" that had previously been available to him, which worked to anaesthetise the self from the figurative imprisonment of his personal and social worlds, are closed down. There is no longer any "long orgasmic sigh of relief" (GA, p. 59) received through an injection of - "God's medicine" (GA, p. 26) - morphine. Also gone is the solace of being in the arms of his lover Molly Novotny, which, like the all-night company of cards and card players, "kept the everlasting darkness off" (GA, p. 118). In "San Quentin's Stranger" (1968), the poet William Wantling remembers such a feeling as "the last bond with life," which, like the memories of Machine, fades into the myriad of unceasing routine and regulation.²⁸ However, this sense of symbolic "death" does not allow us to write off the character in a final analysis. Rather, the total isolation that the prison environment represents is seen by Machine as an "iron sanctuary" (GA, p. 185), within which the self can be "resurrected."²⁹ This facet is made explicit in an earlier unpublished story by Algren entitled "An American Diary." After spending only one week confined within the cell, the imprisoned character of this story writes his metamorphosis: "I am not the same man who was arrested last week. I have been reborn. I am cleaner, finer, nobler."³⁰ Within such terms, we notice the relevance of Goffman's reference to the experiences endemic to the prison:

Mortification or curtailment of the self is very likely to involve acute psychological stress for the individual; but for an individual sick with his world or guilt-ridden in it, mortification may bring psychological relief.³¹

This equation unites punishment, and not treatment, with "psychological relief." In light of Machine's perpetual feelings of guilt regarding the sickness of his wife, together with his own illness associated with being a junkie, we see how Algren reconfigures the prison as a sanctuary: "Frankie Machine wasn't happy; yet Frankie wasn't too sad. He felt oddly relieved now that, for a while at least, all things would

28. William Wantling, *The Awakening* (London: Rapp and Whiting, 1968), p. 54.

29. See Maxwell Geismar, *American Moderns: From Rebellion to Conformity* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1958). Here, Geismar states, but does not develop, the idea that "prison is the safest place for Nelson Algren's people to be. It is the "iron sanctuary" which puts at rest their fevered and distorted hopes." p. 187.

30. Rare Books and Manuscripts, Nelson Algren MSS, fol. 395, "An American Diary," p. 6.

31. Erving Goffman, "On the Characteristics of Total Institutions: The Inmate World," in *The Prison: Studies in Institutional Organization and Change*, ed. Donald R. Cressey (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), 15-67, p. 48.

be solved for him" (GA, p. 185). The fact that the inmate feels "oddly relieved" touches the paradox of the prison as holding out imaginative possibilities. The separation or "death" of the captive from the external associations of "psychological stress" imbues Machine with the strength needed to activate these possibilities and direct them into the self-realisation that "I'm gonna shine again" (GA, p. 210).

As the days of his sentence count down towards release, we see a marked transformation in the character:

For now all things healed strangely well within him, as though by grace of his punishment. He was paying off for smashing up Sophie, the irons had only been God's means to let him, a Priest told him; so that when he was released everything he'd done would be paid for and he'd be truly free at last.

(GA, p. 209)

At this point in the narrative, Machine is no longer an addict, but an individual who, even though confined to prison, is "truly free at last." For the first time, he is able to find absolute redemption from the guilt associated with his wife's debilitating sickness. The juxtaposition of terms such as "healed" and "strangely . . . grace . . . God . . . [and] Priest" invests the cure with an almost supernatural essence that echoes Victor Brombert's conception of "salvation through enclosure."³² It would certainly be a mistake to read the prison setting in *The Man with the Golden Arm* as, in the words of Frank Sinatra's character in Preminger's film, "the greatest place you've ever seen."³³ Nevertheless, I have illustrated the importance underlying the role of the prison in serving to regenerate the once flailing figure of Frankie Machine. But this configuration of escape ("loopholes") and empowerment represents only one side of a prison motif in the novel; the other side, as Brombert observes, "gives birth to the opposite: to the perverse, the illicit, the absurd."³⁴ In my view, this antithesis is present in the depiction of Sophie Majcinek, figuratively imprisoned in the austere setting of her tenement room, and it is to this that the next section will turn.

* * *

In a short story entitled "Escape – or the Woman?" (c. 1931), Nelson Algren writes: "Women do not attempt escape – they resign themselves. In all the history of the

32. Victor Brombert, *The Romantic Prison: The French Tradition*, trans. the author (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 17.

33. Preminger, I have taken this quotation directly from the film itself.

34. Brombert, p. 176.

penitentiary never has a woman attempted escape.”³⁵ Algren’s comments here upon the apparent resignation of female prisoners offers a telling insight into the construction of the female protagonist Sophie Majcinek. In contrast to her husband Frankie Machine, whose imprisonment, as we have seen, promotes his temporary experience of liberation and empowerment, Sophie is caught within what Judith A. Scheffler would call a “virtual” web of imprisonment that “does not share the luxury of verbal play with the word *freedom*.”³⁶ The following analysis will show how the narrative reconfigures the “domestic” sphere of the tenement room that Sophie inhabits into an absolute space of enclosure. It is my argument that this narrative focus represents one of the most potent and terrifying aspects of a prison motif in Algren’s work.

I want to start with a brief overview of a specific event that shapes the development of the character, because it is here that we locate the genesis of, in Michel Foucault’s words, “the real capture of the body and its perpetual observation.”³⁷ The event I refer to is the car accident that traps both Machine and his wife within a debilitating experience of guilt and paralysis. The narrative returns us in time to an evening in the Tug and Maul bar where the end of the war with Japan is celebrated. Driving home that night, the inebriated Machine crashes the car. Although both characters are treated with only minor injuries and discharged from hospital, Machine notices “that something had gone wrong with his Zosh” (*GA*, p. 72).

In search of a diagnosis, they visit a clinic where the doctor, after sitting Sophie in a wheelchair, “had immediately taken her by surprise with a needle jabbed into the tender back of her calf” (*GA*, p. 75). Having returned home, Sophie has a nightmare that enacts the end of her physical and psychological sense of freedom:

That night she had dreamed that she was about to be jabbed by a flaming needle in Frankie’s hand: she’d gotten out of bed, turned on the light and wakened screaming. Frankie had carried her back to the bed and she hadn’t gotten out of bed unaided since. Living between the bed and the wheelchair, her arms had grown flabby while her legs had lost flesh from disuse. The

35. Rare Books and Manuscripts, Nelson Algren MSS, “Escape – or the Woman?” fol. 429. It is not my intention to engage with the problematic nature of Algren’s statement. Rather, I quote the passage as offering an insight into the way Algren constructed the character of Sophie Majcinek.

36. Judith A. Scheffler, *Wall Tappings: An Anthology of Writings by Women Prisoners* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986), p. 18.

37. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991) (1977), p. 304.

skin had crowded pendulously upon itself beneath her chin to make her eyes mere pale gray slits reflecting her sick despair. (GA, p. 75)

This nightmare builds the foundations of an imprisoned world (a world without the possibilities of reform or cure), which works to define the character and her pattern of behaviour within the mind of the reader. I now want to identify and examine this passage in order to bring out the room's virtual identification as a prison cell.

One of the most powerful symbols here is the needle that is administered by the doctor and, in the nightmare, by her husband. In both cases, the injection constructs, symbolically, an image of Sophie as an addict and, by extension, a prisoner of her male counterparts. Such an image is achieved through the archetype of women as "docile and compliant companions of men," to borrow Sandra Lee Bartky words.³⁸ This "docility" is articulated in terms that echo the addictive behaviour and vernacular associated with the junkie. In a similar manner to her addicted husband, who after morphine feels that "all he had to do the rest of his life was to lie right here" (GA, p. 59), Sophie is paralysed by the injection. By claiming that "he's fixed me" (GA, p. 121), Sophie reinforces this connection between her own body – punctuated with actual or imagined needle marks, her "flabby" arms shrinking the vein from view – and the anatomy of the junkie. As Frankie is imprisoned within the very yearning for morphine, the agoraphobic Sophie becomes habituated to the place "between the bed and the wheelchair."

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir offers such a model of a "closed cell"³⁹ in order to define the female figure "Consumed in her solitude and sterility."⁴⁰ I have drawn upon this model because it illuminates certain tropes of the "small and close" (GA, p. 32) room where Sophie, as her husband says, "got banged up" (GA, p. 67). Indeed, a register of the level of confinement that underpins our reading of the room is established through Machine's belief that it represented an even "narrower freedom" than the police holding cell (GA, p. 27). In this "narrower freedom," Sophie,

38. Quoted in Susan Wendell, *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on Disability* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 90.

39. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1972) (1949), p. 497. At the time of publication of *The Man with the Golden Arm* and *The Second Sex* in 1949, Algren and de Beauvoir were lovers. Perhaps more importantly, though, de Beauvoir was a reader and translator of Algren's work, and Algren, in turn, discussed issues pertinent to de Beauvoir's feminism. There is certainly useful research to be done in the influence exerted by both writers on each other's work.

40. De Beauvoir, p. 495.

“who had so loved to dance and be with dancing people” (GA, p. 67). is “fixed” by a “sick despair.” The culture of “the whole vast frame rooming house” (GA, p. 32), an echo perhaps to the so-called “Big House” prisons of the 1940s,⁴¹ works to maintain both these themes of restriction and sickness. One of the ways in which this is achieved can be seen through the brief depictions given to the landlord of the tenement. Like the “turnkey” who inhabits the jail scenes of *Somebody in Boots* or *Never Come Morning*, landlord Schabatawski is referred to as “the jailer” (GA, p. 32). His role is one of “door-shutter and key-turner” (GA, p. 32), and his perpetual demand of his tenants is to keep “door always closed” (GA, p. 32). The closure of exits serves metaphorically to transform the domestic associations of the home into the solitude of the prison cell. As I mentioned before, this is not the same type of cell as inhabited by Machine, which seems to promote the character’s self-esteem, but, rather, the opposite.

The fact that the hallway of this tenement is lit “the same as that over the visitors’ cage” (GA, p. 225) in the prison further augments the connection between the room and a cell. Within this light, Machine’s arrival in, and departure from, the room becomes comparable to the trajectories available to the prison visitor. Working through the night as a card dealer in Schwiefka’s gambling house, he reluctantly returns to the room only in order to sleep. In theory, Machine’s arrival into the room offers a disruption to the loneliness experienced by his wife, in a similar way to the presence of the prison visitor punctuates the alienation felt by the inmate. But there are problems with this idea. Sophie appears aware of the possibility of disruption to her situation and pleads with her husband to wheel her, as this “could arrest that endless plunge into nowhere” (GA, p. 36). However, in practice, Machine feels confined by the realisation that “there was no end to the wheeling at all” (GA, p. 36). Consequently, he attempts to escape his condition by playing his “homemade drummer’s practice board” (GA, p. 36), which, as Bruce Bassoff suggests, “represent his hope for freedom and respectability.”⁴² Rather than disrupt the isolation experienced by Sophie, then, the timed movements of her husband function to reinforce her sense of imprisonment.

We find similar trajectories of the visiting husband in Mary Jane Ward’s almost-forgotten novel, *The Snake Pit* (1947).⁴³ This text offers a perspective of life as seen

41. Rotman, p. 169.

42. Bruce Bassoff, “Algren’s Poetics in *The Man with the Golden Arm*,” *Études Anglaises* 4 (1987) 413–420, p. 414.

43. All parenthesised references are to this edition: Mary Jane Ward, *The Snake Pit* (London: Cassell and Company, 1947).

through the eyes of a female inmate of a mental hospital. The character Virginia Stuart Cunningham is placed into this institution by her husband Robert. Like Sophie, the female patient understands her illness as the central reason behind her being “shut up like a criminal” (*SP*, p. 86). Indeed, the regular visits by Robert appear to accentuate the sense of confinement that the hospital represents, as we have seen between Machine and Sophie, because they map the paths that travel between “inside” and “outside” that liberate him but imprison her. The language employed by Ward in order to catch the connection between this sense of confinement and the deterioration of Virginia’s psychological state echoes the details we see associated with Sophie. Both characters share a claustrophobic setting, where the “little room” (*SP*, p. 174), “narrow yellow door” (*GA*, p. 226), and “narrow bed” (*SP*, p. 162) define the nature of their existence.

Here, the experience of figurative (as in Sophie’s case) or literal (as in Virginia’s) imprisonment for the female protagonist becomes conceptually fused. In both texts, we receive a view of both husbands carrying their wives towards a bed that is defined by illness and stagnation. For both female characters, such an act symbolises the docility and compliance, to paraphrase Bartky, which underscores the acute level of imprisonment surrounding, paralysing, and “fixing” their bodies in place.

These female figures share a degree of personal entrapment that reconfigures the world as an alien and remote landscape. The domestic locus, together with the very thought of travel from it, imbues all with an anxiety that translates the external environment, in Elizabeth Grosz’s words, “into the simulacrum of the body.”⁴⁴ In terms of Sophie, we see the extent to which her psychological and physical paralysis informs her view of the city from the room’s only window:

Moonlight that had once revealed so many stars now showed her only how the city was bound, from southeast to the unknown west, steel upon steel upon steel: how all its rails held the city too tightly to the thousand-girdered El For the city too was somehow crippled of late. The city too seemed a little insane. (*GA*, pp. 95–96)

The passage evokes an inter-connection between the mental and physical stagnation of the perceiving character and the structures that are seen to circumscribe the urban landscape. The symbolic associations loaded onto the iconography of the train, for instance, which offers Machine an escape from Captain Bednar, work in-

44. Elizabeth Grosz, “Bodies-Cities,” in *Sexuality and Space*, ed. Beatriz Colomina (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), 241–253, p. 242.

stead to mirror and reinforce the immobility that overwhelms and invests the very being of Sophie. The one small tenement window that frames the picture of the “bound” city, Sophie’s only view of the outside world, is directly akin to “the slotlike opening” (*SP*, p. 62) that directs the gaze of Virginia onto the austere architecture of the asylum that imprisons her. The criss-crossing of “steel upon steel upon steel” that forms the elevated train network, as Mary Ellen Pitts observes, “reflect[s] the barred images of the jail cells.”⁴⁵

This visual drama of enclosure is heightened by the soundscape that surrounds the senses of Sophie. We have already noted the extent to which Machine uses the drums to drown out his wife’s appeal for companionship and also to envisage a new and ideal life. But Sophie does not share this attempt at liberation. Instead, the repetitive beat is translated into the construction of a prison:

Listening to the light mechanical beat, it began to sound for the first time, to Sophie, like a hammer’s rapid tapping. When she’d closed her eyes his hammer went tap-tap-tapping down a thousand little bent rusty nails. She had had to clench her palms tightly to fight off the panic rising within her and when he’d looked up at her eyes had had the same immovable stare they’d had on the receiving-room table. (GA, p. 72)

Here, the “light mechanical beat” of the drums and the noise of “a hammer’s rapid tapping” are riveted together with “a thousand little bent rusty nails” to form an enclosing architecture within the mind of Sophie. The sight of the character “clench[ing] her palms tightly” at the thought of the “rusty nails” once again tacks the experience and anatomy of the junkie onto the image of Sophie. This image is reinforced by the belief that it was Machine “who drove in the nails” (*GA*, p. 66). Left alone in the solitude of the room, Sophie sees their marriage as offering a similar relationship in principal to the one between the hustler and the addict. Consequently, she sees the nails in the same way as the addict sees the needle, as being driven into “her own palms” (*GA*, p. 66) which were “already bleeding” (*GA*, p. 67).

Using this model of a conceptually loaded soundscape is also valuable in identifying “the stranger’s step,” which Sophie hears “coming on heavily, like one almost too tired to mount one more flight” (*GA*, p. 304). Again, the narrative evokes the construction of the paralysed and “weighed down” (*GA*, p. 94) condition that imprisons Sophie, using a similar method to the poet Ericka Huggins:

45. Mary Ellen Pitts, “Algren’s El: Internalized Machine and Displaced Nature,” *South Atlantic Review* 52.4 (1987), 61–74, p. 70.

I sense the great weight of the prison
pressing down on the little box of room I lie in
alone forgotten.⁴⁶

The premise “I sense” establishes a felt connection between “the great weight of the prison” and “the little box room I lie in,” thus bridging the boundaries between figurative and literal forms of absolute incarceration. Caught within such a context, Sophie strains to hear “a light step on the long dark stair” (*GA*, p. 120) that symbolises the freedom of her youth where she longed to be a dancer. But where the escape attempt of Machine is realised, Sophie’s desperation to find amelioration from the enclosed surroundings is mocked by the “light step” transforming itself into the “tapping, tapping . . . tapping, tapping” of Blind Pig’s cane as he navigates the stairs towards his room. (*GA*, p. 92) The repetitious beat of the cane slips easily into the whole crescendo of sounds that range from the banging of drums, the chimes of clocks, the “tap-tapped” (*GA*, p. 210) patter of Molly Novotny, and the “rapping of jailer’s hammer” (*GA*, p. 304). A large proportion of this soundscape forms a dynamic of escape for Machine. However, for Sophie, it reinforces the metaphoric edifice of her own prison, circumscribed by “the vast web of backstreet and alleyway” (*GA*, p. 228).

The tenement room draws and holds these sounds in the same way as the prison cell reverberates with, what *Never Come Morning* calls, “the sounds of human trouble” (*NCM*, p. 153). Like the slow drowning of a cockroach in the prison’s “water bucket” (*GA*, p. 22), which temporarily reminds Machine “just how that felt” (*GA*, p. 22), the noises of the room reflect and enforce the permanent debilitating condition suffered by his wife:

The mousetrap in the closet clicked. She felt it close as if it had shut within herself, hard and fast forever. Heard the tiny caught thing struggling, slowly tiring, and at last becoming still. (GA, p. 99)

The audibility of the working trap is accentuated by the silence that normally pervades the tenement house. Therefore, the sharp quality of the noise itself – the click – is emphasised in order to reveal the penal metaphor underpinning it. The deathly representation of the trap is channelled into an echo of the human equivalent, the opening of the gallows’s platform that hangs the body of the condemned prisoner. The noise of the mousetrap closing “hard and fast forever” enacts a pro-

46. Ericka Huggins, “[untitled],” in Scheffler, 298–99, p. 298.

phetic vision of the character's committal to an asylum, where the door closes "for keeps" (*GA*, p. 307).

As we have already noted, and by way of a conclusion, the "click" of the prison door denotes a sanctuary for Machine, within which he can escape from the pains associated with morphine addiction and anticipate a new life. The reverse is true for Sophie, as the noise defines the very terminus that "had shut within herself," catching the full horror that confinement can impose upon the mind of the female captive.

Márta Asztalos

Barthelme's Twisted Fathering

On Donald Barthelme, *The Dead Father*

This paper approaches Donald Barthelme's *The Dead Father* along the dual, paradoxical, and seemingly mutually exclusive terms of quest and anti-quest, murder and rescue, life and death. Its objective is to show how these antonyms exist inseparably and interwoven in the novel, successfully resisting logically coherent binary orders. The master trope of the analysis is chiasmus, the trope of deception, which seems to open a fruitful and "untrodden" path for reading the novel. The first half of the essay examines the chiasmus taking place on the thematic level of the novel, in the power relations between Thomas and the Dead Father and the possible twists of this twisted trope. The second half examines this chiastic inversion of power relations as an ironic inversion, as a reversed Oedipal situation and tries to read the interplay of psychoanalytic theory and Barthelme's novel in terms of irony, ironical inversion, and parody.

Readers' attitudes towards Donald Barthelme's works are truly diverse, but usually they either hate or adore them: it seems that no real middle path exists. As Richard F. Patteson points out in his introduction to one of the essay collections on the writer, the same phenomenon can be detected in scholarly circles as well: "From the beginning, his fiction has stimulated differences of opinion."¹ Of course, these differences manifest themselves not only in utterly positive or negative critical attitudes towards the writer's experimentalism, though, the groups of dissenters and admirers can be detected quite clearly. Critics have passionate debates where to place him. There are many critics² who treat him as a realist writer and claim that there is "nothing surrealist about him, his dislocations are real, his material quite actual,"³ while, opposing this view, there is a group of critics, considerable in size, who regard

1. Richard F. Patteson, "Introduction," in *Critical Essays on Donald Barthelme*, ed. Richard F. Patteson (New York: G. K. Hall, 1992), 5–21, p. 6.

2. William H. Gass, Mary Robertson, or Richard Schickel, just to name a few.

3. William H. Gass, "The Leading Edge of the Trash Phenomenon," *New York Review of Books* (25 April 1968), p. 5.

Donald Barthelme as a surrealist artist.⁴ Larry McCaffery praises “the inward, meta-fictional quality of his writing,”⁵ while Charles Molesworth examines him as a “parodist, a special sort of ironist.”⁶ As we can see, the “absence of . . . center”⁷ or agreement is not only one of the main characteristics of Barthelme’s own works, but extends over the critical and theoretical reflections on his writings as well.

Barthelme’s short novel, *The Dead Father* that I intend to focus on in the following few pages, created an even wider schism in the critical and readerly audience. In 1975, when the novel appeared, “the Barthelme opposition, though small in number . . . gathered up a head of steam” and “Barthelme criticism hit rock bottom.”⁸ Hilton Kramer in his review in *Commentary* reduces *The Dead Father* into a “simple fantasy of filial revenge” and claims “the Barthelme followers” to be only critics, professors and literary editors. Robert Con Davis shares this view and states that “only specialized knowledge (a critical awareness) of the English tradition and its underlying structures can navigate”⁹ a book of such complexity. This complexity or “impurity” arises from the fact that the text uses the methods of collage, pastiche and parody, makes use of bits and pieces of our culture and the novelistic tradition, creating allusions and innumerable interferences. Many of the reviewers and critics try to get closer to the meaning of the novel by attempting to solve the riddles of the allusions, and focus on the allegorical interpretation of the figure of the Dead Father. Quite a number of them produce long lists of possible solutions, trying to make sure that they do not leave out even the most farfetched ideas. Lance Olsen reads the figure of the Dead Father as “an omnipresent authority and a dismembered god, omnipotent and finally impotent, Orpheus, Zeus, Prometheus, Oedipus, Lear, the Fisher King.”¹⁰ Olsen’s list of allegories is only out-

4. John Barth categorizes his style as “urbane and urban semi-Surrealism” (John Barth, “Thinking Man’s Minimalist: Honoring Barthelme,” *The New York Times Book Review* [3 Sept 1989], p. 9).

5. Patteson, p. 6.

6. Charles F. Molesworth, *Donald Barthelme’s Fiction: The Ironist Saved from Drowning* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1982), p. 8.

7. Patteson, p. 10.

8. Patteson, p. 11.

9. Robert Con Davis, “Post-Modern Paternity: Donald Barthelme’s *The Dead Father*,” in *Critical Essays on Donald Barthelme*, ed. Richard F. Patteson (New York: G. K. Hall, 1992), 185–195, p. 194.

10. Lance Olsen, “Linguistic Pratfalls in Barthelme,” *South Atlantic Review* 51.4 (November 1986) 69–77. Online. Gale Database. Contemporary Literary Criticism. Capital Comm Coll Lib, Hartford, CT. 22 March 2005.

numbered by Dedria Bryfonski and Phyllis Carmel Mendelson, who provide an even longer “litany.” Richard Todd aims to formulate a hierarchy of allegories by trying to put them in order according to their relevance. “He is God first of all. God as a father. And father as God. After that he is what you will: the Novel, Western Culture, Truth, Duty, Honor, Country.”¹¹

Opposing the previously mentioned group of critics, there are a number of scholars who claim that “such an allegorical interpretation, though not invalid, imposes a logic upon the text that distorts or neglects its literal development.¹² These critics¹³ see the character of the Dead Father rather as an “open metaphor”¹⁴ or as a “complex symbol” whose different parts are to be taken as “emblems of paternity.”¹⁵ Walsh goes as far as stating that “the idea of fatherhood is a more fundamental unifying principle in *The Dead Father* than any abstract allegorical formulation.”¹⁶

I should say that I mainly share Walsh’s view and think that these, in certain cases farfetched, allegorical interpretations can be misleading to such an extent that they divert our attention from the key mechanisms of the text itself. They sidetrack and lead us into the depth of a vast and impenetrable forest of literary figures where it is almost impossible to “see the wood from the trees.” In my opinion this “depth” of allegorical meaning can be a trap for the reader – one of the ways the novel makes fun of all too serious-minded “fathering.” Therefore the critic or reader has to disengage the function of the brain that detects and decodes the possible allegorical and archetypal links “hidden” in the text, which in case of other literary works may prove so useful in interpretation. This situation is different, as the novel is so overloaded with possible allusive links: “the Dead Father as mythic father archetype is so sys-

11. Richard Todd, “Daddy, You’re Perfectly Swell!” in Patteson, 44–46, p. 45. For further allegorical interpretations of the Dead Father read Neil Schmitz, “Barthelme’s Life with Father”; Carl D. Malmgren, “Exhumation: *The Dead Father*” (the part entitled: Examining the Corpse); Michael Zeitlin, “Father Murder and Father-Rescue: The Post-Freudian Allegories of Donald Barthelme”; Régis Durand, “On the Pertinaciousness of the Father, the Son, and the Subject: The Case of Donald Barthelme.” Although not all of these essays focus on allegorical interpretations, quite a number of interesting ideas can be found in them.

12. Richard Walsh, “*The Dead Father*: Innovative Forms, Eternal Themes,” in Patteson 173–84, p. 175.

13. Among many others: Richard Walsh and Robert Con Davis.

14. Walsh, p. 175.

15. Con Davis, p. 186.

16. Walsh, p. 174.

tematically over-determined"¹⁷ that it can be connected to almost every piece of art written up to this point. I agree with Robert Con Davis, who states that "Barthelme's novel forces one to rediscover how to read a novel, as the first lines . . . show this novel's resistance to any simple interpretation."¹⁸

In my paper I will try to evade this pitfall, which offers itself too willingly, and aim to read the novel along the dual, paradoxical and seemingly mutually exclusive terms of quest and/versus anti-quest, murder and/versus rescue, life and/versus death. My objective is to show how these antonyms exist together inseparably and interwoven in the novel, successfully resisting logically coherent binary orders.

This characteristic of the text is apparent from the very first pages. When somebody starts reading the book he/she is almost immediately presented¹⁹ with the first, apparently unsolvable dilemma of the novel: the ambiguous existence of the Dead Father: "Dead, but still with us, still with us, but dead."²⁰ This sentence could be chosen as a motto for the novel, as it reveals so many things not only about the character of the Dead Father but about the signifying mechanisms of the novel as well.

Quest and/versus Anti-Quest

Barthelme's novel, on the surface, follows the traditional, teleological, linear structure of the quest narrative. The Dead Father and nineteen of his sons plus Julie set out in search of the Golden Fleece, which is expected to invigorate and rejuvenate the Dead Father. "When we are there, and when I wrap myself in its warm yellowness, then I will be young again I shall once more be wiry. . . . When I embrace or am embraced in its damned fine luster, the Dead Father said, all this will seem worthwhile." "When I douse myself in its great yellow electricity . . . then I will be re-vivified." This level, or as Carl D. Malmgren puts it, the macrotext of the novel is a pastiche/parodic version of one of the most traditional literary plot types, in opposition to the majority of Barthelme's other works, in which not a single element of a target-oriented structure is spared. The Dead Father and the "little band of brothers" (9; 35), as the Dead Father knows them, are heading to acquire an object of desire, a Lacanian *objet petit a*, the mythical object of the Golden Fleece.

17. Malmgren.

18. Con Davis, p. 185.

19. On the very first page of the novel.

20. All parenthesized references are to the following edition: Donald Barthelme, *The Dead Father* (New York: Penguin Books, 1975).

The actual goal of the “quest” is revealed only step by step to the Dead Father and the reader. The true intention of the brothers, especially Thomas’s, is to get rid of the Dead Father. Although their plan is foreshadowed in some parts of the book,²¹ it is spelled out explicitly only in the very last chapter.

You are to get into the hole, said Thomas.
Get into the hole?
Lie down in the hole.
And then you’ll cover me up?
The bulldozers are just over the hill, Thomas said, waiting.
You’ll bury me alive?
You’re not alive, Thomas said, remember? (175)

Considering this final information, we can state that this level of their “mission” can be interpreted as an anti-Quest, for their real intention is not to acquire an object of desire but to get rid of “an Object Of Loathing,”²² an object in the psychoanalytical sense. Or, from another point of view, they endeavour not to rejuvenate and rescue the Dead Father, but to murder him. At this point the two activities (to rejuvenate or to murder) seem to be two mutually exclusive possibilities, two goals in the minds of two parties of characters, and two simultaneous story patterns.

Examining the “Corpse of *The Dead Father*,” Carl D. Malmgren states that as a result of the above mentioned inversion that takes place on the level of the plot the master trope for the text is chiasmus. He goes so far as positing that as a consequence of these opposing forces inside the narrative “the plot effectively cancels itself out.” Despite the fact that the chiastic inversion pointed out by Malmgren is not a chiasmus in the true sense of the word, I am inclined to think that identifying chiasmus as the master trope of the narrative is highly relevant (as we shall see in the forthcoming part of the essay). Yet, instead of short-circuiting the idea with coming to the conclusion that it is nothing else but “a crossing-out, an elimination,”²³ we can go much further following this line, dissecting “Corpse of *The Dead Father*” in the hope of reaching a deeper understanding of the novel.

First, let us examine further the Quest and anti-Quest doubles, having a closer look at the *chi* drawn by Malmgren. The novel retains its teleological structure till the

21. Thomas’s story about the Great Father Serpent in chapter 6, an intuition of the Dead Father in chapter 19: “You are killing me” (p. 158), the presentation of the will in chapter 20, which the Dead Father is supposed to sign (p. 162).

22. Malmgren.

23. Malmgren.

end, as the alliance reaches the targeted place of their mission, where the two lines converge, the two sides of the *chi* join, the Quest and anti-Quest meet (which have never been that different from each other). In the final chapter of the novel it is revealed that this Quest has always already been an anti-Quest as well, for the object of the quest, the desired Golden Fleece exists only “[i]n a sense” (73). It is nothing else but Julie’s golden pubic hair, which has been within a hand’s reach during the whole journey (but not for the Dead Father).

Julie lifted her skirt.

Quite golden, said the Dead Father. Quite ample. That’s it? . . .

He moved to touch it.

No, said Thomas.

No, said Julie.

I’m not even to touch it?

No.

(175)

Even his “last request,” to place his hand on it just once, is denied, and is declared to be “[u]nseemly” by Thomas (175). With this prohibition the degradation and the deprivation of the Dead Father of his authority, which have been taking place throughout the whole journey, culminates. He is degraded to the level of a child, whereas Thomas is raised to the highest point of his power – he is able to exercise the ultimate power of the Father, the Lacanian “non du père.” The roles interchange: the Dead Father becomes an obedient “child/son,” while the son, Thomas is transformed into an omnipotent “father-figure,” who can do whatever he pleases, “can place his hand on the Fleece” signalling his power over everything. Both the Dead Father and the reader have been fooled and lured into a trap and we (the readers) have no other choice than to follow the Dead Father’s example and pretend that we “knew all along” (176). But before we run too far ahead in our story, let us examine the whole process of role-changing.

The chiasmic reversal of power relations

The novel opens with a tableau in which the Dead Father’s huge body is presented to us in detail. Although the description is quite matter-of-fact, it is constantly flirting with and skirting the tone of a heroic epic narrative.²⁴ It is modelled on an epic enu-

24. Richard Walsh also mentions this characteristic of the very first, not-numbered chapter of the novel in his essay entitled “*The Dead Father: Innovative Forms, Eternal Themes*” (p. 175).

meration, as all the noble and heroic attributes of the Dead Father are listed here. “Broad and noble. And serene, of course . . . Jawline compares favorably to a rock formation. Imposing, rugged, all that” (3). According to Richard Walsh this first, italicised part of the novel can also be read as “a sort of protasis,” as “it stands in relation to the rest of the text as the condition upon which its action is predicated.”²⁵ The elevated and sonorous style of the narrative is debunked from time to time, for unfitting facts and details are inserted in the text as “verbal banana peels” and “they undermine the self-confident syntax.”²⁶ “The full red lips drawn back in a slight rictus, slight but not unpleasant rictus, disclosing a bit of mackerel salad lodged between two of the stained four” (3). Not only does this very first section of the text introduce to us the figure of the Dead Father and his might, but it also establishes the power relations between him and his sons, especially Thomas (though we have not even met him at this point). “He controls the hussars. Controls the rise, fall, and flutter of the market. Controls what Thomas is thinking, what Thomas has always thought, what Thomas will ever think, *with exceptions*” (4; my emphasis). The last two words of the previous sentence can be interpreted as “verbal and structural banana peels” making use of and developing further Olsen’s imaginative phrasing. Not only do they show us the “demythifying” dynamics of the novel at work, but they foreshadow the crisis and malfunction of patriarchal order, the decline of the Dead Father’s authority.

When we first encounter Thomas in the first (numbered) chapter of the novel, he is the leader of the brothers who joined together to drag the Dead Father to the Golden Fleece/to his grave. We learn that he has just “thrown away the cap-and-bells” (7), the humiliating orange fool’s cap which signalled the sons’ obedience and submission to the Father. Thus, the redistribution and takeover of power has already begun. From this moment on the power relations of the two characters change step by step. A “series of symbolic transfers of power . . . occur at key stages of the novel.”²⁷ First, Thomas gets hold of the Dead Father’s belt buckle.

May I try it on? . . .

You may certainly try it on if you wish.

The Dead Father unbuckled the belt and handed it to Thomas.

Thomas buckled on the Dead Father’s belt.

25. Walsh, p. 175.

26. Olsen.

27. Walsh, p. 181.

I like it, he said. Yes, it looks well on me. The buckle. You may have the belt back, if you like.

My belt buckle! said the Dead Father. (47)

Then he obtains his sword, his passport, and, finally, his keys (79; 157; 170). By the end of the novel the Dead Father has been deprived of all the tokens of authority he had. The seizure of these phallic objects can be interpreted as symbolic castration, in the course of which Thomas deprives the Dead Father of “the signifier of signifiers,” the *phallus*, which is “crucial in the distribution of power, authority and a speaking position, a kind of mark or badge of a social position.”²⁸ Moreover, Thomas starts acting like a symbolic father and exercising those tasks associated with Fatherhood over him: disciplining, prohibiting and articulating the *non-du-père*, the ultimate prohibition of the father, which hinders incest in the family. He acts like Freud’s primal father who “prevented his sons from satisfying their directly sexual impulses.”²⁹ He never lets the Dead Father touch Julie and if he does so, he (Thomas) chastises him and forces him into abstinence and consequently into emotional ties with him.³⁰

The Dead Father placed [Julie’s] toe in his mouth.

Thomas rapped the Dead Father sharply in the forehead, across the cloth.

Toe fell from the mouth. The Dead Father clutched his forehead.

You have rapped the Father, he said between moans. Again. You *should not* rap the Father. You *must not* rap the Father. You *cannot* rap the Father. Striking the sacred and holy Father is an offense of the gravest nature. (55)

This quote shows us clearly that the Dead Father’s *no* has no power, he cannot influence the course of events any more. He becomes a “Kafkaesque victim.”³¹ Thomas has usurped his position and has absolute control over him. The power is exchanged and the symbolic roles are inverted.

It is clear that examining the power relations between the Dead Father and Thomas we come across an even more evident chiasmic inversion than Malmgren did,

28. Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan, a Feminist Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 121; 125.

29. Sigmund Freud, “The Group and the Primal Horde,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* 18 (London: Vintage, 2001), 163–75, p. 124.

30. Freud, “The Group,” p. 124.

31. Walsh, p. 180.

studying the motives of Quest and anti Quest in the novel. It seems so obvious and clear that the reader starts to suspect, rightly. Furthermore, the scruple is inscribed into the text, as a twist that debunks the teleological structure of the (anti-)quest and does not let any totalising, coherent interpretation be imposed on the text, not even the logic of the twist (X) itself. This twist is placed into the book within the book, into *A Manual for Sons*, where it is laid down what happens when a father dies (and as we all know this is the destiny of the Dead Father decided by his sons).

When a father dies, his fatherhood is returned to the All-Father, who is the sum of all dead fathers taken together. . . . Fatherless now, you must deal with the memory of a father. Often that memory is more potent than the living presence of a father, is an inner voice commanding, haranguing, yes-ing and no-ing . . . , governing your every, your slightest movement, mental or physical. At what point do you become yourself? Never, wholly, you are always partly him. (144)³²

A Manual for Sons overwrites the pattern of the story at the point when the reader has taken a glimpse at the intrigue behind the mission (the cabal behind the cable), the anti-Quest behind the Quest. This happens at the very moment when the reader starts to get his/her bearing in the novel, when s/he begins to trust the teleological structure and feels proud of himself/herself that s/he has some notion about the end. So, at the very point when the reader starts acting like an all-knowing “father,” being positive that s/he holds the play of signification in his hands, his authority is shaken, his “fatherly” interpretation is “castrated.” The Manual seems to disclose pieces of crucial information that cause a sudden turn in fortunes and it

32. Of course, these thoughts ring a bell to those of us who are familiar with Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, not accidentally. One of the underlying discourses that Barthelme made us conscious of while making this novel is psychoanalytic theory. Régis Durand examining the Father, the Son, and the Subject in Donald Barthelme’s works goes as far as stating that, thoroughly familiar with the catchwords of psychoanalysis, Barthelme “is determined to beat it at its own game” (Régis Durand, “On the Pertinaciousness of the Father, the Son, and the Subject: The Case of Donald Barthelme,” in *Critical Angles: European Views on Contemporary American Literature*, ed. Mark Chénétier [Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986], 153–63, p. 163). I think that this statement of Durand’s is not well-considered and has no real foundation in his essay. In my opinion, *The Dead Father* is not only a post-modern but a post-Freudian text as well, and Barthelme uses the theories of Lacan and Freud (similarly to other literary texts and elements of popular culture) as raw materials from which he can build up his collage.

projects a clear vision of the future, utterly different from the one the reader has expected. This information seems to give a further twist to our already twisted and twisting structure.

But before we put our trust in this Manual, let us examine the source where it comes from. It is brought to Julie and Thomas by its translator:³³ Peter Scatterpatter, who gives it to them as a present which “[m]ight be of some use to [them]. On the other hand, might not” (108). The name of the presenter might carry some information about the source or the intentions of the Manual itself (on the other hand, might not). Let us examine the surname (Scatterpatter) a bit closer. The second part of the compound being of similar sound and meaning as the words: *chatter*, *tattle*, *prattle* can give us the notion that the whole text is nonsense, that reading it is a waste of time and energy. On the other hand, “to scatter patter” can mean to spread deceitful information³⁴, so the intention of a man with such a name can be to diffuse misleading knowledge, to lead Julie and Thomas astray. So the Manual can be some means of deception, which aims at hindering the accomplishment of the (anti)-Quest. The very last chapter of it seems to support this idea, as it tries to dissuade the reader (Julie and Thomas) from committing patricide, “the principal and primal crime of humanity as well as of the individual”:³⁵

Patricide is a bad idea, first, because it is contrary to law and custom and second because it proves, beyond a doubt, that the father's every fluted accusation against you was correct: you are a thoroughly bad individual, a patricide!” . . . It is not necessary to slay your father, time will slay him, that is a virtual certainty. Your true task lies elsewhere. . . . You must become your father, but a paler, weaker version of him. If your father was a captain in Battery D, then content yourself with a corporalship in the same battery.

(145)

33. Who translated the book from English into English (cf. Barthelme, p. 108).

34. The expression ‘patter’ is used when we refer to the jabber/double Dutch of a conjurer. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* gives the following definition: “the rapid talk of a person telling jokes, performing tricks, selling sth, etc., intended to entertain, distract one's attention. . .” (p. 850).

35. Sigmund Freud, “Dostoevsky and Parricide,” in *The Standard Edition* 21 (London: Vintage, 2001), 173–96, p. 183. Régis Durand supports this reading of the Manual. He states that “the Manual for Sons” makes for an acceptance of, a compromise with, the unshakeable facts of fatherhood. Instead of the old Oedipal strategies of conflict or parricide it suggests avoidance, playing down the whole question” (p. 163).

The manual gives clear-cut orders and instructions, and the tone of the narrator is highly paternalistic and stern. Furthermore, it protects the position of the father by pointing out that a son can never, should never, must never become a father in the fullest sense of the word. If the reader is attentive enough, these thoughts can sound familiar as they (or a slightly different version of them) were pronounced by the Dead Father in chapter five: “A son can never, in the fullest sense, become a father. Some amount of amateur effort is possible. A son may after honest endeavor produce what some people might call, technically, children. But he remains a son. In the fullest sense” (33). These facts indicate that *The Manual for Sons* may be a supporting pillar of Fatherhood and patriarchal authority (though, at first sight it seems to be aiming at the opposite direction).

On the other hand, the similarity of the two words *patter* and *pattern* may not be accidental.³⁶ *Pattern*, meaning a special kind of order, can take us into the direction of reading the Manual as a book which spreads (*scatters*) knowledge about the order of the world or the system. This interpretation of the word is supported by one of the last sentences of the Manual as well: “You can see the pattern” (145). However, if we focus on another meaning of *to scatter*: *to disperse*, we get a different reading of the name and the Manual: It/He may aim at dispersing or upsetting the existing order, the order of the *pat(t)er*. With this last interpretation of the name we arrive at the point when the articulated objective of the Manual (“Fatherhood can be, if not conquered at least ‘turned down’ in this generation” [145]) and the meaning gathered from the name seem to correspond. Summing up and evaluating our results achieved up to this point in the domain of name-reading, we can establish that our (presumed) key-name and key signifier proves to “open” too many doors of possible interpretation, triggers too many opposing readings. It seems to be a “floating signifier,” an unreliable “trope,” one may say, as one talks about an unreliable narrator, which may seem to indicate the presence of an “unreliable translator” (or may not).

At this point the reader has two choices: either s/he accepts *A Manual for Sons* as a meta-narrative, which was written “over” the novel itself as a guidebook or a manual of rules not only for sons but for the reader as well, or s/he rejects and overlooks the information it comprises, following Julie’s and Thomas’s example.³⁷

36. The idea comes from a reading mistake, when reading the text for the first time, quite fast I misread the word, I mistook it for *pattern*. Moreover, when I checked the word in the dictionary I had to realize that *pattern* follows *patter* in the dictionary as well.

37. Julie “threw the book into the fire” (146).

In the first case the reader concedes the truth of the manual and, henceforth, believes that in the “after last moment” of the novel (which is not presented to the reader deliberately) the Dead Father is to regain his power symbolically, following a post-Freudian and post-Lacanian logic, as the murder of the father according to Lacan is “the fruitful moment of debt through which the subject binds himself for life with the Law.”³⁸ So, in this case “[t]he father [takes] up permanent residue in the son’s soul, intertwining himself with the son’s most intimate definition of self”³⁹ despite all the endeavor on the son’s part to get rid of him. Following this line of thought we arrive at the conclusion that the Quest (to revivify the Dead Father with the help of the Golden Fleece) and the anti-Quest (to get rid of the Dead Father by “killing”⁴⁰ him) run to the same endpoint, have the same result: the Dead Father regains his power over his sons, he is (physically and/or symbolically) fortified. Adopting the information laid down in *A Manual for Sons* as truth the reader starts to read on assuming that s/he has some kind of superior knowledge about the rules of the game, about the mechanisms of the novel and with a sense of certainty that s/he cannot be tricked.

If the reader chooses the second option and looks at *A Manual for Sons* as some trickery aiming at diverting the group of Thomas and himself/herself from their path by shaking their extant belief, s/he repudiates the information provided by the manual, does not let her/his reading strategies be subverted and reads on with some kind of superior knowledge and with a sense of certainty that s/he does not let anybody trick her/him. However, it may be worth being cautious with a book so doubtful about paternity.

In my opinion the *Manual* brings some kind of uncertainty into our interpretations, precisely because of the different possibilities of its credibility. If one takes it seriously, it gives a twist to the narrative, if one decides not to take it seriously, this very gesture will involve a twist. In either case, one cannot simply believe what s/he sees, and interpretation becomes a “twisted” process, in which one has to re-evaluate one’s opinions from time to time. Using the well-known Freudian metaphor, one may claim the mechanism of fort/da to be a peculiar feature of the game that the

38. Jacques Lacan, “On the Possible Treatment of Psychosis,” in *Écrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), 179–221, p. 199.

39. Michael Zeitlin, “Father-Murder and Father-Rescue: The Post-Freudian Allegories of Donald Barthelme,” in *Contemporary Literature* (Summer 1993) 182–203, p. 200.

40. As the reader must have already realized by this point the dichotomies of life and death have no real value in the world of the novel, they cannot be looked upon as fix points of the system.

novel plays with the reader and his “fatherly” interpretative desires: from time to time the text robs the reader of the “fatherly” (serious, allegorical, totalizing) meanings that it has apparently offered previously, in a fashion very similar to the way Thomas takes everything back from the Dead Father that used to be his.

Rescue and/versus Murder of the Father

As Michael Zeitlin pointed out earlier, “the entire book is structured as an ambiguous rescue / murder of the father.”⁴¹ As we have seen, if we take seriously the “mock-psychoanalytic” principles of *The Manual*, we can draw the conclusion that it makes no difference whether we “murder” or “rescue” the Father because we carry out the truest or ultimate rescue by murdering him and setting up a permanent place for him in the ego.⁴²

In the following part of my paper I aim to approach these two concepts (Father-murder and Father-rescue) from another psychoanalytic standpoint, making use of the theories of Karl Abraham and other contemporaneous psychoanalysts. Freud was the first (1910) who examined and used the notion of “rescue phantasy” and pointed out the defiant meaning of such filial phantasies.⁴³ He claimed that governed by “a single wish to be his own father”⁴⁴ the son “forms the phantasy of rescuing his father from danger and saving his life; in this way he puts his account square with him.”⁴⁵ This line of thought is familiar from the novel as well, as Barthelme worked this theory of Freud into the novel (in *The Manual for Sons*) creating a fine example of psychoanalytic intertextuality: “When you have rescued a father from whatever terrible threat menaces him, then you feel for a moment, that you are the father and he is not. For a moment. This is the only moment in your life you will ever feel this way” (139). So, in this sense, rescuing the father is the son’s one and only possibility to take over his father’s role and power, to break out from the role of the child, to undo or “murder” him as a father for a moment. Following this line of thought and bringing our murderous and rescuing lines together, we can state that one can symboli-

41. Zeitlin, p. 198.

42. Freud, “Dostoevsky,” p. 184.

43. Whenever I quote or refer to the theories of Freud or Abraham I use the form “phantasy,” as they refer to the phenomenon using this form.

44. Sigmund Freud, “A Special Type of Object Choice Made by Men,” *The Standard Edition* 11 (London: Vintage, 2001), 163–75, p. 173.

45. Freud, “A Special Type of Object Choice,” p. 172.

cally murder or diminish his father by rescuing him and symbolically rescue and fortify his father by murdering him. Hence, we can come to the conclusion that the chiasmic inversion or the twist is written into the psychoanalytic theory (of rescue and murder) itself. The novel, making use of psychoanalysis for its mythmaking, allegorises/ parodies it, giving the twist a further twist. Let us examine this latter twist later, in the following chapter.

Returning to our not truly abandoned line, the Freudian idea of rescue phantasy, we can find that Freud himself points out that the root of such a phantasy is nothing but defiance on the son's part, which is sustained by unconscious aggression. In "Mourning and Melancholia" he states that "hostile impulses against parents (a wish that they should die) are also integral constituents of neurosis."⁴⁶ Following Freud's path and examining the wish-creations of neurotics, Karl Abraham goes as far as positing that the rescue phantasy contains an ambivalent meaning which includes the destruction of the father.⁴⁷ The unconscious rescue is synonymous with killing and "the transformation of an onslaught into a rescue is due to the stricter application of censorship."⁴⁸ Thus, rescue is nothing but a facade for the aggressive unconscious content of the phantasy. Richard Sterba, investigating aggression in the rescue fantasy, grasps the same problem from another side and states that "the content, 'rescuing,' expresses only a part of the complex fantasy, for the object to be rescued must first have been brought into the danger from which the producer of the fantasy is to save it."⁴⁹ In his reading endangering reflects the true intention of the producer of the phantasy and rescue is only self-protective.

Hence, having examined the underlying, unconscious content of a rescue phantasy we can come to the conclusion that the unconscious, emotive background for rescue and murder is the same. Putting it a bit more clearly (and, perhaps, harshly), according to psychoanalysis the difference between the two is only a matter of the effectiveness of censorship. So, from a psychoanalytic point of view the differentiation between the levels of Quest and anti-Quest in the novel loses its fundamentals, throwing meaning into the abyss of the confusing twists of an ever-turning chiasmus, which makes all totalizing, "fatherly" interpretations impossible.

46. Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *The Standard Edition* 14 (London: Vintage, 2001), 237–60, p. 240.

47. Karl Abraham, "Rescue and Murder of the Father in Neurotic Phantasies," *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 3 (1922) 467–74, p. 469.

48. Abraham, p 468.

49. Richard Sterba, "Aggression in the Rescue Fantasy," *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 9 (1940) 505–8, p. 505.

Irony, parody, the *chi* (and) *sous rature*

For a critic writing (or rather trying to write) about Barthelme's *The Dead Father* it would be too much of a naivety to ignore the ironic discourse of the novel, to disregard its parodic quality, to take the whole novel, all the offered allegorical meanings and beautifully constructed parables (and the act of writing itself) too seriously. The text seems to possess a whole set of techniques that make such totalising approaches – so much cherished by Barthelme criticism⁵⁰ – impossible. As Alan Wilde states: “his [Barthelme's] work refuses the epistemological quest for ultimates and absolutes.”⁵¹ Hereinafter, I will try to illustrate and examine through some examples how these strategies function in the novel, the way the text works as an ironical discourse.

The Dead Father was slaying, in a grove of music and musicians. First he slew a harpist and then a performer upon the serpent and also a banger upon the rattle and also a blower of the Persian trumpet . . .

The Dead Father resting with his two hands on the hilt of his sword, which was planted in the red and steaming earth.

My anger said proudly.

Then the Dead Father sheathing his sword pulled from his trouser his ancient prick and pissed upon the dead artists, severally and together, to the best of his ability – four minutes, or one pint.

Impressive, said Julie, had they not been pure cardboard. (11–2)

The passage starts with the portrayal of the “terrible scene” (11) in quite elevated style and an almost biblical tone. “The repetition of the “he slew” and “upon the” formula echoes the universe of the epic catalogues.”⁵² The sonorous eulogy goes on without any fault for almost one page, though the logorrhea of the narrator implants

50. Quite a number of the critics who have interpreted Barthelme's novel up to this point walked into this trap deluding themselves with the hope that the meaning of the novel can be discovered, can be grasped in some kind of a totality through providing a bunch of allegorical readings. However, the impossibility of coincidence with the substance and by this, possibility of a synthesis and the experience of totality is inscribed in the nature of allegory itself. (Paul de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* [London: Routledge, 1989], 187–229, p. 207).

51. Alan Wilde, “Barthelme Unfair to Kirkegaard: Some Thoughts on Modern and Post-modern Irony,” in Patteson, 100–124, p. 122.

52. Olsen.

the feeling in the reader that something is brewing. The well-constructed narrative collapses with the introduction of the words: "prick," "pissed," which suddenly create an ironic distance from the heroism of the previous passage. Applying a stylistically contrastive, inverse expression, a counter-term instead of the locution which could meet the reader's expectations fostered by the previous passages, the text performs ironical inversion on the stylistic and semantic levels of the novel. "The dogma of lexical and tonal consistency collapses"⁵³ through the novel's "heteroglossia," thus, the language contract which secures the father's authority is violated. The paternal function which is "ultimately a function in narrative structure . . . which prohibits mere repetition and sequentiality"⁵⁴ is destroyed, the power of the father is annihilated. The Law, which is identical with the symbolic order of language⁵⁵ is "inverted" by the irony of the text. Thus, taking seriously a discourse with such a respectable quantity of "linguistic illegality,"⁵⁶ and reading the text as if it functioned according to "the rational economy of language associated with paternal authority"⁵⁷ would most likely be a naive mistake. On the other hand, Umberto Eco states that it is in the quality of irony to make it possible for one to take the post-modern game seriously without understanding it. "There's always someone who takes ironic discourse seriously."⁵⁸ However, in my opinion (and according to my experiences) the reader or the critic himself/herself might experience a "de Manian fall" engendering the *dédoublement*⁵⁹ of the self⁶⁰ (and in our case of the reading technique) when s/he aspires to father a "serious reading" of the text. According to de Man, the falling of the subject and the laughter of him at himself falling generates the *dédoublement*, the reflective disjunction of the self, the birth of the "ironic, twofold self." The subject is split into "an empirical self that exists in a state of inauthenticity and a self that exists only in the form of language that asserts the knowledge of this inauthenticity."⁶¹

53. Olsen.

54. Con Davis, p. 186.

55. Jacques Lacan, "Function and Field of Speech and Language," in *Écrits*, 30–113, p. 66.

56. Olsen (my italics).

57. Con Davis, p. 189.

58. Umberto Eco, "Postmodernism, Irony, the Enjoyable," in *Modernism/Postmodernism*, ed. Peter Brooker (New York: Longman, 1992), 225–227, p. 227.

59. "[T]he characteristic that sets apart a reflexive activity . . . from the activity of the ordinary self caught in everyday concerns" (de Man, p. 212).

60. De Man, pp. 212–13.

61. De Man, p. 214.

An example of this fall can be observed in this essay in the part where I attempt to read the name of *A Manual's* translator (Scatterpatter) by means of deconstructive close reading, which usually proves quite efficient in other cases. In the present instance, as we have already seen, the time-honoured method “fails” and the critic “falls,” as our key signifier proves to be informative to such an extent that it becomes almost uninformative. Applying Paul de Man’s theory of irony to the act of reading, we can state that “the element of falling introduces the specifically comical and ironical ingredient” to the reading process and shakes the reader out of his/her naivety. The critic/reader realizes the “mistaken, mystified assumption he was making about himself” and about the text. His failure or fall awakens the critic to realize the inauthenticity of his reading, moreover, every further attempt to return to his “never-failing” method “asserts the knowledge of this inauthenticity” and mystification.⁶² Tamás Bényei talks about a highly similar (ironical) experience of the reader when he discusses the effect of ironical inversion:

They make the reader at least momentarily conscious of his interpretive desires and procedures, awakening him from a relatively blissful state of innocent reading into an awareness of what he’s doing, into a knowledge of the preconditioned, programmed nature of his reading habits. Every time his expectations are frustrated by the ironical inversion of one or another of the well-known clichés, he has to make a choice between reading the inversion as a minor textual or narrative irregularity which, annoying as it may be, does not affect the generic cohesion and identity of the text (and thereby put off his exit from the innocent reading), or trying to eliminate his now painfully explicit and conscious generic expectations, on the assumption that the text he is reading follows a narrative pattern hitherto unknown to him.⁶³

According to Bényei, in case the reader chooses the second option he “will come up with a new reading strategy rooted in his frustrations” and when “the next discrep-

62. De Man, p. 214. However, the two reading strategies have to function hand in hand and give birth to a new strategy, as we have seen that a “serious” interpretation cannot stand the test of the ironic text, and a totally ironic reading would be nothing but madness, as “absolute irony is a consciousness of madness, itself the end of all consciousness”; and “[s]anity can exist only because we are willing to function within the conventions of duplicity and dissimulation” (pp. 215–16).

63. Tamás Bényei, “Ironic Parody or Parodistic Irony? Irony, Parody, Postmodernism and the Novel,” *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 1.1 (1995) 89–125, pp. 100–1.

ancies appear, therefore, he is no longer the victim of the text's irony: he is – or he thinks he is – now an ironist himself." Let me remark here that the essence (and the irony) of irony lies in this interpolation, as at the very moment the reader thinks that he is an ironist himself, is he the farthest from that position, as he is taken in again by a mystification. To become a truly "ironic mind" the reader has to keep the state of *dédoublement* or "*folie lucide*" as irony is "the recurrence of a self-escalating act of consciousness."⁶⁴ Bényei also thematizes the trait of endlessness inherent in irony by stating that "irony tends to generate a kind of *regressus ad infinitum* in the reading process," which, becoming explicit, transforms the two-layered structure of irony into an endless spiral, and irony into a device engendering uncertainty.⁶⁵

Ironical/ironic inversions, which generate the failure of traditional interpretive processes, are characteristics of all parody. To put it in another way, parody is a "repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity."⁶⁶ Hence, the interplay of psychoanalytic theory and Barthelme's novel may undoubtedly be described in terms of irony, ironical inversion and parody.⁶⁷ Considering the chiasmic inversion of power relations drawn up in the previous part of the essay, we can state that besides being an (excellent) example of chiasmus it is also an ironic inversion, as it is a reversed Oedipal situation, where the son bears the power, authority, and knowledge (of the plan), together with the mother's (Julie's) love and access to her body. Therefore, Barthelme's novel can be regarded as a parody or a parodistic rewriting of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis:⁶⁸ "The fucked mother conceives, Julie said. The whelping is, after agonies I shall not describe, whelped. Than the dialogue begins. The father speaks to it. The 'it' in a paroxysm of not understanding. The 'it' whirling as in a centrifuge. Looking for something to tie to. Like a boat in a storm. What is there? The father" (77).

64. De Man, pp. 220; 216; 220.

65. Bényei, pp. 102; 103.

66. Linda Hutcheon, "Introduction," in *The Theory of Parody* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 1–29, p. 6.

67. For further information on the relation of irony to parody or parody to irony, see Tamás Bényei, "Ironic Parody or Parodistic Irony?"

68. What would Freud say to this? To connect psychoanalytic theory and (its) parody on another level let me remark here that reading parody from the perspective of psychoanalysis (reversing the reversal) we can claim that, most surprisingly, Freud would possibly be highly pleased, as he states in one of his essays that "[c]aricature, parody and travesty . . . are directed against people and objects which lay claim to authority and respect, which are in some sense '*sublime*'" ("Jokes," p. 200). Could he ask for more?

Chiasmus, irony and parody seem to display analogies not only in the text but on a more general level as well, since all of them are based on deception. “Chiasmi are the tropes of deception and of the (dis)tors/(t)ion of (the presence of) meaning.”⁶⁹ “The rhetorical structure of irony . . . is based on deception. . . . Both parody and irony are deceptions that expose themselves as deceptions.”⁷⁰

Examining the disruption of surfaces and the functioning of linguistic games in the text, Michael Zeitlin states that these verbal games and the playfulness of the text are nothing but “diversionary tactics,” “ruses” which “transfer our attention from the underlying parricidal theme,” from the “father’s humiliation.”⁷¹ However, we should not forget that, being a parody, the underlying parricidal theme is itself a ruse, a deception. On the other hand, the reader can easily discern that the majority of (verbal) ironies in the text are directed against the figure of the Dead Father, of course, not accidentally. Now, let us have a look at some examples: “A bit left out, said the Dead Father. A bit. That is what I feel, at the moment. . . . Excluded, said the Dead Father. It is because you are an old fart, Julie explained. Old farts don’t get much” (10). The Dead Father’s childish weeping is deconstructive in itself, as instead of positioning him as the bearer of authority, and power it casts a degrading light upon him, it defines him as a vulnerable, impotent creature. His childlike position becomes even more explicit if we consider that this dialogue takes place after Thomas and Julie return from the bushes, where she gave Thomas “a suck of the breasts.” The situation bears close resemblance to an Oedipal triangle, though it is an inverted/subverted version of it: the excluded member who cannot possess the mother (Julie) is the Father, and the lucky one who can indulge himself is the son. Subversion takes place not only on the plot level but on a semantic level as well, as Julie answers to the Father’s childlike whining with a vulgar snort. To provide another example, we can have a look at the following quotation as well, in which the Dead Father, to prove his virility, lists all the items he has fathered. “I fathered upon her in those nights the poker chip. The cash register, the juice extractor, the kazoo, the rubber pretzel. . .” (36). The litany starts with a style evoking that of the Genesis but the enlisted offspring resemble rather the supply of a rummage sale. So, instead of proving his manhood and potency the list of these worthless junks symbolically castrates him. Thus, we might say that it is language itself that snatches and pulls down the

69. György Kalmár, “Az ördög írása: Thomas Hardy: *Erdőlakók*,” in *Szöveg és vágy – pszichoanalízis – irodalom – dekonstrukció* (Budapest: Anonymus, 2002), 135–153, p. 150 (my translation).

70. Bényei, pp. 108–111.

71. Zeitlin, p. 192.

figure of the father from the epic and heroic elevation, that performs the humiliation and castration of the father. Thus, we might say that the vehicles of "father-murder" or parricide are not the bulldozers in the text but (ironic) language itself, which turns against "the figure of the law."⁷²

Nevertheless, parody has an effect working against the above seen "murder" of its object. We should take into consideration the fact that however parasitical parody⁷³ may be, it also "inscribes the mocked conventions onto itself, thereby guaranteeing their continued existence." Or to put it another way, parody has a "potential power both to bury the dead . . . and also to give it new life."⁷⁴ Hence, the dead material remains, at least to some extent, alive,⁷⁵ it is "[d]ead, but still with us, still with us, but dead" (3). Thus, the textual world of *The Dead Father* is also the realm of irony and parody from the outset, in which the status of the incorporated materials (for example psychoanalytic theory) highly resemble that of the Dead Father. "Fragile, yet present" (67). They are deprived of their "organic" existence, their "authority," to attain a hollowed out subsistence, a meagre (non)existence, in which they duplicitously pretend to be alive⁷⁶ only to be "reminded" that "you're not alive . . . remember?" (175).

The dialectic of destruction and conservation which characterizes the relationship of parody and the parodied text or tradition may be described productively with the notion of the Derridean "sous rature" ("under erasure"), as the two phenomena seem to display some essential semblance. Derrida draws the idea of the concept from Heidegger, but he starts to use the notion in a slightly different way. Hereinafter, I will examine how the concept of parody can be brought into play with the two diverging though analogous notions of the "sous rature." Explaining Heidegger's concept, Derrida writes that "that mark of deletion is not . . . a 'merely negative symbol' That deletion is the final writing of an epoch. Under its strokes the presence of a transcendental signified is effaced while still remaining legible . . . is destroyed while making visible the very idea of the sign."⁷⁷ "Since the word is inaccurate it is

72. Lacan, "Function," p. 67.

73. That, of course, "is by definition always ironical" (Bényei, p. 116).

74. Hutcheon, pp. 75; 101.

75. Bényei, p. 95.

76. Bényei, p. 94.

77. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 23.

crossed out. Since it is necessary it remains legible.”⁷⁸ Thus, we might say that the condition of the word “under erasure” is, in a sense, analogous with that of the parodied text/tradition, as both of them are proclaimed to be inaccurate or exhausted and are destroyed in their metaphysical presence. On the other hand, both of them are necessary, hence they remain legible. The legibility of the parodied text is highly important in parody, as “parody is unable to function unless it ensures by textual means that the target text is properly recognized by the reader.”⁷⁹ Moreover, as we have seen earlier, neither parodying a text, nor putting a word “under erasure” can be read merely as a negative act, the conservative force is always already there besides the subversive one.

The alteration of (self-)destruction and (self-)conservation/invention may also describe the ~~parodie text~~’s relation to itself, as “by parodying a tradition the ~~parodie text~~ inevitably becomes part of the parodied tradition . . . [so] every parody is potentially a self-parody as well.”⁸⁰ Consequently, the parodic text’s irony may probably be targeted against itself at some places⁸¹ (Julie’s statement: “[Y]ou are perpetuating myths” [67] may refer to the novel itself as well), so the parodic text may also perform a “self-cancellation,” it may also put itself “under erasure.” Hereby, the *chi* of the chiasmic inversion that we have drawn upon the novel, may also signal the *chi* of “sous rature” by which the novel cancels itself signalling “its evasiveness and reluctance to commit [it]self and be present.”⁸²

Conclusion

As the psychoanalytic investigation of the novel shows, the paradoxical terms of quest and/versus anti-quest, murder and/versus rescue, life and/versus death, which can be kept apart in “normal” cases, are thoroughly intertwined in the novel. Moreover, if we rely on the (somewhat) inverse logic of psychoanalysis (according to which one can symbolically rescue and fortify his father by murdering him) we might

78. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Translator’s Preface,” in Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, ix–lxxxvii, p. xiv.

79. Bényei, p. 110.

80. Bényei, p. 92.

81. By this statement we come close to what Margaret Rose claims, who “equates parody with self-reference” (Hutcheon, p. 20), merging the concepts of meta-fiction and parody.

82. Bényei, p. 109. Or the critic puts the novel “under erasure,” signalling that she is still not a truly ironic mind, as she still has not managed to get rid of her longing for a totalizing reading.

state that a slight modification of the much quoted sentence: "Dead, but/therefore still with us, still with us, but/therefore dead" can bring us closer to the understanding of the novel.

On the other hand, examining the novel as an ironic and parodic text and establishing that the novel's textual world is the realm of irony we need to have a look at these paradoxical pairs from another, ironic standpoint. The inverse mechanism of irony makes it impossible to treat these (or any other) concepts as fixed points which can stand in an invariable, stable position to other notions. The constant play of differentiation and conformation, which characterizes irony, makes the notions of paradox and analogy irrelevant in an ironic realm.

At this point the following question arises: Is the novel really as subversive and transgressive as the above-mentioned conclusions indicate or as critics like Thomas M. Leitch or William Stott claim? Is the novel able to live up to Thomas's manifesto-like statement: "The family unit produces zombies, psychotics, and warps. . . . *In excess of what is needed*" (78)? The parodic quality of the novel, its subsisting upon a well-established and well-known "tradition" seem to indicate that it is not. Moreover, Linda Hutcheon's argument that parody is "legalized though unofficial subversion"⁸³ also seems to confirm that our suspicion is justified.

The parodic and ironic quality of the novel seem to give a twist (remaining loyal to our master trope) not only to our reading strategies but to our foregoing reading as well, and makes us reconsider the significance and relevance of it. In a sense the critic's only possible solution at this point is to put his/her reading "under erasure" as well, as it seems to be possible only this way to address a novel so much concerned with (self-)destruction and (self-)invention, with murder and rescue, with life and death. Writing criticism about such a twisting and twisted parodic text probably has to be also a constant self-cancellation and self-assertion, of affirmation and revocation, a constant revitalization and murder of one's fatherly interpretive habits.

83. Hutcheon, p. 75.

Tamás Juhász

The Dream of Sharing

Business and Community in Timothy Mo's *Sour Sweet*

This essay argues that the central motifs of debt and contractuality in Timothy Mo's *Sour Sweet* (1982) are explanatory of the characters' sense of social belonging. The novel is approached from an angle where the behaviour and the interpersonal relations of young Chinese immigrants in London reflect their uncertain positions in the available, economic and not strictly economic, exchange mechanisms. The paper demonstrates how these individuals attempt to overcome their isolation by entering into various transactions and how their sense of unrelatedness is abused and manipulated out of economic interests. The theoretical framework of the paper hinges on the economic anthropological insights of Marcel Mauss, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Karl Polanyi.

Timothy Mo's Chinatown narrative elaborates aspects of immigrant existence in the in-between territories of an ethnically heterogeneous, Western metropolis: "The Chens had been living in the UK for four years, which was long enough to have lost their place in the society from which they had emigrated but not long enough to feel comfortable in the new" (5).¹ An obvious culinary allusion in the title indicates how the rootless family intends to establish itself in an austere London. Following a period of regular employment, they launch their own business that brings them into contact with a number of groups and individuals, but in the long run, their attempts at expansion and adjustment produce mixed results. Similarly to a great deal of literature dealing with economically motivated migration, *Sour Sweet* (1982) demonstrates that the central motif of commercial engagement has obvious bearings on the characters' actions and psychological condition. The present essay will explore this linkage, and discuss the ways in which businesslike activities impact the issue of communal belonging.

1. All parenthesized references are to this edition: Timothy Mo, *Sour Sweet* (London: Paddleless Press, 1999).

When in initial search of the specifics of the Anglo-Chinese author's novelistic craft, the reader may notice that while the motif of economic need is obviously basic for similar stories of relocation and diasporal self-definition, the related communal dynamic in Mo's novel is remarkably different from the one displayed by, for example, the thematically comparable fiction of Samuel Selvon and George Lamming. In the former's *The Lonely Londoners* (1959), and in the latter's *The Pleasure of Exile* (1960), a broader as well as more elastic narrative frame accommodates the characters' actions. Inside it, the bipolarity of having a real London as well as an equally real, if romanticized, Trinidad, gives the characters an actual, if rudimentary, social footing in two places, and facilitates the pulsation of episodic, back and forth narrative presentation in the interspace. The corresponding theme of financial need is also treated in a looser fictional structure: particularly in Selvon's text, money is not only about the bare essentials, but it features as the crystallisation of some ever-elusive promise because, Georg Simmel might explain, it has to do with the much desired transformation and expansion of the self.

Sour Sweet, however, is confined to a uniformly bleak urban territory that does not permit episodic wandering. Whereas a spontaneous understanding between fellow foreigners, which includes the less settled British as well, still translates into a sense of economic solidarity – the West Indian bus conductor “regularly undercharged” the travelling family, and as did the nomadic “aitchgevees” (120) in their illicit supplies for the new restaurant – the Chens do not, as a rule, conduct any real, i.e. personally felt business with anyone outside their ethnic rank. They serve food to distant and ineffectual white Londoners expertly but almost incidentally, because the restaurant is merely an instrument to help them with a much more serious business, which is the husband's ill-advised debt to the Chinese Triad Society. Thus, a more or less legal but publicly and impersonally conducted commerce is motivated by the existence of an illegal, clandestine, and profoundly experienced bad debt. These two layers of commerce are connected in a closely-knit narrative texture, and the various controlled exchanges leave very little to the outside of their sphere. Since both the lender and the creditor inhabit a territory in almost complete isolation from host country as well as home country, Mo can tie the other narrative threads in with the pivotally important motif of borrowed money. One may argue that in his narrative design, this particular transaction becomes an epitome of diasporal existence for the following reasons.

There is the fact, for example, that the sheer structural dynamic of the loan encapsulates key events and aspirations in the displaced family's life. The Chens' move from Hong Kong to London is shortly followed by the physical transference of a

given sum from one budget to another. As the husband's original intention to return the money with an interest forms an imaginative unity with his vague desire to return to his home land one day, both acts of relocation are expected to be but temporary. Moreover, the reversal of the right to dispose over the borrowed sum interrelates with the motif of gender role reversal between husband and wife. From the very beginning, Lily shows more aptness for traditionally male activities such as martial arts, driving and fixing things around the house, while Chen assumes the customary female role of the family with his general passivity. The couple's mutual crossing of gender lines produces the same dire consequences as the reversal of the money. Though Chen comes to possess an additional, if temporary, budget and Lily also increases her dominance within her family, the outcome is not an expansion of themselves, but rather, the shrinking of their individual freedom and connectedness. Chen first goes into hiding by choosing an obscure place for business, then he is killed. Afterwards, the first, triumphant Lily comes to confront the walls of loneliness that her own philosophy of ethnic pride and isolation erected. Thus, the link between the "diasporic individual's ambiguous or unsettled national identity" and "the fiction's dramatic conflicts"² can be specifically related to the misguided opening deal – in accordance with the traditionally usurious aspect of such loans, all parties involved pay a higher price than intended.

Yet, the full significance of the credit is not to be limited to its immediate consequences and the narrative suspense that it generates. The agreement is ill-legal not only because of the criminal conditions attached to it, but also because it lacks the kind of social-jural precedents that usually govern legal procedures. Transactions, so explain a number of economic anthropological theories, can be categorized as occurring either in a state of "embeddedness" or "disembeddedness."³ The first term refers to a condition where "man's economy, as a rule, is submerged in his social relationships"⁴ and where "economic ties are [still] personalized."⁵ But during the transformation of such archaic or primitive economies into capitalist ones, the separation of personal status and economic function takes place. This new condition of disembeddedness manifests itself in, among other things, the rise of the concept of alienability. Gift-giving as the "exchange of inalienable objects" is now superseded by

2. Shirley Geok-lin Lim, *Writing South East/Asia in English: Against the Grain* (London: Skoob Books Publishing), p. 94.

3. Karl Polanyi, *Primitive, Archaic and Modern Economies: Essays of Karl Polanyi* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), p. 82.

4. Polanyi, p. 82.

5. Raymond Firth, *Elements of Social Organization* (London: Watts, 1951), p. 137.

"[c]ommodity exchange [as] an exchange of alienable objects."⁶ Transactions no longer constitute a "total social fact,"⁷ they no longer have to do with "being born into a particular kinship/ethnic group,"⁸ and "an institutionally separate and motivationally distinct economic sphere"⁹ replaces the earlier field of all-encompassing trade in which, as Marcel Mauss explicates in his seminal study on gift-giving, "[e]verything is tied together."¹⁰

Although such observations and distinctions are from the fields of sociology and anthropology, they can be taken as explanatory of much of the plot and imagery of Mo's novel. There is, for example, the first encounter between Chen and the Triad members. This scene is quite emblematic of the criminal organization's favored technique of recruitment. Purposefully, the mobsters offer their prospective members what the rootless Chinese lack so miserably: a sense of relation between exacting economic services and social connectedness. For this reason, the situation becomes clearly evocative of archaic situations of trade. Set in a restaurant, the episode might accommodate the ritual of sharing dishes and reciprocal giving and taking: Chen keeps pouring tea for the criminals during the meeting, accepts that he is required to use the address "Uncle," and as the expected financial favour is staged as a quasi gift, the victim too brings along a bag of pineapples and mangoes. In turn, the Triads take the fruit bag, introduce a family terminology despite its obvious "presumption" and "incongruity," involve the question of Chen's sick father in the one-sided conversation, refer to themselves as a "friendship association," echo the family values of respect and loyalty, and finally, disgustedly refuse to go into the details of "repayment interests . . . in front of Uncle" (72). All this is but a manipulative performance to simultaneously impress and paralyse the confused restaurant-worker. They take the mango Chen offers only to step on it, and this act will read in contrast to the cultiva-

6. Chris Gregory, "Kula Gift Exchange and Capitalist Commodity Exchange: A Comparison," in *The Kula: New Perspectives on Massim Exchange*, ed. Jerry W. Leach and Edmund Leach (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 109.

7. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, trans. James Harle Bell, John Richard von Strumer and Rodney Needham (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 52.

8. Janet Tai Landa, *Trust, Ethnicity, and Identity: Beyond the New Institutional Economics of Ethnic Trading Networks, Contract Law, and Gift-Exchange*. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 107.

9. Polanyi, p. 84.

10. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Function of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (New York: The Norton Library, 1967), p. 45.

tion of another mango in Chen and his son Maen Kee's garden, where it becomes a symbol of true social and familial alliance.

As the fruit was a gift, its crushing also epitomizes the strategically selective approach the triads have to schemes of exchange. On the one hand, they preclude any notion of reciprocity because what they give is something that the recipient can never return – Chen's embarrassment indicates his inequality throughout the situation. On the other hand, the triads borrow the logic of tribal gift-giving practices in the sense that their "gift" is not an isolable element but something that comes to have a claim on Chen's whole personality and, ultimately, on his life. And before that life is taken, in a mercifully distanced way, much narrative suspense stems from the various suggestions of the vulnerability of his family. Particularly Maen Kee is an easy target, and the reason why one day he may not return from his bus-trips to school is his unwitting involvement in his father's agreement with the Chinese mob. The Triads, who purposefully deploy archaic trading structures to impress their victims, may at any time act on the conviction that "personalities are in some manner the permanent possession of the clan [within which the] circulation of goods follows that of men, women and *children*."¹¹

These lines are from a section of Marcel Mauss's famous study *The Gift*, where potlatch, the most distilled, "typical form [of] the archaic organization of exchange"¹² is discussed. Still extant in some territories, this native Indian practice along the North Pacific Coast is remarkable for its correlating the issue of social status and a wide variety of exchange mechanisms. Consisting in a combined process of feasting, marriages, initiation ceremonies and rituals of gift-giving, the various transactions are not motivated by material need, instead, they are performed to "maintain . . . human, personal, relationships between individuals and groups."¹³ Thus, in the unfolding context of immigration and social disconnectedness, it is appropriate that Ian McEwan introduces various *potlatch*-like images in his screenplay. An early scene shows Chen and Lily's wedding ceremony, where the bridegroom can only "collect his bride"¹⁴ if he is ready to pay "Nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand dollars,"¹⁵ and Lily's father challenges the party-goers in tests of strength and courage. Though these homeland villagers no longer live in a tribal organization, their cultural reflexes

11. Mauss, p. 45. Italics added.

12. Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, trans. Robert Hurley. Vol. I. (New York: Zone Books), p. 67.

13. Mauss, Evans-Pritchard's Introduction, p. ix.

14. Ian McEwan, *Sour Sweet* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 2.

15. McEwan, p. 3.

still call for an archaic coalescing of sexual, financial and verbal exchanges on such festive occasions. Mo's ironic plot construction, however, will move Chen from this realm of metaphorical dollars to a condition where the husband – at once in debt to his parents, his wife and the Triads – is literally reduced to a monthly money order.

Before that happens, the young entrepreneur's inability to seek help is exposed. Though his trouble is, partly at least, of a legal nature, he cannot find a legal frame within which he might find some solution. According to a Roman law distinction that was elaborated on by such theorists as, for example, Bronislaw Malinowski, Max Weber and Karl Polanyi, the individual's rights and obligations are regulated by either *status* or *contractus*. While the former is "acquired by virtue of a person being born into a particular kinship/ethnic group"¹⁶ and governed by the archaic principles of "reciprocity and redistribution,"¹⁷ the latter has to do with the "legal aspect"¹⁸ of a given agreement and requires the existence of an independent, essentially commercially motivated realm of exchange.¹⁹ But neither principle is applicable in Chen's case. Though the young husband soon recognizes what kind of men his benefactors are, his attempts to manage the problem on his own are doomed from the beginning. There is no community to protect him or at least appreciate his misguided attempt to improve the family budget: throughout the end, Lily and the rest of the family never even learn what in fact happened to the vanished husband. As far as the possible protection offered by the London authorities is concerned, Lily's amused refusal to consider the legal ways of tax reduction exemplifies the couple's inability to even identify, not to mention accept, any official assistance. Thus the opening sentence of the novel can be reread as a preliminary comment on the inherent weakness of the immigrant family's business strategies: belonging to neither the U.K. (place of *contractus* types of transactions, as shown by their emphatically impersonal restaurant), nor to China (place of surviving *status* types of transactions, as shown in the grandfather's reminiscences about ritual feasting with his friends), the new restaurant owners are not likely to complete successful transactions in the long run. Mo could have added that they do not belong to Chinatown either. The isolated friendship with Mrs. Law only accentuates the Chens' lack of connectedness with the fellow immigrant Chinese, and exposes how limited and conventionalized the existing relationships of this type are. Theoretically, the sympathetic and prosperous fellow exile Mrs. Law

16. Landa, p. 107.

17. Polanyi, p. 84.

18. Polanyi, p. 84.

19. Polanyi, p. 84.

could find a settlement with the triads, but Chen, out of a sense of gender and class-related anxieties, never appeals for her help.

Thus, it becomes inevitable that the couple fall prey to the mock-version of economic embeddedness that the Hung family represents to them, and that they, in their isolation, are unable to resist. Living in a world where the everyday economic factors of their lives are completely severed from their social existence – so much so that even the protective aspects offered by modern Western institutions are not recognized – the husband cannot but accept the loan that is handed over as a so-called gift. Yet soon the gift as present becomes gift as poison, a semantic connection supported by Mo's references to Chen's required participation in drug-trafficking.

Seemingly, the family never meant to be connected with the triads, and on the level of novelistic plotting, the case is presented as a more or less accidental consequence of a malignant co-worker's interference. On another level, however, the ultimate connectedness of the two worlds is signalled. A large number of cross-references emphasize that both the non-criminal diasporal Chinese, including the Chens, are somehow allied with the Triads. Mo himself confirms the intentionality of this design:

That's what [*Sour Sweet*] was trying to do – to show how close the Chen family are to the criminals. What makes these criminal societies possible are the same values that Chinese people like to espouse. Respect for elders, the tradition of self-help, which leads to a distrust of the state . . . the fact that the family is the unit of survival, not the individual.²⁰

On one level of representation, Mo portrays this connection as a specifically Chinese feature. The motifs of rigid hierarchies, the foregrounding of male principles, ritualized communication and the endorsement of unquestioning loyalty bring not only the exilic Chen and Hung families, but also the homeland territories into the same cultural focus. Selectively as they do, Lily and the Triads keep distinct memories of the circumstances that shaped them, and through his positioning of various key images, the narrator indicates that the two families reflect not only each other but the civilization that produced them. Chen's coming into contact with the Triads is necessitated by the pan-Chinese imperative to take care of his parents under any circumstances; his mental association of one of the mobster-creditors with a "crocodile" (72) echoes Lily's exploitation in a "crocodile shoe and purse factory" (19) in

20. Kazuo Ishiguro, "In conversation with Timothy Mo," *The Fiction Magazine* (Winter 1982) 48–50, p. 49.

Hong Kong, and the mango imagery in the same episode evokes not only the Chens' own garden in England but also the dominant vegetable growth in the New Territories (163). The historically ingrained dictate of making self-sacrifices, as well as the readiness to accept it, is suggested by the framing correspondence between the money orders sent to Chen's parents by Lily, and the monthly cash sent to Lily by the Triads. Both substitute for Chen, both are welcome by their respective recipients, and as a link between the two, there is again the motif of the loan which, so protests one of the mobsters, does not come from an ordinary "money-lender" (70), but from "good Chinese people who stick together to observe the old ways" (70).

Yet, at the same time, Mo, who endows his two diasporal families with a number of obvious as well as exotic ethnic attributes, curiously denies the relevance of the Chinese setting. He claims to "know nothing about Chinese culture"²¹ and proclaims, surprisingly, that *Sour Sweet* "wasn't about Chinese people living in London"²² at all. And while his own definition of the real subject matter of his narrative is "the unity of good and evil,"²³ the reader may also recognize that the heavy contractual orientation of his plot is neither limited to the representation of historically specific Chinese immigrant life nor to its moral conditions. Instead, Mo presents the central motif of owing a deep "debt" (81) as a universal problem in the relationship of the individual and his or her community.

It is again Mauss as well as his theoretical successor, Claude Lévi-Strauss's work that can help one conceptualize the relevance of the exchange motif in the novel. As partly cited earlier, these anthropological theories address the issue of integration into a given communal formation through acts of giving and taking. Mauss's idea of archaic trade focused on "[g]ifts [that] are precisely not *objects* at all, but transactions and social relations"²⁴ and where the "[f]ailure to give or receive . . . means . . . a loss of dignity and social prestige altogether."²⁵ While Mauss was among the first to thoroughly expound on the link between trade and sociality in general terms, Lévi-Strauss's similarly oriented research and theoretical writings have resulted in the specific equation of exchange with family relations, sexual and linguistic structures.

21. Lucy Hughes-Hallett, "A singular obsession: Timothy Mo," *Vogue*, August (1986) 33–5. p. 35.

22. Elaine Yee Lin Ho, *Timothy Mo* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 12.

23. Ho, p. 12.

24. John Frow, *Time and Commodity Culture: Essays in Cultural Theory and Postmodernity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 124.

25. Mauss, p. 40.

His elementary structures of kinship can arise because an inter-tribal swapping of women can take place, and it is this transactional technique of overcoming incest that distinguishes man's cultural condition from his merely natural existence. Jacques Lacan adds that "speech . . . is in effect the original object of exchange"²⁶ and, among others, Luce Irigaray comments on how "the exchange of women as goods accompanies and stimulates exchanges of other 'wealth' among groups of men."²⁷ A transactional model can thus indeed be seen as "the basis of human society: in a sense it is the society."²⁸

Sour Sweet reproduces this anthropological stance in two ways. The changing conceptions of home that the diasporal Chens embrace is "never simple territoriality, a geopolitical space or original home,"²⁹ instead, their complicated sense of social belonging is relative to their participation in the available transactural schemes. This tendency will culminate in their moving into a building that is both their work place and permanent residence (it should be added that this motif is reminiscent of the Verloc's place in Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, another novel to relate the conditions of foreignness and contractual engagement explicitly). But already on the opening pages, when Lily and Chen are introduced, Mo's narrative concern is almost exclusively focused on the various transactions that structure his characters' days and nights. Calculations, schedules and references to money punctuate the text that contains, initially at least, hardly anything else. One learns, for instance, that Chen's "week had a certain stark simplicity about it" (5) because he worked "seventy-two hours at his restaurant" (5), that he received "spectacularly good" (6) wages and "paid reasonable rent" (5) for a home that is clearly superior to their earlier lodgings in Hong Kong. With his exhaustion and aching feet, Chen is aware that you must give and take, or, as Mo puts it, that "[m]oney came at a cost" (6) But even the remaining "forty hours with his wife and child" (5) is not exempt from this principle. When returning home at night from work, the tired restaurant-worker enters a complex exchange ritual with Lily. Having already had an "employees' dinner," Chen does not want a second meal, still his spouse prepares a hot soup for him out of "wifely duties" and does not let him have some sweets after the salty dish out of respect for the "bal-

26. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954–1955*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli, ed., Jacques-Alain Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 261.

27. Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 172.

28. Lévi-Strauss, p. 19.

29. Geok-lin Lim, p. 194.

ance [of] yin and yang" (6). "[U]ncomfortably full" and "tortured with the last extremities of thirst," Chen does not choose to confront Lily's "steely will" and "unrelenting" decree (6).

Part of the significance of this particular scene is that it interlocks with the novel's rich imagery of improper, i.e., enforced, eating and catering: Chen himself will serve the wrong dishes for "appalled" (66) customers; Western patrons are generally regarded as "non-persons" (142); the physical torture that is depicted in chapter six is related to the Triad's common practice of "restaurant squeeze" (262), and fittingly, the two great showdowns of the rival mobs take place in eateries. In a sense, these later images and episodes have their roots in this late night communication between husband and wife. The scene exemplifies, on a miniature scale, that the gesture of accepting or refusing food is indeed inseparable from broader social relations. So the culinary-material exchange of the chapter is supplemented by highly "patterned" (6) visual, sexual and verbal exchanges. Lily's behavior during the dinner is laden with expectations and conditions. Chen consumes his dinner under her "reproachful eyes," and her continuing "sidelong glances from the sofa, her knees pressed closely together," "the baby's socks" in her hands and her standard question if "Husband . . . enjoy[ed] that" (6) compellingly indicate that more than the satiation of Chen's hunger is at stake. Lily is blatantly conscious that one should not "take something for nothing" (12). Just like enhanced social presence, friendship and alliance was promised along with the gift-like, but in reality unwanted loan, the wife's full (sexual) presence is the reward of the acceptance of the "unwanted" (23) dinner.

It is the same, introductory segment, that displays the link between commonality and contractuality by, as it were, default. If acts of exchange have the capacity to generate sociality, various suggestions of the painful isolation of the immigrant self necessitate the Chens' permanent involvement in one or another type of transaction. "They were no longer missed" in their homeland, makes the very first paragraph clear, and the only way the husband is "truly remembered" by his family is if the "money order he remitted to his father every month . . . failed to arrive" (23). The situation is not much better "in the UK [where] Chen was still an interloper . . . a foreigner [and] a gatecrasher" (5). It is with the non-occurrence of visual contact, arguably the most basic form of social communication, that the narrator intimates the void in which the young husband lives his new life: "No one . . . so much as looked at him twice" (5). A sense of decay and marginality permeates the moments when the man walks "past emptying public houses" or "hear[s] bottles rolling in the gutter," and a sense of emptiness, even non-existence, arises at times of "descending silence [and] dark" (5). Whenever there is a momentary pause in Chen's interactions

with his working ambiance and immediate family, a frightening gap opens up, and no fellow Chinatown dweller can fill it.

Considering this alternative of thwarted or terminated social intercourse, another reason for the enforced aspect of the featured exchange mechanisms emerges. So far, two factors could be seen as explanatory of the kind of violence that permeates virtually all transactions in this fictional world. One was the Chinese cultural setting itself that demonstrates, in a variety of ways, how communal interests just override individual ones. As White Paper Fan puts it: the family is “greater than any individual, however high-ranking he may be. The individual is of no importance in himself, only in his office. He can be replaced” (268). Added to this ethnically defined stance was the earlier quoted, broader anthropological view of Lévi-Strauss that relates the very rise of social formations to transactions taking place between clans or tribes. If basic kinship structures are derivable from the act of “binding men together [through an] alliance governed by rule,”³⁰ then this alliance will inevitably ignore individual needs or aspirations, because it “is not established between a man and a woman . . . but between two groups of men.”³¹ Sexual politics in the novel calls for another study, but it should be noted here that Chen’s coming into contact with the Triads is not quite as accidental as it appears at first reading: his colleague, the malicious Fok prepares this trap for him because Chen disagrees with him on a story concerning prostitution (35), a traditionally enforced type of sexual exchange.

In addition, Mo’s hints at a bleak, non-social existence or death at the end of a line of diverse transactions signal yet another reason for the importance of giving and receiving. The immigrant individual, with his precarious position in his larger community, is in danger of losing all social interaction without engaging in some exchange with society. A *contract*, forceful as it may be, necessarily secures some minimum form of *contact* as well. For earlier examples, one can return to Rousseau, Henry James and particularly Conrad, but Ishiguro’s recent fiction is also demonstrative of the danger implicit in the refusal of social contract. When the central character in *When We Were Orphans*, Christopher Banks realizes that his entire social prestige and wealth is the result of some “sinful trade” he was not aware of earlier, and then, as a consequence, he begins to perceive the opening up of a “vast black space,”³² the reader may recall how, as the second part of Mo’s framing device, Lily passes “dark, empty thoroughfares” (276) only to confront the “terminat[ion of]

30. Lévi-Strauss, p. 481.

31. Lévi-Strauss, p. 115.

32. Kazuo Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2000), p. 290.

a blind brick wall" (278) in her search for Chen. With the collapse of the symbolic structure that commerce represents, the kind of silence intrudes that Lacan or his reader Žižek might associate with the Real. In the latter's words, "at the end of . . . the symbolic itinerary, we encounter the Real,"³³ where, in the former's words, one is "no longer, no longer anything, at all."³⁴

Thus, the end of the narrative sees a curious mixture of irony, decline, liberation and familial reorganization. Alternating dejected and droll effects underscore Lily's firm belief that income for her family's life is still derived, and should be derived, in what she sees as the appropriately traditional form of self-support. She sneers at the very idea of a bank loan, registers information about unemployment benefit as a sign of her sister's growing lunacy, and she gratefully acknowledges the monthly remittances that she supposes to be coming from a fugitive, but in a way still supportive Chen with the words "We Chinese know how to look after our own" (286). Her unawareness of the criminal origin of the money is brought into a final parallel with her inability to understand the social-financial logic of government benefits in general (284). Always acting on the belief that the really important agreements occur within the ranks and files of families or ethnic groups solely, the young widow fails to recognize the scope of much larger, much more impersonal deals that so obviously affect her and her family's life.

But at the same time, the shift toward less intimate transactional patterns also produces an unexpected sense of relief. The change has to do with the disappearance, or at least the diminishing, of the enforced nature of the novel's exchange mechanisms: the "tough-skinned organism [that] their family had been" is now "two cells, sharing the same territory, happily co-existing but quite autonomous" (285). As in the examples for the earlier implicit forcefulness, this tendency of loosening discipline manifests itself on the combined levels of the economic, the sexual and the verbal. Mui's rejection of an interfamilial loan shows that money is no longer to be striven for as desperately as earlier, and Lily's surprising light-heartedness during her contemplations of her husband's absence compares meaningfully to an earlier description of the two partners' otherwise good sexual relationship in terms such as "degradation" (19), "subjugat[ion]" and "dominat[ion]" – even if the conqueror used to be the wife. This imbalance is not present now, and it is lost from the two sister's communication as well. As their last dialogue exemplifies it, Lily the elder sister's

33. Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan In Hollywood and Out* (New York and London: Routledge), p. 21.

34. Jacques Lacan quoted in Žižek, p. 21.

previously undisputed superiority and leadership collapses, not to be challenged or fought against, but to be dissolved in laughter and sympathy – as the narrator puts it, the younger sister could now become “a friend, an equal” (285).

It is also the ending of the novel that treats once again the issue of immigration in explicit terms. Mui announces that she will acquire citizenship soon, because the UK is now her “home” (284). Whereas her adjustment follows the ready-made patterns of conducting business in a legal and profitable way (she and her husband will open a big fish and chip restaurant), Lily’s final settling down occurs in a quite different manner. With the vague suggestions that her own Chinese take-away may close down and she herself may become a bus driver, her future remains an unspecified one. Yet an interesting parallelism with an earlier segment of the text shows that she too begins to be “naturalized,” if only in a negative way. The reader may recall that when Lily and her husband selected a location for their new restaurant, they found an “open space, a demolition site” (76) whose desolate, already-conquered-and-left-behind quality immediately put Lily’s aggression and materialism into an ironic perspective. Situated on the same territory, the Chen’s garden resurfaces as a variant on the unsightly, deserted plot in the coda of the narrative. Lily still cuts a proud, if somewhat humbled, Asian conqueror figure, but her partial successes are undercut by the fact that her own final lot coincides with the images she used to form about the despicable English after seeing the demolition site. Disturbed by its abandoned aspect, she then concluded that English society is burdened “with loneliness and a shirking of responsibilities as well as inevitable physical extinction” (77). When she is last shown, strangely serene in her husband’s correspondingly abandoned garden, one may recognize that her homecoming, her gradual modulation towards Englishness happens along the same lines she condemned earlier: her own loneliness, Mui’s refusal of traditional Chinese responsibilities and Chen’s recent extinction.

Maeve Tynan

Mapping Roots in Derek Walcott's *Omeros*

Like most epic poetry Derek Walcott's *Omeros* concerns itself with the fate of a nation or people, in this instance 'our wide country, The Caribbean Sea.' Engaging with the epic genre, a form commonly identified as an 'imperial genre' highlights a problematic area for the postcolonial writer whose identity is necessarily 'split' or 'hybrid' as a result of the vicissitudes of colonial history. Marking an inner struggle, his troubled relationship to Western canonical texts has proved a most fruitful zone of inspiration for the poet whose own divided heritage causes him to frequently question how to choose 'between this Africa and the English tongue I love?' Seamus Heaney has made the point that Walcott has made a career out of the impossibility of choosing either. *Omeros* then, maps a program of cultural integration that has been a fundamental theme of his writing for decades. Assuming an entitlement to all the diverse cultural traditions available in the region he freely draws from African and European sources, and is irreverent in his ironic reconfigurations of mythic themes and figures. This article examines the role of the sea-swift as both transatlantic guide and as a central transcendent metaphor for cultural integration within the poem. Crossing east-west meridians the swift explores the cathartic potentiality of the journey, a trope that the poet continually invokes in his writing. For Walcott, the swift is a comfortable hybrid able to inhabit a mixed society, without forgetting the individual cultures that compose its heritage.

Derek Walcott's *Omeros*¹ is an epic poem concerned with the cathartic potentiality of the journey. This journey poem charts physical and metaphorical passages brought about by the colonial encounter and in response to it. Blending his own poetic odyssey with that of the Caribbean more generally it allows Walcott to sing of "our wide country, the Caribbean Sea" (320). *Omeros* therefore is concerned with the disparate strands that comprise a hybrid Caribbean identity and how these components interact. This concern with the fate of a nation or people is a typical feature of epic poetry

1. All parenthesised references are to this edition: Derek Walcott, *Omeros* (London: Faber & Faber, 1990).

whilst the simultaneous tracing of a more personal quest where “the ‘I’ is a mast; a desk is a raft” (291) marks a more autobiographical departure from the form. It is therefore an epic in the manner set out by Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus, who defines epic as a literary form in which the “personality of the artist passes into the narration itself, flowing round and round the persons and the action like a vital sea.”²

Marking an inner struggle, his troubled relationship to Western canonical texts has proved a most fruitful zone of inspiration for Walcott and one that highlights his own literary and personal evolution. Homeric analogies proliferate in his work and the figure of the Odyssean wanderer bears a particular significance to his conception of a Caribbean culture that has been already diasporised:

Omeros can be read as the culmination of Walcott’s life-long and continuing engagement with classic models and prefigurations for local St Lucian realities, an engagement both resolute and reluctant in its canonical implications.³

This precarious affiliation to the European literary tradition serves as a muse that Walcott simultaneously invokes and rejects throughout his writings. The poet’s tie to his other Old World heritage, that of Africa, is rendered problematic as a result. This study then, seeks to outline the manner in which postcolonial cultures create identities in response to the historical violence and rupture of a colonial past.

Walcott’s epic poem is divided into Seven Books with 64 chapters and is written in three-line stanzas. *Omeros* weaves three main strands into its narrative. The first strand on which the poem opens concerns itself with the poorer black St Lucians, in particular the fishermen Achille and Hector who are rivals for Helen, and Ma Kilman who is attempting to heal Philoctete of his wound. The second story line deals with Major Denis Plunkett and his wife Maud, and the relationship this white couple have with the island. Finally the third thread traces the ‘I’ narrator, Walcott himself, his views, attitudes and autobiography. The naming of the protagonists in the Greek tradition along with the insistent paralleling of events in their lives with classical episodes seems to invite comparison to Homeric works. The British Major and his Irish wife on the other hand point to a more recent history while Walcott’s personal narrator bridges the distance between the artist and his art. Walcott discloses his

2. Tobias Döring, “Writing Across the Meridian: Epic Echoes in Derek Walcott’s *Omeros*,” in *Caribbean-English Passages: Intertextuality in a Postcolonial Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2002), 169–202, p. 179.

3. Döring, p. 174.

own personal investment in the narrative by the intermittent collapsing of the fictitious space between the poet persona (introduced in the form of the 'I' narrator) and the poet himself:

This wound I have stitched into Plunkett's character.
He has to be wounded, affliction is one theme
of this work, this fiction, since every "I" is a
fiction finally. Phantom narrator, resume. (28)

As the above quote would suggest, many of the characters in the poem are wounded. Though manifesting in diverse ways, this wounding is recognized as being a consequence of colonization and draws no distinction between oppressors and oppressed. This essay will follow these intertwining elements of epic and autobiography that inform the composition of *Omeros*.

The journeying epic represents for Walcott his own colonial education in the Western tradition, what he might term his European inheritance. This legacy embodies a problematic for the postcolonial writer whose identity is necessarily "split" or "hybrid" as a result of the vicissitudes of colonial history. Walcott identifies this innate self-division in his 1962 poem "A Far Cry from Africa":

I who am poisoned with the blood of both,
Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?
I who have cursed
The drunken officer of British rule, how choose
Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?⁴

Themes of exile and hybridity come naturally to Walcott. His own complex heritage informs much of his work and the wellspring of his inspiration. As Seamus Heaney writes of this conflicting dual allegiance, "Africa and England beat messages along his blood."⁵

For Stuart Hall the Caribbean is the "purest diaspora,"⁶ a place where everybody comes from somewhere else. Bruce King supplements this observation by stating

4. Derek Walcott, "A Far Cry from Africa," in *Collected Poems: 1948–84* (London: Faber & Faber, 1986), 17–18, p. 18.

5. Seamus Heaney, "The Language of Exile," in *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott*, ed. Robert D. Hamner (USA: Three Continents Press, 1993), 304–309, p. 305.

6. Stuart Hall, "Negotiating Caribbean Identities," in *Postcolonial Discourses: An Anthology*, ed. Gregory Castle (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 280–293, p. 284.

that “No one is indigenous to the West Indies but they belong no where else.”⁷ One of the more interesting features of Walcott’s work is his insistence on hybridity, on being a “mulatto of style.”⁸ His work testifies to a recurrent refusal of a single, unitary identity, like Shabine, another Odyssean figure who features in Walcott’s poem “The Schooner *Flight*” and who proclaims “I had no nation now but the imagination.”⁹ Colonization in the Caribbean resulted in the forced migration of vast numbers of people from Africa under the control of four European powers. Laws introducing the emancipation of slavery led to the introduction of indentured servitude bringing Chinese and Indian workers to the region, many of whom were stranded after their contracts were reneged upon. These peoples, combined with what was left of the indigenous tribes that had been decimated by the Europeans have resulted in a Gordian knot of identity – impossible to unravel. The poet’s mixed heritage is alluded to in the character of Shabine whose background seems to mirror his own:

I’m just a red nigger who love the sea,
I had a sound colonial education,
I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me,
And either I’m nobody, or I’m a nation.¹⁰

For John Thieme the character of Shabine emerges as a “Caribbean Everyman, who is self-conscious and at the same time skeptical about his representative possibilities.”¹¹ What this entails for the poet is not a rejection of inheritance but an embracing of it, in all its forms. “This did not mean the jettisoning of ‘culture’ but, by the writer’s making creative use of his schizophrenia, an electric fusion of the old and the new.”¹²

7. Bruce King, *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 519.

8. Derek Walcott, “What the Twilight Says,” in *What the Twilight Says: Essays* (Kent: Faber and Faber, 1998 [1970]), 3–25, p. 9.

9. Derek Walcott, “The Schooner *Flight*,” in *An Anthology of African and Caribbean Writing in English*, ed. John J. Figueroa (New Hampshire: Heinemann Educational Books, 1982), 280–291, p. 283.

10. Walcott, “The Schooner *Flight*,” p. 280.

11. John Thieme, *Derek Walcott: Contemporary World Writers*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 162.

12. Walcott, “What the Twilight Says,” p. 16.

The fragmentation of traditions by colonialism does not make him bitter but rather emboldens him to take possession of the diverse cultural resources available to him. Focusing on the inequities of colonialism can only create a “literature of re-creation and despair, a literature of revenge written by the descendants of slaves or a literature of remorse written by the descendants of masters.”¹³

He therefore lays claim to the various traditions that compose his “mongrel”¹⁴ identity, maintaining that “maturity is the assimilation of the features of every ancestor.”¹⁵ Walcott’s hybridity then, is strategic, a deliberate attempt to add his signature to a long list of literary forbears. It does not follow though that he sets his own mixed heritage in opposition to an assumed purity of any other cultural form. Rather his work acknowledges that “cultures are not discreet phenomena; instead, they are always in contact with one another, and this contact leads to cultural mixed-ness.”¹⁶ Recognising that all hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or “purity” of cultures are untenable, all cultural resources are fair game. His poetic practice assumes that “representations of all cultural forms are equally derivative and therefore equally permissible.”¹⁷

However, one of the main criticisms that has been made of Walcott and his concept of a New World classicism is, that while espousing an all-embracing multicultural aesthetic, the tone of much of his earlier writing tended to emulate only European models. “The multicultural rhetoric of Walcott’s ironic New World classicism reflects this diversity promisingly, but his poetic practice relies too heavily on Western cultural resources to match that rhetoric.”¹⁸

In fact, in some of his earlier critical essays he appears to be openly hostile to African influences in the Caribbean. His attitudes show a strange contradiction at the core of his work: appropriating Western influences being seen as the claiming of a natural inheritance, the use of African models being a “spectacle of mediocre talents raising old totems”¹⁹ or a “degeneration of technique.”²⁰ This anxious denial of Afri-

13. Walcott, “The Muse of History,” in *What the Twilight Says: Essays* (Kent: Faber and Faber, 1998 [1974]), 36–64, p. 37.

14. Walcott, “What the Twilight Says,” p. 9.

15. Walcott, “The Muse of History,” p. 36.

16. David Huddart, *Homi K. Bhabha* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 7.

17. Charles W. Pollard, *New World Modernisms: T.S. Eliot, Derek Walcott, and Kamau Brathwaite* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), p. 35.

18. Pollard, p. 58.

19. Walcott, “The Muse of History,” p. 43.

20. Walcott, “The Muse of History,” p. 55.

can influence in his earlier work is perhaps not altogether surprising, given the nature of St Lucian society of his youth. Though culturally mixed, a hierarchical relationship was maintained in a society where colour gradation was a visible indication of social ranking and “such distinctions as straightness of hair were carefully observed and could form the basis of marriage and jobs.”²¹ Stuart Hall contends that “[y]ou only have to look at the Caribbean to understand how for centuries every cultural characteristic and trait has its class, colour and racial inscription.”²²

Asserting a hybrid identity entitled him to regard his assimilation of European modes as a legitimate birthright. Yet, it is not until the publication of *Omeros*, however, that Walcott can truly allege to represent his diverse heritage.

“L’hirondelle des Antilles”

In *Omeros* two journeys map the internal division of the Caribbean subject that Walcott’s “A Far Cry from Africa” outlines. In the first Achille imagines himself reversing the Middle Passage to return to Africa and to the village of his ancestors. The second sees the poet-persona, embarking on a Grand Tour of Europe under instruction from the ghost of his dead father. The swift acts as a transatlantic guide on both odysseys. On a more symbolic level the swift exemplifies the divisions created by colonial history. Forever vacillating between two cultures it resembles the predicament of dislocation inherent in a Caribbean culture:

One of the most interesting migrant figures in the text is the sea-swift which, like the Odyssean poet and Achille who *dreams* of a return to Africa, travels east-west routes across the Atlantic.²³

Thieme makes the point that the “swift occupies much the same role as Athena, Odysseus’s guiding deity in *The Odyssey*.”²⁴ Indeed there is much to support this observation. Athena operates throughout *The Odyssey* as a benevolent force within the life of the protagonist keeping him safe on his voyages and ensuring that he arrives safely home. Guardian and protector of Odysseus, moreover, Pallas Athene elects to take the hero’s loved ones under her wing giving strength and inspiration to Penelope and Telemachus at critical junctures. The goddess serves also as a plot-

21. King, p. 32.

22. Hall, p. 284.

23. Thieme, p. 185.

24. Thieme, p. 186.

propelling device, rousing characters from their apathy and spurring them on to meet their fates. Akin to her favourite Odysseus, she too is a master of disguise and frequently appears in various human forms. Significantly she appears in bird form on no less than three separate occasions in *The Odyssey*, transforming in Book 22 into a swallow.

Echoing Homeric instances Walcott's sea-swift, like the goddess, functions to bring both Achille and Walcott home after their sustained wanderings. For Walcott, it is the sea-swift, "*l'hirondelle des Antilles*" (88) that links these various quests and provides a central transcendent metaphor for cultural integration. It is the swift that can "carry the cure / that precedes every wound" (239) and return the wandering writer home to the seat of his inspiration: "slowly traveling hand / knows it returns to the port from which it must start" (291). The swift who carries the seed to St Lucia of a herb that Ma Kilman later uses to cure Philoctete of his "ancestral wound." At Maud Plunkett's funeral the swift that she had sewn into her shroud of birds of St Lucia lifts off the silk and flies into the air with "all the horned island's / birds, bitterns and herons, silently screeching there" (267). The swift thus links the lives of all the island's inhabitants regardless of their origins. As the fates of the lead-actors in Homer's verse seem propelled forward by celestial forces greater than themselves so Walcott's poetic practice seems ordained from the outset by external powers. Seven Seas informs the poet-persona in Chapter 58 that this is "why the sea-swift was sent to you: / to circle yourself and your island with this art" (291). A benevolent companion the swift pours benediction both on the poet and his art, guiding him and his creations through outward odysseys and internal migrations.

Therefore if the swift is representative of division it also operates as a symbol of unity, crossing east-west meridians and thus linking the disparate aspects of a Caribbean heritage into one coherent identity. Persistently traversing lines of longitude its journeys enact a "monumental groaning and soldering of two great worlds, like the halves of a fruit seamed by its own bitter juice."²⁵

This New World identity is a space where "each man was a nation / in himself, without mother, father, brother" (150), bereft of the crippling weight of history. King suggests that if epic poetry is a celebration of the nation and nation building than *Omeros* is a fragmented epic about a fragmented society:

Fragmented in the sense of mosaic, something composed of distinct parts, something put together from bits to make a society, nation, culture, in which the bits will show, the divisions are still there, distinctive, and are

25. Walcott, "The Muse of History," p. 64.

likely to remain so, but this is the essence of the situation, its being together and whole despite the apparent differences of which it is made.²⁶

For Walcott, the swift is a comfortable hybrid able to inhabit a mixed society, without forgetting the individual cultures that compose its heritage.

Africas of the Heart

In Book Three of *Omeros*, Achille is “lured by the swift” (130), who “touched both worlds with her rainbow...this dart of the meridian” (130), “the mind- / messenger” (131) who prompts him towards his future and his past – “for the first time, he asked himself who he was” (130). The fisherman, in his sunstroke delirium travels back to Africa and through the historic journey of the slaves’ Middle Passage to the Americas:

For Achille the swift is a transatlantic muse who prompts him to question “his name and origin” and who figuratively pulls his canoe “home” to Africa.²⁷

The sea-swift is also invested with the power of bestowing blessings, its cruciform shape in flight bestowing benediction on those who encounter it.

And God said to Achille, “Look, I giving you permission
to come home. Is I send the sea-swift as a pilot,
the swift whose wings is the sign of my crucifixion. (134)

Yet though this quest seems blessed from the outset, it does not mark a uncomplicated re-union with a ruptured tradition. Though welcomed into the village of his ancestors he finds he cannot simply be re-inserted into that society. Another potential father figure is provided in the character of Afolabe with whom he discusses the meaning of names. Here the postcolonial trauma of the loss of a language is alluded to as Achille admits that “[e]verything was forgotten” and that as Caribbeans “we yearn for a sound that is missing” (137). He sees the villagers dancing and hears their music, recognizing those aspects of culture that survived the Middle Passage, managing to maintain “an umbilical connection with the African homeland and culture”:²⁸

26. King, p. 518.

27. Pollard, p. 185.

28. Hall, p. 285.

"The same, the same." (143) He takes part in their customs but remains removed, tears filling his eyes "where the past was reflected / as well as the future." He tries to invoke the gods of the trees but they ignore his incantation. When war came he finds he cannot fight and 15 slaves are taken. He considers changing the course of history, of becoming their deliverer but, in epical fashion, his hubris pre-empts a fall. "Then a cord / of thorned vine looped his tendon, encircling the heel / with its own piercing chain. He fell hard" (148). Nature fashions her own shackles to chain those who would impede the inexorable march of history. Walcott argues here as elsewhere that the past must be accepted – it is time to move on.

To such survivors, to all the decimated tribes of the New World who did not suffer extinction, their degraded arrival must be seen as the beginning, not the end, of our history.²⁹

It is time to shirk off the weight of an all too burdensome history, the shame of a degraded past and embrace a new horizon. "[T]hey crossed, they survived. There is the epical splendour" (149).

This psychological return to Africa that Achille embarks on is overshadowed by a problem that every postcolony must face. In truth the return to a pre-colonial past is utopian. One of the main problems is that the Africa that is imagined is one that no longer exists. The roots to which the colonized direct their gaze are withered and dead. This imagined, pure, pre-colonial Africa cannot be addressed as a presence; rather it is a narrated and created absence. This spiritual quest of Achille is a quest for self-knowledge – "His name / is what he out looking for, his name and his soul" (154). However having healed a wound brought on by a colonial past, the "homesick shame / and pain of his Africa" (134), Achille must now return to his hybrid present. If Africa is a necessary port of call on a journey to self-knowledge it by no means constitutes the destination. The roots to which Achille "returns" are imagined and based on a need of the fisherman to renegotiate his identity as opposed to a firm point of origin from which this culture derived. Achille's journey therefore is into an "Africa of the heart." The artificiality of this imagined homeland is emphasized in that the scene which Achilles' delirium conjures up "was like the African movies / he had yelped at in childhood" (133). The culture he must create belongs in the future not in the past:

Silencing as well as remembering, identity is always a question of producing in the future an account of the past, that is to say it is always about narra-

29. Walcott, "The Muse of History," p. 41.

tive, the stories which cultures tell themselves about who they are and where they come from.³⁰

Achille's journey highlights Walcott's position on the formation of cultural identity: while celebrating the manifold sources of cultural inheritance, there is no going back, to Africa or anywhere else. Informed by a long held view that writes "amnesia is the true history of the New World"³¹ he contends that "cultures can only be created by this knowledge of nothing."³² The offshoot of this is his contention that cultures must be created out of this void:

Walcott recognizes that this loss of cultural origins threatens any collective sense of identity in the Caribbean; however, rather than engaging in what he sees as a futile project of cultural recovery, he claims the right to create a Caribbean cultural identity from this absence.³³

Rather than "wailing by strange waters for a lost home" the castaway must look into the future, inventing a culture from the various crates and broken vessels washed up on the shore. *Omeros* is a significant milestone in the poet's career in that it achieves a larger incorporation of African cultural sources into the poet's multicultural vision of New World classicism. However while acknowledging Africa as a potential fatherland it is also read in measured terms as being but one of the possible horizons that the New World castaway can look to for clues to the past. As Achille travels to Africa the poet persona admits that only:

Half of me was with him. One half with the midshipman
by a Dutch canal. But now, neither was happier
or unhappier than the other. (135)

If Africa provides the poet with one aspect of his cultural composition, Europe must equally provide another.

30. Hall, p. 283.

31. Walcott, "The Muse of History," p. 39.

32. Derek Walcott, "The Caribbean: Culture or Mimicry?" in *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott*, ed. Robert D. Hamner (USA: Three Continents Press, 1993[1974]), 51–57.

33. Pollard, p. 108.

“The Echo in the Throat”

The figure of the “castaway,” the “eternal wanderer” or the “fortunate traveler” recurs throughout Walcott’s literary career. The trope of the journey is repeatedly invoked in his writing to signify an evolution or an ability to cross boundaries, transcend binaries and achieve a more holistic vision. The poet relies on

[t]ropes of traveling to express how art can unite the fragments of experience to create the possibility of a transnational, interethnic, cross-cultural sense of individual and collective wholeness.³⁴

A Caribbean appropriation of Homer’s *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*, the most obvious trans-Oceanic crossing in *Omeros* involves that of the poet Homer—here reclaimed as “Omeros”—and of his epic works. Already seasoned travellers, *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* are, as George Steiner reminds us, the “two texts most frequently translated into English. Surpassing even the translations of the Bible”:³⁵

Since his very first collection of verse, *25 Poems*, Walcott has repeatedly found Homeric analogies for his Caribbean experience and virtually all his published volumes of verse to date contain references of one kind or another to *The Iliad* or *The Odyssey*.³⁶

As the above quote would suggest Derek Walcott has found resonance in the Odyssean figure to describe his own Caribbean experience. Indeed the figure of the eternal wanderer or castaway, whether an Odysseus or a Crusoe or indeed in any other form has appeared repeatedly in his poetry, drama and prose. Charles Pollard asserts that “[i]n Walcott’s New World each person is a ‘craftsman and castaway,’ a creator as well as a casualty of his or her history.”³⁷

As we shall explore later, Walcott’s odyssey shows not only an awareness of Homer’s epic but also acknowledges a debt to Joyce’s *Ulysses* in providing a literary precedent of appropriation. Returning to Homer his Greek name “Omeros” Walcott both “reclaims Homer from his assigned role at the headwaters of Western European culture” and “propounds an altogether different etymology”³⁸ for him:

34. Pollard, p. 12.

35. Quoted in Döring, p. 203.

36. Thieme, p. 151.

37. Pollard, p. 43.

38. Thieme, p. 154.

O was the conch-shell's invocation, *mer* was
 both mother and sea in our Antillean patois,
 os, a grey bone, and the white surf as it crashes. . . (14)

This move, Thieme suggests, both restores Homer's own cultural specificity as Greek, while reinventing him as a Caribbean poet. This reinvention is compounded by the conflation of the figure of "Omeros" with that of "Seven Seas" throughout the poem. In fact Walcott's Homer seems to possess a Protean capacity of metamorphosis whose identity slides between his reassigned Greek personage as Omeros, his Roman counterpart Virgil, his indigenous Caribbean counterpart Seven Seas, Walcott's close friend the St Lucian painter Dunstan St Omer, the famous American painter Winslow Homer, the African griot, a blind barge-man encountered in London. These fluid character mutations highlight the ambitious project of cultural integration that Walcott has engaged in. In effect he is actively "creolizing" canonical Western texts and their authors. As Irene Martyniuk argues:

by intertextually reformulating these original texts, Walcott finds acceptance and celebration of the post-colonial in the very stories Europeans have identified as specifically their own- their founding texts or "master narratives."³⁹

Walcott therefore freely draws from the well of the traditions that have preceded him. *Omeros* for example contains a myriad of allusions and references that include the work of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Eliot, and Joyce. Does this make the writer, as Bruce King suggests, "Telechamus in search of a literary parent?"⁴⁰

Also, if epic is, as Döring⁴¹ reminds us, an "imperial genre" that "typically sides with winners and with narrative teleology" can an epic of the Caribbean ever be written? The authors of *The Empire Writes Back* remind us that the Caribbean is the "crucible" of history as it is here that "worst features of colonialism throughout the globe" are all "combined in one region."⁴² Can this tendency of epic be merely reversed to voice the vanquished as the title of Robert Hamner's *Omeros: Epic of the*

39. Irene Martyniuk, "The Irish in the Caribbean: Derek Walcott's Examination of the Irish in *Omeros*," *The South Carolina Review: Ireland in the Arts and Humanities* 32.1 (Fall 1999) 142–148, p. 143.

40. King, p. 519.

41. Döring, p. 172.

42. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin eds., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 144.

Dispossessed would seem to suggest? Or are the genre and the actual experience inherently at odds? My reading of *Omeros* finds that for Walcott the genre is employed with a knowing nod to its own built-in obsolescence. The epic scaffolding represents the tools that the New World 'craftsman' utilizes to create something entirely new. So while "[e]pic references and meanings are first established by means of topoi, names and rhetorical strategies that render the scene on the St Lucian beach in a recognizably classical manner"⁴³ they are ultimately dismissed as "[a]ll that Greek manure under the green bananas." (271) In characteristic Walcott fashion this renunciation is itself loaded with contradictory meaning- manure it must be remembered fosters growth. If at times Walcott's ironic reconfigurations display an irreverent and light-hearted approach, at other points they suggest a more uneasy sense of self-doubt as the poet yearns to "enter that light beyond metaphor" (271):

When would the sails drop
 from my eyes, when would I not hear the Trojan War
 in two fishermen cursing in Ma Kilman's shop?
 When would my head shake off its echoes like a horse
 Shaking off a wreath of flies? When would it stop,
 The echo in the throat, insisting, "Omeros" . . . (271)

The Homeric influence here is a haunting that not only intimidates and burdens the poet but also affects his ability to perceive his present reality on its own terms, "to mark itself outside 'Greek' canonical coordinates."⁴⁴ This passage marks a point of self-chastisement where the poet chides himself for relying too heavily on the Western tradition and not being able to see his St Lucian world as it really is: "The displacement of Homeric works into Caribbean worlds is being questioned not just for its complicity with the western canon but, more fundamentally, for its constant mistaking and misnaming of St Lucian realities."⁴⁵

Walcott's fear of complicity with the colonial mission is illustrated in the poem by his providing a parallel to his poetic project of writing a Caribbean epic in his character Plunkett's historical assignment. Like Major Plunkett who has decided to write a history for St Lucia the poet too is engaged in an attempt to distill the life essence of the island in art. "So Plunkett decided that what the place needed / was its true place in history" (64) and the poet decides to "give those feet a voice" (76).

43. Döring, p. 178.

44. Döring, p. 181

45. Döring, p. 181

Plunkett's history is inspired by his attraction to his housemaid Helen. The poet's project is for his Helen – St Lucia we are told is commonly referred to as the "Helen of the West Indies." In Chapter 54 both attempts are taken to task for failing to see the wood for the trees:

there was no real need for the historian's
remorse, nor for literature's. Why not see Helen

as the sun saw her, with no Homeric shadow,
swinging her plastic sandals on that beach alone,
as fresh as the sea-wind? (271)

This section of the poem calls the integrity of the entire project into question. The poet challenges himself for failing to celebrate his island for its own inherent worth, its "green simplicities" (187). Self-doubt is rife as Walcott assesses the ethical dimensions of his poetic tribute to the island:

The last third of *Omeros* is deconstructive, anti-myth, anti-metaphor, as both Plunkett and the narrator are found to be wrong. Joyce is the model because he is an Irish realist and an Irish internationalist (beyond nationalism), who created his race from daily life without mythic inflation.⁴⁶

However, this doubt is assuaged somewhat at the end of the chapter as Walcott accepts that his inherited forms of expression are his only means to express his island experience and therefore possess a lived validity. "[I]t was mine to make what I wanted of it, or / what I thought was wanted" (272). In other writings he compounds this assertion: "The language I used did not bother me. I had given it, and it was irretrievably given; I could no more give it back than they could claim it."⁴⁷

In Chapter 56 the poet-persona in conversation with Omeros makes clear that he has never read *The Odyssey* in its entirety: " 'I never read it,' / I said. 'Not all the way through' " (283). Whether or not this statement is true, it is telling of the anxiety of the poet that his work be seen only in the light of derivative influence. Such assertions mark Walcott's sustained commitment to create "a Caribbean world of parallel status and originality with little sense of vicarious dependence on Homer."⁴⁸ Walcott's work therefore illustrates both a sustained engagement with and a firm disavowal of the European literary tradition in the Caribbean. He achieves this through

46. King, p. 517.

47. Walcott, "The Muse of History," p. 63.

48. Thieme, p. 153.

a process that simultaneously “reverses and honours” (68) the tradition that has proceeded him. “This poetic practice both ‘reverses and honours’ the past, the pun on *reverses* (both a rewriting and a redirecting) suggesting his resistance to the past and the word *honours* conveying his indebtedness to it.”⁴⁹

As readers we are advised to be alert to this process in the writing of Walcott lest we mistakenly take the myriad of allusions and references to European literature and culture as a sycophantic mimetic gesture. Pollard reminds us “[f]or Walcott, an allusion is never tantamount to an endorsement.”⁵⁰ Walcott freely and ironically reconfigures Western influences because he is entitled to. If it is in Europe that he finds his “multiple epic father-figures” his poetic project links them into a “literary genealogy whose lines he transfers to the New World.”⁵¹ His practice therefore deliberately smashes such simplistic binaries as colonizer and colonized. This deconstructive technique of highlighting opposing positions only to reveal their inter-relatedness is characteristic of Walcott. King rightly contends that his “life and work were to be marked by the creative coexistence of antagonistic opposites.”⁵²

Prompted by the ghost of his father and accompanied by the swift, the “I” narrator sets off on his own Grand Tour of Europe. He is under instruction to ‘enter cities / that open like *The World’s Classics*’ but “[o]nce you have seen everywhere and gone everywhere, / cherish our island for its green simplicities, / enthrone yourself” (187). To travel beyond his island home is a necessary journey for the poet if he is to better represent it. From Boston, he travels to Lisbon and London, and then on to Dublin. This Irish visit is particularly significant as it is here that he encounters James Joyce in a pub by the Liffey, praising him as “our age’s Omeros, undimmed Master / and true tenor of the place! . . . I blest myself in his voice” (200). Acknowledging a debt of inspiration Walcott generously proclaims “Mr Joyce / led us all” (201) but significantly if it is the “gaunt, // cane-twisting flaneur” (200) who leads in song he is accompanied by Maud Plunkett, a character created by Walcott in *Omeros*. Thus Walcott both honours Joyce and declares his right to alter the tune. The interaction between fictive, actual and historical figures throughout the poem highlight the fluidity of Walcott’s conception of identity and indeed the fictive nature of all identities.

49. Pollard, p. 153.

50. Pollard, p. 82.

51. Döring, p. 184.

52. King, p. 34.

Integration

Arrival in the New World marks not an ending, but a new beginning, the start of a new journey, a point of departure. This new beginning will only take place when the evils of colonialism are first acknowledged, and then passed over. As the poet states in the first section of the poem, “affliction is one theme / of this work” (28), and *Omeros* is a poem where all the characters, colonizer and colonized alike, are forced to bear the wounds inflicted by colonialism. These afflictions need to be dealt with and although the scars may never fade, Walcott promotes a cleansing forgiveness for his characters to allow the pain to wash away. Cultural integration is for Walcott the mode in which the wounds created by colonialism begin to heal. As the poet dissolves his own life into the narrative of the poem so his work seeks to dissolve the diverse cultural ties of the peoples of the Caribbean into a broader Caribbean that simultaneously embraces its own hybridity. This is a hybridity that celebrates the permutations and fluctuations of an all-inclusive but never homogeneous self. As mentioned previously the swift, forever vacillating between cultures, yet remaining true to the disparate cultures that compose its heritage embodies this process. This inclusive vision of a Caribbean identity is marked by that fact that almost all the characters in the poem are wounded. Like the characters and “I” narrator of *Omeros*, the poem charts a movement from affliction to cure: “We shall all heal” (319).

Then Philoctete

waved “Morning” to me from far, and I waved back;
we shared the one wound, the same cure. (295)

If colonialism is the common experience in the New World, uniting Caribbean peoples, Africans, Europeans and Asians it is time to conceive the world anew. Walcott envisions “the great poets of the New World” whose “vision of man in the New World is Adamic” (37). Walcott’s *Omeros* characterizes a tribute to both inheritance and re-invention answering his own question posed in “A Far Cry from Africa” by *not* choosing “[b]etween this Africa and the English tongue I love.”⁵³ As Heaney reminds us “[h]e did neither, but made a theme of the choice and the impossibility of choosing.”⁵⁴ This self-described “mulatto of style”⁵⁵ chooses not to privilege one inheri-

53. Walcott, “A Far Cry from Africa,” p. 18.

54. Heaney, p. 305.

55. Walcott, “What the Twilight Says,” p 9.

tance over another: “so that mongrel as I am, something prickles in me when I see the word ‘Ashanti’ as with the word ‘Warwickshire,’ both separately intimating my grandfather’s roots, both baptising this neither proud nor ashamed bastard, this hybrid, this West Indian.”⁵⁶

This essay has focused solely on the African and European aspects of Caribbean identity. It is clear that Walcott’s odysseys, both poetic and literal envisage a broader inclusiveness. In an essay he read on accepting the Nobel Prize for literature Derek Walcott writes:

Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than the love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. The glue that fits the pieces is the sealing of its original shape. It is such a love that reassembles our African and Asiatic fragments, the cracked heirlooms whose restoration shows its white scars.⁵⁷

It is clear that Walcott is aiming to achieve a wholeness of identity, though one that acknowledges a fractured past. In this speech Walcott freely admits that he has not yet managed to integrate all the diverse cultural resources available: “I am only one-eighth the writer I might have been had I contained all the fragmented languages of Trinidad.”⁵⁸ However Walcott’s vase metaphor remains somewhat problematic in its implications that the original vase, being whole and untainted might be thought to imply a notion of culture as originally pure. Thus the cultures that existed prior to the colonial experience and subsequent transformations maintain a hierarchical relationship to the hybrid cultures that emerged. However the fact that “the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than the love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole”⁵⁹ would seem to counteract this potential hierarchy. *Omeros* testifies to a strong commitment to cross-cultural inclusion: “[T]he mirror of History / has melted and, beneath it, a patient, hybrid organism // grows in his cruciform shadow” (297).

This marks the development of Walcott’s own writing: his earlier writing tended to concern itself with division and oppositions, his later aesthetic moves towards resolution and wholeness. As Walcott’s narrator tells:

56. Walcott, “What the Twilight Says,” p. 9.

57. Derek Walcott, “The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory,” in *What the Twilight Says: Essays* (Kent: Faber & Faber, 1998 [1992]), 65–84, p. 69.

58. Walcott, “The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory,” p. 69.

59. Walcott, “The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory,” p. 69.

MAEVE TYNAN

I followed a sea-swift to both sides of this text;
her hyphen stitched its seam, like the interlocking
basins of a globe. . .

One, the New
World, made exactly like the Old, halves of one brain. (319)

While celebrating his 'Old Worlds' of Europe and Africa, Walcott finds, ultimately, there is no place like home – "the place held all I need of paradise" (320).

Senayon S. Olaoluwa

Another Tale of Two Cities

Protesting Globalization in Odia Ofeimun's *London Letter and Other Poems*

Globalization is unequivocal about the centrality of the image of the cities to the accomplishment of its mission. Whether from London to New York, or from the Asian Tigers to Lagos and Johannesburg, the image of cities looms large in such a way that suggests how the conceptual agenda harks back to history, reminding us of the roles of various cities as veritable sites of operation for the previous Euro-American imperialist activities. However, the current postmodern agenda not only implicates the cities but also critically operates in such a manner which creates a split between them. This paper seeks to study *London Letter and Other Poems*, a poetry collection by Nigeria's Odia Ofeimun, as a direct response to the challenge of globalization. It seeks to explore how the work contextualizes the experience of Lagos migrants in a global city like London, and the challenge these Lagosians face in this place as against Lagos, their non-global city of nativity. Specifically, the paper examines the contradictions and odds against the operation of globalization besides the fact that it impoverishes some cities to enrich others in terms of financial and human resources.

Literature, the City, and Globalization

In the enigmatic evolution of the city in modern times, perhaps one of the major literary attempts to capture its attraction and wonder is to be found in the 19th-century *Mysteries of Paris* by Eugene Sue.¹ The success of this publication in 1845 was evident in the readership it enjoyed and how this resulted in the publication of other similar works on the city of Paris and other cities as centers of human gravity. However, this pioneer effort of Sue also inspired an alternative focus on the structure

1. See David Frisby, "The City Detected," in *Cityscapes of Modernity* (Cambridge & Malden: Polity Press & Blackwell, 2001), 52–99, p. 53.

and operation of the city in which it was not spared the focus on its shadows. It is this fact that gives credibility to the understanding that writing has always been concomitant with the evolution of cities.²

Certainly, one feature of the city at all times – whether the pre-industrial city, the earliest of which, according to Sjöberg, dates back to 3500BP in Mesopotamia,³ or the (post)modern city – is the defining trope of immense productivity in a way that contrasts with what goes on in the rural areas. But from the foregoing, another thing that is evident is the freedom to hold opinions on the constitution and operation of the city. It is this that in turn accounts, ironically, for both its admiration and denigration. Regarding the opinions held about the city, it is important to subscribe to the notion that “positioning” is crucial to whatever view anyone holds about the subject in focus; also related to this is the prospect of the impossibility of ruling out the application of reversal theory.⁴ Put differently, the foregoing position allows for a presentation of the city in terms of an object under perception, and to do this effectively, Vincent Hope in his essay, “The Perception of Space” (in *Spaces and Crossings*) explains that

to perceive an object properly is *to be able to be able* [sic] to control one’s position or posture by the spatial relation of the object to one’s body. To perceive the spatial relation between objects is to perceive where the objects individually are and to be able to be able to [sic] control one’s position simultaneously by the different positions of the objects.⁵

2. Illustrating the close relationship between the evolution of the city and writing, Richard Maxwell cites Levis-Strauss’ explication on this time-honoured joint evolution: “the only phenomenon with which writing has always been concomitant is the creation of cities and empires, that is, the integration of large members of individuals into political system, and their grading into castes or class” (Frisby, *Cityscapes of Modernity*, p. 53).

3. See David Thorns, “Industrial-Modern Cities,” in *The Transformation of Cities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 13–40, p. 13.

4. In psychology, both positioning and reversal theories are reconciled by the fact that whatever stance is maintained at one point or the other about a subject becomes automatically specified for others who may subsequently go ahead to assimilate, resist or reinfect it in their own reactions to the same issue. This view holds much water for the various perceptions of the world cities by world writers as it does for the perceptions of globalization – see Margaret Wetherell, “Paranoia, Ambivalence, and Discursive Practices: Concepts of Position and Positioning in Psychoanalysis and Discursive Psychology,” Rom Harre and Fathali Moghaddam ed., *The Self and Others* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2003), 99–120, p. 99.

5. Vincent Hope, “The Perception of Space,” in *Spaces and Crossings* (New York and Oxford: Peter Lang, 2001), 19–25, p. 24.

In the delineation of the city, therefore, the location of the perceiver himself is also crucial. Some colonial writings of various kinds, for instance, present European cities in forms that reflect the passionate nationalism of these writers. Taking Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* for illustration, one sees an evident celebration of London as geo-symbolically represented by River Thames in its ceaseless and glistening flow as against River Congo, whose navigatory treasures have been seriously depleted by the oil-sprained and almost stagnant condition. However, when one turns to Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure* as a textual reaction of the colonized, the depiction of Paris becomes that of an unfeeling city to which the colonized of the Third World move and end up being alienated and disillusioned to the extent of not attaining their desired goals. This view finds pertinence in the expatriatory circumstance of the central character, Samba Diallo.

The application of positioning and reversal theories is instructive for the understanding of the postmodern cities as it is for the apprehension of globalization. The invention of globalization in the present fashion⁶ – which implies that we must take seriously the view that globalization is not a new phenomenon – is necessitated by the transmutation of the mode of production from being industrial-based to information-based. This said transmutation is mediated through the various media networks that have become crucial, if not inviolate in the bid to link peoples of different parts of the world at the same time. In technical terms, this present mode of production is often explained in terms of a transition from Fordism to flexible production in which case global markets are created and maintained through the operations of such organizations as World Trade Organisation (WTO), the World Bank, among others.⁷ It has further increased the ubiquity and preeminence of the Multi-National Companies (MNC) as they register and assert their presence across countries and especially in the cities. It is in the light of this that the increasing frequency and flexibility of border and border crossing can be understood. Explaining the development in relation to the cities and the states, Saskia Sassen in "The Impact of the New Technologies and Globalization on the Cities" (in *Race, Identity, and Citizenship*) writes:

6. In a carefully drawn tabulation, illustrates further the transformation of the modern age of Fordism in which world economy was "industrial-manufacturing-based" into a postmodern age defined essentially by a flexibility that turns world economy into an information-dependent one and further resulting in transnationality. See David Thorns, "Global Cities," in *The Transformation of Cities*, 68–95, p. 71.

7. See Ankie Hoogvelt, "Africa: Exclusion and the Containment of Anarchy," in *Globalisation and the Postcolonial World* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 162–181, p. 166.

In the past cities were centres for imperial administration and international trade. Today they are transnational spaces for business and finance where firms and governments from many different countries can transact with each other, increasingly bypassing the firms of the host country.⁸

The above appears to be a leveling of world cities. But in actuality, the operation of globalization has resulted in the dialectic categorization and polarization of world cities into global and non-global. Invariably, the capital and human pull to the cities in the present age can be regarded as one-sided – the one in which the Third World cities are discriminated against as non-global cities. Clarifying further this fact about the conceptual agenda, Sassen sees it as a contradictory space which is constantly defined by contestation and border crossings, a condition of which the city is emblematic.⁹ The implication of a situation like this is the construction of the credentials and prospects of globalization as a transmuted imperialist strategy of the First World and in which there is a productive dispersal of both labor and capital from the Third World cities for the enhancement of and advancement of the wealth and position of First World cities. The relationship of the two worlds, therefore, still remains that of the core-periphery interaction.¹⁰

With the establishment of this of relationship, the recourse to the cities occasions the inauguration of discourse and counter-discourse as expected within the understanding of postmodernism. Odi Ofeimun's *London Letter and other Poems*, therefore, fits into this category. In other words, the streaks of controversies and contradictions in which globalization is strewn confer on it the lot of a contested space. And as hinted earlier, in the layout of the city, there is always an abiding interest of literature, serving on the one hand, as intervention; and on the other, making a necessary intrusion upon the space of the city structure in which it is not impossible to see a textualized reflection of the link between two cities or more.¹¹ It is

8. Saskia Sassen, "The Impact of the New Technologies and Globalization on the Cities," in *Race, Identity, and Citizenship*, ed. Rodolfo Terres et al (Berlin: Blackwell, 2003), 355–372, p. 360.

9. Sassen, p. 362.

10. See Peter Dicken; *Global Shift: Reshaping the Global Economic Map in the 21st Century* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE, 2004), p. 9.

11. Citing Michael Butor, David Coughlan illustrates the function of literature in relation to the city in the essay, "The Space of the Novel": "the impression is different as the text becomes a link between two city spaces and the jolt is not as great;" [now quoting Butor], "In my own city . . . many other cities are present, by all kinds of mediation," see David Coughlan, "Situating Intertextuality: Networks, Borders and the Space of Literature," in Rita Wilson and Car-

not therefore out of textual character that this collection forges a link, of a critical kind, between the cities of Lagos and London.

In the taxonomic categorization of cities into global and non-global, the relationship between Lagos and London becomes that of contradistinction. This is so because the former, though one of the foremost in Africa, has come under the buffeting of the various strategies of exclusion to which non-global cities of the Third World have been subjected. Putting this succinctly, Hoogvelt says further:

The present transformation of the global economy reduces many parts of the Third World to a position of “structural irrelevance.” But this is not to say that in the period of transformation itself those parts of the Third World do not have a function: between 1982 and 1990, creditor nations received \$1345 billion in debt service, most of it coming from the heavily indebted nations of Africa. . . Structural irrelevance is the outcome of this process of accelerated pillage under debt-peonage.¹²

The issue of debt service to which Africa has been subjected in an unending way, has resulted in the pauperization of her cities, Lagos included. The enormity of this makes the fact of “structural irrelevance” a matter of double truth. For, not only is the non-global West African city irrelevant – except when serving as a receptacle for transferring capital to the core of global cities – in terms of its poor relation to the global city of London, it is also irrelevant in terms of the crumbling socio-political and infrastructural system that defines it. This situation goes further to illustrate the contradictory insincerity of globalization. It is even the more so when its invention in the present fashion as a conceptual agenda is vulnerable to the projection of the intention of the location biases of its western proponents. For, as Cacciari reminds us in *The Necessary Angel*, “Truth is the death of intention; any theory that wants to reduce truth to the ambit of international relation is destined to miss ‘the peculiar giving of itself of truth from which any kind of intention remains withdrawn.’ In reality, therefore, this conception betrays only an ignorance of the problem of representation.”¹³ The truth of globalization despite the enthusiasm of the “hyperglobalists” is, for that matter, fun-

lotta von Maltzan ed., *Cultural and Literary Criticism: Spaces and Crossings* (New York and Oxford: Peter Lang, 2001), 73–86, p. 55.

12. Hoogvelt, p. 162.

13. See Carlos Vidal “Globalization or Endless Fragmentation? Through the Shadow of Contradictions,” in *Over Here: International Perspectives on Art and Culture*, ed. Gerald Mosquera and Jean Fisher (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 2004), 26–46 p. 39.

damentally flawed as it is hardly divorced from the imperialist intentions of the West which aspire to the attainment of “the end of geography.” The agenda is normally propagated in a manner that attempts to neutralize the sovereignty of the nation-states, especially of the Third World. It thus looks forward to an anticipated result in which the major sources of the First World capitals’ wealth – that is, the Third World, which have continually been consigned to poverty in the capitalist scheme of things – will further be undermined. The concealment of truth, which is also tantamount to the divorce from truth in relation to the representation of globalization, justifies the assertion that globalization is capable of breeding contradictions to the extent of engendering anarchy. The preparation for this anarchy is evident in the increasing “maximization of national capabilities.” Otherwise, as Gilpin warns, globalization is historically predicated on the ideological prejudices of dominant states, the practice of which is unsympathetic to narratives of the already dispossessed or the potentially dispossessed.¹⁴ The powers of its callous contradictions are projected in the readiness of the disposed to seek further dispossession in the migration to the capital centers in the First World.

At Home in Lagos

Ofeimun’s engagement of this socio-political and economic crisis is, therefore, what one encounters first in this collection, yet not without some sense of hope and nationalism as the segment, “My City by the Lagoon” opens. In “Lagoon,” he writes:

I let the lagoon speak for my memory
though offended by water hyacinth
waste and night soil. . .
I still let the lagoon reclaim
the seduction of a land moving
with the desire of a sailing ship
pursuing a known star.¹⁵

Like most coastal cities and settlements, the place of the maritime phenomenon of the lagoon in the history of Lagos cannot be over-emphasized. For the lagoon has always been there from time immemorial. It was indeed a witness to the pre-history

14. See McGrew “A Global Society?” in *Modernity and its Futures*, ed. Stuart Hall et al (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 61–80, p. 84.

15. All parenthesised references are to Odua Ofeimun’s *London Letter and Other Poems* (Lagos: Hornbill of Arts, 2000), p. 3.

of Lagos and when this island was founded in the pre-colonial time by the Yoruba bounded by the Egun of Badagry to the south, the lagoon must have played an active role as a collaborator and facilitator of movement, migration and settlement. In the various political and succession crises between the ruling families of Akitoye and Kosoko, and the intrigues of installation, dethronement, exile, reinstatement and war, there was no way the lagoon could have been excluded. As the British colonial government cashed in on the situation of succession crises to colonize Lagos in 1961¹⁶ after the abolition of Slave Trade – which was, to say the least, an abolition of convenience – the lagoon played roles that were beyond the navigatory. So, by arousing the lagoon’s sense of history which straddles both the pre-colonial and the colonial on the one hand, and on the other, the independence and post-independence, there is an acknowledgment of the visceral link between the fate of the city and the lagoon.¹⁷ In its unrivalled position as a witness to history, it then becomes clear why at the close of the 20th century, when western imperialist strategies had taken their toll on the city both physically and otherwise, the agelessness of the lagoon as a natural phenomenon to which the fate of the city is tied, becomes a compelling choice of weaving yet another narrative around the city. It explains why the lagoon occupies the place of a privileged and sustained motif throughout the collection. This choice of the lagoon as a veritable custodian of Lagos memory, and by implication that of the entire nation is further justified in the position of Richard Terdiman on the perception of memory in his book *Present Past: Modernity and the Crisis of Memory*:

But “memory” is so omnipresent, so fundamental to our ability to conceive the world that it might seem impossible to analyze it at all. Memory stabi-

16. As from the 1830s, Lagos was caught in the web of succession crisis which came to a head during the tussle between Akitoye and Kosoko. It was characterized by a scenario of alternation between enthronement and dethronement as well as reinstatement. By 1851, however, the British had succeeded through their military might in reinstating Akitoye who, unlike his nephew Kosoko, agreed to sign a treaty putting an end to slave trade. But beyond this apparently humanitarian intervention of the British was the undercurrent of imperialism as a decade after, specifically in August 1861, “under the guns of H.M.S. *Prometheus* anchored in the lagoon, Oba Dosumu agreed to cede his kingdom to the British.” This would mark the beginning of the rapid and systematic colonization of the rest of the southern and northern parts of the Niger – see Robert Smith, *Kingdoms of the Yoruba* (London: Methuen, 1969), pp. 170–172.

17. For, Lagos being the first part of Nigeria to be colonized by the British naturally became the colonial capital of Nigeria and for many years after independence until the early 1990s when the seat of central power was moved to Abuja.

lizes subjects and constitutes the present. It is the name we give to the faculty that sustains continuity in collective and individual experience. Our evidence for it may not be as direct as Freud's evidence for the unconscious, but it is an essential postulate in our attempt to explain how the world remains minimally coherent, how existence doesn't simply fly apart. Memory functions in every act of perception, in every act of intellection, in every act of language. So even framing the question one might ask about memory is difficult. For in framing these questions, we might as well attempt to see vision.¹⁸

So, it is for this omnipresent nature of the lagoon that the poet-persona declares, "I let the lagoon speak for my memory." Despite the natural interference of "water hyacinth' which constitutes a challenge to navigation, besides the human pollution of "night soil," and which is also an obvious social criticism of the neglect of the amenities for good sewage system by the government and other private sectors and individuals concerned, in turning to the lagoon, the possibility of "vision" becomes evident. This is so as the movement of the lagoon is akin to the aspiration of the "city by the lagoon" itself, whose ambition is demonstrated in "pursuing a known star." The pursuit no doubt is the strong will exhibited by a non-global city to attain productive relevance and compete favorably with any other city that has become a known star – whether London or New York or Tokyo.

In an extension of the aspiration of the city, despite the daunting challenges, it remains undaunted. Rather, for it, the present becomes an interface between history and the future:

The lagoon speaks
like a foetus remembering the future.
listening from the depths of formlessness song
for the Words that break
against the voyages of discovery
in the discovery of voyages.¹⁹

Here is a postcolonial attempt to relive the process of colonization and the tension that was bred and contained between the British or the entire western exploration of the city and the natives who naturally stood to resist, no matter how feebly, and their posterity charged with the responsibility of contesting such narratives of discovery.

18. Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Crisis of Memory* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 8.

19. Ofeimun, *London Letter*, p. 3.

The picture painted of Lagos in this segment is understandably panoramic. Understandably panoramic because memory, what Terdiman will further call the “present past” is an agglomeration of various previous experiences woven into the fabric of the present. This explains why in “Demolition Day” Maroko comes to the picture.²⁰ In the demolition of this slum, thousands of people in the category of “the wretched of the earth” were rendered homeless just by one act of military decree. The foregoing attests to the position of Jean Franco in his essay, “Beyond Ethnocentrism: Gender, Power, and the Third-World Intelligentsia” (in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*) that the language of domination and dispossession has often been “semanticized” along sexual lines by constructing power in masculinity.²¹ It then begins to add up why the image of suffering is often cast in the feminine mode. So, a woman becomes the symbol of the Maroko demolition victimhood without any prospect of resettlement or compensation:

Face to face with the demolition squad,
she wept, a wet rag trembling
against the drone of bulldozers. . .

She knelt, dry leaf against iron hoofs
among the forgotten of Lagos,
the homeless of Maroko, wishing
the Lord would nod at her withered hands
stretched pleadingly towards the law-mighty
epaulettes glinting with a merry stamp
towards her vale of sad wire.

20. A little well over a decade ago, a military dictatorship ordered the demolition of a popular slum on the far side of Victoria Island. The manner of the sudden dispossession was so grim and lacking in human face that in the words of Ofeimun himself in a recent review, “it was promptly memorialized across Nigerian literature” – from Soyinka to J. P. Clark-Bekederemo, to Ogaga Ifowodo to Maik Nwosu. In fact, these works, including Ofeimun’s contribution on the demolition in this collection, he suggests rather appropriately, can as well be regarded as *Maroko corpus* today, and find parallel in such literary response as Jorge Amado’s to the insatiate slum clearance of his country, or South African writing’s memorial on the demolition of District Six during apartheid. See Ofeimun “Daring Visions: *Invisible Chapters* by Maik Nwosu,” in *English in Africa* 32, 1 (May 2005) 135–41, p. 137.

21. Jean Franco, “Beyond Ethnocentrism: Gender, Power, and the Third-World Intelligentsia,” in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg ed., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 503–515, p. 503.

She wept, a wet rag trembling against
gruff indifference and glee-toothed power –
the snarl of antlers and implacable mortars
rolling the earth over her Carthage
over her world of cardboard and decayed zinc
over wishes, tired bones, her Maroko
escaping from the throes of History.²²

One thing to which one is uncomfortably held spell-bound in the above is the extremism of domination and dispossession. The victim, having been stripped of all access to good living, has suffered a callous diminution which is interpreted in her reduction to “a wet rag trembling” or “a dry leaf.” It will be no exaggeration, therefore, to see her as representing the living dead which the establishment has made of these people, the sealing of which is their final expulsion from their ‘world of cardboard and decayed zinc.’ But the sadism and impunity of the government of the day are brought to the fore in the abhorrently gleeful acts of the demolition as exemplified by the uniformed agents whose agenda of human and environmental vandalism raises a very serious existentialist question in the sense that even “the Lord” could not grant her wish to avert the demolition.

By the time “Self-Portrait of a Lagosian” is brought to focus, Maroko, having been replaced by “flashy skyscrapers,” becomes for the victim of the demolition a tantalizing scene with its expected elusiveness:

You, you traveled to your old Maroko of the mind
before the Slum Clearance Act overcame the seething swamps
with futurist architecture; you met the friend
that you have always been to yourself who wore his knowledge
of your rise and fall with the finality of a fatwa.²³

The victim, having been thus eternally denied his old Maroko, is now haplessly left with a self-consolatory pastime of engagement in an autistic travel during which some surrealistic satisfaction is attained by having “a feast.”

There is no doubt that this is a testimony against the totalitarian tyranny of military regimes in Nigeria. The promulgation of their various decrees and proscription of all forms of civil and rightful organizations and movements justifiably critical of their aberration were some of the most trying moments of the country’s travail. It

22. Ofeimun, *London Letter*, p. 6.

23. Ofeimun, *London Letter*, p. 7.

was an era which spanned more than half of the nation's independence history until 1999. This class of the military, defined essentially by an abiding pathology for political opportunism and adventurism, in its successive interruption of civil regimes, acted true to type when viewed against Leo Tolstoy's observation on its vulnerability:

Military service always corrupts a man, placing him in conditions of complete idleness, that is, absence of all intelligent and useful work, and liberating him from the common obligations of humanity, for which it substitutes conventional considerations like the honour of the regiment, the uniform and the flag, and, on the one hand, investing him with unlimited power over men, and on the other, demanding slavish subjection to superior officers.²⁴

But in all this, part of the Third World discontent against globalization is evident in the fact that the destructive authoritarianism of most of these regimes were known in some cases to have been openly sponsored by western nations.²⁵

In "Eko – my city by the lagoon," one encounters a more comprehensive panoramic version of the features of the city of Lagos. And to achieve this successfully, there is again a gendering of the city; after all, whether in matters of honor or dishonor, women stand to represent the collectivity of a nation,²⁶ and in this case, one may add the collectivity of the city. The features in themselves reveal a continual implosive contestation between binarisms such as poverty and wealth, hunger and satisfaction, with a tilting imbalance of the overwhelming treacherous impact of the unfavorable. The situation may not be surprising as globalization in the reality of its operation sanctions exclusionary and inclusionary strategies which, according to David Held in his essay, "Globalization, Stratification and Inequality" (in *Global Covenant*), "makes the gulf between the empowered and the disempowered harder to bridge."²⁷ And for cities that are not favored in this polarization, there can only be a readiness to be content with the socio-economic and cultural manipulations of "the empowered" other.

So cast in the mould of a woman, "my city by the lagoon" begins:

24. Cited in Udentia Udentia, "Art and Ideology in the Period of Re-colonization: The Revolutionary Aesthetic Imperative," in *Art, Ideology and Social Commitment in African Poetry* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1996), 91–122 p. 101.

25. See Hoogvelt, p. 172.

26. See Nira Yuval-Davis, "Ethnicity, Gender Relations and Multiculturalism," in Rodolfo Terres et al. ed., *Race, Identity, and Citizenship* (Berlin: Blackwell, 2003) 112–125, p. 114.

27. David Held, "Globalization, Stratification and Inequality," in *Global Covenant* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 34–54, p. 45.

A woman to love whose beauty hides
in tantrums and shredded decorum;
she breaks the combs that hold her braids
from bursting into a scream for help
she curses the lagoon and the wayward sea
and the glinting hour of shopping First Ladies
who tighten her lockjaw of traffic
with outriders streaming from hell.²⁸

Such overbearing flamboyance of the “First Lady,” representative of the ruling class, contrasts sharply with “malarious mangroves” that are also abode to some other categories of the city denizens. Subsequently, there is the reference to the “commerce of pain” and the “zinc shack kingdoms in joyless dancing / angling for living room in the hugging spaces / under hooves of marching skyscrapers.” This obvious instance of the gentrification of the city of Lagos accentuates the veracity of such assertion as the unprecedented social inequality and exclusion experienced in the last decades of the 20th century being a result of global changes to cities.²⁹

It is therefore no surprise when in the last stanza of the poem the effects of the negative aspects of the city are compared with the act of “drowning.” But hard as the city fights against this drowning by striving heroically with an unmistakable patriotic nationalism “to outshine the moon,” “and cure polluted lagoons,” her denizens seem to be incurably caught in a fever of disillusionment which finds collusion in the delirious yarn of the borders “for exiles.” The reason for this is perhaps best explained in the words of Dilys Hill (in *Citizens and Urban Policy*):

The effects of global economic restructuring are evident in changes to labour markets. . . . The changes have affected employment, migration, household formation and housing. The results have a polarization both within cities and between cities.³⁰

Besides, it needs to be clarified that the above is just an aspect of the consuming mementoes of the questionable concentration of the world’s wealth in the hands of a few nations, leaving the majority of the rest of Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin

28. Ofeimun, *London Letter*, p. 9.

29. See David Thorns, “Urban Social Inequality and Social Exclusion,” in *The Transformation of the Cities*, 149–177, p. 175.

30. *Citizens and Cities: Urban Policy in the 1990s* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p. 246.

America to wallow in abject poverty.³¹ The situation creates at the same time a post-modern simulacrum which necessitates the valorization of the *surfaces* of the cities of these few nations, hiding as it were, their *depths* which are nothing but the wealth of the poor nations. Needless to say, such shift of attention from the depths to the surfaces thus explains significantly why the changes that have affected employment and migration are along one way traffic which forces citizens of the Third World into moving helplessly towards the First World nations. They do this in search of the wealth of their own nations from which they have been, ironically, alienated. Worse still, there is usually no guarantee for any better living for such immigrants because of the attendant oppositions to the nature of their spatial dispersal, the result of which is usually the devaluation of their status. This often contrasts sharply with the enhancement and preservation of privileges that define the status of citizens of the First World nations when they engage in such migration to the South, a dispersal experience which, in any case, they rarely have.

Dispersed to London

Naturally, it is this inequality “between cities” that lures citizens of non-global cities to the global cities, just as from “my city by the lagoon” the collection transits segmentally to “London Letter.” It must be admitted that here is a textualization of migration from Lagos to London where globalization in its western bias seems to have created a utopia of London with a pull of attraction for the citizens of the city of Lagos. Again, this textual transitional route from Lagos to London cannot be wholly surprising given the special historical link of colonialism between the two cities. London – having served as the colonial mother-city and capital to Lagos from the second half of the 19th century up to the second half of the 20th century – emerges in the consciousness of Lagos as a collaborator and hostess, of a kind, in the period of hardship.³² So, exiles, armed with this kind of false impression, naturally commence a march to London. Yet, it was during this colonial period, it can be argued, that the foundation of the dichotomy between the two cities was laid. One was the colonizer, while the other was the colonized. For the British myth of modernizing and civilizing the colonies of Africa – which was akin

31. Hetata cited in Julian Murphet “Postmodernism and Space,” in Steven Connor ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 116–135, p. 128.

32. Throughout the era of British colonization of Nigeria, Lagos citizens were privileged to carry special British passports with benefits that other citizens of the colony did not enjoy.

to that of the French vulgate and political prophylactics, and other forms of colonization – the undercurrent of gaining economic advantage over the colonies was underscored by the systematic depredation of the colonies' wealth and resources. Needless to say, it was in a bid to ensure an advancement of the precursory imperialist stage of slavery. Nevertheless, the postcolonial Lagos, because of the apparently unique link with London, may be content with the illusion of finding reception from the latter. It is an assumption that has its antecedent in the spirit that moved West Indians of British colonization to London in the 1950s, the frustrating impact of which is best illustrated in Samuel Selvon's *Lonely Londoners*. The reality of antagonism then, as of now, remains alarmingly constant, undermining and exploding at the same time the invention and proposition of globalization that otherwise appears to confer world citizenship on every willing individual that is prepared to subscribe to migrancy.

It will suffice at this juncture to take a look at "London Letter I," a poem divided into seven parts:

Na London we dey. Pooling vast memories
across the Atlantic, we witness
the red bus careering towards Marble Arch
so free from the swarm and crush of Lagos
the sweet journey turned to a fiasco
fiercer than the wars of democracy

we dey for London, spoiling our best wishes
in strands of rueful remembrance – *the god*
of bolekajas packing bins upon human cattle
to redress crowded busstops;
ah! we pitch for undergrounds haunted to delirium
by highlife numbers only a Lagosian can hear
in the snakes and ladders of the mind
Seducing Big Ben to dance "*na so so enjoyment.*"³³

In the pidgin, "*Na London we dey,*" or "*we dey for London*" (We are in London, or we have arrived in London), we encounter a conscious announcement of the movement of the sight of battle of the cities from Lagos to London. However, for all the excitement which stems from the arrival, the memory of Lagos remains inalienable from the migrant minds. They may have found "Marble Arch / so free from the swarm and crush of Lagos," but the success of this finding is seriously inverted and

33. Ofeimun, *London Letter*, p. 14.

shadowed by the fact that they are now confronted with a counter-reality which makes the thought of Lagos a “rueful remembrance.”

In the second part of this eponymous poem, the critical and discerning perception of the persona shatters the myth of utopia constructed around London; for just as there can be found “in my city by the lagoon / generations under bridges and rampant flyovers / there are also in Thatcher’s ‘clockwork orange’ natives as hopeless as truth at Hyde Park.” This goes without saying that the continual refrain of “*na so so enjoyment*” (it is so much of enjoyment) is, at its best, sarcastic. There is an extension of the commentary on the decadence of the city of London in the third part of the poem. In a way, this exposes the insincerity of the hyper-reality which the media, as an integral part of the project of globalization, create about the cities of the First World. They consciously in their movies shield the vulnerabilities of such cities to make effective their magnetic pull from the Third World. But having arrived in London, it becomes clear to these migrant characters that London is also of “filth, sick city falling / artlessly begging my city by the lagoon.” Also owing to the overarching nuances of capitalism, the dignity of labour may have been seriously compromised as the developments in Peckham and Brixton are not different from those in Mushin and Aguda of “shuffering and shmiling” fame.³⁴

By the time we are in “London Letter IV,” the argument of the invention of globalization no longer holds water. Memory again becomes compelling as the migrants review the oil boom wealth of their nation and cannot make out why the “surplus value / of hope” has become “raised to the brim of vomitorium.”³⁵

34. This parodied allusion calls to mind the Nigerian legend of Afro Beat Music, Late Fela-Anikulapo-Kuti, who in one of his tracks, “Shuffering and Shmiling” analyzed the collective psyche of the Nigerian suffering masses as the one that lacks the gravitas to confront and dethrone the oppressive hegemony of the ruling class, preferring to adopt a quietism through which their suffering contrasts curiously with their smiles. He elaborated on this view further in one of his interviews granted in the late 80s entitled “Animal Can’t Dash Me Human Rights” – See Jack Mapanje ed., *Gathering Seaweed: African Prison Writing* (Heinemann, 2002), 313–316, p 315.

35. It will be recalled that the first time Nigeria was wheedled into obtaining a World Bank loan in the 1970s, she actually had no cause for it because of the buoyancy of the economy mainly attributable to crude oil boom. Yet, the West succeeded with the rationale that it was necessary for Nigeria to obtain the loan as she was, technically speaking, “under borrowed.” This would subsequently result in the inclusion of the country in the long list of World Bank and IMF debtors of the 70s and 80s. Needless to say, the travail of debt servicing coupled with the compulsion of paying back has since paralyzed the economies of most of these Third World Nations while the facilitators of such loans of the Western nations have continued to

The question of race, identity and nativity in the First World has been found to constantly undermine any form of global knowledge of welfarism. It explains why the migrants in the end find themselves again on the rueful path “against [the] loony chatters ringing: *‘Nigger go home / there is no black in the Union Jack.’*” It is significant to note that this part of the poem is not only quoted, but also italicized to illustrate the double emphasis on the question of racial prejudice within the western psyche and as an albatross to the achievement of common human progress on a global scale. This was true of history in the middle ages as it was on the threshold of the 20th century, and may remain an issue in the 21st century so long as the precisions of science can be enlisted in a service of compromise to indulge the sentiment of white racism. Howard Winant in the contribution, “Difference and Inequality: Postmodern Racial Politics in the United States” (in *Racism, the City and the State*) is unambiguous about this when he puts in perspective what can be termed the unfortunate historiography and dynamic of race:

We may be more afflicted with anxiety and uncertainty over race than we are over any other social or political issue. Time and time again, what has been defined as ‘the race problem’ has generated ferocious antagonism: between slaves and masters, between natives and settlers, between new immigrants and established residents, and between workers divided by wage discrimination. Time and time again, this problem has been declared resolved, or perhaps supplanted by other supposedly more fundamental conflicts, only to blaze up anew.³⁶

The implicit ordering of the difference in terms of race overwhelms every other consideration of globalization and consolidates the myth of the racial *other*. This ordering of difference, as Foucault reminds us, permeates every form of knowledge and explains why the presence of black immigrants is often considered suspect, to the extent of exclusionary extremities. And with this kind of knowledge, it is not surprising that the present form of imperialism which makes people willingly leave the city of Lagos for London sucks in the African content without leaving anything behind. So, in V and VI, the western capitalist basis on which the structures of global-

make extremely profiteering gains – See Peter Abrahams, “In the Jaws of Debt,” in *The Black Experience in the 20th Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 296–307, p. 299.

36. Howard Winant, “Difference and Inequality: Postmodern Racial Politics in the United States,” in Malcolm Cross and Michael Keith ed., *Racism, the City and the State* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 108–127, p. 108.

ization rest is exposed as the migrants, despite their repetition of “*so so enjoyment, / pay as we pee or peel.*” The consumerist bias of globalization underscores this fact. Further, there is a revelation that in this “tale of two cities,” there is a rhythm between the levels of decadence that pervades infrastructural systems in London and Lagos. Yet, these black immigrants must be subjected to the most basal and degrading of undertakings to earn a living in London:

in this city of many navels and absent centres
see my countrymen sing *owambe*³⁷ to the garbage can
knowing that the pound yields no stink at dusk
after the sweat of day returns to Thames.³⁸

The issue of gentrification highlighted earlier comes up here again as in London there are found “prostrate denizens, lying low” and consigned to knowing “London from the heap-bottom of highlilife.” All this goes to show why the seventh and last part of the segment rivets on the double tragedy of these migrants from Lagos. Their movement from their homeland was occasioned by a sense of alienation engendered by the folly and decadence of governance and infrastructural system that fails to deliver on comfort; coupled with this was the need to be reconciled with the native wealth already swept to the city of London. However, they have ended up in London where the aggregation of all this, in addition to unfavorable temperate weather as well as the racial question mediated through capitalist operations, has left them more confused and traumatically alienated, having no place they can actually call theirs:

Like them who sang “Lagos, na so so enjoyment,”
we dey for London like we no dey at all’
dreading the winter like the old woman in nights
without firewood to hold harmattans at bay
we dey for London like we no dey at all
chewing cud in the birth of freedom as tragedy
a used up hope mocking the human condition
on both sides of the Atlantic: Na so so enjoyment.³⁹

37. *Owambe* refers to the musical pop brand played and enjoyed mostly among the Yoruba-speaking people of Nigeria, South-West.

38. Ofeimun, *London Letter*, p. 19.

39. Ofeimun, *London Letter*, p. 20.

The repetition of “*we dey for London like we no dey at all*” (we are in London as though we were not at all) explodes with a tone of finality the rarefied proposition of globalization. It is, after all, in the context of this work, a “mocking of the human condition,” in which the migrant citizens of the Third World have been most hit.

Conclusion

It invariably implies that to the Third World cities, globalization remains a space of contestation; for even where there is a convergence between Lagos and London, it is only to the extent of decadent similarity. Otherwise, the postmodern simulacrum has only led to a double devaluation of the condition of these citizens of Lagos across spaces, making them, ultimately, victims of an advanced imperial strategy. Therefore, rather than forging a collaborative and dialogic alliance of cities for the purpose of mutual progress, Lagos and London in this case have laid out as two cities in conflictual contestation emanating from the potency of the North-South binarism. And with the tableau of Lagos’ travails of resource dispersal as against the manner of London’s resource pull, globalization, assessed against this backdrop, emerges, even at its best, as a concept that is as suspect as it is contradictory. Therefore, as the formulae of the new economic cartography emerge in their discounting of the primacy of distinct and individual geographies for the purpose of executing a project of planetization, there seems to be little hope for the Third World cities. For in the envisaged consolidation of the New World Order, one sees from a more sober and reflective angle, like Richard Helgerson, not only the “the folly of [such] maps and modernity,”⁴⁰ but also, one dare add, the folly of the present construction of geography and the tyranny of the management of its postmodern space.

40. See “The Folly of Maps and Modernity,” in Andrew Gordon and Bernhard Klein ed., *Literature, Mapping and the Politics of Space in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 241–262, p. 241.

Károly Pintér

The Meaning of 31 Words

The Pledge of Allegiance and Its Interpretations

In my essay, a case study of civil religion, I propose to examine both the history and evolution of the Pledge of Allegiance and the ultimate decision of the Supreme Court in terms of its constitutionality, as well as the remarkable dissents, using the famous notion of Robert N. Bellah. The Pledge case reveals the controversial legal as well as public attitudes towards the role of religion in American public life, especially the growing gulf between the predominantly separationist interpretation of the Establishment Clause by the Court since World War II, on the one hand, and the continuing strong role of religion in American public life, on the other.

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

This is the official text millions of schoolchildren in thousands of schools throughout the United States are required to recite at the beginning of every school-day while standing at attention, looking at the American flag, and placing their right hand over their heart.¹ For the majority of Americans, the Pledge of Allegiance is arguably the

1. In the 1940s, members of the Jehovah's Witnesses denomination challenged the compulsory character of the Pledge of Allegiance at court, claiming that their children should not be required to recite the oath on freedom of conscience grounds. The Supreme Court first ruled against the Witnesses in 1940, then reversed its decision in 1943, forbidding public schools to require the recitation of the Pledge or punish children for refusing to do so (*West Virginia Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U. S. 624 [1943]). Nonetheless, the practice remained widespread, but most of these requirements have been turned into 'recommendations': in a 2002 textbook for elementary-school children, the above requirements are listed with the following comment: "Things you *can* do while saying the pledge" (Bill Martin, Jr. – Michael Sampson, *I Pledge Allegiance: The Pledge of Allegiance, with Commentary* [Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2002], p. 15, my emphasis).

best-known verbal expression of their patriotism, a succinct and lofty summary of the fundamental values of the US as represented by the national flag. As a result of being repeated thousands of times by millions of young people all over the country during their elementary school career, the words have practically acquired the status of a secular prayer, a near-sacred text resonant with the wisdom of the Founding Fathers, conveying a powerful statement about the United States with the overtones of self-evident truth.

My intention in this essay is to interpret the veneration of the flag in general and the Pledge of Allegiance in particular as an integral part of the American civil religion, a concept introduced by Robert N. Bellah in 1967. In his essay, which subsequently generated a great deal of scholarly controversy, Bellah asked the following pertinent question *apropos* the inauguration speech of J. F. Kennedy:

Considering the separation of church and state, how is a president justified in using the word *God* at all? The answer is that the separation of church and state has not denied the political realm a religious dimension. Although matters of personal religious belief, worship, and association are considered to be strictly private affairs, there are, at the same time, certain common elements of religious orientation that the great majority of Americans share. These have played a crucial role in the development of American institutions and still provide a religious dimension for the whole fabric of American life, including the political sphere. This public religious dimension is expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals that I am calling the American civil religion.²

Bellah went on to identify several elements of this civil religion, beginning with the inauguration ceremony itself, which resembles a consecration of a high priest. Bellah examined all the inauguration speeches of the Presidents up to 1967 and found that all but one of them (Washington's very brief second inaugural address) mentioned or alluded to God, while none of them referred to Jesus Christ.³ This is used by Bellah as evidence that the 'God' invoked at public political ceremonies is not

2. Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," in *American Civil Religion*, eds. Russell E. Richey – Donald G. Jones (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 21–44, p. 24.

3. Bellah, p. 28. Bellah also observes that Presidents belonging to the generation of the Founding Fathers consistently avoid mentioning the word 'God' in their inaugural speeches, preferring such phrases as "Almighty Being," "Invisible Hand," "Providence," or "Infinite Power." It is only in the second inaugural speech of President James Monroe in 1821 that the phrase "Almighty God" is first uttered (Bellah, p. 42n3).

identical with the God of Christianity, neither is it simply an Enlightenment idea of an aloof Deity, since “he is actively interested and involved in history, with a special concern for America.”⁴ The rhetoric of the Founding Fathers and other contemporaries established an analogy between America and the Israel of the Old Testament, on which Washington, like a latter-day Moses, led his people out of captivity and into the promised land.⁵ From this analogy, the idea that the United States and its newly founded republican institutions enjoy divine favour and legitimacy naturally follows. The same divine legitimacy is invoked in the Declaration of Independence, which claims that the ‘inalienable rights’ of each man originate from their Creator.⁶

Bellah takes pains to emphasize that the civil religion is not merely a substitute for Christianity in the constitutional context of the separation of church and state: it is rather a system of beliefs and symbols that serves to justify the legitimacy of the new nation, express a national identity and destiny, and “mobilize support for the attainment of national goals.”⁷ It is also more than mere nationalism; in Bellah’s words, it is “a genuine apprehension of universal and transcendent religious reality as seen in or . . . as revealed through the experience of the American people.”⁸

The American civil religion soon developed its rudimentary theology: its most sacred event was of course the Revolution as an act of liberation and the making of a new covenant, namely the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, which in turn acquired a quasi-holy status. The creators of these documents, the Founding Fathers, became the patriarchs or saints of the young nation, and Independence Day as well as Thanksgiving Day – proclaimed as a national holiday in Washington’s first presidential year at the request of both houses of Congress to express the nation’s gratitude for God’s special favours to the US⁹ – became its first ritual celebrations.

4. Bellah, p. 28.

5. Bellah, pp. 28–29.

6. Perhaps the first person to identify the divine legitimacy invoked in the Declaration was British author G. K. Chesterton, who wrote that “America is the only nation in the world that is founded on creed. That creed is set forth with dogmatic and even theological lucidity in the Declaration of Independence. . . . it clearly names the Creator as the ultimate authority from whom these equal rights are derived” (quoted in Sidney E. Mead, “The ‘Nation with the Soul of a Church,’” in *American Civil Religion*, ed. Russell E. Richey – Donald G. Jones [New York: Harper & Row, 1974], 45–63, p. 45).

7. Bellah, p. 35.

8. Bellah, p. 29.

9. Robert L. Cord, *Separation of Church and State: Historical Fact and Current Fiction* (New York: Lambeth Press, 1982), pp. 51–52.

The Civil War added a new dimension to the civil religion, as it painfully constrained the nation to reflect upon its own fundamental principles. These reflections were summarized in a classic form by Lincoln's second inaugural address and Gettysburg address, which added to the Old Testament themes of exodus and new covenant the New Testament themes of sacrifice, death and rebirth, subsequently symbolized by Lincoln's personal martyrdom. The ritual calendar was completed by Memorial Day and the birthday of Washington and Lincoln, the two greatest figures in the national pantheon.¹⁰

In his first essay, Bellah does not carry on his analysis further than the Civil War, and does not discuss other rituals of national civil religion, most importantly the cult surrounding the national flag, probably because it is post-Civil War in origin. But he does make a passing reference to the public school system "as a particularly important context for the cultic celebration of the civil rituals,"¹¹ and his conceptual framework offers a suitable background for the examination of the Pledge of Allegiance, perhaps the most widespread daily ritual in the American civil religion.

The Origin of the Pledge

Despite the appearance of being sanctified by centuries of history, the Pledge is actually little more than one hundred years old: it was composed by a certain Francis Bellamy, staff editor of a popular family magazine in Boston called *The Youth's Companion*, in 1892.

Bellamy's text was not the first pledge of allegiance practiced in public schools. The practice of taking an oath of loyalty to the flag of the United States probably originated during the Civil War and the Reconstruction as one way of reinforcing the dubious political faithfulness of teachers in Southern states. The practice was first popularized in public schools by George T. Balch, a Civil War veteran and member of the Grand Army of the Republic, a patriotic organization formed after the War. Balch, who was working as an auditor for the New York City Board of Education, published a book entitled *Methods for Teaching Patriotism in the Public Schools* in 1890, in which he propagated the use of the flag as a fundamental symbol of patriotic loyalty.¹² The Balch salute was practiced the following way:

10. Bellah, pp. 30–33.

11. Bellah, p. 33.

12. Cecilia Elizabeth O'Leary, *To Die For. The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 151–152.

students touched first their foreheads, then their hearts, reciting, "We give our Heads – and our Hearts – to God and our Country." Then with a right arm outstretched and palms down in the direction of the flag, they completed the salute: "One Country! One Language! One Flag!"¹³

Balch's efforts were part of a larger movement, unfolding in the 1880s, to instill a sense of American patriotism into the new masses of immigrants that were flooding the country in increasing numbers in the late 19th century. The zealous patriots recognized that education of immigrant children promises the best results for a campaign of nationalist indoctrination. Balch followed up his first publication with other books, including *A Patriotic Primer for the Little Citizen*, which educated children about patriotic values through questions and answers. One such answer defined the aim of the public school as "To train us in such habits of behavior as will best fit us to become GOOD MEMBERS OF CIVIL SOCIETY and PATRIOTIC AMERICANS."¹⁴ Practices recommended by Balch combined "religious fervor and military discipline":¹⁵ adoration of symbolic objects by observing strictly choreographed rituals which were expected to impress the youthful mind. His program was an instant success: by 1893, more than 6,000 children in 21 schools of New York City saluted the flag daily, and on Washington's birthday the same year, 20,000 Native American children saluted the flag in the federal government's Indian Schools.¹⁶

The flag salute movement received a huge impetus from *The Youth's Companion*, a popular weekly family magazine published in Boston, which had more than 400,000 subscribers in 1887, making it one of the most widely read weeklies in the country. The *Companion*, under the chief editorship of owner Daniel Ford, successfully marketed itself as an entertaining magazine with high moral standards that published articles both for children and adults, ranging from short news bits to long stories and essays, some of them written by Mark Twain, Bret Harte, O. Henry, Emily Dickinson, William James, Theodore Roosevelt, and others.¹⁷

The magazine had considerable readership among public school teachers, and in about 1888, it espoused the campaign, initiated by the Grand Army of the Re-

13. John W. Baer, *Questions and Answers* [about the Pledge of Allegiance], October 7, 2003, A.1 <<http://pledgeqanda.com>>.

14. Quoted in O'Leary, p. 152.

15. O'Leary, p. 153.

16. O'Leary, pp. 154–155.

17. John W. Baer, *The Pledge of Allegiance: A Centennial History, 1892–1992* (Annapolis, Md: Free State Press, 1992), Ch. 2. Online version: <<http://history.vineyard.net/pledge.htm>>.

public,¹⁸ to raise the US flag over every schoolhouse in America as part of the great task of assimilating immigrant children. Previously, the flag had not been routinely displayed anywhere except on ships and in military installations. The idea came from the head of the magazine's premium department (the equivalent of a modern manager of advertising), James Upham, who most probably saw in it a unique opportunity to promote a good patriotic cause while increasing sales and profits.¹⁹

The magazine soon embarked on an unceasing propaganda campaign for the flag: besides a torrent of articles, it sponsored a national essay contest on the topic, publishing the winning entries, and also launched an advertising campaign for selling US flags "of every size, shape and price, including a pocket size flag with a carrying case," selling about 25,000 to public schools alone in one single year, 1891.²⁰ The *Companion* also lobbied for adoption of flag laws nationwide, and as a result, most states passed such laws by 1905 except in the South, where enthusiasm for the federal flag was lacking for obvious reasons.²¹ The enthusiastic response from teachers, students and families nationwide increased the number of subscribers to 560,000 by 1892, providing a healthy profit from the sale of patriotism.²²

For 1892, Congress authorized the organization of a World's Columbian Fair in Chicago to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of the voyage of Columbus. Upham very skilfully allied his own campaign with the national event, and in 1891 came up with the idea of a National Public School Celebration centering around the raising of the US flag and reciting a flag salute, which was officially incorporated into the program of the Fair and embraced by several nationwide organizations, such as the National Education Association.²³

The management of the campaign of the Public School Celebration was entrusted to one of the *Companion's* editors, Francis Bellamy. Bellamy was a novice

18. The GAR declared their aim at the 23rd National Encampment in 1889 the following way: "Let the children learn to look upon the American flag 'By angels' hands to valor given,' with as much reverence as did the Israelites look upon the ark of the covenant" (O'Leary, p. 151).

19. Baer, *The Pledge*, ch.2.

20. Baer, *The Pledge*, ch.2.

21. Baer, *The Pledge*, ch.2.

22. O'Leary, p. 157. The circulation figure provided by O'Leary – who cites Louise Harris: *Flag over the Schoolhouse* (1971) as source – is contradicted by Baer, who claims that circulation did not reach the half-million mark until 1898 but cites no source (Baer, *The Pledge*, Ch. 2). But essentially, the two figures reflect the same tendency: the magazine's circulation was continuously growing, lifted by the tide of patriotic enthusiasm.

23. Baer, *The Pledge*, ch.2.

at the magazine, having worked for more than a decade as a Baptist minister in Boston, but he was forced to resign his position in 1891 when the conservative businessmen who supported the congregation threatened to withdraw their support due to Bellamy's preaching of the doctrines of Christian Socialism from the pulpit. The owner of the *Companion*, Daniel Ford, who attended Bellamy's church and sympathized with the 'Social Gospel' he argued for, invited him to work for the magazine.²⁴

Bellamy's ideas were considerably shaped by his cousin, Edward Bellamy, who published his famous Socialist utopian novel, *Looking Back*, in 1888. Both people were ardent nationalists who deeply believed in the great potential of the United States as well as the ideas enshrined in the Constitution, but criticized the spirit of industrial capitalism and the resulting urban poverty as contrary to the spirit of universal human brotherhood. When Francis graduated from the University of Rochester in 1876, he delivered a speech in which he praised the slogan of the French Revolution – liberty, equality, fraternity – as the best expression of the universal aspirations of man. He saw no contradiction between them and the essential values of Christianity.²⁵

The nationwide propaganda campaign supervised by Upham and Bellamy was highly successful: they managed to gain the support of General John Palmer, commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, former President and current candidate Grover Cleveland as well as future president Theodore Roosevelt. Influential politician Henry Cabot Lodge secured a meeting for Bellamy with current President Benjamin Harrison, who gave his official endorsement to the Celebration.²⁶ As a result of the intense lobbying, the two houses of Congress passed a joint resolution on June 29, 1892, authorizing the president to proclaim Columbus Day a national public-school holiday. In a Presidential Proclamation dated July 21, 1892, Harrison ordered the public celebration of Columbus Day on October 21st, 1892:

Columbus stood in his age as the pioneer of progress and enlightenment. The system of universal education is in our age the most prominent and salutary feature of the spirit of enlightenment, and it is peculiarly appropriate that the schools be made by the people the center of the day's demonstration. Let the National Flag float over every school house in the

24. Baer, *The Pledge*, ch.4.

25. Baer, *The Pledge*, ch.4.

26. O'Leary, p. 165.

country, and the exercises of such as shall impress upon our youth the patriotic duties of American citizenship.²⁷

Upham and Bellamy co-operated in drafting the program for the local celebrations: it started by reading out the Presidential Proclamation, followed by the raising of the flag by Civil War veterans and saluted by schoolchildren. The program continued with the “acknowledgement of God” in the form of prayer or a reading from the Scripture, and a special address entitled “The Meaning of Four Centuries,” written by Bellamy, in which he exalted the American public school as one of the outstanding institutions of the nation, disseminating the fundamental values of the Founding Fathers: “America, therefore, gathers her sons around the schoolhouse today as the institution closest to the people, most characteristic of the people, and fullest of hope for the people.”²⁸ The celebration was supposed to end with individual speeches and patriotic songs.

Upham also asked Bellamy to compose a fitting salute to the flag in August 1892. The text he eventually came up with was the following: *I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all*. In his own recollection, the first part of the sentence occurred to him first as an echo of the Civil War, in which people fought valiantly for the Union, represented by the US flag. The word ‘allegiance’ was probably suggested by the ‘oaths of allegiance’ former Confederate soldiers and officials were required to swear in order to get their political rights back. The “one nation indivisible” phrase is also a clear reference to the bloody struggle whose veterans and memories were still very much alive at the time. The final part was meant as a summary of the fundamental values of the nation: Bellamy claimed to have been tempted to insert some form of the great slogan of the French Revolution but realized that the officials of the Celebration would not accept such a radical declaration, therefore he settled for the phrase “with liberty and justice for all,” in which ‘liberty’ and ‘justice’ had a respectable pedigree, appearing in the Preamble to the US Constitution. The allusion for the more controversial third ideal, ‘equality’, was, according to Bellamy, hidden in the concluding “for all.”²⁹

The Pledge was published in the September 8th issue of the *Companion* as part of the Official Program of the Celebration. The program and its individual parts, including the Pledge, appeared anonymously, in line with the magazine’s policy of

27. Baer, *The Pledge*, ch.4.

28. Baer, *The Pledge*, ch.4.

29. Baer, *The Pledge*, “A Short History”; O’Leary, p. 161.

not signing articles written by staff members. This fact subsequently gave rise to a dispute over authorship in the 1939, when the United States Flag Association set up a three-member scholarly committee to arbitrate over competing claims of authorship between Bellamy and Upham's family. The committee unanimously decided in favour of Bellamy.³⁰

On October 21, 1892, the official opening day of the Columbian Exhibition, millions of schoolchildren took part in "the first nationally orchestrated day devoted to raising and saluting the flag."³¹ After four years of intense campaigning, more than 100,000 public schools had raised the US flag over their buildings, and Columbus Day signalled the beginning of a nationwide campaign to turn general education into a program for Americanization.

The Evolution of the Pledge

As I have endeavoured to sketch up above, the Pledge of Allegiance was a product of a larger movement unfolding in the late 19th century that can be seen as a deliberate and self-conscious effort to extend the meaning and the influence of the civil religion. The traumatic experience of the Civil War has provoked a national soul-searching (at least outside the South), and resulted in a significant transformation of the civil religion as formulated by the Founding Fathers. The primary fear of the generation that fought the War of Independence was a tyrannical government (either foreign or domestic), therefore they drafted a Constitution whose central concern was to carefully limit the powers of the federal government and prevent the dominance of any branch. This issue remained in the focus of political struggles in the first half of the 19th century, as both Jefferson's Republican Party and Jackson's Democrats championed the cause of the smallest possible federal government, and the maximum autonomy of member states.

The Civil War, however, had proven that the states-right doctrine could easily provide justification for the break-up of the Union, and the fierceness of Southern opposition to the United States dismayed Northern patriots. The primary threat against the prosperity of the nation was seen no longer in an all-too-powerful federal government, but in potential divisions within the nation. The Pledge of Allegiance was created as part of a response to what many saw as an urgent need for new, unify-

30. "The Story of the Pledge of Allegiance," September 1, 2003 <<http://www.flagday.org/Pages/StoryofPledge.html>>.

31. O'Leary, p. 168.

ing patriotic symbols and rituals. The inclusion of the flag among the sacred symbols of the nation was a very important step to provide the masses with an accessible and instantly recognizable emblem of civil religion. In the speech Bellamy wrote for the local celebrations, he very skillfully utilized the occasion of Columbus Day, the 400th anniversary of the discovery of ‘the promised land,’ to celebrate the public school as the very fulfillment of the promise made by the Founding Fathers in the Declaration of Independence (while his rhetoric, with the repetition of phrases ending with ‘the people,’ deliberately echoed the wording of the Gettysburg Address). The Pledge provided the words for the celebration of the national flag as an emblem of the very same promise, and this liturgy has proven very successful in the following decades, quickly becoming an integral part of the civil religion as practiced in public schools all over the country.

It is important to note, however, that Bellamy’s version of the Pledge was not identical with the version used today: most importantly, it did not contain any reference to God. Despite being a Protestant clergyman by training, Bellamy was a firm believer in the constitutional separation of church and state, and did not wish to insert any explicitly religious reference in an essentially secular oath intended for public schools.³²

Bellamy’s original text was subsequently modified three times, each time inserting more words into the sentence. Twice, in 1923 and 1924, the First National Flag Conference held in Washington, D.C., under the leadership of the American Legion and the Daughters of the American Revolution, proposed emendations in order to ‘clarify’ the reference to the flag. Members of these patriotic organizations were concerned that the phrase “my flag” may be misinterpreted by immigrant children as the flag of their original home country, and, in order to eliminate any potential ambiguity, they replaced these two words with the phrase “the flag of the United States” in 1923, enlarging it to “the flag of the United States of America” in 1924.³³ It should be noted that this modification occurred at the time when widespread nativist fears about the uncontrolled flow of immigrants into the country resulted in restrictive legislation effectively putting an end to the unlimited immigration from Europe.

The third, latest and undoubtedly most significant modification took place in 1954, during the early Cold War, amid the frenzied anti-Communist hysteria fuelled primarily by Senator Joseph McCarthy. By that time, the Pledge had become ‘canonical,’ since it had been incorporated into the the United States Flag Code (Title

32. Baer, *Questions*, A.1.

33. “The Story.”

36) by Congress in 1942, shortly after the US entered World War II, at a time when patriotic fervor reached unprecedented heights. As a result, any modification to the text had to be approved by Congress as well.³⁴

The 1954 modification was preceded by a public campaign, initiated by several patriotic and religious organizations, including the Sons of the American Revolution, the Knights of Columbus, and the American Legion; and it was promoted nationwide by the Hearst Newspapers. The idea itself allegedly originated from Louis A. Bowman, a member of the Illinois Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, who proposed to repeat the Pledge with the added two words, “under God,” after “one nation,” on Lincoln’s Birthday, February 12, 1948, at a meeting of the Illinois Society. Bowman explained that the idea is derived from Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, where he refers to “this nation, under God.” During the campaign, the major argument in favor of the modification was that it makes a pithy point about the fundamental values of the United States that distinguishes it from the atheist, Communist Soviet Union.³⁵

In 1952 the Reverend Dr. George M. Docherty, pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC, preached in favor of adding “under God” to the Pledge. His point was that a Soviet atheist could easily recite the Pledge without compunction by substituting the ‘Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics’ for the ‘United States.’³⁶

Eventually, both houses of Congress passed a bill incorporating this addition, and the bill was signed by President Dwight Eisenhower on Flag Day, June 14, 1954. On that occasion, the President said: “In this way we are reaffirming the transcendence of religious faith in America’s heritage and future; in this way we shall constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country’s most powerful resource in peace and war.”³⁷

By first ‘canonizing’ the text and then inserting an explicit reference to ‘God’ into the Pledge, Congress completed a process that may be interpreted as the full incorporation of the Pledge into the sacred tradition of the civil religion. The addition has considerably changed the meaning of the whole Pledge, since the values enunciated

34. “The Story.”

35. It is hardly a coincidence that two years later, in 1956, Congress substituted the original and entirely secular motto of the US, “E Pluribus Unum,” selected by the Founding Fathers, for “In God We Trust,” which is the only motto appearing on US paper currency (Baer, *Questions*, A.1).

36. Baer, *Questions*, A.1.

37. “The Story.”

therein – the republican form of government symbolized by the flag, the unity of the nation, and the commitment to freedom and justice – have gained a sacred overtone, an implicit legitimacy with a divine origin. In that way, however, the rhetoric of the Pledge has become fully harmonious with that of the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address, two ‘holy’ documents of the American civil religion which both attributed divine support to the values on which the United States is predicated.

The Challenge to the Pledge

Recently, the privileged position of the Pledge as one of the primary prayers of civil religion has become an object of controversy, primarily in the context of the on-going legal argument over how the separation of church and state is to be understood and enforced in public schools. This has been a highly charged public issue for decades, one of the ‘culture wars’ sharply dividing public opinion in the US.³⁸

The constitutional problem underlying the conflict is the interpretation of the so-called ‘establishment clause’ of the First Amendment: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.” Legal interpretations of this brief statement, according to Ted Jelen, can be grouped around two general positions: accommodationism and separationism. The former is the narrow interpretation, namely, that the clause forbids the federal government³⁹ to provide preferential

38. According to James Davison Hunter, a cultural conflict is “political and social hostility rooted in different systems of moral understanding. The end to which these hostilities tend is the domination of one cultural and moral ethos over all others” (James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* [New York: BasicBooks, 1991], p. 42). He claims that the major fault lines of cultural conflicts in the late 20th century run between adherents of “cultural orthodoxy” and “cultural progressivism,” the former defined as a belief system or world view characterized by “a commitment . . . to an external, definable, and transcendent authority,” while the latter interprets moral authority more flexibly, rationally and subjectively, tending to “resymbolize historic faiths according to the prevailing assumptions of contemporary life” (Hunter, pp. 44–45). While religious individuals can be found on both sides, people with strong religious convictions tend to gravitate towards moral orthodoxy, while people of more secular outlook more typically support the ideas of progressivism.

39. Advocates of this interpretation also emphasize that the First Amendment, in the original intention of the Founding Fathers, did not forbid state governments to support religion, which was as much a practical political concession to existing establishment laws of several states at the time when the Bill of Rights still awaited ratification, as a theoretical distinction

treatment to any particular church or religion over the others, but it does not prevent the government from offering support to religion in general; this idea is often referred to as 'benevolent neutrality.' "Government is required to be neutral between religions, but is not required to be neutral between religion and irreligion."⁴⁰ This interpretation was generally accepted during the first 150 years of US history both by the government and the majority of the public.

Separationism is the broad interpretation of the establishment clause: it construes the clause as a general ban on any form of government assistance to religion or churches, on all levels of government alike. This position also has a long history, going at least as far back as Thomas Jefferson's famous phrase that the First Amendment was intended to erect "a wall of separation between church and State,"⁴¹ but it has not been accepted widely or embraced by the Supreme Court before the mid-20th century. The separationist position is more skeptical and suspicious about the influence of religion in public life, but not necessarily hostile to religion itself: some conservative churches argue that authentic religion does not need and should not receive government assistance since that violates the free exercise clause of the First Amendment. Nevertheless, the typical argument of separationists is that religion is a source of conflict in democratic politics, therefore it should be kept as distant from it as possible.

between the constitutional limitations binding the federal government and the state governments, respectively (Kenneth D. Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States* [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987], pp. 111–112; see also Cord, pp. 3–47). This interpretation of the First Amendment, however, was superseded by Supreme Court rulings from the 1940s on, which extended the ban on the support of religion to all levels of government on the basis of the Fourteenth Amendment: "No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States." "By restricting states in the same way as the federal government, the new interpretation treated religion as part and parcel of a national list of rights that all governmental institutions must respect" (Wald, p. 117).

40. Ted G. Jelen, "In Defense of Religious Minimalism," in *A Wall of Separation? Debating the Public Role of Religion* by Mary C. Segers and Ted G. Jelen (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 3–51, p. 4.

41. Jefferson's widely quoted phrase comes from a letter he wrote as president to the Danbury Connecticut Baptist Association on Jan 1, 1802 (quoted in Cord, pp. 114–115). He is generally considered the most radical early advocate of the separation of church and state; Cord, however, cites a 1808 letter in which even Jefferson restricted the idea of separation to the federal government. "Certainly, no power to prescribe any religious exercise, or to assume authority in religious discipline, has been delegated to the General Government. It must then rest with the States, as far as it can be in any human authority" (quoted in Cord, p. 40). Of course, this statement predates the Civil War and the Fourteenth Amendment.

The separationist interpretation of the establishment clause was adopted and spelled out in detail by the Supreme Court in its opinion in the 1947 case *Everson v. Board of Education*,⁴² and the Court went on to extend this interpretation to all cases involving taxpayers' money used for religious purposes, or situations in which any governmental organization could be considered to express a preference for religion. Legal battles over the interpretation of the establishment clause typically focused on public schools, the most common arena of clashing principles.

Because children are thought to be especially open to influence, Americans have been most sensitive to government's treatment of religion insofar as it affects the youngest members of society. That concern has been magnified because children are required by law to attend school and most of them do so in educational institutions paid for by tax revenues. In such politically delicate circumstances, any apparent favoritism toward a religious faith can appear to constitute government endorsement of religion.⁴³

In that spirit, the Court has declared unconstitutional such practices as providing religious instruction in public school premises (1948); reciting mandatory prayers or Bible verses at the beginning of each school day (1962, 1963); state contribution to the salaries of parochial school teachers or the maintenance of church school buildings (1971, 1973); reimbursing parents for the costs of private school tuition (1973); posting the Ten Commandments on classroom walls (1980); or orga-

42. The majority opinion of Justice Hugo Black summarized the Court's new interpretation of the Establishment Clause as follows: "Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another. Neither can force nor influence a person to go to or to remain away from church against his will or force him to profess a belief or disbelief in any religion. No person can be punished for entertaining or professing religious beliefs or disbeliefs, for church attendance or non-attendance. No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion. Neither a state nor the Federal Government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious groups and vice versa" (quoted in Darien A. McWhirter, *The Separation of Church and State* [Phoenix, AR: Oryx Press, 1994], p.36). Cord subjects Justice Black's majority opinion to a detailed analysis (pp. 109–145) and makes a convincing argument that such a broad interpretation is without precedent in the history of the Supreme Court, and cannot be justified by historical reference to the words and deeds of the Founding Fathers either. In essence, the Supreme Court significantly extended the interpretation of the Constitution to address a current issue, namely, the discrepancy between policies of the federal government and state governments concerning church-state relations.

43. Wald, p. 117.

nizing voluntary prayer sessions or any other religious activities on school premises (1982, 1983). At the same time, in seemingly paradoxical fashion, the Court accepted such forms of state aid as compensation for the costs of bus transportation of children to and from school, including children attending religious private schools (1947); and loaning the textbooks received free of charge by public school students to private school students as well (1968).⁴⁴

In the 1971 case *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, Chief Justice Warren Burger established a three-pronged test for the acceptance of any government action as compatible with the establishment clause:

- The policy must have a primarily secular purpose.
- The policy must have a primarily secular effect.
- The policy must not result in ‘excessive entanglement’ between government and religion.⁴⁵

Applying this test to public school cases, the Court has considered all state practices acceptable whose primary aim is to offer some sort of help to all students, regardless of the type of school they attend (such as compensation for bus transportation costs or loaning books). But as soon as state legislation or policy is directed primarily toward helping religious private schools, their students, or students of any particular religious persuasion, and consequently discriminates against other students, it is considered unconstitutional.

The Lemon test – although it was applied rather inconsistently later on – was subsequently supplemented with two other tests. The so-called endorsement test was defined by Justice O’Connor in her concurring opinion in the 1984 case *Lynch v. Donnelly* as an unconstitutional government endorsement or disapproval of religion which “sends a message to nonadherents that they are outsiders, not full members of the political community, and an accompanying message to adherents that they are insiders, favored members of the political community.”⁴⁶ The coercion test was adopted as a precedent in the 1992 case *Lee v. Weisman*, when the Court found non-sectarian forms of prayer at public school graduation ceremonies such as invocations and benedictions unconstitutional, because such religious acts at a ceremony organ-

44. Wald, pp. 118–119, 134.

45. Jelen, pp. 5–6; *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602 (1971), in *A Wall of Separation? Debating the Public Role of Religion*, Mary C. Segers and Ted G. Jelen (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 168–170.

46. *Lynch v. Donnelly*, 465 US 668 (1984), November 13, 2003 <<http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=US&vol=465&invol=668>>.

ized and supervised by the school put “subtle coercive pressure” on nonreligious students to participate or at least comply with it, which is an impermissible case of establishing a state preference for religion.⁴⁷ Both decisions further widened the interpretation of the Establishment Clause but made Supreme Court precedents even more complicated and more difficult to apply with any consistency.

These Supreme Court decisions were far from popular among the American public; the largest outcry was provoked by the ban on public school prayer: “Public opinion polls have consistently revealed that a clear majority of Americans – possibly as much as two-thirds of the population – favors some sort of organized prayers in the public schools.”⁴⁸ Backed by public support, state legislatures as well as local school boards have attempted to find a way around the Court ban, ranging from legislation substituting the morning prayer with a period of “silent meditation” at the beginning of school days (this was also declared unconstitutional by the Court in 1985), and attempts to pass a Constitutional amendment explicitly legalizing prayer in public institutions (such a bill failed to receive two-thirds support in the Senate in 1984), to simply disregarding the legal ban and continuing the religious practices with the transparent claim that it is left to the discretion of the individual teacher. In areas of strongly and conservatively religious population such as the South, noncompliance is still widespread since the probability that a local parent mounts a legal challenge against public school prayers or Bible readings is very low.⁴⁹

Given the tendency of the Supreme Court to interpret the establishment clause in a strongly separationist way since 1947, it may be considered surprising that the ‘under God’ phrase inserted into the Pledge was not singled out as violating the separation in any legal challenge until 2002. That year, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals caused nationwide uproar by reversing the decision of a lower federal court in the case *Newdow v. U.S. Congress* and ruling that the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in a California public school is an unconstitutional “endorsement of religion” because of the phrase ‘under God.’ In its ruling, the Circuit Court basically accepted

47. *Lee v. Weisman*, 505 US 577 (1992), November 13, 2003 <<http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=US&vol=465&invol=668>>.

48. Wald, p. 128. Spokesmen of some fundamentalist religious groups have gone as far as blaming all sorts of moral decline and social problem since 1962 on the ban against prayer in public schools: “removing prayer and the acknowledgment of God from our class rooms has been the primary cause of the devastatingly serious decline in the lives of students, their families, the schools, and our nation” (quoted from *America: To Pray or Not To Pray?* published by the Concerned Women for America in 1988; see Hunter, p. 203n19, p. 368).

49. Wald, pp. 128–130.

the argument of plaintiff Michael Newdow, an atheist who filed the suit as a constitutional test case against the United States, Congress, California, two school districts and its officials on behalf of his eight-year-old daughter, studying in an Elk Grove, California, public school. He claimed that “his daughter is injured when she is compelled to ‘watch and listen as her state-employed teacher in her state-run school leads her classmates in a ritual proclaiming that there is a God, and that our’s [sic] is ‘one nation under God.’”⁵⁰

In its opinion, the majority of the three-member panel (consisting of Circuit Judges Alfred T. Goodwin and Stephen Reinhardt) applied the ‘Lemon test,’ described above, as well as the endorsement test and coercion test. Applying these tests to the case at hand, the majority of the panel found that the phrase ‘under God’ is a “profession of a religious belief, namely, a belief in monotheism,”⁵¹ and the recitation of the Pledge in the form codified in 1954 amounts to swearing allegiance to – among other, secular, values – monotheism. In rather sweeping language, the opinion declared that

[a] profession that we are a nation “under God” is identical, for Establishment Clause purposes, to a profession that we are a nation “under Jesus,” a nation “under Vishnu,” a nation “under Zeus,” or a nation “under no god,” because none of these professions can be neutral with respect to religion. The school district’s practice of teacher-led recitation of the Pledge aims to inculcate in students a respect for the ideals set forth in the Pledge, including the religious values it incorporates.⁵²

Since the California Education Code prescribes “appropriate patriotic exercises” at the beginning of each school day and explicitly declares that recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance satisfied this requirement,⁵³ the school district’s appropriate policy of prescribing voluntary and teacher-led recitation of the Pledge at the beginning of each school day “has a coercive effect” because it forces schoolchildren into an uncomfortable position of having to choose between compliance or open dissent, a form of pressure declared illegal in *Lee v. Weisman*.

50. *Newdow v. US Congress et al.* No. 00-16423 D.C. No. CV-00-00495-MLS/PAN. Order and Amended Opinion and Amended Concurrence/Dissent. The United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Filed June 26, 2002. Amended February 28, 2003, November 13, 2003 <<http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/data2/circs/9th/0016423p.pdf>>, p. 2801.

51. *Newdow v. US Congress*, p. 2807.

52. *Newdow v. US Congress*, p. 2808.

53. *Newdow v. US Congress*, p. 2800, note 1.

The majority opinion was aware of the momentous implications of declaring the mere utterance containing a reference to God unconstitutional, therefore they strove to draw a line of distinction between the Pledge and other well-known public documents and rituals mentioning or alluding to God:

The Pledge differs from the Declaration [of Independence] and the [national] anthem in that its reference to God, in textual and historical context, is not merely a reflection of the author's profession of faith. It is, by design, an affirmation by the person reciting it. "I pledge" is a performative statement. . . . To pledge allegiance to something is to alter one's moral relationship to it, and not merely to repeat the words of an historical document or anthem.⁵⁴

For failing to meet the criteria established by the above-mentioned Supreme Court precedents, the majority opinion concluded that "the school district's policy and practice of teacher-led recitation of the Pledge, with the inclusion of the added words 'under God,' violates the Establishment Clause."⁵⁵ It refused to consider, however, the constitutionality of the 1954 Act of Congress that inserted the phrase into the official text of the Pledge.

The majority decision of the panel did not even meet the approval of their own fellow judge: the third member of the panel, Circuit Judge Ferdinand F. Fernandez, in a rather emotionally worded dissenting opinion, rejected the idea of applying specific Supreme Court tests to the Pledge and instead emphasized what he considered the original intention of the First Amendment, which is not "to drive religious expression out of public thought . . . [but] to avoid discrimination."⁵⁶ He went on to conclude that the Pledge represents a negligible amount of threat of suppressing somebody's beliefs or enforcing a 'theocracy.' Furthermore, he referred to several Supreme Court opinions in which the Supreme Court considered the Pledge in passing and did not raise objections against it. For example, in the 1989 case *County of Allegheny v. ACLU*, the Supreme Court remarked that "Our previous opinions have considered in dicta the motto and the pledge, characterizing them as consistent with the proposition that government may not communicate an endorsement of religious belief."⁵⁷ Such examples of referring to God in various public rituals, for instance at the beginning of legislative or court sessions, has been described by the phrase

54. *Newdow v. US Congress*, p. 2811.

55. *Newdow v. US Congress*, pp. 2812–13.

56. *Newdow v. US Congress*, p. 2814.

57. Quoted in *Newdow v. US Congress*, p. 2815.

‘ceremonial deism,’ and considered part of the American historical and cultural heritage ever since the establishment of the independent nation. As Judge Fernandez passionately declared,

such phrases as “In God We Trust,” or “under God” have no tendency to establish a religion in this country or to suppress anyone’s exercise, or non-exercise, of religion, except in the fevered eye of persons who most fervently would like to drive all tincture of religion out of the public life of our polity. Those expressions have not caused any real harm of that sort over the years since 1791, and are not likely to do so in the future.⁵⁸

A more detailed and rationally argued dissent was put forward when the whole Circuit Court was asked to reconsider the case *en banc*, that is, before a randomly selected 11-member panel. In February 2003, the majority rejected the appeal, but six judges dissented, and Circuit Judge O’Scannlain submitted a dissenting opinion, in which he strongly condemned the panel’s decision. His fundamental argument was that the panel had misinterpreted existing Supreme Court precedents since those precedents focused exclusively on public religious exercises, typically public school prayer, while repeatedly emphasizing that other “manifestations in our public life of belief in God . . . [at] patriotic or ceremonial occasions bear no true resemblance to the unquestioned religious exercise [school prayer].”⁵⁹ In the same spirit, the Supreme Court, in the 1963 case *Abington School Dist. v. Schempp*, struck down a Pennsylvania state law requiring schoolchildren to read from the Bible and recite the Lord’s Prayer each morning while saying nothing of the Pledge that was also part of the same morning routine.⁶⁰ O’Scannlain specifically quotes from Justice Brennan’s concurring opinion which, while agreeing that prayers and Bible readings are religious exercises, ventured the – albeit somewhat hesitant – opinion that

[t]he reference to divinity in the revised pledge of allegiance . . . may merely recognize the historical fact that our Nation was believed to have been founded ‘under God.’ Thus reciting the pledge may be no more of a religious exercise than the reading aloud of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, which contains an allusion to the same historical fact.⁶¹

58. *Newdow v. US Congress*, p. 2816.

59. *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), quoted in *Newdow v. US Congress*, p. 2785.

60. *Newdow v. US Congress*, p. 2786.

61. Quoted in *Newdow v. US Congress*, p. 2787.

In the 1985 case *Wallace v. Jaffree*, in which the Supreme Court declared the Alabama state law authorizing a one-minute period of silence in public schools “for meditation or voluntary prayer” unconstitutional, Justice O’Connor in her concurring opinion remarked that “the words ‘under God’ in the Pledge . . . serve as an acknowledgment of religion with ‘the legitimate secular purposes of solemnizing public occasions, [and] expressing confidence in the future.’”⁶² Even in the *Lee* case that was used as precedent by the panel, the Supreme Court cautioned against “[a] relentless and all-pervasive attempt to exclude religion from every aspect of public life [which] could itself become inconsistent with the Constitution.”⁶³

O’Scannlain’s conclusion is that since the Supreme Court’s coercion test applies exclusively to formal religious exercises at school, its application to the Pledge hinges on whether the Pledge may be considered a religious act, a question asked by 7th Circuit Court in their decision of the 1992 case *Sherman v. Cmty. Consol. Sch. Dist. 21 of Wheeling Township* and firmly answered in the negative. O’Scannlain fully agrees with this answer: “Most assuredly, to pledge allegiance to flag and country is a *patriotic act*. . . . The fact the Pledge is infused with an undoubtedly religious reference does not change the nature of the act itself.”⁶⁴ He justifies his opinion by pointing out the difference between the formalities of the Pledge and the common formalities of prayer, as well as citing “our 200-year history and tradition of patriotic references to God,”⁶⁵ which would be under direct threat once the panel’s decision became a precedent:

Of course, the Constitution itself explicitly mentions God, as does the Declaration of Independence, the document which marked us as a separate people. The Gettysburg Address, inconveniently for the majority, contains the *same precise phrase*—“under God”—found to constitute an Establishment Clause violation in the Pledge. [footnote omitted] After *Newdow II*, are we to suppose that, were a school to permit—not require—the recitation of the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, or the Gettysburg Address in public schools, that too would violate the Constitution? . . . Indeed, the recitation of the Declaration of Independence would seem to be the better candidate for the chopping block than the Pledge, since the Pledge does not require anyone to acknowledge the *personal* relationship

62. Quoted in *Newdow v. US Congress*, p. 2788.

63. Quoted in *Newdow v. US Congress*, p. 2789.

64. *Newdow v. US Congress*, pp. 2791–2, emphasis retained.

65. *Newdow v. US Congress*, pp. 2792–3.

with God to which the Declaration speaks. [footnote omitted] So too with our National Anthem and our National Motto.

Our national celebration of Thanksgiving dates back to President Washington, which Congress stated was “to be observed by acknowledgment with grateful hearts, the many and signal favours of Almighty God.” *Lynch*, 465 U.S. at 675 n.2. Congress made Thanksgiving a permanent holiday in 1941, [footnote omitted] and Christmas has been a national holiday since 1894. [footnote omitted] Are pere Newdow’s constitutional rights violated when his daughter is told not to attend school on Thanksgiving? On Christmas day? Must school outings to federal courts be prohibited, lest the children be unduly influenced by the dreaded intonation “God save these United States and this honorable Court”? [footnote omitted] A theory of the Establishment Clause that would have the effect of driving out of our public life the multiple references to the Divine that run through our laws, our rituals, and our ceremonies is no theory at all.⁶⁶

I have quoted extensively from the dissenting opinion because I think it reveals the wider issue underlying the constitutional wrangling over the interpretation of the Pledge: in my understanding, the issue is nothing else but the future of the American civil religion. From an outsider’s point of view, it may seem strange why two words inserted into the Pledge of Allegiance less than 50 years ago would stir up such passionate emotions: on the one hand, they indeed seem quite innocuous, unlikely to be found offensive by anyone willing to recite the rest of the Pledge; on the other hand, they were not part of the original text to start with, the Pledge would lose none of its solemnity and patriotic value if they were erased from it, and that way no one could question the constitutionality of the recitation of the Pledge. But such rational considerations have little place in the argument of either side. Critics charge, seemingly in harmony with the separationist interpretation of the First Amendment preferred by the Supreme Court since the 1940s, that such an explicit reference to God in a patriotic oath prescribed for schoolchildren amount to a preference for theism and thus constitute a case of government-sanctioned discrimination against agnostics, atheists, or polytheists, which sounds like an exaggerated claim. Defenders of the Pledge, however, are not even willing to consider dropping the contentious words from the text. Their staunch defense of the Pledge in its current form is unyielding because it is framed as the defense of something far more significant: the sanctity of the American civil religion. Those documents, rituals and symbols that constitute the

66. *Newdow v. US Congress*, pp. 2793–4, emphases retained.

sacred tradition of patriotism derive a significant part of their holiness by establishing an explicit link between God and the American nation. The canonization of the Pledge and its full incorporation into that sacred tradition was completed by inserting the explicit reference to God in 1954. Legal challenges citing the establishment clause represent a mortal threat to the Pledge and similar patriotic rituals, since these attacks are striking at the heart of the sacred tradition: their implied divine origin. To employ a crude analogy: questioning the appropriateness of references to God in the texts and rituals of civil religion in the eyes of its defenders is equal to doubting the divine origin of Jesus for Christians.

Although other secularized modern democracies have survived reasonably well without invoking such metaphysical support from above, the tradition of the American civil religion rests, explicitly or implicitly, on a deeply embedded belief in American exceptionalism, the idea that the United States, its values, institutions and way of life enjoys some sort of special divine favour. This majority attitude has been increasingly uneasy with the growing trend of secularization that has affected American society in steadily widening waves all through the 20th century, a tendency manifested in constitutional law by the increasingly separationist interpretation of the First Amendment by the Supreme Court. The 'benevolent neutrality' of the federal and the state governments towards various denominations has given way to a preference for legally enforced neutrality between religion and irreligion, which, according to critics, is in fact a discrimination against religion. Judge O'Scannlain does not fail to level this charge against the panel's decision:

The absolute prohibition on any mention of God in our schools creates a bias *against* religion. The panel majority cannot credibly advance the notion that *Newdow II* is neutral with respect to belief versus non-belief; it affirmatively favors the latter to the former. One wonders, then, does atheism become the default religion protected by the Establishment Clause?⁶⁷

His impassioned rhetoric, however, belies that a significant part of his argument in defense of the Pledge is disingenuous: while he goes out of his way to make a distinction between the Pledge as a patriotic act, as opposed to religious acts, his underlying conviction is that the two are one and the same. The Pledge is a patriotic *and* religious act, the two aspects are inseparably intertwined. Criticising the religious aspect is inevitably seen as an attack on the patriotic values connected to it. For the true believers of civil religion, this one nation has indeed become indivisible under – and from – God.

67. *Newdow v. US Congress*, p. 2798.

A Temporary Settlement

The Elk Grove School District, supported by the Attorney General of California, appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States to review the decision of the 9th Circuit Court. On October 14, 2003, the Supreme Court accepted the case for consideration. The decision was eagerly awaited by supporters and critics of the Pledge of Allegiance alike. As it happened many times in the nation's past, it has fallen on the high court to give a final and incontrovertible interpretation to the Constitution and the Pledge. From the point of view of civil religion, the process is highly similar to a church council that is entrusted with the responsibility of resolving a doctrinal dispute and draw the line between true dogma and heresy. Is the Pledge a religious act or a patriotic act? Are the words 'under God' to be understood as a reference to the historical origins of the nation or as a recognition of divine blessing and favour constantly present? Can the unity of the American civil religion be preserved without the presence of God?

Powerful forces swang into motion to offer support to one or the other side and put pressure on the eight justices (Justice Antonin Scalia recused himself from the case at Newdow's request since he had made public remarks earlier in which he had criticized the Circuit Court's decision⁶⁸) considering the case. Several religious groups and associations, the majority of Congress members, the attorneys general of all 50 states, the National School Boards Association and the National Education Association have signed briefs supporting the pledge in its currently accepted form, while George Bush expressed his support in a form letter sent to those who wrote to the White House complaining about the Circuit Court's decision.⁶⁹ At the same time, 32 Christian and Jewish clergy members took Newdow's side in the case, arguing that the pledge with the phrase 'under God' is a kind of civic blasphemy. The group's brief asserted that "every day, government asks millions of schoolchildren to take the name of the Lord in vain."⁷⁰ The American Civil Liberties Union also sided with Newdow, and so did, surprisingly, well-known conservative journalist William Saphire, who declared that "Those of us who believe in God don't need to inject our faith into a patriotic affirmation and coerce all schoolchildren into going along."⁷¹

68. Linda Greenhouse, "One Crucial Issue in Pledge Case: What Does 'Under God' Mean?" *The New York Times* (March 22, 2004).

69. Greenhouse, "One Crucial Issue."

70. Greenhouse, "One Crucial Issue."

71. William Saphire, "Of God and the Flag," *The New York Times* (March 24, 2004).

The issues involved were so weighty and so divisive that several observers predicted the Court was going to find some sort of evasive legal argument to avoid a categorical answer to the constitutionality of the ‘under God’ phrase. A convenient way to duck the problem was offered by Newdow’s questionable legal standing, that is, his right to bring this particular case to court. Newdow never married the mother of his daughter and they live separately, with the mother, Sandra L. Banning, having legal custody over the girl. Furthermore, she filed a brief supporting the pledge and her daughter’s recitation of it.⁷² All this significantly undermined Newdow’s argument that his parental responsibility for the upbringing and education of his daughter compelled him to bring the case to court, even though the Circuit Court in its decision recognized his right “to direct the religious education of his daughter.”⁷³

Oral arguments before a full session of the Supreme Court were heard on March 24, 2004, with Newdow arguing his own case against the well-known and very experienced constitutional lawyer, Solicitor General Theodore B. Olson. Newdow performed surprisingly well before the high court, his sharp and witty answers to the Court’s questions drawing occasional bursts of applause from the audience and consternations from some Justices.⁷⁴

Eventually, the Supreme Court issued its decision on the deeply symbolic day of June 14, 2004, the 50th anniversary of President Eisenhower signing the Congress bill into law that inserted the ‘under God’ phrase into the Pledge of Allegiance. It was highly unlikely that the Court meant to commemorate such an anniversary by striking the ‘under God’ phrase down, so the very timing of the release of the decision all but guaranteed the maintenance of the status quo. The majority of the Court, however, balked at unequivocally declaring the present form of the Pledge constitutional, and opted instead for the predictable emergency exit by ruling that Newdow lacked standing to bring the case before a federal court. Justice Stevens, who wrote the majority opinion supported by four other Justices, argued that the Supreme Court strictly avoids involvement in domestic legal conflicts, recognizing the priority of the laws and courts of individual states in such matters. Newdow’s claim that his right “to inculcate in his daughter—free from governmental interference—the atheistic beliefs he finds persuasive”⁷⁵ was injured by the daily recital of the Pledge in his

72. Linda Greenhouse, “Atheist Presents Case for Taking God From Pledge,” *The New York Times* (March 25, 2005).

73. *Newdow v. US Congress*, p. 2804.

74. Greenhouse, “Atheist Presents Case.”

75. *Elk Grove Unified School District and David W. Gordon, Superintendent, Petitioners v. Michael A. Newdow et al.* No. 02-1624 decision of the Supreme Court of the United States.

daughter's school was contradicted by mother Sandra Banning's claim that she was a Christian who did not object to her daughter's reciting the Pledge or listening to others reciting it.⁷⁶ Furthermore, as Banning had sole legal custody over the child, she had asked for and received a California Superior Court order which enjoined Newdow from involving her daughter as a party in the case.⁷⁷ While recognizing Newdow's right to influence the religious education of her daughter, the Court established that he had no right "to dictate to others what they may and may not say to his child respecting religion,"⁷⁸ not being the legal custodian of his daughter. As Stevens summed it up:

In our view, it is improper for the federal courts to entertain a claim by a plaintiff whose standing to sue is founded on family law rights that are in dispute when prosecution of the lawsuit may have an adverse effect on the person who is the source of the plaintiff's claimed standing. . . . There is a vast difference between Newdow's right to communicate with his child—which both California law and the First Amendment recognize—and his claimed right to shield his daughter from influences to which she is exposed in school despite the terms of the custody order. We conclude that, having been deprived under California law of the right to sue as next friend, Newdow lacks prudential standing to bring this suit in federal court.⁷⁹

The validity of this legal reasoning aside, it seems obvious that the rejection of Newdow's legal standing may serve as a neat ploy to avoid consideration of the merit of the case, that is, the constitutionality of the Pledge. In his dissenting opinion, Chief Justice William Rehnquist did not flinch from the challenge, and made his opinion straightforward: the Pledge in its current form is constitutional. Before offering his justification, he blasted the majority opinion for what Rehnquist considered a highly contradictory position: while apparently founding their position on the Court's deference for state law, the majority opinion effectively rejected the interpretation of California law by that state's Court of Appeals which accepted Newdow's standing.

In his consideration of the case itself, the Chief Justice essentially provided no new argument compared to the dissenting opinion of Circuit Court Judge O'Scann-

June 14, 2004, August 21, 2004 <<http://www.supremecourtus.gov/opinions/03pdf/02-1624.pdf>>, Opinion of the Court, p. 11.

76. *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, Opinion of the Court, p. 6.

77. *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, Opinion of the Court, p. 6.

78. *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, Opinion of the Court, p. 13.

79. *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, Opinion of the Court, p. 14.

lain. He rehearsed the well-known instances of historical references to God by former Presidents in their public utterances, from Washington through Lincoln, Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt to Eisenhower (the latter in his capacity as Commander of the Allied forces before D-day) and cited some of the generally accepted uses of God's name (the national anthem, the motto 'In God We Trust,' the Court Marshall's proclamation before Supreme Court sessions). He concluded that

[a]ll of these events strongly suggest that our national culture allows public recognition of our Nation's religious history and character. In the words of the House Report that accompanied the insertion of the phrase "under God" in the Pledge: "From the time of our earliest history our peoples and our institutions have reflected the traditional concept that our Nation was founded on a fundamental belief in God."⁸⁰

To an observer, it appears as somewhat one-sided argumentation to justify the public use of God's name by the words of the report which was written specifically to persuade the House to pass the bill ordering the inclusion of the phrase 'under God' in the Pledge, but the Chief Justice was apparently captivated by this quote, using it twice in his relatively short opinion. For the second time, he cited it to demonstrate that the 'under God' phrase could not be considered a formal religious exercise of the kind that had been declared unconstitutional in public schools by the Court in 1992,⁸¹ but rather a recognition of the religious heritage of the US (he carefully avoided discussing why such a recognition were necessary in a 'patriotic exercise,' or why it should be preserved in the Pledge when the patriotic exercise had functioned equally well without it for more than half a century). His summary was unequivocal:

Reciting the Pledge, or listening to others recite it, is a patriotic exercise, not a religious one; participants promise fidelity to our flag and our Nation, not to any particular God, faith, or church. . . . The recital, in a patriotic

80. *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, Rehnquist, C. J., concurring in judgment, p. 13.

81. It might be worth noting at this point that the Chief Justice joined Justice Scalia's dissent from the majority opinion of the Court in the *Lee v. Weisman* case, which established this precedent. Scalia in his dissenting opinion protested against "a boundless, and boundlessly manipulable, test of psychological coercion," and argued both that non-sectarian public prayers have a long historical tradition in the US and that the First Amendment's provisions cannot be so construed as to authorize the Court to ban "the expression of gratitude to God that a majority of the community wishes to make" (Darien McWhirter, *The Separation of Church and State* [Phoenix, AR: Oryx, 1994], pp. 31–33).

ceremony pledging allegiance to the flag and to the Nation, of the descriptive phrase “under God” cannot possibly lead to the establishment of a religion, or anything like it.⁸²

By way of conclusion, he also remarked that the text of the Pledge of Allegiance had been codified by Congress, while its daily use had been approved by both the state of California and the local school board – three levels of popular government agreed on its appropriateness, and such democratic choices should be restricted on constitutional grounds only when a grave violation of constitutional principles can be established. While the Constitution guarantees the right of individual children to abstain from the ceremony if they chose to do so, it cannot give a “heckler’s veto”⁸³ to any parent to prevent a patriotic ceremony because he finds one single phrase offensive in it. The Chief Justice’s phrase is telling: it reveals, consciously or unconsciously, his personal opinion on plaintiff Michael Newdow and his claim.

Justice Sandra Day O’Connor wrote a separate opinion, in which she fully agreed with the Chief Justice’s dissent but felt that she should offer a separate argumentation in support of it. She had written about Establishment Clause cases several times in the past, creating the endorsement test, cited above, in 1984, which never fully gained the status of a Supreme Court precedent, nonetheless it was cited in several subsequent cases, including the 9th Circuit Court’s decision. O’Connor returned to her favourite approach in this opinion as well, arguing that the endorsement test should be applied to a case with two related principles in mind: those of the “reasonable observer” and the “community ideal of social judgment.”⁸⁴ The first means essentially the same as the Chief Justice’s refusal to accept a “heckler’s veto”: in O’Connor’s more sophisticated wording, any government action might be considered religious endorsement from a radically subjective point of view, “given the dizzying religious heterogeneity of our nation.”⁸⁵ The second principle urges the examination of a certain practice while considering its historical origins and social context. With this, O’Connor again reiterated the Chief Justice’s historical argument, suggesting that

82. *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, Rehnquist, C. J., concurring in judgment, pp. 14–16.

83. *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, C. J. Rehnquist, concurring in judgment, p. 16.

84. *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, J. O’Connor, concurring in judgment, p. 3.

85. *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, J. O’Connor, concurring in judgment, p. 2.

although these references speak in the language of religious belief, they are more properly understood as employing the idiom for essentially secular purposes. One such purpose is to commemorate the role of religion in our history.⁸⁶

Another such secular purpose is “to solemnize public occasions,”⁸⁷ to quote a favourite phrase of O’Connor, in which case such references must not be interpreted as government endorsement of religion. The latter case is what O’Connor called ‘ceremonial deism,’ and she lumped all the famous instances cited by the Chief Justice into this category. In the rest of her opinion, she endeavoured to demonstrate that the ‘under God’ phrase also belongs under the heading of ceremonial deism.

She supported her interpretation by stressing the relatively long history and ubiquity of the Pledge, which nonetheless seems to have generated practically no controversy in a country ready to bring rather bizarre Establishment Clause cases to court. This argument in my view is not too convincing since many of the Supreme Court decisions of the past were based on similar or more outlandish challenges that were ultimately accepted by the majority of the Court. The second argument is basically identical with that of the Chief Justice, namely, that the Pledge with the ‘under God’ phrase cannot be construed as a religious prayer, which is inadmissible as an instance of ceremonial deism. O’Connor, unlike the Chief Justice, felt that this claim is explicitly contradicted by the religious intentions of the sponsors of the 1954 bill, therefore she hastened to add:

Whatever the sectarian ends its authors may have had in mind, our continued repetition of the reference to “one Nation under God” in an exclusively patriotic context has shaped the cultural significance of that phrase to conform to that context. Any religious freight the words may have been meant to carry originally has long since been lost.⁸⁸

Furthermore, the reference in the Pledge is non-sectarian, it does not prefer any particular religious faith or denomination over the other, even though – as O’Connor was forced to admit – it obviously prefers those which believe in one single Supreme Being over those, like Buddhism, which do not. She tried to avoid this trap by a rather awkward reference to historical context again, claiming that half a century

86. *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, J. O’Connor, concurring in judgment, p. 3.

87. *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, J. O’Connor, concurring in judgment, p. 4.

88. *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, J. O’Connor, concurring in judgment, pp. 9–10.

ago, in a less diverse nation, the reference could be considered generic enough to be acceptable to all.

Her final argument is that the religious content of the Pledge is minimal (2 words out of 31), which again proves that the phrase is an instant of ceremonial deism rather than a signal of government endorsement of religion. An evidence of this religious minimalism is, according to O'Connor, that "the presence of those words is not absolutely essential to the Pledge, as demonstrated by the fact that it existed without them for over 50 years,"⁸⁹ which begs the question: why should then these two words be protected so resolutely and with such convoluted argumentation?

The rather disappointing performance of Justice O'Connor is contrasted by the robust dissent put forward by Justice Clarence Thomas. While he agreed with the Chief Justice and Justice O'Connor that the Pledge of Allegiance is constitutional, he was the only Justice on the bench willing to tackle the central problem, the eye of the storm raised by Michael Newdow's case: how could it happen that the Circuit Court of Appeals reached a diametrically opposite conclusion based on what Thomas considered a "persuasive reading of out precedent, especially *Lee v. Weisman?*"⁹⁰ In a bold answer rather unusual from a Supreme Court Justice, Thomas repeated his earlier opinion that "our Establishment Clause jurisprudence is in hopeless disarray."⁹¹ Over the past thirty years, the Supreme Court had created several tests, but applied none of them consistently, making distinctions between seemingly similar cases and creating exceptions to their own precedent, which confused lower court and produced 'silly' results.⁹² Therefore Thomas in his

89. *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, J. O'Connor, concurring in judgment, p. 11.

90. *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, J. Thomas, concurring in judgment, p. 1.

91. *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, J. Thomas, concurring in judgment, p. 1n1.

92. Thomas's opinion is shared by legal scholar Donald L. Drakeman, who observed ten years earlier that the conclusions reached by the Supreme Court in Establishment Clause cases had been "characteristically confusing" (Drakeman, *Church-State Constitutional Issues: Making Sense of the Establishment Clause* [Greenwood Press, 1991], p. 41). He was also sharply ironic about exactly the same case cited by Thomas in his footnote, the *County of Allegheny v. American Civil Liberties Union* (1989), where the majority opinion declared a Christmas crèche display unconstitutional but a huge menorah permissible, arguing that in the latter case there were enough non-religious symbols to distract from the message of the religious theme. As Drakeman remarked, "the Court did not specify the ratio of elves to angels required to withstand an establishment clause challenge" (Drakeman, p. 38) against a Christmas display, mocking the increasingly absurd distinctions employed by the Court.

opinion called for an overhaul of the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Establishment Clause and he grabbed the opportunity to chart the course for such a sweeping review.

He observed – implicitly opposing the opinion of both Rehnquist and O'Connor – that on the basis of the *Lee v. Weisman* decision, the SC should declare the Pledge unconstitutional, since the “subtle coercive pressure”⁹³ deemed dangerous in the case of a school graduation invocation and benediction, a single event, is far more prominently present in a daily school ritual. He rather dismissively brushed aside the elaborate argument of the Chief Justice that the Pledge is not a religious exercise by pointing out that in the 1940 decision ruling the compulsory recital of the Pledge unconstitutional, the Supreme Court described it as an “affirmation of a belief,” which now includes the phrase that the US is ‘one Nation under God.’

It is difficult to see how this does not entail an affirmation that God exists. Whether or not we classify affirming the existence of God as a “formal religious exercise” akin to prayer, it must present the same or similar constitutional problems.⁹⁴

With a sudden turn of argument, however, Thomas did not conclude that the Pledge is unconstitutional: the point of his reasoning was that the most relevant precedent, the *Lee v. Weisman* case was wrongly decided. He squarely rejected that ‘peer pressure’ can be equated with ‘coercion’ as defined by the decision. Furthermore, he questioned the whole constitutional foundation of extending the scope of the Establishment Clause through the Fourteenth Amendment by arguing that while the Free Exercise Clause was certainly meant to protect individual rights, the Establishment Clause is directly applicable only to the federal government, possibly but questionably to state governments (whose scope of action it was evidently meant to protect), and definitely not to individuals. Along this reasoning, the only meaningful question that could be asked about the Pledge is whether it pertains to an ‘establishment of religion,’ the original subject of the Establishment Clause.

Thomas's answer is a firm ‘No,’ emphasizing that true establishment by necessity involves legal coercion with a threat of penalty, or at least legal compulsion (e.g. taxation for religious purposes). An alternative view of establishment may also lay stress upon the danger of lending governmental authority to one particular church or religion. Voluntary activities in a public school, be it a school prayer or recital of the

93. *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, J. Thomas, concurring in judgment, p. 2.

94. *Elk Grove Unified School District v. Newdow*, J. Thomas, concurring in judgment, p. 4.

Pledge, have nothing to do with such coercive government action. Since free-exercise rights are not threatened, he concluded – along a completely different line of logic – that the Pledge is fully constitutional.

As the brief summary above has shown, members of the Supreme Court are also divided in their views of both the Pledge and the interpretation of the Establishment Clause. An observer cannot quite get rid of the suspicion that much of the elaborate argumentation distinguishing the Pledge from a ‘proper religious exercise’ is but a legal facade to hide the proponents’ core conviction: namely, that there is nothing essentially wrong with American schoolchildren reciting daily that the US is ‘one nation under God’; and the concept of ‘ceremonial deism’ is a constitutional excuse to accommodate common and widely approved phenomena of ‘civil religion’ over and against the otherwise strict separationist interpretation of the Establishment Clause by the Supreme Court. It is noteworthy that none of the eight Justices considered the substance of *Newdow’s* case valid: or if they did, they chose to conceal their opinion behind the technical argument about the lack of the plaintiff’s standing. Justice Thomas alone had the intellectual and political courage to admit plainly that the Circuit Court of Appeal’s decision was correct, under the existing precedents established by the Supreme Court the Pledge should be declared unconstitutional, and all other hair-splitting distinctions between ‘religious’ and ‘patriotic’ exercises hastily brought in by Chief Justice Rehnquist and Justice O’Connor are attempts to paper over this truth. But Thomas employs this revelation as an argument for his urgent call to reverse at least 40 years of Supreme Court interpretation of the First Amendment, to return to an accommodationist position that would give a much wider scope for states and state institutions (including public schools) to ‘endorse’ religion in a variety of ways. This argument, however sound it may seem in the light of constitutional history and a strictly literal interpretation of the First Amendment, carries a huge threat under the current political climate of the United States: it might open the floodgates for a radical conservative agenda that would be eager to promote Christianity through the machinery of the state, thus turning civil religion into something like an established Christian church.

Such a radical conservative turn in the interpretation of the Constitution is unlikely. Still, Thomas’s constitutional logic is a fine illustration why so many people, especially on the liberal side of the political spectrum, are bracing themselves for the nominations of President George W. Bush to the new Supreme Court positions. If the majority of the Court could be won over to a more conservative interpretation of the First Amendment, much more than a mere phrase in the Pledge of Allegiance may be at stake.

Shakespeare and Company

Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford: OUP, 2002)

Brian Vickers does not mince words. The very first sentence of the preface to *Shakespeare, Co-Author* comes right to the point: "This book asks the question 'How much do we know about Shakespeare's collaboration with other dramatists?', and tries to extend that knowledge" (vii). Over the next 500 pages, he describes just how much we should already know about this collaboration, discusses how both Shakespeare's conservators and his post-modern critics have ignored, misunderstood or misrepresented the evidence of it, and demonstrates that 5 plays in the canon were indeed written with another author.

Vickers, currently a senior fellow at the School of Advanced Study, University of London, was for many years a professor of English literature at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, and also directed its Centre for Renaissance Studies. He has been publishing since the 1960's; in addition to work on Shakespeare, he has written on Francis Bacon, rhetoric and Greek Tragedy. Two of his most important contri-

butions to the study of Shakespeare until now have been *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage, 1623–1901*¹ and *Appropriating Shakespeare: Contemporary Critical Quarrels*.² The editing of the former confirmed Vickers as a historian of the first rank; the writing of the latter solidified his reputation as the most outspoken and erudite, critic of trendy Renaissance literary theory. And the impact both have had on Vickers the researcher can be seen throughout *Shakespeare, Co-Author*.

The book is divided into two parts. In the first, Vickers discusses the nature of playwriting in England during the Renaissance, in particular the common practice of collaboration, and then reviews the methods that have been used over the years to establish co-authorship. Part Two is an in-depth examination of Shakespeare's collaboration with four authors: George Peele (*Titus Andronicus*), Thomas Middleton (*Timon of Athens*), George Wilkins (*Pericles*), and John Fletcher (*Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*). Most of the evidence presented here is internal, and shows how the lexical, metrical and poetic habits of the co-authors can be detected in the texts. In addition, Vickers devotes the final chapter to explicating how the discrepancies in plot and character in the five plays also indicate more than one author at work. The book also includes two appendices: one a collection of

The views expressed in the book reviews do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors of *The AnaChronisT*.

graphs from researcher Ants Oras's pioneering work into pause patterns in the plays of the period; the other a devastating critique of Foucault and his disciples called "Abolishing the Author? Theory *versus* History."

There is much to admire in *Shakespeare, Co-Author*. The introductory survey of playwriting practices, based on external evidence, is exhaustive and informative. The extensive methodological overview is clearly laid out and, while sometimes technical, easy to understand. Vickers's literature reviews for each play are models of the genre: they are thorough, critical, on the whole balanced, and they also nicely situate his own contribution. His data commentary on the more than 75 tables is also exemplary; student researchers, as well as publishing professionals, could learn something from studying Vickers's technique here. The arguments are solidly supported, and build over the course of the book. And where there are still any doubts about evidence, Vickers is not afraid to acknowledge them. In short, *Shakespeare, Co-Author* should convince most readers that these 5 plays were written in collaboration. Vickers's conclusions are palpable, and un-ignorable.

The methods used for detecting the composing habits of co-authors are both quantitative and qualitative, and derive in part from work carried out on the Beaumont and Fletcher canon, as well as the plays of Thomas Middleton. These

include testing the verse (e.g., counting the number of feminine endings used); looking for parallel passages in other plays (by Shakespeare, his likely co-author, as well as other candidates); documenting vocabulary and other linguistic preferences (some writers prefer *you* instead of *ye*, for example); and counting function words (like *and*, *or*, and *but*). The plays are also subjected to stylometric and socio-linguistic analyses, and their dating and chronology are investigated. On their own any one of these methods is not enough to establish co-authorship, but in combination they are very effective.

Vickers also demonstrates the value of conducting a full literature review, i.e. one that relies on scholarship published before 1975. He makes a point in his preface to emphasize that the work carried out in authorship studies during the 19th century is just as important as more recent work, and that the earlier work is often overlooked today. He argues that not reading – or fully understanding – this literature on collaboration has led to 150 years of scholarship being either dismissed or ignored in critical editions of the five plays. For example, Vickers admonishes the editors responsible for recent individual editions of *Titus Andronicus* published by Arden, New Cambridge and Oxford.

Jonathan Bate, who edited *Titus Andronicus* for the Arden 3rd Series, is no

exception. I had just finished reading his edition before picking up *Shakespeare, Co-Author*, and thought Bate had settled the authorship question once and for all when I read in his introduction that “[c]omputer analysis of [function words] suggests what literary judgement confirms: that the whole of *Titus* is by a single hand and that at this level of linguistic habit is very different from Peele’s. According to Andrew Q. Morton, who undertook the analysis, the statistical probability of Peele’s involvement is less than one in ten thousand million.”³

I was impressed by the figure of “one in ten thousand million,” but Vickers was not. He recounts how Morton’s research was later shown to be seriously flawed, and he takes Bate to task for not knowing – and reporting – this crucial information. He also criticizes the Arden editor for only spending 3 pages on the authorship question. (Vickers devotes 150 pages to *Titus* in his book.) The danger of such a slapdash editorial approach is that it has a knock-on effect: “Our collective understanding of Shakespeare, our need to distinguish his work from that of his co-authors, is not advanced by editors who treat the authorship question in such a partisan or perfunctory manner. . . . The prestige that these major editions enjoy means that their pronouncements on the authorship issue can have a stultifying effect on other editors and critics. In the recent New Penguin edition the textual editor, Sonia

Massai, simply capitulated before Jonathan Bate’s authority, reporting that ‘Bate distances himself from [J. C.] Maxwell’s view that the first act was written by George Peele. . . .’ as if no more need to be said. There, more than eighty years of scholarship by a dozen reputable scholars was buried from view by citing one of Shakespeare’s ‘conservators,’ a deference which, on this issue, was unfortunately misplaced” (210).

Interestingly, Bate himself reviewed *Shakespeare, Co-Author* for the *Times Literary Supplement*, and was not afraid to be self-critical in the light of Vickers’s stinging indictment: “I so wanted to praise the play . . . that I uncritically accepted the arguments for solo authorship put forward both by usually trustworthy scholars and seemingly persuasive stylometricians brandishing computer printouts and big-number statistics. The profound methodological flaws of the latter have now been exposed and new research by MacDonald Jackson has been published which provides compelling evidence that the first act of the play was actually written by George Peele. Next time I edit *Titus* I will follow Vickers’s example and credit it to ‘William Shakespeare with George Peele.’”⁴

Bate is not the only editor who has had his mind changed. Stanley Wells acknowledges Peele as co-author on the title page of the play in the second edition of the Oxford *Complete Works*. In

his introduction Wells writes that recently “scholars [have] increasingly come round to the view that George Peele had a hand in, especially, the first act of the play.”⁵ There can be little doubt that he includes Brian Vickers among these scholars. And when asked to comment on Vickers’s work, Stephen Greenblatt, the general editor of the *Norton Shakespeare*, said “I think the next edition . . . should acknowledge the arguments for the collaborative nature of *Titus*.”⁶ That three highly regarded editors have gone on record so soon to recognize Vickers’s accomplishment says much about the effect this book is having in the field: the results are quickly being disseminated to the general reader.

I do have some reservations about the book; one is methodological and the others are stylistic. The first is related to the manuscript of *The Booke of Sir Thomas More*, perhaps the most significant text in Shakespeare attribution studies. Throughout the book Vickers is at pains to point out that it is important to look at large chunks of text when trying to identify co-authors. This seems to me a sound and reasonable methodology. Yet some of the foundation work in the field has been carried out on *Sir Thomas More*, Shakespeare’s contribution to which consists of a scant 185 lines of text (164 lines supposedly handwritten by Shakespeare himself; the rest in the hand of a scribe). While the

evidence suggests – overwhelmingly – that this is indeed Shakespeare’s work, I am still somewhat troubled by so much being made of so few words. I would have welcomed more discussion on this point.

My other concerns are about Vickers the writer. On occasion his tone is too dogmatic; when taking on other researchers, for example, he can be particularly unmerciful in his criticism. While I believe there is nothing wrong with a writer taking a strong position, I also think this particular writer would win over more readers where he to tone down his sharp language in places. Another problem is that the book lacks a concluding chapter. From what I have seen Vickers’s decision to forego a conclusion is not unique: writers across disciplines are doing the same nowadays. Whether they are doing this because they feel they have written enough already, or are under pressure from editors and publishers to save space, I think they are making a mistake. The closing gambit in any work can often be just as important as the opening one. It is a pity, therefore, that Vickers simply moves on from his chapter on plot and character to the two appendices, and does not round off his discussion with a final chapter that nicely complements his opening one.

Despite these reservations, this is an important work, and as mentioned above one that is already having an

impact on the discipline. Shakespeare's conservators are not the only ones who will have to shift their paradigms because of *Shakespeare Co-Author*. The book shows that writers in the early modern period left their individual stamps on the plays, or the portions of the plays, they wrote, so the critics who for many years have advocated for the 'de-centered' author will also need to reconsider their post-modern positions. Despite the fact that theatre was (and is) a collaborative art, Renaissance authorship studies corroborate what external evidence like Henslowe's diary has always shown: playscripts were written by individuals. And the work these individuals created made it to the printing house, and to the page. Vickers should be celebrated for 're-centering' Renaissance authors.

This will not be the last word on collaboration, as there is an urgent need to extend Vickers's work to two other plays: *Henry VI, Part 1* and *Edward III*. But these are more difficult cases because, like *The Booke of Sir Thomas More*, they probably involve more than two authors. For now, though, *Shakespeare Co-Author* is recommended reading for anyone interested in the collaborative practices of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists in general and the work of one author with his company of collaborators in particular.

Tom Rooney

Notes

1. 6 volumes; London and Boston: Routledge, 1974–81.
2. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993.
3. Jonathan Bate, *Introduction to Titus Andronicus, by William Shakespeare* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 83.
4. Jonathan Bate, "In the Script Factory," *Times Literary Supplement* (18 April 2003), pp. 3–4.
5. Stanley Wells, "Introduction to *Titus Andronicus*," in Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, et al. ed., *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), p. 155.
6. William S. Niederkorn, "Seeing the Fingerprints of Other Hands in Shakespeare," *The New York Times* (2 September 2003), p. E1.

"Metaphysics themselves are but a dry romance"

Uttara Natarajan, Tom Paulin, and Duncan Wu, ed., *Metaphysical Hazlitt: Bicentenary Essays* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005)

C. I. Patterson, Jr., in an article of 1981, concluded that "the need for thorough reappraisal of [Hazlitt's] criticism and his present high standing as a critic seems evident."¹ What happened was, however, exactly the opposite, since the eighties proved to be the period when Hazlitt started to achieve an increasingly stable "standing" among the canonical writers of the romantic period. David Bromwich's foundational study appeared in 1983; then came Stanley Jones's *Life* in 1989, which was followed by Uttara Natarajan's systematic account of Hazlitt's philosophy in 1998, and Tom Paulin's analysis of his style in the same year; 1998 also saw the appearance of a nine-volume critical edition of the *Selected Writings of William Hazlitt* by Duncan Wu. A new biography, by A. C. Grayling, appeared in 2001, to mention only the most important publications.² *Metaphysical Hazlitt*, by the sheer fact that a volume of articles by the most distinguished experts was published by Routledge on the bicentenary of the publication of Hazlitt's first book (in 1805) shows

that the efforts of these scholars have not been in vain.

What, then, is Hazlitt's *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action: Being an Argument in favour of the Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind*? This is the work of a very young man (he was planning the book already as a teenager), and his only attempt to produce something like a treatise in an eighteenth-century mode. He formulates very precisely the problem to which he is seeking an answer: "The question is whether the individual is the same being in such sort or manner as that he has an equal, absolute interest in every thing relating to himself, or that his future impressions affect him as much and impel him to action with the same mechanical force as if they were actually present."³

The answer to this complex question is a definite no. Simplifying the argument rather crudely, he suggests that the individual is not "the same being" but many different beings. We are connected to our past selves through memory, to the present through sensation, and to the future through imagination. Now we cannot have the memories of anyone else, nor can we share their sensations, but the imagination that carries me out of my present self into my future self is the same faculty that can carry me out of myself into someone else. And since all action (and all our volitions behind it) is directed at

the future, the root of selfish and benevolent behaviour is the same.

The authors of this volume, by focusing on this single philosophical work, can disregard many important issues in Hazlitt-scholarship. His participation in the massive print culture of the age,⁴ his political journalism, the generic difference between this and most of his later essays,⁵ or the gender implications of his writings attract little or no attention, although Hazlitt seemed almost to beg this last by his preposterous remark that “no woman ever read or would ever comprehend the meaning of” the *Essay* (quoted by Natarajan, p. 4 – may this have anything to do with the fact that ten out of eleven contributors are men?). The overall impression that the volume makes is that its writers have accepted Natarajan’s warning, in her monograph on Hazlitt, against the over-dominance of historicist readings.⁶ Most of the essays can be read within the tradition of the history of ideas. The articles are arranged into three sections: those in the first concentrate on the *Essay* itself, and its place in Hazlitt’s oeuvre, in the second we have three papers that focus on Hazlitt’s influence on his better-known contemporaries (especially Wordsworth and Shelley, the much-discussed case of Keats receives little attention here), and the final three essays compare him to major philosophers either of his era, or our own.

The first section begins with a detailed delineation of the *Essay*’s arguments by David Bromwich. He has already analysed this work in his monograph on Hazlitt, and, he claims that he intends to correct the interpretation there given, because he then underestimated the importance of the theme of “instinctive attraction to the good” in that book (17). In fact, he did attend to the problem there, but regarded it as a contradiction in the *Essay*, since, in his interpretation, it contains proofs for the possibility of disinterestedness mostly from our psychology, whereas, at certain moments, this is interrupted by arguments from the nature of the objects of our action. If the object is interesting in itself, “then there could be no virtue in unselfishness.”⁷ Here, however, he finds this explicable in light of the significance of the idea of liberty in Hazlitt’s political writings, which, he suggests, is the equivalent of the abstract good of the metaphysical work.

The second paper, by James Mulvihill, focuses on the account of identity in the *Essay*. Mulvihill concludes that Hazlitt’s is a “dualistic proposition:” “identity is both compound and distinct – never the same from moment to moment, yet the continuing focus of consciousness and perception.” (41) This is basically the psychological counterpart of Natarajan’s account of “the aggregate” in Hazlittian epistemology, which

replaces traditional concepts of abstract ideas and universality. She defines it as “a universal or general reality, each of whose components is individual and particular.”⁸ Mulvihill contends that this theory of identity permeates the whole of Hazlitt’s writings from his theatrical criticism to the *Spirit of the Age*. The question of the unity of Hazlitt’s oeuvre is a contended one. Opinions vary from Natarajan, who finds a “quite astonishing consistency” in the “complexity of Hazlitt’s thought” to Dart, who opts for its “self-contradictory” nature, and Whale, in whose judgment it “defies system or theory.”⁹ Mulvihill’s is thus an interesting, sophisticated in-between position.

In the next essay Philip Davis takes up the idea from the *Essay* that the philosophy of self-love, propounded by Hobbes and his followers, is nothing but a secondary consideration which is preceded by the instantaneous workings of the imagination, characterised by unsurpassed swiftness and incalculability, which results from the ease with which it moves between self and other. Davis points out that Hazlitt found the best example of natural disinterestedness in Shakespeare, who could identify with all of his characters at the same time, and could also create a dramatic field in which the dynamics of the imaginative process could have full play. The problem with this analysis is not so much that much of its argu-

ment coincides with Tom Paulin’s in *The Day-star of Liberty* (1998) – where motion and dynamism were already central concerns, both in the analysis of the philosophical bases of Hazlitt’s thinking and in the description of his style – but that it fails to address the crucial question, posed by Uttara Natarajan, whether Shakespeare is actually the prime example for Hazlitt as to the workings of the imagination, or rather, as she has suggested, “the glorious exception.”¹⁰ This is a crucial issue partly because it is decisive as to the continuity between Hazlitt’s and Keats’ thinking about poetry.

John Whale’s is one of the healthily sceptical voices in a volume in which few of the authors dare openly criticise Hazlitt; this is probably the result of the urge behind the whole enterprise to foster his recognition.. The chapter on Hazlitt in his book, *Imagination Under Pressure* is based on the conviction that the essayist’s “aesthetics are caught between sympathy and power, the learned and the vulgar, the body and ideas.”¹¹ While in that book the first two pairs are in the foreground, here he focuses on the last one: the suppositional selfishness of sexual desire as a threat to the conception of disinterestedness in the *Essay*. He points out that in the early writings, and especially in the *Reply to Malthus*, Hazlitt seems to believe in the “culturally constructed nature of sexuality” (59), while this

belief evaporates altogether by the time he comes to write his 'A Letter to my Son' (1822), where love is represented as standing in direct contrast with the world of culture and is mostly seen as an issue of sheer physical desire. One should maybe emphasise that although Hazlitt often allows his personal disappointment to distort his statements concerning the relation of the sexes, even to the point of open sexism, still the complex and contradictory nature of human motivations will remain a constant theme in his writings, which may preserve something of the subtlety of his earlier remarks concerning the nature of sexual desire.

Paul Hamilton's article, which concludes the first section of the book, examines the relationship between the private and the public in Hazlitt's oeuvre. In his youthful *Essay* he argued for the possibility of an imaginative merger between the two, while in his political writings one pillar of his Jacobinical outlook was the belief in the potential of any private person to gain an important public role, which goes a long a long way to explain his admiration of Napoleon as well. This is a central theme in his criticism of contemporary poetry also, which Hamilton exemplifies by quoting from Hazlitt's readings of Shelley ("eaten up with personality") and Wordsworth. "Briefly, there is nothing poetical in the spirit of the age, and so creative minds like Words-

worth are forced into the untenable egotism of pure Dissent" (73–74). In contrast to Natarajan, who claimed in *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense* that egotism, to the essayist's mind, was inseparable from the nature of poetry; Hamilton convincingly presents this problem as part of his criticism of modernity only.

The second part begins with one of the most exciting pieces of the whole collection, in which Duncan Wu reconstructs, going beyond the account given in "My First Acquaintance with Poets," the events of the three weeks when Hazlitt stayed with Wordsworth and Coleridge at Nether Stowey and Alfoxden in 1798, and the disputes that took place there. Building on Uttara Natarajan's account of Hazlitt's philosophy as emphasising the independent powers of the human mind and being in a significant part the secularization of Unitarian theological doctrine, he shows that Hazlitt was in the unique position not only to become acquainted (later) with the Two-Part *Prelude*, but to offer a criticism that significantly challenges the whole philosophy that was to sustain "The Recluse." Wu analyses in detail how Hazlitt's concept of the empowered mind clashed with the idea of "wise passiveness" that was to be central to the necessitarian theme of the grand philosophical poem, and how his atheism provoked both Coleridge's Unitar-

ian faith and Wordsworth's "mystic perception of the natural world" (94). He makes us aware that the "exceptionally well read" (89) Hazlitt was "even at the tender age of twenty . . . fully qualified to advise on 'The Recluse'" (85), and that Wordsworth took him seriously enough to have to reassure himself in a number of poems that Hazlitt cannot have been right after all.¹²

Tom Paulin is probably the only person who is able to relish everything that Hazlitt wrote, from his masculinist outbursts to his anti-Catholicism. Here he begins his chapter by quoting a very long footnote from the *Essay* in which Hazlitt criticises, in epistemological terms, the superficiality of the French character. The French seem to be unable to create connections between perceptions and the abstractions of the mind: either all is abstract as in the rhetoric of their tragedies, or there is but a free-floating succession of unconnected perceptions, a fault Hazlitt usually attributes to British philosophy from Hobbesian sensualism to Hartley's associationalism. Paulin contends that the solution Hazlitt offers to this dilemma is very similar to Wordsworth's concept of the "spots of time"; he also points out that the two authors may have borrowed certain images from each other. One might say that Paulin, in his zeal to "restore [Hazlitt] to his rightful place as philosopher,

master critic, political journalist and unequalled prose stylist" (111) probably stretches the case for borrowings from Hazlitt too far, but he certainly does indicate a number of important parallels with Wordsworth, and, in passing, De Quincey.

Uttara Natarajan's study about Hazlitt's influence on Shelley's moral philosophy is the last in this section. She argues that there is an element in the connection that Shelley establishes between moral action and the imagination that is markedly different from the theories of David Hume and Adam Smith (other important influences), but shows important parallels with Hazlitt's speculations. In the theories of the two Scottish philosophers the imagination is always dependant upon the senses, and is ultimately self-regarding, Hazlitt, on the other hand, subordinates the senses to the mind, and describes a "circle of sympathy" that does not diminish with the distance from the self. Natarajan, not really interested in political implications, is satisfied with pointing out the structural parallels and differences in these moral philosophies, and does not add that the relative weakness of the imagination in Hume and Smith largely contributes to the importance they accord to positive law, and the keeping up of inherited social structures, which is clearly unacceptable for the more radically minded romantics. It is comforting, however, to

learn that there was a more creative interchange between the two writers than Hazlitt's dismissive statements about Shelley's poetry.

Tim Milnes's essay is the first of the last group that examine Hazlitt's *Essay* in the context of more established philosophers. Milnes, the other healthily sceptical contributor to the volume, has already written an article in which he unearths certain unresolved dilemmas in Hazlitt's oeuvre, caught, as he claims, between idealism and empiricism, without recourse to the solution already offered by Kant's transcendental philosophy.³³ It would have benefited a collection of studies that argues for Hazlitt's recognition as a philosopher to try to face up to this challenge. In this essay he contrasts Hazlitt's and Bentham's theories of language, and contends that while the romantic essayist is constructing a metaphysics based on truth as the correspondence between mind and reality, the utilitarian philosopher manages to work himself free from metaphysics altogether by reducing the question of truth to questions of meaning. This goes against the grain of a tradition that, Milnes claims, we have inherited ultimately from John Stuart Mill, according to which the figurative, metaphorical language of romanticism effectively deconstructs the matter-of-fact empiricism of utilitarianism. On the contrary, in this case at least, it seems

to be Bentham, and not Hazlitt, who better understands the performative nature of language.

Frederick Burwick, in his article, by far the toughest reading in the whole book, points out certain parallels between Schelling's (especially in his 1809 essay *Of Human Freedom*) and Hazlitt's concept of freedom. He emphasises that both were formulating their moral philosophies under similar political circumstances in the aftermath of the French Revolution, and the coming of the Napoleonic wars. Both responded to necessitarian arguments by a reconsideration of the concept of self, both were informed by the contemporary science of the brain, and both believed in the disinterestedness of the mind. Obviously, in this case it is only possible to speak about parallels; influence – either way – is out of the question.

Grayling, in the final essay of the book, examines the relationship between the early *Essay's* defence of disinterestedness, and the more pessimistic analysis of our egotistical tendencies in the later writings. I find the contrast somewhat artificial, since Hazlitt readily admits from the very beginning that there is a "strong and uneasy attachment to self which comes at last (in most minds) to overpower every generous feeling."¹⁴ The *Essay* does not present an especially optimistic anthropology; it is only concerned to show that

there is a theoretical possibility of disinterested action. Grayling argues that although there are places where Hazlitt takes a more extreme view, there is evidence enough to suggest that he understood the role “nurture” plays in the formation of a character, and he was also aware of the contradictory motivations behind our actions. Meanwhile, he compares Hazlitt’s arguments with those of P. F. Strawson (1919–2006). The latter philosopher is best-known for his contributions to ordinary-language philosophy and metaphysics. Both thinkers seem to believe that awareness of my own mind, and awareness of that of others mutually presuppose one another. Self-love and benevolence, to put it plainly, are inseparable.

In conclusion, I can only say that anyone interested in the fortunes of Hazlitt has to welcome that we are able to see him now in his metaphysical guise as well. This book will certainly increase the readers’ awareness that there are other reasons for studying Hazlitt’s philosophy, than to understand more about the conceptual bases of his literary, art or social criticism, and his influence on the major poets of the period. Hazlitt’s writings, these studies prove, can be taken seriously as an interesting contribution to the history of philosophy as well. I have to add nonetheless that it would be important to take the more conversational writ-

ings just as seriously. One should note Gregory Dart’s shrewd observation that “Hazlitt’s essay on sympathy had failed, in a way, to be sympathetic.”¹⁵ It is possibly the later writings that realised, in their use of language, what the early *Essay* propounded in principle. The dialogical, controversial nature of these writings (which is a central theme in Jones’s biography, to whose memory the volume is dedicated), and the unique way in which they incorporate quotations, perform disinterestedness as literary practice. The Hazlitt that emerges from these studies is certainly more recognisably a philosopher than the one that we are used to, but also a bit less colourful. Like the grey and white covers of the book.

Bálint Gárdos

Notes

1. Charles I. Patterson, Jr., “Hazlitt’s Criticism in Retrospect,” *SEL* 21 (1981), p. 663.
2. David Bromwich, *Hazlitt: The Mind of a Critic*, 2nd edition (New Heaven and London: Yale UP, 1999); Stanley Jones, *Hazlitt, A Life: From Winterslow to Frith Street* (Oxford: OUP, 1989); Uttara Natara-jan, *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense: Criticism, Morals, and the Metaphysics of Power*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Tom Paulin, *The Day-Star of Liberty: William Hazlitt’s Radical Style* (London: Faber & Faber, 1998); William Hazlitt, *Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, ed. Duncan Wu, 9 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1998); A. C. Grayling, *The Quarrel of the*

Age: The Life and Times of William Hazlitt (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2001).

3. William Hazlitt, *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe, 21 vols. (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent, 1930-4), Vol. 1, p. 30.

4. The topic, for example, of an excellent chapter in Mark Parker's *Literary Magazines and British Romanticism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), 59-105.

5. Although Uttara Natarajan has suggested that the "familiar essay," even by the choice of its genre, can be understood as a philosophical statement. See Natarajan, "The Veil of Familiarity: Romantic Philosophy and the Familiar Essay," *SiR* 42 (2003) 27-56.

6. "[W]e are in some danger of forgetting that the history of events may not take precedence over the history of ideas. Nor is the second simply conflatable with the first" (Natarajan, *Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense*, p. 2).

7. Bromwich, p. 53.

8. Natarajan, p. 132.

9. Natarajan, p. 3; Gregory Dart, *Rousseau, Robespierre and English Romanticism* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), p. 210; John Whale, *Imagination under Pressure, 1789-1832: Aesthetics, Politics and Utility* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), p. 110.

10. Natarajan, p. 9.

11. Whale, p. 110.

12. On the topic of Hazlitt's training in philosophy we probably owe the best account to Wu as well. Duncan Wu, "'Polemical Divinity': William Hazlitt at the University of Glasgow," *Romanticism* 6 (2000) 163-177.

13. Tim Milnes, "Seeing in the Dark: Hazlitt's Immanent Idealism," *SiR* 39 (2000) 3-25.

14. Hazlitt, *The Complete Works*, Vol. 1, p. 42.

15. Dart, p. 216.

Thrice Told Tales

Andrew Biswell, *The Real Life of Anthony Burgess* (London: Picador, 2005)

If they cannot be courteous, reviewers should at least be accurate, and if they cannot possibly be either, being apologetic is their last resort. Coming from Robert Graves, these injunctions were primarily meant for the ears of a youthfully arrogant critic of his, Graves's, own work. The "pushy lad, too anxious to tell the famous poet . . . how to go about his job" was none other than John Wilson, an undergraduate student of English literature at Manchester University, himself eventually to become an internationally acclaimed writer, known to the world as Anthony Burgess. If a biography can be seen as an extended review of sorts – and why should it not be seen as such? – then the least to be said of Andrew Biswell's *The Real Life of Anthony Burgess*, the source of the story involving Graves and Burgess (68), is that its writer took the late poet's advice to heart. While being meticulously accurate about his facts, Biswell is always courteous to a fault when it comes to offering opinion. As for being apologetic, this latest account of Burgess's life and times displays so many of the virtues and so few of the shortcomings of the genre that its author has no reason whatever to beg the reader's forgiveness. What follows is an attempt at rendering Andrew Biswell

the courtesy of being as accurate in its assessment of his work's impressive strengths and negligible weaknesses as he was when going about his incomparably more challenging job of writing what can aspire to be Anthony Burgess's authoritative, if not authorised, biography.

Twelve years after the death of its subject, the arrival of a truly reliable assessment of Burgess' life was long overdue. Not that *The Real Life* was the only guide to the phenomenon called Anthony Burgess. But then, putting down a previous treatment of Burgess's life, the uninformed reader with little else than Roger Lewis's misguided effort¹ to go by will have inferred that a somewhat less rancorous assessment of John Anthony Wilson Burgess's failures and achievements than that produced by the author of *Anthony Burgess* would take considerably more courtesy than the journalist-writer of Burgess's first comprehensive post-mortem biography had at his command. Lacking the passionate intensity which animates Lewis, Biswell shows incomparably more courtesy and sympathy to his book's subject than his fellow-biographer's tabloid-style compendium of half-truths and mad imaginings displays. Biswell's Burgess emerges from the plentiful factual evidence amassed by the author of the bulky *Real Life* as a very likeable character bearing little, if any, resemblance to Lewis's monstrous bogeyman. While duly taking

note of Burgess's weaknesses as a human being – his class-snobbery, his drunken rowdiness well beyond the age of unreason, a more than healthy amount of self-pity coupled with a tendency of self-mythologisation and even self-aggrandisement – Biswell convincingly describes the writer of the Enderby-novels as a person far surpassing Burgess's own, fictionalized self-portrait in *The Clockwork Testament's* Enderby in terms of intelligence, tact, forgiveness and generosity (221). Spiteful as he could get when confronted with the stupid arrogance of the high and the mighty, this lapsed Catholic always remained "your true Christian." His masochistic devotion to a drunken nymphomaniac of a first wife throughout twenty-four years of their married life before her shrunk liver collapsed, his untiring politeness, on account of their undeniable talent, to a churlish Kingsley Amis or a peevish Graham Greene, or his inexhaustible patience with the less gifted in his capacity as practical literary critic, present Andrew Biswell's Burgess as a very decent person indeed.

Biswell's thesis that Burgess was only too full of the milk of human kindness is amply documented by a wide variety of testimonials painstakingly collected by the scholarly author of *The Real Life*. Ranging from reminiscences voiced by brothers-in-arms with whom Burgess served during World War II to warm words of acknowledgement spoken by

fellow-faculty in England, Malaya and the United States as well as writers, editors and artists of all descriptions, these miscellaneous recollections carefully filed away in Biswell's archives for his magnum opus include the complementary opinion of no lesser figure than Joseph Heller. In an interview given shortly after being diagnosed with a life-threatening disease, the American novelist spoke about his one-time colleague at City College, New York, a municipal institution of supposedly higher education whose dubious academic standards resulted from the school's politically correct open-admission policies. Heller recalls Burgess as a human being whose "enormous inner generosity" the interviewee himself had never come near to in his whole life. No matter what "rubbish . . . a rebellious, angry student with a broken life" threw at him, Burgess, already an internationally acclaimed writer at the time, would continue to care, to "give serious thought to even their most absurd statements." "To him," Heller concludes, "everyone mattered" (quoted 350).

The sympathy with which Biswell regards Burgess the man is extended to Burgess the creative artist, too. Biswell's exhaustive discussion of the central pieces in the Burgess-canon as well as his passing remarks on the works on the peripheries of the writer's phenomenally large oeuvre of thirty-three novels, sixteen non-fiction books and innumerable

shorter pieces in every major literary – and sub- or paraliterary – genre reveal a critic whose erudition enhances, rather than blunts, his readiness to appreciate all that is worth appreciating. Whether it is the attentiveness with which he discovers how the earliest Burgess's, or Wilson's, prompt appropriation of fresh voices, such as the poetic idiom of a then newly published Hopkins, anticipated the future novelist's hallmark preoccupations and literary techniques (38–39), or his casual gesture impressing even the veteran specialist as he inserts an exhaustive list of fictional devices borrowed by Burgess from Joyce to add another dimension to *Nothing Like the Sun* (287, 290), or his alertness to Burgess's undiscovered strengths as a short-story writer (66), the acumen of Biswell's observations rarely fails to command respect.

This is not to say that the author of *The Real Life* is always infallible as a guide to the vast field he covers. Although he is remarkably well informed on just about everything however vaguely related to his subject from the mortality rate among patients of the 1918–19 Spanish flu pandemic, through the ethnic makeup of Manchester's fabled Hallé Orchestra, or the poet Dylan Thomas's drinking and sexual habits, Biswell does make the occasional faux pass as he goes along. Among these is the implied claim, made in connection with Burgess's first novel *A Vision of*

Battlements, that the reader of *Ulysses* is constrained, by some unspecified intrinsic quality of the novel, to recognize, rather than freely discard, the epic scaffolding of Joyce's classic (102), or the remark that the first Polish-language translation of *One Hand Clapping* was made in 1973 and that it was in Warsaw that the novel was "adapted as a popular stage musical" (225n⁺). Venturing further afield to comment on the original form of Lynne Burgess's Christian name, Biswell remarks on the difficulties confronting an Englishman trying to pronounce the fabled Welsh "consonantal double L" (72), thus coining a pleonasm that Llewela's husband would never have let slip – despite his being condescendingly referred to as an "inspired amateur" of a linguist by Peter Green, a novelist-translator cited approvingly in *The Real Life* (291).

It is to his credit that Biswell himself does not, at any point in his impressive work, lay claim to professional expertise in linguistics. Yet this minor, and in most cases irrelevant, deficiency might be the reason why he overlooks the significance of a language-related remark made by the character Dr Branom in *A Clockwork Orange*. The "subliminal penetration" that the scientist overseeing Alex's brainwashing believes to be responsible for the predominance of Slavic, as opposed to Gypsy or Cockney, roots in his patient's "tribal dialect" must come from outside the location

where the story unfolds.² Russian, as opposed to Alex and his droogs' Nadsat, a patois clearly based on Standard English before all else, is thus understood to be spoken in the geopolitical "other" of Alex and Dr Branom's mutual country, a rival very much like the Soviet Union at the time the novel was written. From this it logically follows that "the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics" cannot, as Biswell believes (241–42), be among the theoretically possible spatial settings of *A Clockwork Orange*. Familiar as some salient features of little Alex's dystopian world may be to readers on either side of what used to be the Iron Curtain, *A Clockwork Orange* is not a Soviet-style dictatorship. If neither linguistics nor geography is Biswell's forte, astronomy is not among his strengths either. Otherwise he would not speak of an asteroid wiping out human life at the end of *The End of the World News*. Emphatically described as a major planet early on in the novel,³ the iron-heavy Lynx cannot possibly "crash-land" on Earth (114, 384), whose mass is but a fraction of the giant heavenly – or hellish – body, which literally pulverizes this world of ours in the novel's horrific conclusion.⁴ To avoid such an astronomical howler one does not have to keep pace with the rapidly changing definitions of what is and what is not a planet issued by the International Astronomical Union or some such gathering of authorized stargazers; it is enough to have a look at

the cover illustration on a paperback edition of *The End of the World News*.

It would not be merely ungenerous, or discourteous, to continue listing Biswell's lapses of attention – it would be well-nigh impossible, too. On the whole, *The Real Life of Anthony Burgess* strikes one as the most reliable, the most meticulously accurate, and certainly the most up-to-date source of factual information on its subject. Sparing no time, effort or expense to unearth the last bit of decisive evidence pertaining to the controversial, exemplary or simply interesting aspects of Anthony Burgess's endlessly exciting life and continually relevant work, Andrew Biswell must have covered thousands of miles and spent hundreds of hours as he delved into archival material held in Manchester, Texas, Angers or Monaco, recorded interviews and exchanged letters with the late writer's friends, relatives, enemies and acquaintances besides reading and rereading those millions upon millions of words that one of the previous century's most prolific poet-novelist-reviewer-scholar-scriptwriter-composers had ever set to paper. Carefully collected, classified and edited before astutely commented on, this daunting wealth of material yields credible answers to all the major issues, critical as well as biographical, that Anthony Burgess's acts, thoughts and writings have prompted. Did Burgess's distant ancestors include Bonnie Prince Charlie

aka Prince Edward Stuart, the Young Pretender? Could the Manchester-born artist as a young man smuggle into his prudish country a banned copy of *Ulysses* in cut-up pieces hidden beneath his clothes? Is it true that Burgess's first wife was raped by a gang of American army deserters in London during the blitz? Was the ailment sending him sprawling unconscious before his class in Brunei the inoperable brain tumour he believed his doctors had told Lynne about or was the medical case dreamed up by his imagination working overtime? Had he some thinly veiled homosexual tendencies or was he just a curious observer of sexual practices that his "omnifutnant" acquaintances were continually engaged in? Was he arm-twisted by his American publishers into truncating *A Clockwork Orange* to unwittingly provide Stanley Kubrick with the brutally pessimistic story of the American director's (in)famous film adaptation or was little Alex denied freedom of choice of Burgess's own free choosing? Was Burgess the novelist cheated of royalties rightfully his by the producers of the *Clockwork* movie? Did he leave England permanently for respectable reasons based on righteous moral principles or was he no more than another irritatingly rich English tax-exile evading his financial obligations to his poorer fellow citizens? These are some of the questions bedeviling the expert researcher as well as the "common reader" that Biswell

answers convincingly or demonstrates to be unanswerable in the absence of conclusive evidence.

Had he done no more than that, Andrew Biswell would deserve every praise. And it is far from all. Biswell's major contribution to Burgess-scholarship has very much to offer to the non-specialist and the professional student of the great twentieth-century writer's work. Besides qualifying as a highly readable, upmarket specimen of a genre enormously popular with a large audience outside as well as inside the groves of academe, *The Real Life of Anthony Burgess* is an intelligently self-questioning work that engages issues that have preoccupied professional practitioners of advanced literary theory for some time now. As the allusion in the book's very title to Burgess's much-liked writer Vladimir Nabokov's first English-language novel reveals, Biswell is as much interested in the process of how the chronicler of a famous life is continuously frustrated in his efforts to reconstruct what in fact happened as he is in achieving his goal of writing the definitive, or real, biography of the notability whose life is under scrutiny. Recognizing Burgess's tendencies to fictionalize his life and indeed to ransack his fiction for his autobiography – as the aging writer did when rehashing the story of *Honey for the Bears* in the Leningrad-episodes of his "Confessions"⁵ – respecting his interviewee's diffidence, jealousy or plain forgetful-

ness, acknowledging the lack or contradictory nature of the documents at his disposal, or simply abhorring the “knowingness” endemic to much current academic criticism, Biswell often refrains from formulating a final answer. Like “V,” the narrator of *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, and very much unlike the writer of another biography mentioned above bearing the self-assured title *Anthony Burgess*, Biswell is only too aware of the fact that one should never be “too certain of learning the past from the lips of the present.”⁶ As his refusal to offer his, presumably *real*, version of what happened to Lynne on that blacked-out night in London before she lost her pregnancy or his unwillingness to choose the real ending of *A Clockwork Orange* on the basis of the original manuscript and the belated exchange between a retroactively righteous author and a deeply offended American editor, Biswell does not need Sebastian Knight’s biographer to warn him: *caveat auctor*. Biswell knows it fully well on his own that “what you are told is threefold: shaped by the teller, reshaped by the listener, concealed from both by the dead man of the tale.”⁷

Suspicious as we, too, had better be as readers in general, when we come across the occasional confident claim in *The Real Life of Anthony Burgess*, we can safely suspend our own, postmodern, disbelief. When Biswell proposes to date a young Burgess’s – or Wilson’s – first

exposure to *Ulysses*, to locate the Wilsons’ residence in the seaside town of Hove, or to establish the identity of the anonymous “Canadian academic” who had offered to write what was meant to be Burgess’s very first biography, we can safely assume that Inspector Biswell interprets his clues correctly. Provided we do not take our philosophical nominalism too seriously, and still hold the unfashionable belief that there is a life out there and that it is real.

Ákos I. Farkas

Notes

1. Roger Lewis, *Anthony Burgess* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002).
2. Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 91.
3. Anthony Burgess, *The End of the World News* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), p. 22.
4. Burgess, *The End*, p. 386.
5. Anthony Burgess, *You’ve Had Your Time: Being the Second Part of the Confessions of Anthony Burgess* (London: Penguin, 1991), 37–53.
6. Vladimir Nabokov, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (New York: New Directions, 1959), p. 52.
7. Nabokov, p. 52.

Fa(c)ulty Towers?

Elaine Showalter, *Faculty Towers: The Academic Novel and Its Discontents* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005)

By providing a general overview of the last fifty years' campus novels, *Faculty Towers* (2005) is, in many respects, a good start for filling a gap long due in literary history. Though it lacks an international context, it discusses over 30 novels, using sufficient quoted material in only 150 pages, so it could easily be set as a reference work for students of the Anglo-American academic novel.

Complying with the request of the original commissioners of the book to be a personal account of a literary and cultural phenomenon that keeps the critic's mind engaged, *Faculty Towers* is, at the same time, informative, instructive and anecdotal. The personal voice does not only reveal a sense of humour but also allows for self- and metareflexive comments, which Showalter makes an estimable use of. She points out in the introduction, for example, how dubious the following enterprise in her position really is: "Perhaps it's the ultimate narcissism for an English professor to write literary criticism about novels by English professors about English professors. . ." (3).

Her reading of autobiography into fiction and fiction into autobiography in

a chronological time frame makes the genre of Showalter's text an interesting subject for speculation. As the obviously dissatisfied *TLS* critic of *Faculty Towers* rightly states: "This is not exactly literary criticism, and it is not literary history either."¹ What is it then? It may be argued that what seems a critical account of the history of the academic novel, reads more as the *Bildungsroman* of a female academic called Elaine Showalter. Just like *Jane Eyre*, it is written in the first person singular, and the author-narrator makes it clear in each chapter which point of her career she is at (getting her PhD: 50, participating in an MLA convention: 66) and what she benefits from her experience: "the Milton scholar Isabel MacCaffrey . . . who had been my professor and role model when she taught at Bryn Mawr" (87) and readings: "That piece of inside information spared me another humiliating conversation with my male colleagues, who all somehow knew this already" (70).

The gradual development of Showalter's identity from a faculty wife to a tenured university professor goes hand in hand with the evolution of the campus novel. Her audience are "women who appear in the background, as students, as eccentric dons and dames, and especially as faculty wives" (16). Thus, it is made clear that the *Bildungsroman* is aimed at women, whichever stage of their career they are

at, who are, like her, both personally and professionally affiliated with the university as an institution and community, and need to know what is going on there for their own benefit.

It is both funny and instructive how fiction and (auto)biography are intertwined in the text. Depending on her self-perception perhaps, Showalter shows different reactions to critical associations of fictional characters in campus novels with her own self: she delights in being related to a male power freak celebrated for his academic achievements (135) but, more than once, refuses the seemingly most feared identification with middle-aged frustrated female characters, who are even called "Elaine" (1, 132). From this it emerges how Elaine Showalter, the author-narrator would picture herself or even (mis)behave as Elaine Showalter, the character. She actually reflects on how fiction and fact may affect each other in case of another person, Stanley Fish, whose publication of a major work was regarded as a long expected outcome of the biography of the fictional character he has been identified with, Morris Zapp, featured by David Lodge's academic novel, *Changing Places* (81). In other words, if you are a well-known academic, a campus novel is another tool to keep up or ruin your reputation.

However, the university novel may not only serve as a manipulative means

of power at a personal level but also at an institutional one. It is very obvious, for example, how protective the author is of Princeton. Having spent most of her academic career at this institution, Showalter's bias and loyalty towards it are not surprising: she declares preference of one novel over the other just because it takes place on Princeton's campus (37). Yet, she may seem suspect for the same reason when she simply uses her authority to save the university's reputation against the accusation, voiced in one of the campus novels, of selecting MLA interviewees on the basis of their treatment of the coffee machine: "In Princeton's defense, I can guarantee that these rumours are false" (109).

As far as the organisation of *Faculty Towers* is concerned, it is broken up into six chapters, each surveying the output of academic fiction per decade, from the fifties up to the first years of the twenty first century. This structuring is certainly beneficial from a literary historical point of view, as it makes the evolution of campus novels easy to follow, and it is a must if one accepts reading the account as a *Bildungsroman*. Nevertheless, as Showalter also admits, chronology may not be the best organising principle (15). It actually seems to limit the discussion of university novels to describing plots and enlisting characters and not leaving much room for thematic issues. This is

also pointed out by the *TLS*-critique, which, after sarcastically reducing *Faulty Towers* to a banality, hints at some topics which could have been dealt with in more detail, such as the university's relationship with utopianism or its lost commitment to education.²

Besides the evaluation of some of the fifties' academic novels as accounts of idyllic, self-enclosed campuses, the university as a (failed) utopian community re-emerges in the conclusion only, in connection with the utopistic Hazard Adams-novel, *Home* (2001). Here, Showalter discusses issues like the possible decline and fall of English departments and staff's refusal to confront it, the reasons for this destruction by both outer forces, such as business, other sciences and technology, and inner ones, like the loss of purpose of humanities (149-152). If these problems received the attention they deserve, the title would not just ring the bell of the popular BBC sit-com series, *Faulty Towers*, as explained in the introduction (6), but also of a book bearing the same title, which was written by two economists on the weaknesses of the structure of higher education. In *Faulty Towers: Tenure and the Structure of Higher Education*, Ryan C. Amacher and Roger E. Meniers challenge the common assumption that tenure means lifelong employment for academics and plead for changing the structure of colleges and universities in a way that

these institutions also function as profit-making entities.³

Two more thematic issues are raised in the introduction, which seem interesting enough to have been developed further: one is the duality characterising the temporality of scholars' life, and the other concerns the Victorian precursors of the campus novel. The section on academic time (9-15) outlines the double time frame academics encounter: the circularity of the seasons characterising the academic year, on the one hand, and the linearity of a lecture, a day or, for that matter, of academic progress itself, on the other. Maybe unconsciously, but even Showalter's reflection on the evolution of the subgenre of the campus novel follows this duality: as a result of the linear, chronological progress of the last fifty years' university fiction, "its scribes have moved from hope to endurance to anticipation to cynicism and around to hope again" (15). Thus, as she reinforces in the conclusion, the academic novel is "back to where it started, with some changes that reflect the historical evolution" (143-4).

It would be tempting to examine what connections there are between the tension arising from this double time frame and both the utopistic enclosedness of universities against other "realities" and the apparent genre hybridity that characterises campus novels, including the circular romance and the

linear (industrial or social) Victorian novel. Showalter claims that the most successful campus novels are rewrites of Victorian texts (9), which is a statement to be verified and found reasons for. Again, there might be a relationship between nostalgically reintroducing certain Victorian conventions and the utopistic nature of universities.

One Victorian text is analysed in detail, however, or, to be more precise, one character of a Victorian novel: Mr. Casaubon of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, the importance of which is carefully constructed and often reinforced. Casaubon embodies the myth of the male scholar: "the spirit of all that is sterile, cold, and dark" (7), against which different counter-images of the female academics can be created. After abundantly projecting his character into those of male professors of the campus novels discussed (27, 48, 114), and thus exercising strong criticism of the patriarchal practices still prevalent in the academia, in one of the last remarks of the text, this type of scholar is plainly declared unwished for in future university staff (152).

Through the consequent structuring of most analyses of individual novels, following the general description of the plot and male characters, the focus on female characters receives an emphatic final position with a good chance of sticking in readers' mind. However, since the observations are rarely longer

than few sentences, they do not pass the level of thought-provoking remarks. Robert Bernard's *Deadly Meeting*, for example, is described from a feminist perspective enlisting male chauvinist characters from the real macho to the closet homosexual, accompanied by a range of female stereotypes from the boring faculty wife, through the sexy student to the mad medievalist, and the only conclusion Showalter draws is a personal one: if she had read this novel earlier, she would not have asked its author for professional advice (65). Or, when describing Morris Zapp of *Small World*, she calls attention to the lack of his female alterego (78), which is reiterated by the closing remark of the analysis pointing out that these "female counterparts were still struggling" (83). But how, in which positions, and with what results?

These questions are reflected on in case of two novels, Carolyn Heilbrun's *Death in a Tenured Position* and Joyce Carol Oates's *Marya: A Life*, but the interpretations seem, in both cases, somewhat hasty: the suicide of the heroine, in the former text, is judged unrealistic (because in real life a woman in such a position would have looked for and found another position), and the protagonist's ignorance of her department's institutional events of the latter novel receives the same verdict (90-91). These readings seem as if there was a proper behaviour for female pro-

professionals. Maybe, this point of view would not seem critically unreflected or prescriptive, if the author had chosen female character types as an organising principle for her analysis of the academic novel, with a more contextualised display of the feminist perspective.

All in all, *Faculty Towers* seems a thought-provoking work, which is most likely to enhance endeavours to contextualise the subgenre of the campus novel in postmodern fiction, to place it in an international context, and, hopefully, to start discussions on thematic issues raised in connection with the university novel, and, more importantly, with academia on the whole.

Andrea Kirchknopf

Notes

1. Ruth Morse, "On the Canonical Campus: Book review of Elaine Showalter, *Faculty Towers*," *Times Literary Supplement* (16 September 2005), 20 June 2006 <<http://tls.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,25363-1886083,00.html>>.

2. Morse.

3. Synopsis of Ryan C. Amacher & Roger E. Meiners, *Faulty Towers: Tenure and the Structure of Higher Education*, The Independent Institute, 20 June 2006 <http://www.independent.org/publications/books/book_summary.asp?bookID=14>.