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Precocity and Performance

Child Characters in Two Shakespeare Plays

The article attempts a close study of the child characters occurring in Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *King John* to problematize their location on a grid defined by the cultural or aesthetic binary of precocity/innocence. Whereas Arthur's ornate, far-fetched pleadings in *King John* lack viability independent of a theatrical idiom, in *Richard III* we have a page coolly advising an assassination, a brother-sister duo participating in a matrix of adult hostilities that they fail to appreciate fully, Prince Edward whose sense of danger is of little help, and the little Duke of York who glibly defies Richard without gauging his murderous schemes. We need to exercise scepticism about marking these characters straightaway as "innocent" or "precocious," and have to take account of theatrical mediations as well as trans-cultural, trans-historical slippages in signification. The article gestures towards the agencies (however rudimentary and inefficacious) embodied by such child characters, and tries to investigate how they subscribe to or undercut a unitary, overarching topos of "childhood."

Lucrative Monsters

In Ben Jonson's play *The Alchemist* (first performed 1610) Lovewit, when returning to his London house after a few months, hears from his neighbours that in his absence it was visited daily by huge and motley crowds. He wonders what curiosity his butler Jeremy might have installed to lure such multitudes, and guesses that among other prodigies it could be "The boy of six year old with the great thing" (5.1.25). In Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (first performed 1607) the Citizen's Wife mentions a similar (if not the same) curiosity, "of all the sights that ever were in London, since I was married, methinks the little child that was so fair grown about the members was the prettiest" (3.2.140–142). These two references may be topical in nature and directed at a real life London sensation. The boy with the overgrown member (traceable to a hormonal quirk) constitutes a carnivalesque spectacle together with "the bull with the five legs and two pizzles . . . the dogs that dance the morris, and the hare o'the tabor" (*Bartholomew Fair*, 5.4.85–87). The boy who becomes a lucrative public attraction for his endowment may be invoked as a metaphor for the boy actors performing on the early modern stage. He may also

afford a convenient sign under which one may expatiate on and summarize the precocity frequently associated with the profession of the boy actors and the roles they played.

The boy's *parts* (organs) are monstrous because not commensurate with his age, whereas the boy actors' *parts* (roles, as well as the ability to attempt them) are not always commensurate with their age or station in life. In fact, just as the boy's disproportionately huge private parts make him spectacular, the dissonance created by the diminutive boy actors mouthing obscene quibbles (for example) or participating in the depiction of political/sexual conspiracies probably made them attractive to the early modern audiences. Even when the boy actors play their age or younger characters, the roles are often found to be precocious. Just as the display of the boy's Priapus-like private parts would injure more refined sentiments, the child roles that the boy actors essayed may appear to many as odious parades of adult(-like) *parts*. Marjorie Garber, for one, is definitely scandalized:

> Those [few child characters] who do appear [in the plays of the Shakespeare canon] are both pert and malapert, disconcertingly solemn and prematurely adult: the Princes in the tower, whose uncle's exasperation with them may be shared to a degree by the audience; Macduff's and Coriolanus' sons, both pathetically martial copies of their fathers; Mamillius, whose proposal to tell a 'sad tale . . . for winter' reveals an intuitive comprehension of the problems of Sicilia and of his own impending doom. These are not, by and large, successful dramatic characters; their disquieting adulthood strikes the audience with its oddness, and we are relieved when these terrible infants leave the stage. We may feel it to be no accident that almost all go to their deaths.[1]

Garber vaguely gestures towards "reasons . . . both historical and dramatic" which underlie Shakespeare's characterization of children, but does not sympathetically probe them. There remains the need for a more nuanced appraisal of the child characters and the material conditions of their production and reception. There is no evidence to prove that these child characters in a body appeared as implausible or abhorrent to Shakespeare's intended audience. At the same time, to make a deliberate understatement, today's visual culture does not shy away from precocious children.

For all Shakespeare plays the text used here is *The Norton Shakespeare, Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt *et al.* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997). For other early modern plays, the source text used is *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, ed. David Bevington *et al.* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002).

1. Marjorie Garber, *Coming of Age in Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 1981), p. 30.

The sauciness or unseasonable solemnity of the children which causes Garber's disaffection might have in effect translated in great part to the USP of the boy actors. Michael Shapiro's estimate of the boy companies suggests as much:

> only the children offered the special mixture of pertness and naivety, audacity and innocence, which Roger Ascham felt was overly prized in upper-class English families. Elizabeth herself is said to have savored this combination of cheekiness and charm, a quality which probably accounted for the widespread appeal of boy companies in early modern London.[2]

Needless to say, the boy actors in the adult companies also partook of the dialectical appeal that Shapiro points out, and the playwrights who worked in close collaboration with the acting companies, and in at least considerable knowledge of the cast, would surely capitalize on this possibility. Hence the theatrical dynamics of the boy actors might be reflected in the repertoire created for them – including the roles of (pert and malapert) children. It is also necessary to realize that drama has a vested interest in the *dramatic*, in the deviation from the common-or-garden experience. In this scheme, a cheeky and impish brat who tantalizingly defies the norms of social desirability makes more sense than a pious, obedient child. The boy with the prodigious private parts can make for a public show only because of his deviation from the biological norm. Likewise, one may weigh the premise that the child actors drew crowds because they departed (onstage at least) from the culturally prescribed roles and attributes of (decent, respectable) children. This departure from the norm would no doubt be constituted in a way that did not radically defy the expectations of the adult world, but produced a minor, pleasant surprise. Precocity is charming so long as it does not threaten or resist the adult world, and does not totally coincide with skills and privileges specific to the adult scheme of things. It is only the distance thus maintained that enables an aesthetic appraisal of precocious children.

However, the show offered by the boy, thanks to his monstrous phallus, consisted only in display or exhibition, whereas the show offered by the child actors as they performed child roles consisted both in display (of their embodied child-ness) and of *mimesis* (i.e., representation of certain fictive children). Whereas the boy's "great thing" is a concrete, biological aberration, the precocity (or otherwise) of the boy actor on stage is a trained and orchestrated exercise more deeply implicated in culture. The elements of display and representation certainly intersected and coloured each other in the person of the child actor, but more importantly they oper-

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2. Michael Shapiro, "Boy Companies and Private Theatres," in *A Companion to Renaissance Drama*, ed. Arthur Kinney (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 314–325, p. 314.

ated within a setting that aimed at an engaging theatricality, and catered to adult tastes. To reiterate the point: what we have before us is a *theatrical* child – in all possible senses of the word. Since the child roles were designed in terms of public performance and theatrical stylistics, some degree of distancing from the model of lived experience was bound to occur. A close study of child characters in the Shakespeare canon will reveal that they do not evoke precocity as a clumsy, stilted and predictable dramatic apparatus, as Garber's observation tends to suggest; but project it as a nuanced and graded experience with variations based on contingencies of situation and personality.

Of all the child characters in Shakespeare we have at one end of the gamut Mamillius of *The Winter's Tale* (perhaps the most childlike) and at the other, the diminutive page Mote (or Moth) of *Love's Labour's Lost* with his topical allusions and multifarious rhetorical prestidigitations.[3] The fact that Mamillius declares "A sad tale's best for winter" (2.1.27) has been seized upon too readily by Garber (quoted above) to reach the conclusion that he has an instinctive understanding of the tension brewing in the Bohemian court. Although his remark furnishes the play its title, it is only accidental and does not speak for any instinctive wisdom on his part. Needless to say, Mamillius has no clue about his fate – his death is the only permanent loss in this play of recuperation and reconciliation. However, it would be wrong to deny a child character like York (*Richard III*) his share of precocity when it becomes strongly apparent from a reading of the play-text. If there are palpable signs of guile or obliquity in a child character, it is necessary to examine how they contribute to the particular dramatic context. Before we take up a few child characters for detailed discussion, it may be useful to review quickly the significances of precocity in the learned tradition that an early modern playwright would have inherited.

Tradition and the Individual Child Character

Along with the term *cursus aetatis* (course of ages), the expression *tempestivitas* was introduced into the mainstream of Western intellectual tradition by Cicero's influential discussion of old age, *De Senectute*.[4] The term denotes "seasonableness,"

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3. Lawhorn locates "about forty-five" child characters in the Shakespeare canon, while Rutter's estimate comes to more than fifty. She also enumerates "notional or symbolic babies" and "off-stage children." Mark Lawhorn, "Children in Shakesperae's Plays: an Annotated Checklist," in *Shakespeare and Childhood*, ed. Kate Chedzoy et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 233–249, p. 233; Carol Chillington Rutter, *Shakespeare and Child's Play: Performing Lost Boys on Stage and Screen* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. xiii–xiv.

4. J. A. Burrow, The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 1.

or the appropriate characteristics assigned to each age by Nature. These sentiments are echoed in the scripture: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted."[5] If the *cursus aetatis* is taken as a biological norm, any violation of the seasonableness (as embodied by the precocious child) would signal a fundamental disharmony in the constitution of the person concerned, and is likely to bring an unhappy end. But there are certain contexts where the lack of conformity with the attributes of bodily age is commended, or, rather, such non-conformity is evoked as a trope for commendation. For example, in *Aeneid*, Book 9, it is remarked that Iulus (more commonly called Ascanius), the young son of Aeneas "bore beyond his years the mind and responsibilities of a man."[6] In addition, the trope of a boy too wise for his years was repeatedly used in the laments for the young dead.[7] A variation on this trope is to be found in Jonson's poem "On Salathiel Pavy: A Child of Queen Elizabeth's Chapel" where he suggests that the boy actor played old men so convincingly that the gods took him for one: "And did act (what now we moan) / Old men so duly, / As sooth the Parcae thought him one, / He play'd so truly" (ll. 13–16).[8] However, the most striking instance of precocity, celebrated in any number of early modern amatory poems, lies in the figure of Cupid – which represents the enigmatic nature of sexual passion. Biron in *Love's Labour's Lost* describes the paradoxical god as "This whimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy, / This *Signior Junior*, giant dwarf, Dan Cupid" (3.1.164–165, my emphases).

As regards the Christian paradigm, the most time-honoured ideal for the transcendence of the classical, materialist concept of *cursus aetatis* is afforded by the concept of *aetates spiritualis* (stages of spirituality). According to the concept of spiritual age, a person irrespective of his/her bodily years may attain by grace the virtues associated with a particular natural age. This idea of transcendence is represented conspicuously by the topos of the *puer senilis* or *puer senex* (aged boy) that emerged in the late pagan Antiquity and enjoyed great popularity in the hagiographic literature of the Latin Middle Ages.[9] The Biblical precedents of the topos

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5. Eccl. 3:1–2.

6. Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. W. F. Jackson Knight (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), pp. 234–5.

7. Burrow, p. 114. Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 99.

8. Ben Jonson, "An Epitaph on S[alathiel] P[avy], a child of Q[ueen] El[izabeth's] Chapel," in *Poetry of the English Renaissance 1509–1660*, ed. J. William Hebel and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: F. S. Crofts, 1941), p. 499.

9. Burrow, p. 94; Curtius, p. 99.

may be located in the child Samuel who was preferred to the veteran priest Eli for ministering unto the Lord, and in the boy Daniel who sat in judgment on two lecherous old men (the apocryphal History of Susanna). Added to this, the Virgin Mary furnishes an example of the *puella senex* since, according to apocryphal Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, when she was taken to the Temple at the age of three she ascended the fifteen steps without once looking back at her parents and behaved like a comely person of thirty years.[10]

In this context precocity, typically in the childhood of a saint, is not a detestable quality. The attainments of venerable old age which the *puer senex* secures beyond his years may be recognized as *maturitas* (maturity), *gravitas* (solemnity), and *sapientia* (wisdom). A *locus classicus* of the topos may be found in the *Life of St Antony* (4th century) by Athanasius, where the saint in his early years is described as a precocious child:

> And when he was a boy, he could not bear to be instructed in literature or to have anything to do with silly children's stories; but burning with the love of God, as it is written, he dwelt at home in innocence. He also often went to church with his parents, and avoided both infantile games and boyish thoughtlessness.[11]

However, the most august provenance for the topos is the life of Christ himself, especially the episode of the *doctores*. The twelve-year old Christ got separated from his parents at the Temple:

> And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding [*prudentia* in the Vulgate] and answers.[12]

Such authorities as Origen, Jerome and Augustine interpreted the episode as the boy Christ teaching the erudite elders. The English Mystery cycles of Chester, York, Wakefield and Coventry all staged this episode, where the doctors are at first sceptical and disdainful but are soon won over by the boy Christ's erudition. Shake-

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10. Burrow, p. 102.

11. Quoted in Burrow, p. 97. Some other examples of the *puer* or *puella senex* may be found in the careers of the following saints all of whom died in their early years defending their faith: Agapitus, Prisca, Justus of Beauvais, Eulalia of Barcelona, Eulalia of Mérida, Agnes of Rome, Saint Dymphna, Fausta of Sirmium, Pelagius of Constance, Pelagius of Cordova, and William of Norwich.

12. Luke 2:45–47.

speare as a Warwickshire child might have seen the Coventry version of the episode which has the boy Christ expound the mysteries of the Trinity and declare his double birth as man and god.[13]

While the attribute of precocity dramatically marks the lives of certain blessed individuals as special, it is to be recognized as an inversion (felicitous in their cases) of the norm rather than the norm itself. Many preachers pointed out that for the multitudes devoid of grace a departure from the *tempestivitas* is a sign of folly or vice. Christ's life was often projected as the ideal for all men to follow, and for this purpose the deviations of the *puer senex* had to be underplayed. St Gregory goes so far as to state that Christ did not lecture the *doctores* at the Temple, but humbly listened to them and asked questions as was befitting his age. He also added that Christ had waited, up to the age of thirty, before starting his public career of preaching and working miracles.[14]

In addition, folk wisdom for centuries had it that precocity was a bad omen. Erasmus in his *Adagia* cites the proverb, "I hate small boys who are wise before their time," from Apuleius, and amplifies it: "It was a common belief that prematurely wise boys either would not live long or else would lose their wits once they came to mature years."[15] Similarly, Henry Cuffe, in *The Differences of the Ages of Mans Life* (1607), states confidently that "children that are too ripe witted in their childhood are for the most part either shortest lived, or else toward their old age most sottish, according to our Proverbe, *Soone ripe, soone rotten*."[16] The word "precocious" is in fact coined from the Latin *praecoci-*, crude form of *praecox* (prematurely ripe), and thus etymologically suggests a fruit that ripens too fast and drops too soon.[17]

"Children in the Elizabethan age," opines Muriel St Clare Byrne, "as in the ages before it, were appreciated for their precocity rather than for the natural qualities of childhood." She continues:

> They were regarded by the normal parent as miniature but troublesome men and women; the more nearly and the more quickly their mental growth and their behaviour approximated to the adult the more were they to be commended. Childhood, like the diseases incident to it, was a thing to be got over as soon as possible . . . It is much easier to understand and to

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13. Burrow, p. 138.
14. Burrow, pp. 137–142
15. Quoted in Burrow, p. 147.
16. Quoted in Burrow, p. 145.
17. Walter W. Skeat, *The Concise Dictionary of English Etymology* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1993), p. 93.

appreciate the precocious and witty little boys of Shakespeare's plays if this is realized.[18]

This observation anticipates Philippe Ariès's (in)famous thesis on medieval and early modern childhoods, and, like it, Byrne's comment is in want of adequate substantiation and qualification.[19] Kate Chedgzoy has pursued the contrary thesis in her study of early modern drama:

> Historians of childhood pursuing the path laid down by Philippe Ariès argue that early moderns effectively considered children as miniature adults . . . In contrast, child performers and the roles they played – whether in aristocratic domestic settings . . . or on the commercial stage . . . suggest that in fact Shakespeare and his contemporaries were both aware of the significant differences between children and adults, and had a sense that those differences could be labile and malleable.[20]

At least, the idea about cultural preference for precocity does not square with the popularity of the proverb, "soon ripe, soon rotten."[21]

Moreover, several precocious boys on the early modern stage are recognized and commented upon as such by other characters. Although such comments indicate mostly approbation and indulgence, they also show that precocity was to be particularly marked out, and did not belong to the general scheme of cultural expectations. In *Macbeth*, Macduff's young son goes on babbling about perjury and treachery and about his mother's prospects of remarriage in the case of his father's death. His mother calls him "poor monkey" (4.2.58) and "poor prattler" (4.2.63), indicating that whatever "wit" he possesses is insufficient to resist Macbeth's hostility in the absence of Macduff. Similarly, when the young Giovanni in John Web-

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18. Muriel St. Clare Byrne, *Elizabethan Life in Town and Country* (London: Methuen, 1961), p. 196.

19. Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Vintage, 1962). Ariès's theses is often simplified to suggest that children as a category did not exist in the Middle Ages, and that the idea of childhood emerged in the seventeenth century, that too only in the upper rungs of the society.

20. Kate Chedgzoy, "Playing with Cupid: Gender, Sexuality, and Adolescence," in *Alternative Shakespeares*, vol. 3 (London: Routledge, 2008), 138–157, p. 156.

21. In this context, one may recall the medieval custom of the boy bishop which lasted in some parts of England till the advent of Anglicanism. According to this popular custom, a boy from amongst the choristers was elected as the bishop for a fixed period of time (usually from the feast of St Nicholas to Holy Innocents' Day) and he performed all the Episcopal rites and offices except the mass. This ritual may be seen as a festive inversion of the hierarchy that reinforced the social norm, and did not signal a general empowerment of children.

ster's *The White Devil* (first performed 1612) appears in his new suit of armour and shows warlike attitudes, his father Bracchiano exclaims: "Forward lapwing! / He flies with the shell on's head" (2.1.126–127). Here he recalls the folk belief that the lapwing, a plover like bird, begins to fly even before it is properly hatched. However, despite his valour and wit Giovanni remains a child, at the mercy of the complex machinations in the adult world – until he emerges as the ceremonial dispenser of justice in the final scene.

It must be remembered that the word "precocious" is used almost exclusively of children and it has the effect of suggesting a half-baked, inadequate maturity. The staging of precocity can in fact accentuate the child-ness of the child characters. In what follows, child characters from two Shakespearean plays will be examined to see how their precocity (or lack thereof) is worked out in the performance-text and what responses it can possibly elicit from the audiences.

The reason for selecting *Richard III* and *King John* for review is that these plays have sizeable child roles which are often adequately varied and individuated. The present article will try to underscore the necessity of looking for multiple (and multiply accented) childhoods/child-nesses, and the diversity of their embodiments as well as representations. It also aims at recuperating the agencies (however rudimentary) embodied in such child characters, and in investigating how they extend or undercut any culturally and aesthetically predetermined topos of "innocence."

Richard III

The Tragedy of King Richard the Third (first performed 1592/93) has not one but five child characters. Let us begin with the more obscure ones. When "High-reaching Buckingham grows circumspect" about killing the princes at the Tower (4.2.32), the perturbed Richard enlists the counsel of his page.

> KING RICHARD *Boy*.
> PAGE My lord?
> KING RICHARD Know'st thou not any whom corrupting gold
>   Would tempt unto a close exploit of death?
> PAGE I know a discontented gentleman
>   Whose humble means match not his haughty spirit.
>   Gold were as good as twenty orators,
>   And will, no doubt, tempt him to anything.
> KING RICHARD What is his name?
> PAGE His name, my lord, is Tyrrel.
> KING RICHARD I partly know the man. Go, call him hither, *boy*.
>
> <div align="right">(4.2.33–41, my emphases)</div>

This page has his origin in the "secrete page" of Richard as reported by Edward Hall in *The Union of the Two Noble . . . Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke* (1548):

> Syr, quod the page, there lieth one in the palet chamber with out that I dare wel say, to do your grace pleasure the thing were right hard that he would refuse, meaning this by James Tirrel. The man had an high harte and sore longed upward . . . which thynge the page had well marked and knowen. . .[22]

The counterpart of the page in the anonymous *The True Tragedy of Richard III* (printed 1594) has a notably longer role, and soliloquizes about his ambition and complicity in Richard's plot.[23] How old is the page? Although Richard's call of "boy" may only affirm the subordinate status of the page irrespective of his age, the idea of boyhood is generally associated with the office of the page. Belsey counts the page as a child, and it is likely that the role was originally essayed by a boy actor.[24] Therefore we have here a child who astutely observes the aspirations and motives of others, guides an adult immensely higher in rank and power, and is party to a heinous conspiracy. The Shakespeare play, like the historical account, represents the murderous counsel of the boy in a matter of fact way and thus the question of precocity or otherwise is not evoked. Critics have generally ignored this brief interaction. While this example does not indicate that it was natural for Shakespeare's children to be precocious (to the point of planning murder in cold blood), it gestures towards the multiple, contingent experiences of boyhood in a climate of civil strife and political chicanery. Here Paul Griffiths's observation may be of help: "Many different ways of growing up in early modern society . . . were affected by social class, gender, the state of labour markets, customary access to the land, and, above all, the responses of the young."[25] It does prompt us to look beyond the simplistic paradigms of innocence and vulnerability dominantly linked with childhood.

Next, we have a pair of siblings – Clarence's children, historically Edward (Earl of Warwick) and Margaret Plantagenet. They are designated by the speech prefixes as "Boy" and "Girl;" when they speak together they are called "Children." This is the only case of a speaking female child ("Girl") in the Shakespeare canon, and one will

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22. Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. 3 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 278.

23. Bullough, vol. 3, p. 323.

24. Catherine Belsey, "Little princes: Shakespeare's royal children," in *Shakespeare and Childhood*, ed. Kate Chedzoy et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 32–48, p. 32.

25. Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experience in England, 1560–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 6.

be hard put to find such characters in early modern drama as a whole. Richard has a plan for disposing of the aggrieved children: "Enquire me out some mean-born gentleman, / Whom I will marry straight to Clarence' daughter. / The boy is foolish, and I fear not him" (4.2.55–57). The canonical age of marriage for girls was twelve full years, unless natural puberty set in earlier. The question of marriage suggests that the Girl is on the verge of puberty, but her speeches show that she is hardly a grown up. The same thing goes for her brother, who has longer speeches – they are not adequately individuated and together form a unit. At the beginning of the scene they are not sure about the fate of their father who has been killed at Richard's behest, but they are observant enough to sense that something is amiss:

> BOY   Tell me, good grandam, is our father dead?
>   Why do you wring your hands, and beat your breast,
>   And cry 'O Clarence, my unhappy son'?
> GIRL   Why do you look on us and shake your head,
>   And call us orphans, wretches, castaways,
>   If that our noble father be alive?   (2.2.1–7)

The Boy jumps to the conclusion that King Edward IV has killed their father, and the Girl seconds his theory, so that their grandmother has to warn them: "Peace, children, peace! the King doth love you well. / Incapable and shallow innocents, / You cannot guess who caused your father's death" (2.2.17–19). The reason for the children's hatred towards the King is that Richard has misled them. The Boy reports:

>   my good uncle Gloucester
>   Told me, the king, provoked by the Queen [Elizabeth Woodeville],
>   Devised impeachments to imprison him,
>   And when my uncle told me so, he wept,
>   And pitied me, and kindly kissed my cheek,
>   Bade me rely on him as on my father,
>   And he would love me dearly as his child.   (2.2.20–26)
>
>   Think you my uncle did dissemble, grannam?
>   . . .
>   I cannot think it.   (2.2.31–33)

This shows that the children are not mature enough to see through Richard's tricks, and are easily swayed by him. Richard's indoctrination is so strong that when Queen Elizabeth bursts into the scene, breaking the news of her widowhood, the children have no pity for her.

> BOY Ah, aunt, you wept not for our father's death.
>   How can we aid you with our kindred tears?
> GIRL Our fatherless distress was left unmoaned;
>   Your widow-dolour likewise be unwept.   (2.2.62–65)

This sentiment may appear revolting since it goes against the pity and sensitivity we have come to associate with children. However, the grandmother does not chide them as precocious or un-childlike, and the play affords their lamentations/rejoinders the same situational validity as the utterances of the two adult women in the scene. The children then engage in an antiphonary chant with Elizabeth, mocking her laments and aggressively putting forward their own.

> QUEEN ELIZABETH Oh for my husband, for my dear lord Edward!
> CHILDREN Oh for our father, for our dear lord Clarence!
>   . . .
> QUEEN ELIZABETH What stay had I but Edward, and he's gone?
> CHILDREN What stay had we but Clarence, and he's gone?
>   . . .
> QUEEN ELIZABETH Was never widow had so dear a loss!
> CHILDREN Were never orphans had so dear a loss!   (2.2.71–78)

The Duchess of York, grandmother to the children and mother to Edward, Clarence and Richard, chips in, mourning for every one. What results is a patterned speech that critics have condemned as unbearable. The formalized, crude use of stichomythia suggests that realism is not intended in this exchange. Therefore, it is inadvisable to attempt a psychological investigation of the children and brand them as malapert and precocious. However, the scene unmistakably indicates how the children are drawn into the vortex of dynastic strife and how they imbibe hatred.

Next, we move to the princes in the Tower, celebrated as emblems of vulnerability. Although they appear on the stage for a small while, the princes are comparatively individuated. Readings of the play routinely pass over the witticisms of the boys and the verbal resistance they offer to Richard, probably because they do not square with the picture of innocent victimhood. However, their banter is shot through with immaturity and shallowness, which shows them to be children. Historically, Edward, Prince of Wales and his brother, the Duke of York were twelve and eleven respectively at the time of their disappearance.[26] But the proximity of York to his mother and grandmother suggests that in the play he is a smaller child, perhaps in petticoats like Mamillius. His mother and grandmother are concerned

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26. Belsey, p. 43.

about his growth, but this becomes a subject of childish/childlike prattle for the boy (2.4.6–15).

Further, York plans to get even with his sarcastic uncle by using the legend that Richard was born with teeth – an evil omen, according to folk wisdom:

> YORK Now, by my troth, if I had been remembered,
>   I could have given my uncle's grace a *flout*,
>   *To touch his growth nearer than he touched mine.*
>
>   . . .
>
>   Marry, they say my uncle grew so fast
>   That he could gnaw a crust at two hours old.
>   'Twas full two years ere I could get a tooth.
>   Grannam, this would have been a *biting jest*. (2.4.23–30, my emphases)

His mother is alarmed at the sauciness of the boy and is quick to rebuke him: "A *parlous* boy! Go to, you are *too shrewd*" (2.4.35, emphases added), and reminds him that "Pitchers have ears" (2.4.37). It seems that York can afford to be facetious and cheeky at this point because he, unlike his mother and grandmother, totally fails to assess the threat posed by Richard.

In the next scene Prince Edward is introduced. Although he cannot be in control of the situation, he seems to have more depth and composure. In his first speech he refers to the arrests of his uncles and half-brothers during his journey to London: "our crosses on the way / Have made it tedious, wearisome, and heavy. / I want more uncles here to welcome me" (3.1.4–6). When Richard tells him that those uncles were false friends, Edward affirms: "God keep me from false friends! but they were none" (3.1.16). He can probably sense Richard's machinations to some extent, but is not strong or resourceful enough to resist them. Moreover, he is eager to meet his brother York (3.1.20), ignorant of the fact that he can stay out of harm's way if he remains in sanctuary.

When Richard announces that the two brothers will have to stay at the Tower before the coronation, Edward reacts intuitively, "I do not like the Tower of any place" (3.1.68). But he soon begins to talk about the connection of Julius Caesar with the Tower, which reveals him to be a sophomoric schoolboy. He asks Buckingham, "Is it upon record, or else reported / Successively from age to age, he [Julius Caesar] built it?"(3.1.72–73), and goes on to observe pontifically:

> But say, my lord, it were not registered,
> Methinks the truth should live from age to age,
> As 'twere retailed to all posterity
> Even to the general all-ending day.   (3.1.75–78)

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This prompts Richard's snide aside: "So wise so young, they say, do never / live long" (3.1.78–79). Edward soon launches into another display of received wisdom:

> That Julius Caesar was a famous man:
> With what his valour did enrich his wit,
> His wit set down to make his valour live.
> Death makes no conquest of this conqueror,
> For now he lives in fame, though not in life.   (3.1.84–88)

This short speech contains such diverse figures of speech as prosopopeia, chiasmus, anadiplosis and polyptoton, which an early modern schoolboy would like to show off. He then speaks of another grandiose plan: "An if I live until I be a man, / I'll win our ancient right in France again, / Or die a soldier, as I lived a king" (3.1.91–93). This elicits another sarcastic rejoinder from Richard that foretells the fate of the boy: "Short summers lightly have a forward spring" (3.1.94). Edward's forays into the past introduce intriguing questions about the nature of historiography, but they are left tantalizingly open. Edward knows that (versions of) the past may be officially inscribed in the form of history ("upon record," "registered") or it may be transmitted as legend or hearsay: "Successively from age to age." But he does not make the inference that history might only be a narrative that is necessarily fashioned by political interests. He takes recourse to the essential humanist dictum that for a meritorious, enterprising hero like Julius Caesar oral report can make up for an absence of written record (ll. 75–78). Edward perhaps also knows that it was Julius Caesar himself who wrote the history of his conquests, *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* (ll. 84–86). But he does not show any sign of speculating that history might only be written by conquerors. These issues have a serious bearing on the representation of Richard III in Tudor historiography, and might lead to an interrogation of the official ideology. The questions could not be spelt out in a more concrete fashion, probably owing to strictures of censorship. By introducing the questions through the character of a pompous schoolboy, the playwright might have hinted that it is childish folly to accept official history (like the one the play itself was ostensibly replicating) without suspicion.

Soon the Duke of York enters the scene and straightaway engages in banter with Richard. He begins on the issue of growth, continuing from the previous scene, and tries to discomfit Richard (3.1.103–107). York then begins to irritate Richard by commenting on his dagger (3.1.110–125). This could be a sly reference to Richard's characteristic habit of fidgeting with his dagger that Hall has reported.[27] It is seen

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27. Bullough, vol. 3, p. 300.

that Edward tries maturely to lighten up the situation during York's snide verbal attacks on Richard:

> PRINCE EDWARD *My Lord of York will still be cross in talk. –*
>   *Uncle, your grace knows how to bear with him.*
> YORK You mean, to bear me, not to bear with me. –
>   Uncle, my brother mocks both you and me.
>   Because that I am little, like an ape,
>   He thinks that you should bear me on your shoulders.
>
> <div align="right">(3.1.126–131, my emphases)</div>

Buckingham reacts thus to York's witticism:

> With what a sharp-provided wit he reasons.
> *To mitigate the scorn he gives his uncle,*
> He prettily and aptly taunts himself
> *So cunning and so young is wonderful.*   (3.1.132–135, my emphases)

Buckingham is perhaps aware that by calling himself an ape (a monkey) that Richard would bear, he is likening him to a fool – for jesters often bore monkeys on their backs. Besides, the shoulder-saddle would make them appear hunch-backed. Thus York's monkey-business may be a damaging allusion to Richard's well-known deformity.[28]

Belsey has found the princes' verbal interventions radically significant in the scheme of the play. According to her,

> For all Margaret's railing, it is the little princes who represent his [Richard's] most effective verbal opponents – until a grown man with an army comes to defeat him. . . . the princes represent a stage on the way to the autonomy of children. While their diction remains fairly simple, differentiating them from adults, their interventions are ironic, layered, ambiguous. Even though most of the audience would have known the outcome, a certain tension informs their struggle against Richard, not least thanks to the differences the play sets up between the princes. In the process it also invests the children with an independent role in the conflict, and childhood itself with concerns, capacities and responsibilities of its own.[29]

While Belsey celebrates the agency of the children in this scene, one must realize that their autonomy is only provisional, restricted to verbal dexterity, and ulti-

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28. Belsey, p. 45.
29. Belsey, p. 46.

mately unsuccessful against Richard's devious plans. Nevertheless, Richard has to grin and bear all the insults in this scene, and the symbolic value of his discomfiture can hardly be overruled. Only after the princes have left the stage does Richard call York "a parlous boy, / Bold, quick, ingenious, forward capable" (3.1.153–154) and trace his scorn to the training of his mother, Queen Elizabeth Woodeville (3.1.155).

Despite all this ingenuity, York is too shallow to appreciate the danger awaiting them. He is afraid to go to the Tower only because he has heard that Clarence's angry ghost haunts it (3.1.144–145). He is surely not a *puer senex* capable of an instinctive judgment of the situation, and when he plays the gadfly he is far from a vatic commentator. Edward however maintains a more perceptive note, "I fear no uncle dead. / . . . an if they live, I *hope* I *need not* fear" (3.1.146–147, my emphases). In *The True Tragedy* the difference between the dispositions of the two princes is pointed out in a scene where Edward is gloomy about his captivity in the Tower, while York asks their keeper to tell a merry story (12.1251–1268).[30] In Shakespeare's play we do not see the princes after this. In Tyrrel's report of their murder, their individuality is ignored and they are typified as angelic babes (4.3.1–22). As in the case of Arthur, whom we shall take up shortly, the agency of children is ultimately made invisible in favour of a broad typecasting determined by the adult discourse. Children (even in representation) can find a life and voice of their own only in the interstices of adult concerns. What is fascinating is that the play seems to make this process obvious.

King John

In *King John* Arthur Plantagenet, Duke of Brittaine, has almost seven times as many words as Mamillius, and therefore the character offers greater scope for analysis. However, the character appears in a play that has been described as "incoherent patchwork" with "wandering and uncertain" action,[31] where much of the matter is left "scrappy, unemphatic, and poorly motivated."[32] In keeping with the present critical climate, the episodic nature of the play is likely to be seen as underscoring its own theatricality, and exposing the ideological fault lines. Such a tendency is reflected by the following observation:

> Separated from the temporal and genealogical chain that unites the two tetralogies, *King John* moves farthest back into the past, and the entire ac-

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30. Bullough, vol. 3, p. 327.

31. E. A. J. Honigmann, Introduction, to *King John*, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann (London: Routledge, 1967), p. xxxi.

32. E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, [1944] 1969), p. 224.

tion seems designed to foreground every kind of moral and political and historiographic ambiguity. The providential justice that determines the outcome in *Richard III* is nowhere to be seen, and every attempt to resolve the action or make sense of it is immediately frustrated by the moral ambiguities of an episodic plot where success and failure ride on the shifting winds of chance.[33]

One critic has gone so far as to call it "Shakespeare's postmodern history play."[34] Does this warrant us to expect that the play may put into relief the ideology informing the cultural definition of childhood and test its limits? While discussing Arthur and the possibilities of precocity in him, it is necessary to determine to what extent his lines contribute to a coherent, naturalistic portrayal of his character and to what extent they participate in (meta)theatrical stylization.

The Life and Death of King John (1596), assigned to Shakespeare, is inextricably linked with another play, the anonymous *The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England* (1591; in two parts). The latter is thought to be the source of the Shakespearean play (the dominant opinion) or the corrupted version of an earlier play by Shakespeare.[35] In *The Troublesome Raigne* Arthur is an older and much more confident youth who is adamant about his political rights and participates as a soldier in the battle scenes. The historical Arthur Plantagenet (1187–1203) was in his early teens during his capture by the English in 1202. In *The Life and Death* he is a small, helpless child dependent on his mother Constance and his protector, King Philip of France. Louis, the French king's son, was historically the same age as Arthur, but both plays show him as a mature, warlike young man. While *The Troublesome Raigne* calls him just "Lewes" he is anachronistically invested with the title of "Dauphin" in *The Life and Death* to give him the formidable status of the second-in-command of the anti-English forces. His is a youth that contrasts sharply with Arthur's. Moreover, John's successor, Henry III, according to Holinshed, was only nine years old when he came to the throne.[36] But as he appears in the final scene of *The Life and Death* he seems to be more composed and authoritative than Arthur.

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33. Jean E. Howard, and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A feminist account of Shakespeare's English histories* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 119.

34. Virginia Mason Vaughan, "King John," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: The Histories*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 379–394, p. 379.

35. Tillyard, pp. 220–224; S. C. Sen Gupta, *Shakespeare's Historical Plays* (London: OUP, 1964), pp. 98–99.

36. Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. 4 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 48.

ABHISHEK SARKAR

In the Shakespearean play Arthur speaks for the first time to thank his new champion, the Duke of Austria:

> God shall forgive you Coeur-de-lion's death,
> The rather that you give his offspring life,
> Shadowing their right under your wings of war.
> I give you welcome with a powerless hand,
> But with a heart full of unstained love.
> Welcome before the gates of Angers, Duke.   (2.1.12–17)

Unlike Mamillius, Arthur speaks in long but well-constructed sentences with subordinate and co-ordinate clauses, and has the trick of stressing his own weakness. But his speech is treated as childlike, rather than precocious, by other characters on the stage. Although he touches upon the sensitive issue that Richard Coeur-de-lion, whose legacy he fights for, was killed by the Duke of Austria himself, his statement is not regarded as a diplomatic *faux pas*. Within the dramatic context it assumes an expository function and sets the stage for the killing of the Duke by Philip Falconbridge, Richard's valiant bastard. The King of France exclaims, "A noble boy. Who would not do thee right?" and the Duke of Austria kisses Arthur in recognition of his tender age: "Upon thy cheek lay I this zealous kiss / As seal to this indenture of my love" (2.1.18–20). In the same scene he is called (for example) "fair boy" (l.30), "little abstract [of his father Geoffrey]" (l.100), "child" (ll.159, 160), "poor boy" (l.166), "oppressed boy" (l.177), "green boy" (l.473) and "young Arthur" (l.552) – all epithets attesting to his tender age and vulnerability.

He plays a mute spectator when Queen Eleanor and Constance hold a slanging match over the competing claims of John and Arthur, respectively, to the English throne. Before the verbal bout has ended, he bursts out crying like a child (2.1.163–165). There is no reason to doubt his earnestness at this point. In the corresponding scene of *The Troublesome Raigne*, Part 1, Arthur speaks like a mature and observant man of the world who is fully conscious of his own prospects (2.440–450).[37] In the same scene he further argues astutely about law, which would be beyond the ken of his counterpart in the Shakespearean play:

> But there was,[38] as sure there can be none,
> The law intends such testaments as voyd,
> Where right descent can no way be impeacht.   (2.526–528)[39]

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37. Bullough, vol. 4, p. 84.
38. Richard's will making John king.
39. Bullough, vol. 4, p. 84.

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Thus it may be inferred that *The Life and Death* tries to show Arthur as a young, vulnerable victim. In such a scheme, precocity or insolence would be against the intended pathos.

In Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (vol. 3, 1587 edition), one of the sources for both plays, there is an account of Arthur's defiance of John's counsel after his capture by the English.[40] This episode is concisely dramatized in *The Troublesome Raigne*, Part 1, where Arthur maintains: "Might hath prevayld not right, for I am King / Of England, though thou weare the Diadem" (9.1097–1098).[41] But such defiance is conspicuously absent from *The Life and Death*, where Arthur has only two lines between Act 2, scene 1 and the famous blinding scene. First, he tries to console his mother in vain when she complains about the French King's betrayal: "I do beseech you, madam, be content" (3.1.42). Second, after being caught by the English at Mirabeau, he is anxious about his mother, "O, this will make my mother die with grief!"(3.3.5). It is thus seen that the Arthur of *The Life and Death* privileges familial bond and emotional attachment over political ambition. This feature comes to prominence in a skewed form in the blinding scene.

According to Holinshed, John's order for the blinding of Arthur was frustrated in the following manner:

> through such resistances as he [Arthur] made against one of the tormentors that came to execute the kings commandment (for the other rather forsooke their prince and countrie, than they would consent to obeie the kings authoritie herein) and such lamentable words he uttered, Hubert de Burgh did preserve him from that injurie, not doubting but rather to have thanks than displeasure at the kings hands, for delivering him of such infamie as would have redounded unto his highnesse, if the young gentleman had been so cruellie dealt withal.[42]

The two plays have dealt with the scene differently. In *The Troublesome Raigne*, Part 1, Arthur tries to dissuade Hubert through a mature and logical argument, pointing out that it was not only immoral but also a sin to obey the murderous command of a prince. Hubert raises the question of his loyalty to the sovereign in support of the commission of the crime – "My Lord, a subject dwelling in the land / Is tyed to execute the Kings command" (12.1391–1392; Bullough)[43] – to which Arthur replies that murder is against the universal commandment of God. Arthur's arguments and pleas are examples of consummate theatrical harangue:

40. Bullough, vol. 4, p. 84.
41. Bullough, vol. 4, p. 101.
42. Bullough, vol. 4, p. 33.
43. Bullough, vol. 4, p. 110

> Hell, Hubert, trust me, all the plagues of hell
> Hangs on performance of this damned deede.
> This seale, the warrant of the bodies blisse,
> Ensureth Satan chieftaine of thy soule:
> Subscribe not Hubert, give not God's part away.
> I speake not onely for eyes priviledge,
> The chiefe exterior that I would enjoy:
> But for thy perill, far beyond my paine,
> Thy sweete soules losse, more than my eyes vaine lack;
> A cause internall, and eternall too.
> Advise thee Hubert, for the case is hard,
> To loose salvation for a Kings reward.   (12.1379–1390)[44]

Thus the Arthur of *The Troublesome Raigne* tries to defend himself by appealing to reason and by striking eschatological terror into the heart of his persecutor. In sharp contrast, his counterpart in the Shakespearean play appeals solely to charity and affect. Even before he gets to know John's order, Arthur starts harping on his abject condition:

> Mercy on me!
> Methinks no body should be sad but I.
> Yet, I remember, when I was in France,
> Young gentlemen would be as sad as night
> Only for wantonness. *By my christendom,*
> *So I were out of prison and kept sheep,*
> *I should be as merry as the day is long*;
> And so I would be here, but that I doubt
> My uncle practises more harm to me.
> He is afraid of me and I of him.
> Is it my fault that I was Geoffrey's son?   (4.1.12–22, my emphases)

He adds to greater effect: "No, indeed, is't not; and I would to heaven / I were your son, so you would love me, Hubert" (4.1.23–24). Hubert is shaken by what he calls Arthur's "innocent prate" (4.1.25), and the boy further reinforces his discomfiture:

> Are you sick, Hubert? you look pale today.
> In sooth, I would you were a little sick,
> That I might sit all night and watch with you.
> I warrant I love you more than you do me.   (4.1.28–31)

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44. Bullough, vol. 4, pp. 109–110.

Arthur's care and love for Hubert seem to be selfless at this point, and makes for dramatic irony. However, soon after he learns about Hubert's compulsion to carry out John's order, Arthur takes into account past acts of solicitude for Hubert and capitalizes on them to stir up pity:

> Have you the heart? When your head did but ache
> I knit my handkerchief about your brows,
> The best I had – *a princess wrought it me*,
> And I did never ask it you again –
> And with my hand at midnight held your head,
> And like the watchful minutes to the hour
> Still and anon cheer'd up the heavy time,
> Saying, 'What lack you?' and 'Where lies your grief?'
> Or 'What good love may I perform for you?'
> *Many a poor man's son would have lien still*
> And ne'er have spoke a loving word to you,
> But you *at your sick service had a prince*.   (4.1.41–52, my emphases)

Curiously, Arthur, a few lines earlier, was eager to relinquish his princely origin in favour of the simpler and freer bucolic life. Now he emphasizes his pedigree to show that he had disregarded feudal hierarchy and stooped below his rank to succour Hubert. Thus he tries to highlight his benevolence and raise the value of the favours he had done to Hubert. Such strategic reinterpretation of past acts and their deployment for present contingencies are not in keeping with the temperament of a simple, guileless child. Is Arthur then inherently (or precociously) politic and opportunistic? Were his past favours to Hubert (Hubert does not deny them) calculated measures meant for gaining influence over a powerful and potentially antagonistic adult? What is more intriguing is that Arthur himself is aware of these possibilities, and he articulates them cannily in the process of pleading with Hubert:

> *Nay, you may think my love was crafty love*,
> *And call it cunning*. Do, an if you will.
> If heaven be pleased that you must use me ill,
> Why then you must. Will you put out mine eyes?
> These eyes that never did nor never shall,
> So much as frown on you?   (4.1.53–58, my emphases)

This self-consciousness and circumspection suggest that Arthur is far from a naïve, immature child. In the light of this revelation, one might surmise whether his other arguments and pleadings are desperate devices hastily formulated under the shadow of an impending danger, or whether they are equally crafty tactics.

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He uses various strategies to evade the gruesome sentence. He invents one excuse after another to defer the blinding. First, he requests that Hubert send away the Executioner and promises to stay silent and calm.

> Alas, what need you be so boisterous-rough?
> *I will not struggle, I will stand stone-still.*
> For heaven sake, Hubert, let me not be bound.
> Nay, hear me, Hubert, drive these men away,
> And I will sit as quiet as a lamb;
> *I will not stir, nor wince, nor speak a word,*
> *Nor look upon the iron angerly.*
> Thrust but these men away, and I'll forgive you,
> Whatever torment you do put me to.   (4.1.75–83, my emphases)

But when the Executioner says that he is pleased to be away from such a deed, Arthur discovers in him a sympathetic soul and reverses his request:

> *Alas, I then have chid away my friend*!
> He hath a stern look, but a gentle heart.
> *Let him come back*, that his compassion may
> Give life to yours.   (4.1.86–89, my emphases)

Arthur then tries to stop Hubert from blinding him by trying to arouse in him an empathic imagination:

> O heaven, that there were but a mote in yours [eyes],
> A grain, a dust, a gnat, a wandering hair,
> Any annoyance in that precious sense,
> Then feeling what small things are boisterous there,
> Your vile intent must needs seem horrible.   (4.1.91–95, my emphases)

Hubert has to rebuke him at this point: "Is this your promise [of keeping quiet]? Go to, hold your tongue!"(4.1.96) The prospect of imminent blinding (and perhaps consequent death) is not supposed to bring out the best in anybody, especially a child; but a character on the early modern stage can adopt the stance of equanimity or *sprezzatura* in the face of calamity. Arthur does not take the route of nobleness and decorum (which would be in keeping with the training and comportment of an aristocratic warrior) and explores all avenues to find respite. Following Hubert's rebuke, he requests that his tongue be cut and eyes preserved (4.1.97–102). Moreover, he repeatedly describes the iron poker and the fire as sentient beings that take pity on him, thus trying to embarrass Hubert for his cruelty:

The iron of itself, though heat red-hot,
Approaching near these eyes, would drink my tears,
And quench his fiery indignation
Even in the matter of mine innocence;
Nay, after that, consume away in rust
But for containing fire to harm mine eye.
Are you more stubborn-hard than hammered iron?   (4.1.61–67)

An if you do [rekindle the fire], you will but make it blush
And glow with shame of your proceedings, Hubert.
Nay, it perchance will sparkle in your eyes
And like a dog that is compelled to fight,
Snatch at his master that doth tarre him on.
All things that you should use to do me wrong
Deny their office; only you do lack
That mercy which fierce fire and iron extends,
Creatures of note for mercy-lacking uses.   (4.1.111–120)

This is not childish prattle, but consistent and well-developed, if far-fetched, argument that may remind one of a Metaphysical conceit. Of all the ruses and strategies that Arthur adopts to avoid being blinded the hyperbolical, prosopopeic invocation of the iron seems to us to be the most embarrassingly affected, and it does not have any viability outside the context of theatre. Curiously, while all other tactics fail, the persistent contrasting of Hubert with the kind, sympathetic iron finally manages to dissuade him from harming Arthur. The boy greets his decision with a pithy rhetorical flourish, unlike a child: "O, now you look like Hubert! all this while / You were disguised" (4.1.125–126).

The complexity and precocity of Arthur's pleas become apparent when compared with the simple but strong petition that the boy Edmond, Earl of Rutland, makes in *3 Henry VI* (*The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York and the Good King Henry the Sixth*) to escape the murderous wrath of Clifford:

Thou hast one son – for his sake pity me,
Lest in revenge thereof, sith God is just,
He be as miserably slain as I.
Ah, let me live in prison all my days
And when I give occasion of offence,
Then let me die, for now thou hast no cause.   (1.3.41–46)

23

However, Hubert does not regard Arthur's speeches as precocious, and the play implicitly invites its audiences to participate in his decision. This is how he reassures Arthur after sparing his eyes: "pretty child, sleep doubtless and secure / That Hubert, for the wealth of all the world, / Will not offend thee" (4.1.129–131). Thus it is clear that the play does not project Arthur as a *puer senex* or a precocious brat; he remains a "sweet child" despite his tortuous and fantastic supplications. It is probable that for the contemporary audiences Arthur's speeches might work as an extra-diegetic exercise of great aesthetic appeal, rather than prove an irrelevant, implausible excrescence. Tillyard spells out their peculiar attraction:

> In itself the business over Arthur's body [in Act 4, scene 3] is superb, but its energy and its freedom of style are quite alien to Arthur pleading with Hubert for his sight. This pleading is usually praised as very pathetic or condemned as intolerably affected. It is indeed affected, but to an Elizabethan audience would not have been intolerable. They probably enjoyed it as an exhibition of rhetoric; and as such it is finely built up, an elegant exercise into word-play, like many other scenes in Shakespeare. It does not, however, square very well with the more vigorous excesses of language [as exemplified by the Bastard] . . . in fact it does not fit naturally into the play at all.[45]

Thus the latitudes of episodic dramaturgy, together with the aesthetics of the early modern stage, justify Arthur's rhetorical manipulations without branding him as precocious. But this particular example does not enable us to return a general verdict upon the cultural-historical attitude towards children and precocity in general.

The words of Arthur before jumping from the walls of the prison are more realistic, but not altogether shorn of rhetorical trappings. In *The Troublesome Raigne*, Part 2, Arthur has to make up his mind before attempting the perilous jump, and his deliberation with himself is captured in a soliloquy:

> Now helpe good hap to further mine entent,
> Crosse not my youth with any more extreames:
> I venter life to gaine my libertie,
> And if I die, worlds trouble have an end.
> Feare gins diswade the strength of my resolve,
> My holde will faile, and then alas I fall,
> And if I fall, no question death is next:
> Better desist, and live in prison still.

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45. Tillyard, p. 238.

PRECOCITY AND PERFORMANCE

Prison said I ? nay, rather death than so:
Comfort and courage come againe to me.
Ile venter sure; tis but a leape for life.   (1.1–11)[46]

In the corresponding soliloquy in *The Life and Death*, Arthur tries to escape disguised as a ship-boy and has a fatal fall:

The wall is high, and yet will I leap down:
Good ground, be pitiful and hurt me not!
There's few or none do know me: if they did,
This ship-boy's semblance hath disguised me quite.
I am afraid; and yet I'll venture it.
If I get down, and do not break my limbs,
I'll find a thousand shifts to get away:
As good to die and go, as die and stay. *[He Leaps down]*
O me! my uncle's spirit is in these stones:
Heaven take my soul, and England keep my bones! *[He dies]* (4.3.1–10)

Arthur in *The Troublesome Raigne* has a longer and more declamatory swan song, which tries to exaggerate the pathos. On the other hand, Arthur's speech in *The Life and Death*, though succinct, exhibits the same trick of personification which he successfully used in the case of the blinding iron. Here, he addresses the ground and craves its pity. When he gets injured he discovers his uncle's malicious, death-dealing disposition in the rocks. Actually, the historical Arthur's disappearance was shrouded in mystery, and there are many competing opinions about the manner of his death. In these two plays, Arthur's rash attempt at jumping out of prison is implicitly traced to desperation and frustration. But if we try to analyze the character of Arthur in *The Life and Death* from a realistic point of view and look for psychological coherence, he does not appear to be an innocent, angelic child that the other characters in the play take him to be. First, he has the instinct and intelligence to apprehend that King John is antagonistic to his life (which shows him to be more mature than Edward and York of *Richard III*). Second, although he resists the attempt to blind him with verbal manoeuvres and elicits a promise of safety from Hubert, Arthur does not trust him at all. That is why he takes the risk of jumping from the walls of the prison. Third, he has the astuteness to disguise himself as a lowly ship-boy lest he should be caught after escaping from captivity (the play does not try to explain how he got the ship-boy's costume inside the prison).

In *The Life and Death*, in the same scene where Arthur jumps to death, Pembroke, Salisbury and Bigot decry his supposed murder in hyperbolic terms and ex-

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46. Bullough, vol. 4, p. 120.

ploit it as a reason for rebelling against John. The Bastard, who is the fiercest loyalist of the king, attacks Hubert for the putative murder of Arthur with equally high-flown rhetoric:

> Thou'rt damned as black – nay nothing is so black –
> Thou art more deep damned than Prince Lucifer;
> There is not yet so ugly a fiend of hell
> As thou shalt be, if thou didst kill this child.   (4.3.122–125)

The adults who vociferously lament Arthur's death are not in a position to know his cunning dealings with Hubert inside the prison. The play does hardly anything to dispel the sympathy conclusively accorded to the boy. The fact remains that the problematic aspect of Arthur's character has not received much critical attention, and he has not been described as precocious and un-childlike because of this. However, as has been indicated earlier, this does not warrant our forming a generalized picture about childhood and precocity in early modern England or in the Shakespeare's corpus. Does the play incorporate the contradictions in the characterization of Arthur consciously, and does it call upon the audiences to regard them seriously? Does it try to test the limits and possibilities of the dominant cultural formulations of childhood? Which is to say, can Arthur be a shrewd survivalist and still be a childlike child? Or does the lack of concern about the individuality and interiority of Arthur replicate a pan-historic, essentialist definition of children as passive, predetermined bearers of adult signification? In the Arthur of *The Life and Death* we may locate a boy who, by our standards, deviates from the ideal of the innocent, pure child, but who is recognized only as the archetypal "sweet child" by his elders and betters.

This predetermined *telos* of the character within the adult discourse of the play has the effect of denying agency and interiority to Arthur, especially when we recall that much of his un-childlike acts are designed to cope with a hostile adult world. The accusation of precocity is usually designed to curb the resisting agency of unruly children and to make them comply with adult norms; but at the same time the refusal to acknowledge the adult-like parts of children can be equally disempowering for them – and for the sign of the child in general. One suspects that that is what has happened to Arthur and several other children in the ideological scheme of the plays in which they occur and in the history of their reception. The act of attentively reading these characters may help tease out the layers of political investment that condition the representation (and formulation) of the child. The initial concern of the article, that of contextualizing and historicizing the child characters in Shakespeare without summarily dismissing them as precocious or otherwise, is thus not devoid of a broader cultural valence.

Zita Turi

Fasting and Feasting in *Hamlet*

A Carnivalesque Interpretation

This paper aims at discussing the features of carnival in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* by focusing on the notions of fasting and feasting in the drama. Carnivalesque interpretations tend to identify the characters of Hamlet and Claudius as the allegorical figures of Lent and Carnival, who during the course of the play also fight their combat. Since Lent and Carnival are primarily characterised by food-related metaphors and imagery linked with corporeality and eating, the paper restricts its scope to the investigation of gustatory conceits and their possible implications. First, it seems reasonable to outline briefly the critical background of carnivalesque interpretations of Shakespeare. Secondly, the paper attempts to establish its argumentation by placing the main characters into a carnivalesque context and, thirdly, the last section proposes to explore the rich variety of conceits related to incorporation. Hopefully, by the end the article will be able to justify its thesis and the validity of such a carnivalesque interpretation of *Hamlet*.

> "[A]ll that lives must die,
>   Passing through nature to eternity. . ."
>   (1.2.72–73)[1]

Introduction

Discourses in Shakespeare studies in the past decades often turn to the notion of carnival suggesting that Shakespearean drama can be traced back to folk traditions. L.C. Barber's *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* opened the ground for carnivalesque interpretations of Shakespearean comedy, yet the real catalyst in the discourse was Mikhail Bakhtin's work on carnival (translated into English as *Rabelais and his World*) in which he exhaustively discusses carnival in the context of Medieval and Renaissance literature in Europe. Barber's and Bakhtin's arguments proved to be the cornerstones of discussions on Shakespeare and the carnival, and triggered a

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1. All quotations and line references are to the following edition: William Shakespeare, *Hamlet: The Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. G. R. Hibbard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

series of similar interpretations extended to other Shakespearean genres such as histories or tragedies, some of which resulted in heated debates. David Ruiter in his *Shakespeare's Festive History* discusses the dynamics of festivity in the two *Henry IV* plays and bases his argument on a previous work on *Shakespeare's Festive Tragedy* by Naomi Lieber. In this book, Lieber adopts Barber's argument regarding the great tragedies. She suggests that both in comedy and tragedy the community is threatened and order must be restored; yet, in tragedy these threats are more powerful than comedy's mere disturbances since they reflect the determined choices people make towards survival, and the price of those choices results mostly in chaos. While comedy performs an escape from the social restraints, tragedy performs an uncontrollable breakage at great expense and it also "celebrates," but "by reconstructing and re-membering what is lost."[2]

Carnivalesque interpretations of Shakespeare focus on the clash between two opposed sets of values within the given artistic constellation.[3] Not only can Shakespeare's work be traced back to carnivalesque origins, this notion was deeply embedded in the Elizabethan theatre and determined the works of many of his contemporaries as well. Therefore, it is worth having a look at the contemporaneous authors' works and see how carnival seeped into the stage productions of the age.

Carnival and the Tudor Period

Michael D. Bristol argues that the institution of Elizabethan theatre is a creation of plebeian culture of the Renaissance. It is, as he suggests, "an institutionalized and professionalized form of Carnival and of popular festive activity in general."[4] Theatre and Carnival are "neighbouring institutions with similar logics of representation and similar orientations to social reality as a whole" therefore the "genres of drama become carnivalized."[5] Bristol also claims that the documentary evidence related to popular culture in Renaissance England is fragmentary since it is primarily based on the oral tradition and not the written texts. However, the understanding of this culture is not so much a question of the availability of concrete materials; rather it is a matter of theoretical orientation adopted towards this material. The framework of

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2. Naomi Lieber, *Shakespeare's Festive Tragedy – The Ritual Foundations of Genre* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 7–8.

3. Most recently Ronald Knowles edited a volume entitled *Shakespeare and Carnival: After Bakhtin*, which presents a collection of essays devoted explicitly to Shakespeare and Bakhtin's idea of the carnivalesque (Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1998).

4. Michael D. Bristol, "Carnival and the Institutions of Theatre in Elizabethan England," *ELH* 50. (1983), 637–654, p. 637.

5. Bristol, "Carnival," pp. 637–638.

popular culture seeped into Elizabethan theatre and supplied the logic and also the language of numerous dramatic texts.[6]

The works of popular tradition were not finished "products;" this culture was primarily collective and improvisatory.[7] In his comprehensive work on early English stages, Glynne Wickham discusses the significance of both the Church and vernacular festivities. His argument begins with the claim that the dramas of Christian character from the tenth to the thirteenth century were products of annual festive celebrations in Christian history; every play that survived from the period is directly related to a particular feast, or Red Letter Day, in the calendar of the Roman Catholic Church.[8] He emphasises that the genre of drama and festivals are closely related and he also suggests that dramatic games and rituals are the expressions of these festive traditions. Days that were considered to be of different sort demanded celebration and also demanded a temporary relief from normal, social restraints. As Wickham suggests, drama is a part of this release as an "expurgation of fear . . . as a rebellion against authority" and "as an idealization of the actual."[9] Through the mimetic games of festivals both actors and audience are enabled to explore and explain society to itself, and the nature of human condition.[10]

Apart from the church related festivals, celebrations of public matters, such as coronations, weddings, births or engagements, and even ruling monarchs' symbolic marriage with their subjects[11] also served as occasions of drama.[12] Wickham emphasises the significance of succession and the citizens' willingness to celebrate it and argues that all these ceremonies serve to "ornament a folk-ritual that at heart is concerned with survival, and thus with tomorrow, rather than today."[13] Numerous such ceremonies were recorded during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, primarily concerned with country life: on May Day of 1579 the Queen was entertained by Sir Philip Sidney's *The Lady of May*, which featured shepherds, foresters and the Lady of May. The interludes that survive from before the opening of the first Blackfriars (1576) employ pastoral settings and characters, but afterwards the pattern also appears in romantic comedy, supplying Nashe, Peele, Greene and Shakespeare with a

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6. Bristol, "Carnival," p. 638.
7. Bristol, "Carnival," p. 639.
8. Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300 to 1660 – Volume Three: Plays and their Makers to 1576* (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 23.
9. Wickham, p. 4.
10. Wickham, p. 5.
11. For instance, James I told his first Parliament: "I am the Husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawful wife" (Wickham, p. 48).
12. Wickham, p. 48.
13. Wickham, p. 54.

storehouse of materials.[14] During the 1580s these theatrical pieces became less frequent, but prior to their total disappearance these non-recurrent festivals had contributed substantially to the development of dramatic expression in England.[15]

Even if carnival diverts both from the church festivals and the non-recurrent ones, these occasions could not have existed utterly separated: their implementation and motives are different from the carnivalesque one they were most probably interrelated, yet they were all concerned with alternate subjects of communal affairs.

Since carnival is unfinished, the discussion on a specific group of materials should be conducted flexibly: on the one hand, because the material evidence is fragmentary, on the other hand, because it does not consist so much of body of carnivalesque texts, but a certain language and logic that seeped into these works. Bakhtin highlights that one of the characteristic speech patterns of the carnivalesque framework is the use of abusive language, which is grammatically and semantically separated from the context, and therefore is considered an individual unit. This language resembles proverbs, and has a similar primitive communicative function to incantations. Carnivalesque language also includes speech patterns that mock and insult the deity, and are therefore excluded from everyday conversations.[16] This language can be found in a variety of works of the period, such as the anonymous *Locrine* and *Mucedorus*, or the works of writers like Nashe, Dekker, Marlowe, Peele and, of course, Shakespeare, which is indicative of its relevance to the discussion of Renaissance culture.[17]

When it comes to carnival in Elizabethan England, scholars tend to discuss Thomas Nashe, who frequently mentions the language and traditions of the common people in his works. For instance, in the *Lenten Stuff* (1599) he ironically describes a character called Humphrey King, who produced verses to mark different occasions and who was also a great fan of Morris dance. This character returns in Nashe's pamphlet entitled *An Halfe-penny Worth of Wit*, which defends the popular festivals against the attacks of Puritans, and suggests that festivals are inseparably linked to popular culture in general.[18] As for dramatic works, scholars traditionally consider Nashe's *Summer's Last Will And Testament*, a dramatisation

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14. Wickham, p. 55.

15. Wickham, p. 60−61.

16. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1968), p. 17.

17. Bristol, "Carnival," p. 640.

18. François Laroque & Janet Lloyd, Shakespeare's *Festive World: Elizabethan Seasonal Entertainment and the Professional Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 39−40.

of the changing of the seasons, to be an outstanding representation of the festive tradition. This interlude features the personifications of the four seasons and lays emphasis on the delights of Spring. The holiday groups and pageant figures are typical of Elizabethan entertainments, and in Nashe's play they are brought on stage successively, which is unusual, since they tend to appear separately (coming under the Queen's window, encountering her in the garden or emerging from the woods).[19] Even if the play mostly exhibits pleasures, there certainly is an underlying gloom in the pageant: it reflects the darkening prospect of plague and winter, which, ultimately, is the direction of the annual cycle. Barber sees the anticipation of Shakespeare's plays in this two-sidedness, in which indulgence and joyful revel are blended with latent bleakness.[20]

This two-sidedness is the framework that defines carnival: its contradictory nature is in sharp contrast with the aesthetics of received culture. Bakhtin argues that in carnival life is shown in its twofold and doubtful: it is the "epitome of incompleteness."[21] The clash of two opposite sets of values reflects the discrepancy that is fundamental to the carnivalesque pattern, not only in theatre and literature but also in the visual arts of Europe.

In his allegorical painting, *The Battle between Carnival and Lent*, Pieter Bruegel the Elder depicts a hurly-burly of allegorical scenes, the representations of Carnival plays. In the description of such allegorical fights and masquerades performed at public squares "Lent, Princess of Fasting and Penitence" exhorts "Carnival, Emperor of the Drunkards and Gluttons" not to forget his soul over the feasting. Carnival is put into jail and escapes. Christmas eventually reconciles the two and Lent is permitted to rule for forty days of the year and for two days each week.[22] This theme put on canvas by Bruegel was flourishing in the Medieval and Renaissance era and scholars of Bruegel and Shakespeare are familiar with the resemblances between the two artists, so much so that they occasionally label the works of the painter as "almost Shakespearean."[23] Although the similarities are remarkable, this paper does not seek to draw up a comparative analysis of Bruegel and Shakespeare, yet, mentioning the Dutch painter gains significance since it provides a starting point for the discussion of carnivalesque features in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*,

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19. C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 59.

20. Barber, p. 61.

21. Bakhtin, pp. 25–26.

22. Hanns Swarzenski, "The Battle Between Carnival and Lent," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 49, No. 275 (1951) 2–11, p. 2.

23. Anthony J. Lewis, "Man in Nature: Peter Brueghel and Shakespeare," *Art Journal* 32. 4 (1973) 405–413, p. 405.

in which Lent and Carnival also fight their allegorical combat. This paper aims at presenting a carnivalesque interpretation of the play by focusing on the conflict between Hamlet and Claudius.

The Combatants

Hamlet's black costume evokes Bruegel's Lent-figures as well as the widely-known disorder of melancholy, which, according to Renaissance physiology, is due to the misbalance of humours and the proliferation of black bile in one's body. Besides the commonplaces concerning melancholy often quoted by Shakespeare scholars,[24] it is also significant that Saturn was the planet most closely associated with this temperament: "children of Saturn" were both blessed and cursed; they could have the unusual gift of contemplation which was, however, bound up with their solitude and alienation from those around them.[25]

Saturn has carnivalesque connotations as well. As Mikhail Bakhtin argues in his introduction to *Rabelais and his World*, the carnival spirit derives from the ancient Roman Saturnalias, which were perceived as a "true and full, though temporary, return of Saturn's golden age upon earth."[26] The Saturnalian tradition seeped into the Medieval and Renaissance episteme and remained unbroken and alive in the carnival custom, and they expressed the universal renewal and a possible escape from everyday life.[27] Both Hamlet's black costume and Saturn's power over melancholic people strengthen the idea that Shakespeare's character denotes the Lent figure combating with the impertinent Carnival, who in the play seems to be Claudius. The king organises feats and entertainments throughout the play, he is mocking kingship by appointing himself (and not being appointed by divine power) and he is incapable of praying, which is also typically carnivalesque as these rites are "completely deprived of the character of magic and prayer."[28] Michael D. Bristol emphasises that the funeral of Hamlet's father goes alongside with a wedding feast, and this "odd mingling of grief and of festive laughter is typical of the play as a whole."[29] Claudius could be inter-

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24. Such as melancholy being also considered as the temperament of people exceptionally gifted in politics and the arts.

25. Bridget Gellert, "The Iconography of Melancholy in the Graveyard Scene of *Hamlet*," *Studies in Philology* 67.1 (1970) 57–66, p. 59.

26. Bakhtin, pp. 7–8.

27. Bakhtin, pp. 7–8.

28. Bakhtin, p.7.

29. Michael D. Bristol, " 'Funeral Bak'd Meats': Carnival and Carnivalesque in *Hamlet*" in *Shakespeare's Tragedies – Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Susan Zimmermann (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 237–255, p. 250.

preted as a variant of the Lord of Misrule, he mocks kingship by "appearing in the usurped finery of the 'real' king," he killed his predecessor and overtook his place in the queen's bed. His coronation and marriage, "a kind of joke at his victim's expense, can be an occasion of Carnival mirth . . . his use of the carnivalesque [however] is intended only as a mask for the strategic advancement of private goals and ambitions."[30] Bristol suggests that Claudius is not only a usurper of the throne but also that of the carnivalesque spirit, since his using of it serves only one purpose: to legitimise his dubious political authority; the authority which, ironically, is mocked by carnival.[31]

Both in the carnivalesque and "official" registers feasts are central. Bakhtin argues that the so called "official feast," that is, the one sponsored either by the state or the church, sanctioned the already existing patterns of things or asserted all that was stable, including the given hierarchy, religious, political and moral values as well as norms and prohibitions, as opposed to the suspension of the hierarchical rank during the carnival. Feasts have mostly been linked with crises or breaking points (such as death and birth) in nature's cycle or in the life of the community, which always led to a festive perception of the world.[32] That *Hamlet* dramatises such a turning point is manifest throughout the play, even from the very first line ("Who's there?") which, by focusing on the question of identity, suggests the presence of some sort of crisis. Hamlet sticks to the hierarchical code and cannot accept the arbitrary nature of carnival; as a Lenten figure he is against misrule and boisterous indulgence. Moreover, due to the custom of primogeniture, he was supposed to be crowned king instead of Claudius. By usurping the throne, his uncle displaces time and creates the festive context of the play in which the only way for Hamlet is to adopt the attributes of lent, thus defeating the affray of carnival. He borrows carnivalesque means: he organises festivities as well, moreover, he stages the mouse-trap scene, which enables the involvement of the audience on and off stage via the device of metatheatre.

Glynne Wickham suggests that apart from the mimetic games and rituals, athletic games also took place as adjuncts to certain festivals. They mostly exhibited trials of strength (wrestling, horsemanship, archery etc.) and were supposed to reflect a common interest in survival, since the skills displayed in these games were crucial to win a battle. In ancient Greece and Rome, these sports events were closely associated with the shrines and religious festivals of Apollo, and they also figured in funeral rites.[33] These athletic games also involved the audience and allowed them to

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30. Bristol, " 'Funeral Bak'd Meats,' " p. 255.
31. Bristol, " 'Funeral Bak'd Meats,' " p. 256.
32. Bakhtin, pp. 9–10.
33. Wickham, pp. 8–9.

explore and interpret the underlying drives of society (namely, the competitive force. rivalry and the survival of the fitter). The sword fight at the end of Hamlet highly resembles the above mentioned festive games, and the bloodshed in the last scene transforms the festival into a battlefield, even a funeral. Consumption is central to this bloodshed: the royal couple drink from the poisoned wine, which fits well into the recurring imagery of feasting. The word 'company' derives from the word "com-pane," which means to have bread together, to eat together; feasting is certainly a most communal act, to which *Hamlet* provides a great store-house of images.

Fasting versus Feasting

In Bruegel's painting, the personification of Carnival, the allegory of bodily pleasures, rides a wine barrel instead of a horse and the combatants also carry kitchen utensils instead of weapons. Carnival's spear is substituted with a roasting spit with a pig's head, a chicken and sausages skewered on. Various characters of Carnival wear articles of food or kitchenware on their heads (kettle or waffle hat) and Carnival himself is crowned with a meat pie that somebody has bitten into.[34] Consumption is central to carnivalesque spirit since, on the one hand, it draws attention to the mundane aspects of life, and, on the other hand, it is the time of incorporation preceding the constraints of piety, reason and fasting. In *Hamlet* there are ample examples of similar gustatory conceits.

The play begins with a wedding feast and after Claudius and Gertrude leave the stage Hamlet connects sexuality with eating: "Why, she would hang on him / As if increase of appetite had grown / By what it fed on" (1.2.143–145). Consumption-related themes saturate the play and the use of images linked with corporeality brings the tragedy to a more down to earth level. As Bakhtin highlights, to degrade means to bury, to sow and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something new. To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs.[35] With the emphasis on consumption, the play establishes a discourse based on incorporation; be that of food, sexuality or the characters themselves. Figures of the play feed on one another: Gertrude feeds on her new husband and Claudius feeds on Old Hamlet's royal position. Polonius is also identified with a rat, a parasitical animal, and Hamlet in his comment on his death explicitly articulates that the ones who feed on others can easily become fed on. When Claudius queries where Polonius is, Hamlet responds: "At sup-

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34. Bristol, " 'Funeral Bak'd Meats,' " p. 251.
35. Bakhtin, p. 21.

per" (4.3.18), and he adds "Not where he eats, but where he is eaten. . . . We fat all creatures else to / fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and / your lean beggar is but variable service – two dishes, but / to one table" (4.3.23–26).

In carnival the world is turned upside down and everything is unpredictable since it operates according to a completely different set of rules than the non-carnivalesque order. Kings can easily become beggars and vice versa, and those who eat can also turn into food for worms. In this context life is random and therefore full of perils, irrespective of one's social rank or status. The "fat king" and the "lean beggar" in the same context highlight the two extremes of the social framework, yet, they are considered equal: two dishes on the same table.

In the eyes of Hamlet everybody is potential meat to be cooked and served during a feast. This is supported by the idea that Old Hamlet's funeral is held together with the wedding feast, like the end of the play where the bloodshed is embedded in the occasion of another feast organised by Claudius. Additionally, the "funeral baked meats" (1.2.180) conjure up the image of meat pie, pastry filled with stew and the conceit also connotes the corpse of Hamlet's father. On the other hand, later in the play Hamlet claims that Claudius "took [his] father grossly, full of bread," which, as G.R. Hibbard points out, recalls the Ghost's statement that he is "for the day confined to fast in fires" (1.5.11).[36] Nonetheless, these images also strengthen the above mentioned interchangeability between consuming and being consumed: the pastry around the meat connotes the bread having been eaten by Old Hamlet, which poisoned his body and deprived him of Lenten purgation.[37]

Claudius is the source of contamination, the exact opposite of the purifying process of the lent. He is also recurrently linked with parasites in the text; for instance, Old Hamlet laments virtue at court and remarks that "lust, though to a radiant angel linked, / Will sate itself in a celestial bed / And prey on garbage" (1.5.55–57). Maggots feed on garbage and, moreover, this imagery is also connected to worms depicted as being generated in dead dogs by the sun (2.2.181). Here, procreation and decay appear in the very same conceit and the prey, the corpse, turns into a "womb" for parasites, which fulfils the criteria of the Bakhtinian grotesque body, the body in transformation that dies and is born simultaneously.[38] In this unfinished

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36. Note to l. 3.3.80.

37. Metaphors of cannibalism frequently occur in Shakespeare's plays, most notably in *Titus Andronicus*, in which serving the human meat pie during the feast is the means of Titus' revenge on Tamora.

38. This self-destructive imagery originates in antiquity: Saturn was traditionally depicted with a scythe which he carried, and the allegorical story of him devouring his own children also connected his figure to temporality. Saturn, or Chronos, is also often characterised as an old man with long beard, as "Father Time," whose nature is ambiguous since he gives life but

metamorphosis both poles of transformation are detectable: the old and the new, the dying and the procreating, the beginning and the end of the process. From the aspect of, in Bakhtin's wording, "classic" aesthetics, which is the aesthetics of the completed, these grotesque bodies are ugly and monstrous.[39] Nevertheless, in carnivalesque aesthetics the grotesque body is not separated from the world, it is not closed and completed. Instead, it is wide open and therefore the stress is laid on those parts through which the world can enter or through which the body can exit to meet the world: the mouth, the genital organs, the potbelly or the nose.[40] Being generated by the sun in dead dogs mirrors this grotesquery, albeit this corporeal depiction is by far not the merry procreation usual to carnival. These maggots are parasitical, they feed on the dead womb and thus it is highly unlikely that any form of procreation could occur in this context. It seems that contamination is vital to the survival of these parasitical organisms, for which Lenten cleansing would be lethal.

Eating-related metaphors impregnate the play and the entire state of Denmark might be perceived as a decaying body being eaten by maggots. The density of metaphors of rankness and the fact that "something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (1.4.65), with "things gross and rank in nature" (1.2.136), suggest that just as Polonius turned from consumer into flesh being consumed, the feasting country can also easily become a dish being served.

The analogy between the human body and state was a frequently exploited in the Renaissance. Maybe the most significant comprehensive work on this issue is that of Ernst. H. Kantorowicz's, who deduces the fiction to "The King's Two Bodies" from the English jurists of the Tudor period (mostly from Edmund Plowden's *Commentaries or Reports*), claiming that besides his physical body the king also has a body politic that legally never dies. Kantorowicz's starting point is a collection of medieval judicial records, from which it turns out that the source of the king's absolute power was not some abstract law or not even an abstract state, but rather an "abstract psychological fiction" of the king being almighty and unquestionably just.[41] "Bodifying" social institutions (even the king) was common from the late Middle Ages and the image of the state was also captured as an organic whole, conceived as a "body" being unable to exist without its constructing components, namely the members of the community.[42] In this context both the body and the

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also takes it. With reference to the grotesque body images, "Father Time" / Saturn "pregnant" with his devoured children seems to be the ultimate carnivalesque / grotesque body.

39. Bakhtin, pp. 24–25.

40. Bakhtin, p. 26.

41. Ernst H. Kantorowitcz *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 4.

42. Kantorowicz, pp. 270–271.

state are hierarchically arranged organisms fighting for survival and both exist by constant tensions and conflicts among their component parts. The complexity of this matrix is evidenced by the various parts of the body linked with their political counterparts in the society. According to the examples listed by Naomi Lieber, the head was usually associated with the prince, while the other organs, e.g. the belly, were assigned a referent with certain variety. William Averell related it to the aristocracy, Bacon to both deprived populace and troubled aristocracy, and Edward Forset to the sovereign of a healthy digestive system.[43]

The digestive allusions in *Hamlet* suggest that the state of Denmark evokes the image of a digesting body which repeatedly needs to be purified of congested pollution. Even Gertrude's words to Hamlet in act 1 scene 2 point out that "all that lives must die, / *Passing through nature* to eternity" (1.2.72–73). As a Lenten figure, Hamlet's task is to cleanse this organism; this process, however, is hindered by Claudius's anti-lenten indulgence.[44] Besides the "funeral baked meat" (1.2.180) there are further references to food made out of animals. In Gertrude's chamber Hamlet accuses her of lasciviousness and holds her fornicating "[i]n the rank sweat of an enseamèd [greasy] bed" (3.4.84) against the queen, thus suggesting the image of the royal couple as two bodies being roasted on the heat of their incestuous sheets dripping with their own fat. Abstaining from meat during Lent would be essential for purgation, yet, the whole play seems to be soaked with the greasy sweat of the characters.

The murder of Old Hamlet is described variously: first, the ghost claims it was caused by "juice of cursèd hebenon" (1.5.62) poured in the king's ear, later Hamlet accuses Claudius of taking his "father grossly, full of bread" (3.3.80). In both cases, Claudius is the cause of congestion which hinders the circulation of the body (the eventual reason for Old Hamlet's death: 1.5.64–70): the rankness of Denmark is condensed in Claudius and he appears to be similar to a blockage in the vein of the country that, in order to restore healthy circulation, has to be removed.

In tragedies, as Lieber suggests, the tragic heroes are the *pharmakoi*, that is, human scapegoats (often slaves, cripples or criminals) who were chosen and cast out of society at times of disaster, hence enabling purification, and who construct and are constructed by the community at the same time. Their removal, or sacrifice, reconfirms the community of the image it has chosen for itself. However, the entire socio-political organism that contains both hero and society, in turning against the

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43. Lieber, p. 15.

44. The most obvious instance of Claudius being a source of contamination is the fact that he murdered Hamlet Senior by pouring poison in his ear. Moreover, at the end of the play he attempts to repeat this villainy, but there the poison is accompanied by wine consumption.

representation of itself (the hero), turns against itself (the community), thus evoking the highly Shakespearean image of self-devouring humanity.[45]

The transformation of the hero into the locus of crisis places him into the position of the scapegoat. In his work, *The Scapegoat*, in relation to myths, René Girard emphasises the harmful omnipotence of the scapegoat, and its persecutors' belief that all initiative come from it. There is only one person responsible for everything, and since this person is the root of sickness he has to be responsible for the cure as well. Scapegoating is only effective at times of crisis when human relations are broken down and this crisis also has exterior implications, such as sickness, plagues or droughts.[46] The *pharmakos* localises hostility that saturates a given community; it embodies the socio-political taint, disease or disruption that produces political anxiety. The deaths of tragic heroes at the end of the plays represent a sort of self-surgery, a ritualised form of cleansing and reclaiming of the community's primary values.[47]

The theatrical representations of the above mentioned rites were common in the Middle Ages and manifested themselves in ceremonies that intended to purge the community of bad luck. This driving-away of evil or other disruptive forces became central to some forms of social theatre, such as the anti-masques of the sixteenth century.[48] The scapegoat-type ceremonies sometimes took a more universal form and depicted allegorical conflicts between forces such as winter and spring or darkness and light. These mock-combats (taking the form of war-dances) usually occurred at the beginning of the year, and the two forces gradually turned into the spirits of the old and the new year, or carnival and lent.[49]

So it seems that for the sake of the purgation of the communal body, the embodiment of crisis within the society has to be annihilated. In *Hamlet*, the locus of crisis is Claudius: he is the embodiment of rankness in the state of Denmark; yet, the "self-surgery" is carried out by Hamlet since he is the protagonist, who identifies the problem first,[50] hence he reflects the crisis the community faces. It is problem-

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45. Lieber, p. 16.

46. René Girard, *The Scapegoat* (London: The Athlone Press, 1986), p. 43.

47. Lieber, pp. 16–17.

48. These anti-masques usually displayed disorder, hence ridiculing the traditional genre of the masque.

49. John Welsey Harris, *Medieval Theatre in Context: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 61.

50. In Gertrude's bed chamber when the queen says "thou hast cleft my heart in twain" Hamlet responds that she should "throw away the worser part of it, / And live purer with the other half" (3.4.152–154). Hamlet's words as daggers penetrate Gertrude and remove the infected organ so that the body can be purified.

atic to identify the scapegoat in this very situation: discourses on the subject most often assign this function to Hamlet since the scapegoat role is traditionally cast on an innocent member of the community. However, Hamlet is most certainly not an innocent figure: he kills Polonius without the slightest sign of remorse or pity, he drives Ophelia into despair and he also sets up the execution of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Regardless of the often applied double standard in case of murder in Shakespeare (namely that regicide cannot be compared to other murderous deeds), Hamlet does have villainous traits. Therefore it might not be far-fetched to suggest that there is more than one sacrificial object present in the play: for Hamlet, the root of all rankness in Denmark is his uncle and vice versa, Claudius assumes that were Hamlet to be eliminated, he would be freed from the embodiment of everything that might oppose his pattern. Additionally, the play is based on mere assumptions, unspoken words, procrastination and uncertainty; the only indubitable evidence for Hamlet that Claudius assassinated Old Hamlet is his reaction to the mouse-trap scene.[51] This, however, is persuasive only for Hamlet and not the whole community. Moreover, the public suspects nothing of the assassination, which from a communal aspect renders the king free from guilt. In this sense, both Hamlet and the king could be cast in the role of the scapegoat; eventually, even if circuitously, they eliminate each other, thus depriving the community of both scapegoats and both extremes.

Another way of transferring sin and thus cleansing the community was to apply so called "sin-eaters," a custom in practice in Britain as well. Its earliest record is a manuscript from the middle of the seventeenth century (*The Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme*) which mentions the Welsh custom of a sin eater consuming a piece of bread over the corpse in order to take upon himself the sins of the deceased. The major difference between the scapegoat and the sin-eater rituals is that the former appealed to the living whereas the latter to the already dead.[52]

The death of the royal family at the end of *Hamlet* purges the community of the living, yet, there is an allusion to the deceased ones as well, and it is, again, feast-related. When Fortinbras marches in and discovers the bloodshed he asks "Oh, proud Death, / What feast is toward in thine eternal cell, / That thou so many princes at a shot / So bloodily hast struck?" (5.2.317–319). These lines echo Hamlet's riddling utterance concerning the whereabouts of Polonius's corpse: "Not where he eats, but where he is eaten" (4.3.20). Polonius is dead here, therefore,

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51. Even if the encounter with the Ghost triggers the consecutive events and supports Hamlet's already existing suspicion, the endless line of studies on the Ghost's identity suggests that his words are to be taken with a pinch of salt.

52. E. Sidney Hartland, "The Sin-Eater," *Folklore* 3.2 (1892) 145–147, pp. 145–146.

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being literally eaten by worms, but on the other hand, being allegorically eaten by Death. The king's final feast turns into a funeral (again) and a Feast of Death, or even a Dance of Death.

The iconography of the Dance of Death enjoyed massive popularity in early modern Europe. Its earliest documented example was a fresco, from which the name 'Danse Macabre' is derived, painted on a cloister wall of the cemetery of Les Innocents in 1424–25.[53] Depicting the Dance of Death was often accompanied by carnivalesque features: for instance, in the depiction of a Dance of Death by Michael Wolgemut (1493), five skeletons are displayed, one of them playing the flute, one of them lying in a grave-like hole and the rest are dancing to the tunes. In early modern Europe, the superstition that at certain times the graveyard dead would rise and dance was widespread, and it might have been related to the churchyard dances and revelry amongst the living.[54] Johannes Nohl in his work *The Black Death*, describes the carnivalesque grotesquery of these performances, highlighting that in this Dance of Death the joyous festive atmosphere is turned into a dead march, during which a young man throws himself on the ground and plays the dead man while girls and women dance around him endeavouring to caricature mourning the dead in as comical a manner as possible.[55] In this game the living attempt to mock Death "in a wild travesty of funeral rites,"[56] whereas in the authentic Dance of Death the figures of Death perform the carnival laughter. Shakespearean tragedies usually end in bloodshed, so Danse Macabre, the devouring womb of the grave, is "inevitable" to the authentic Shakespearean solution; however, in *Hamlet* this Dance of Death is directly linked with feasting[57] and due to the carnivalesque pattern human beings are equal in both festivals and death. Fortinbras arrives into this dismal sight, in order to regenerate the body of the state and he describes the horrid image with gustatory conceits. This act of consumption also seems to be of a parasitical nature,

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53. Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Morality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 51.
54. Neill, p. 63.
55. Neill, p. 64.
56. Neill, p. 64.
57. In her comprehensive work on the history of European drama, Erika Fischer-Lichte describes similar festive occasions related to the human mocking of Death. These were connected to the religious festivals of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, most notably the Easter tropes and the Passion plays in Europe. By this time, these festive events went beyond the range of the Church and were often held in cemeteries. Feasting, drinking and turbulence were so central to these carnivalesque occasions that, according to records, during one of these lengthy festivals events deteriorated to an extent that the cemetery had to be reconsecrated (*A dráma története* [2001], p. 74).

however, it is inexorable for the renewal of the community; the character of Fortinbras is reminiscent of a "dramaturgical scavenger," a socio-political bird of prey waiting for the body of the state to die. He is a marginal figure in the play, yet, he periodically appears and his presence is constant throughout the tragedy. His figure resembles a vulture hovering over its prey until it finally dies and can be devoured. In this sense, Denmark is really a decaying body, the space of feasts, which eventually devours itself. Fortinbras "[s]harked up a list of landless resolutes / For food and diet to some enterprise / That hath a somach in't" (1.1.98–100), upon which G.R. Hibbard in his edition remarks that the allusion to food might firstly mean that the landless resolutes are to serve as rations ("food and diet") to the personified "enterprise" that has a challenge to their pride ("stomach") in it; secondly, Hibbard suggests, these men will participate in any enterprise that promises something for the stomach to digest,[58] which in this "bodified" context is the state of Denmark.

Once Fortinbras is in charge, he starts to give orders and clean up the bloodshed both by rearranging the corpses ("Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage" 5.2.349) and by urging the story to be told, thus restoring the name of Hamlet and enabling purification via the catharsis of representation:

> Let us haste to hear it,
> And call the noblest to the audience.
> For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune.
> I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,
> Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.   (5.2.339–343)

In this sense, Fortinbras is not only a scavenger cleaning the battle field of the dead bodies, but he is also a sin-eater, who allegorically takes away Hamlet's sins by justifying and representing his deeds. Throughout the play Hamlet is, first, the personification of melancholy, the killjoy who casts a dark gloom over the wedding feast of Claudius; later, the figure of the madman who commits outrageous deeds (lies, deceit, murder), due to which his reputation within the community is at least dubious. As a contrast, in the last scene Fortinbras depicts him as a valiant soldier who was likely to "have proved most royally" (5.2.351) and would have become a great king. Additionally, Hamlet, as a student of Wittenberg, is a man of reason, which in Shakespearean drama is frequently linked with memory. In *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth calls memory "the warder of the brain" (1.7.66), to which Kenneth Muir in the Arden edition adds that anatomists in Shakespeare's time divided the brain into three ventricles, in the hindmost of which, the cerebellum, they placed the memory, which was the warder of the

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58. Note to ll. 1.1.98–100.

cerebellum warning the reason against attack.[59] Memory and remembrance is also crucial in *Hamlet* and it is synonymous with reason. The Ghost urges Hamlet to remember him and the consecutive monologue suggests that the encounter made Hamlet restructure his previous conception of reason:

> Yea, from the table of my memory
> I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
> All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
> That youth and observation copied there,
> And thy commandment all alone shall live
> Within the book and volume of my brain. . .   (1.5. 98–103)

The code valid in Wittenberg fails in carnivalesque Denmark, where the memory of Old Hamlet has faded away, and therefore Hamlet needs to readjust to the festive pattern which instead of the head appeals to the lower stratum of the body. In the framework of corporeality reason is exiled and replaced by passion, indulgence and madness, characteristically carnivalesque attributes and the complete opposites of Lenten abstinence and spirituality. Fortinbras, as the one in charge of memory in the kingdom, restores the Lenten pattern by representing the story for the "noblest audience," in a communal act, which, again, is typical of carnival.

Conclusion

Although the characters carry the traits of carnival, and the play can be perceived as an allegorical battle between Lent and Carnival, the infertility and the lack of reproduction give the carnivalesque approach a slight twist and in many senses it seems the play offers rather an anti-carnivalesque solution. The pattern of festivity is completed in the final scene in which Claudius arranges a feast with sports and games, albeit lethal ones. At the end of the drama Carnival and Lent eliminate each other leaving the stage empty for something upcoming and new. Even though *Hamlet* offers no proper carnivalesque outcome (present, e.g. in the marriages at the end of the comedies), some sort of renewal and regeneration does occur in the end: the restoration of the pre-carnivalesque framework of "re-membering" and reason.

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59. William Shakespeare, *Macbeth: The Arden Shakespeare*, Kenneth Muir ed. (The Arden Shakespeare, 2006), note to l. 1.7.66.

John C. Murray

Refocusing the Gendered Gaze

Role-Playing, Performance,
and Multiple-Identity in Defoe's *Moll Flanders*

Daniel Defoe makes use of subject-object patterns within his novel *Moll Flanders* in order to produce ruptures within eighteenth-century gender ideology and to reconstitute the subject-object relation between masculine and feminine within the novel. Even as Defoe affirms the dominance of gender ideology by positioning his readers as objects of the novel, Defoe uses his character of Moll Flanders to suggest the potential for transforming ideology through the performative act of gender. As Moll struggles to link fragments of her past, she explores the boundaries of gender identity and transgresses their limits in order to achieve movement within eighteenth century society. How Moll negotiates her conceptions and interpretations of her relation to her natural, cultural, and psychological landscapes suggests her success in tracing the presence of an identity that would inform and sustain the self by allowing her to assert a sense of economic individualism, which might release her from any moral obligation to the pervasive and dominant ideologies affecting gender in the eighteenth century.

> "It is impossible to recover our own past. It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture it: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) which we do not suspect."   (Marcel Proust)[1]

Marcel Proust's comments on the vagueness of memory suggest ways in which we may reconstitute traditional forms of history by bridging chronology with personal narrative to explain the past. Our explanations frequently rely upon binary strands

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1. Marcel Proust's focus on reconstructing memory has resurfaced in many contemporary novels (e.g. Don DeLillo's *Libra* and Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*) as a way to reshape traditional forms of history which have become both unreliable and unsuitable for explaining the past. See Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, 2 vols., trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff (New York: Random House, 1934), p. 34.

that reveal subject-object orientations within our narratives. We make use of these orientations to determine how we act and how we are being acted upon. What we learn from subject-object patterns affects our identity, determines our value, and influences our potential for growth.

Daniel Defoe makes use of subject-object patterns within his novel *Moll Flanders*.[2] Defoe employs many modern themes within his fictional work to facilitate the narrative mode. His character of Moll Flanders struggles to link fragments of her past in order to define a new gender identity that is informed by classifications she both embraces and rejects in order to achieve movement within society. Defoe appropriates gender opposition and spatially reconstitutes it in terms of antagonistic representations of historical and personal narratives, public and private identities, and insideness and outsideness.

Moll's identity is inscribed according to referents that determine her proximity to historically and socially prescribed definitions of insideness. These classifications are further qualified according to perceived physical attributes, gender, sexuality, class distinction, and morality. How Moll negotiates her conceptions and interpretations of her relation to her natural, cultural, and psychological landscapes suggests her success in tracing the presence of an identity that would inform and sustain the self by allowing her to assert a sense of economic individualism, which might release her from any moral obligation to the pervasive and dominant ideologies affecting gender in the eighteenth century.

Ideology is used to predict and to pattern the organization of humans and the distribution of resources within a socio-economic system. However, ideology requires affirmation that can only be demonstrated through a commitment to performative acts that stabilize these systems and affirm our value and location within them. By fulfilling the requirements of performative acts, we strengthen the multiple definitions used to outline roles and tasks we assume in service of the dominant ideology. By altering performance, by changing or reshaping established roles, we diminish the capacity of the dominant ideology to sustain its self and necessitate a refashioning of its conceptual fabric.

Defoe produces ruptures within eighteenth-century gender ideology by reconstituting the subject-object relation between masculine and feminine within the novel. Even as Defoe affirms the dominance of gender ideology by positioning his readers as objects of the novel, he uses Moll to suggest the potential for transforming ideology through the performative act.

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2. All parenthesized references are to this edition: Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988).

The episodic plot of *Moll Flanders* allows the reader to sift through shards of memory that comprise the autobiographical mode of representation. Readers share in Moll's experience of tracing memories by struggling to unify the fragments she offers which reconstitute her identity through the affirmative act of narration. As Moll relates the events of her life, it becomes apparent that she has manipulated her identity in order to achieve social mobility. It is also apparent that Moll is inscribing a new identity, realized through the authoritative voice of the narrative, which places her in a more positive light. The conclusion of the narrative causes readers to wonder whether or not Moll has reconciled her past to achieve a new and enlightened sense of self, or whether or not she is merely playing the part of the penitent woman.

It is through the process of deconstructing and reconstructing identity that Moll seeks traces of memory to compose her subjective narrative in relation to the absence of identity that informs it. Sigmund Freud defined the term "memory-trace" to explain the ways in which we attempt to restore our knowledge of past experiences. Securing the trace memory is impossible, because, as Jacques Derrida suggests, "*trace itself does not exist*."[3] However, one of the problems with Derrida's concept of trace as signification is that knowledge is filtered through a subjective lens. Thus, how are we to differentiate the trace from the absence that informs it? I will apply the previous question to a close-reading of *Moll Flanders* in order to assess whether or not tracing the past enables Moll Flanders to recover her sense of self, a signification that has been compromised by her continuous manipulation of appearance and identity. I will also consider how gender ideology might frame our notions of self in a reductive and exclusive sense.

Through Moll's numerous gender transformations, Defoe suggests how the displacement of feminine gender within industrialized society might enable the birth of a neutral and commodious individualism that makes performance imprecise and destabilizes the traditional gender roles that inform the dominant ideology. Performance desires a subject that must be affirmed, and as such, performance is used to

> refer to all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his (sic) continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers. It will be convenient to label as 'front' that part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance.[4]

3. Gayatri Spivak provides a translation of Derrida's theories of deconstruction, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis, which have affected criticism and theory: Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976), p. 167.

4. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Penguin, 1969), p. 32.

The success or failure of Moll's performance is largely determined by the novelist's commitment to satisfying his readerships' expectations of gendered behavior and his commitment to traditional masculine and feminine representations, particularly at a time when the accumulation of wealth and status was a fully masculine concern.[5] Moll struggles to locate a suitable identity that would accommodate both her public obligations to represent herself as a liberated feminine member of society, and her private concerns to accumulate and possess the artifacts of wealth (i.e., gold) which she believes signify masculine conceptions of nobility and gentility.

In *Of Grammatology* Derrida adapts trace as a theoretical term in relation to a number of "nonsynonymic substitutions" (e.g., differance, arche-writing, and spacing); it will be beneficial to isolate trace as a by-product of the subject-object opposition within the context of Defoe's novel. There are numerous works that allude to the themes of memory, presence, and absence, and are available for inclusion within my essay.[6] This essay will conclude by demonstrating how the concepts of self and other, subject and object, and masculine and feminine are used to suggest that Moll experiences "belonging" or "insideness" not as an absence, but rather as a presence which has not actually been present in her life. Presence, therefore, presents itself in terms of multiple histories of being that necessitate a unifying autobiographical narrative.

The notion of the trace left by the absent sign in the process of signification affects the continuity of subjective identity, a self-awareness that must be present within the narrative in order for Moll to have "grown Penitent and Humble, as she [affirms] to be" and to experience a spiritual rebirth (1). As David Marshall suggests, "The rebirth of conversion makes the retrospective reflections of autobiography

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5. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage, 1989), pp. 177, 181.

6. The following titles are insightful contributions to a growing corpus of readings on memory, trace, and presence-absence. See John Sutton's, *Philosophy and Memory Traces: Descartes to Connectionism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998); Lina Bolzoni "The Play of Images: The Art of Memory from Its Origins to the Seventeenth Century," in P. Corsi, ed., *The Enchanted Loom: Chapters in the History of Neuroscience* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991), 16–26; Robyn Fivush and Elaine Reese, "The Social Construction of Autobiographical Memory," in M Conway, ed., *Theoretical Perspectives on Autobiographical Memory* (New York: Kluwer, 1992), 115–32; Robert N. McCauley, "Walking in Our Own Footsteps: Autobiographical Memory and Reconstruction," in U. Neisser and E. Winograd, eds., *Remembering Reconsidered: Ecological and Traditional Approaches to the Study of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988), 126–44; James L. McClelland, "Constructive Memory and Memory Distortions: A Parallel-Distributed Processing Approach," in D. L. Schacter, ed., *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains, and Societies Reconstruct the Past* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995), 69–90.

possible."[7] Moll's relation to her reader is characterized by a similar process of exchange. Moll parcels out fragments of her life story to a captivated reader. By controlling the textual flow of the narrative, Moll "withholds and spends information as both actions suit and profit her."[8] As Stephen Michael suggests in his essay "Thinking Parables: What Moll Flanders Does Not Say," "Language . . . functions as a resource for Moll because it becomes part of her economy of accumulation; it is constantly associated with capital, in the sense that capital is a resource for Moll's continued identity as a gentlewoman."[9] In this case, Moll uses language as a means for impressing upon the reader her qualities as a "gentlewoman."

Moll offers and withholds information to continuously shape readers' perceptions of her, perceptions that must agree with her ever-changing definitions of self, and also positions the readers as unknowing objects of her subjective narrative. The readers assume a feminine position as an object of the masculine gaze of the narrative subject. As much as Defoe's heroine rejects the mandates of eighteenth-century ideology, her narrative prose draws readers into a dialectical behavior model of gender. Consequently, the dominant gender ideology is resituated within the readers' subconscious, as we realize the limits of Moll's witness-exploration of identity.

In her youth, Moll depended upon the charity of other townspeople for shaping and sustaining her existence: "But the Kindness of the Ladies of the Town did not End here, for when they came to understand that I was no more maintain'd by the publick Allowance, as before, they gave me Money oftner than formerly . . . so that now I was a Gentlewoman indeed, as I understood that Word" (15). Moll's survival continuously hinges on the charity of benefactors.

Even when she mentions her relation to the good nurse who cared for her and enabled her by teaching her sewing and needlework, monetary exchanges always inform Moll's conceptions of relationships: "I told my nurse as we called her, that I believed I could get my living without going to service, if she pleased to meet me; for she had taught me to work with my needle, and spin worsted, which is the chief trade of that city, and I told her that if she would keep me, I would work for her and I would work very hard" (10). Moll's functional view of relationships takes root in her initial social interactions, even if she is not able to comment on it or fully perceive its implications: "As for my money, I gave it all to my mistress-nurse, as I called her, and told her she should have all I got for myself when I was a gentlewoman, as well as now" (13). For example, Moll reveals to the nurse her plan for becoming a

7. David Marshall, "Autobiographical Acts in *Robinson Crusoe,*" *ELH* 71.4 (Winter 2004) 899–920, p. 899.

8. Steven C. Michael, "Thinking Parables: What Moll Flanders Does Not Say," *ELH* 63.2 (Summer 1996) 367–95, p. 367.

9. Michael, p. 367.

gentlewoman by "[being] able to get my Bread by my own Work" (13). However, Moll is fixated on the adornments of wealth (e.g., "gold" and " mended Lace") and her fixation diminishes her ability to recognize the unscrupulousness of "Person[s] of ill Fame" who purport a social status to which she aspires (14).

False titles, deceptive intentions, and hollow trappings of wealth entice Moll and cause her to suffer misfortune at the hands of those who possess the significations of nobility and gentility. Moll's innocence and naïvete of youth is betrayed as she is deceived by false intentions and appearances:

> From this time my head ran upon strange things, and I may truly say I was not myself; to have such a gentleman talk to me of being in love with me, and of my being such a charming creature, as he told me I was; these were things I knew not how to bear, my vanity was elevated to the last degree. It is true I had my head full of pride, but, knowing nothing of the wickedness of the times, I had not one thought of my own safety or of my virtue about me; and had my young master offered it at first sight, he might have taken any liberty he thought fit with me; but he did not see his advantage, which was my happiness for that time ... After this he thought he had heard somebody come upstairs, so got off from the bed, lifted me up, professing a great deal of love for me, but told me it was all an honest affection, and that he meant no ill to me; and with that he put five guineas into my hand, and went away downstairs. I was more confounded with the money than I was before with the love, and began to be so elevated that I scarce knew the ground I stood on.   (23)

Moll recounts how she repulsed the advances of two brothers who rivaled for her affections but yields to the elder brother who "said a great many things, as in Jest, which I had the folly to believe in earnest, or to flatter myself, with the hopes of what I ought to have suppos'd he never intended, and perhaps never thought of" (21). Ian Watt concludes that the "animality of man can only achieve its purpose when the woman's spirit is made absent."[10] As Moll reveals, her initial physical and emotional experiences of men reduce her to a state of passive suffering that is an historical symptom of repressed feminine sexuality and exploitation endured by women of the eighteenth century.

Judith Butler suggests we prescribe and authenticate gender through descriptive and normative accounts in which "[a] descriptive account of gender includes considerations of what makes gender intelligible, an inquiry into its conditions of possibility, whereas normative account seeks to answer the question of which ex-

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10. Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2001), p. 34.

pressions of gender are acceptable, and which are not, supplying persuasive reasons to distinguish between such expressions in this way."[11] Moll's sexual compulsiveness as whore and mistress (multiple times over) affirms her emancipation as the object of masculine sexual aggression. Her ability to initiate sexual liaisons suggests the subject-object relation between man and woman which relied on masculine assertiveness and feminine timidity to perform the respective roles of subject and object: "Thus the government of our virtue was broken, and I exchang'd the place of friend for that unmusical harsh-sounding title of whore" (116).

Moll is unable to reach sexual fulfillment without constituting male sexual performatives because "the development of a sexually normal woman seems too clearly required by the practice of male sexuality."[12] However, Moll's erotic movements destabilize gender by suggesting how sexual pleasure is achieved without the phallus. Borrowing from Butler, Moll's non-normative sexual acts might "call into question the stability of gender as a category of analysis."[13] The repetition of Moll's nonnormative sexual acts displaces her gender identity. Her performative acts disrupt the reception of descriptive-gender identity and allow her to redefine her role as an emancipated woman.

Butler would contend "s/he knows that her position in that exchange is transgressive, that she is a usurper of a masculine prerogative, as s/he puts it, and that s/he contests that privilege even as s/he replicates it."[14] As Butler might conclude, it is not Moll, but rather her suitors who have been seduced by the performative act. Much like she has done to her readers, Moll, again, transposes the subject-object correlative and assumes a masculine glance toward her suitors as feminized objects. Butler might ask us to question whether or not gender identity has been reduced to a subjective orientation that requires reciprocal performance exchanges. For it is through the repetition of performative acts that identity becomes exact, verifiable, and universal.

As Larry Stewart comments, "Throughout the [novel,] the reader sees Moll's life as dependent on the contingencies and vagaries of others and of that outside herself – *if the weather be fair*, *if she intended to put me out*, *if a man of virtue finds out*, *if possible*, etc."[15] However, Moll's dependency is orchestrated by an over-

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11. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. xxi.

12. Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985), p. 23.

13. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. xi.

14. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 128.

15. Larry Stewart, "Calculating Gender: Empirical Analysis and Gender Assumptions in Eighteenth-Century England," *Empirical Studies of the Arts* 23.1 (2005) 65–77 (my emphasis).

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arching desire to secure title, rank, and station. As Moll accumulates age and experience, she displays a growing fondness for gold trinkets which she possesses as marks of her nobility, marks that were acquired through ignoble acts of thievery: "when I looked into this Treasure, to think of the poor disconsolate Gentlewoman who had lost so much by the Fire besides . . . I cou'd never find in my Heart to make any Restitution . . . and I began quickly to forget the Circumstances that attended the taking them" (207).

Moll's preoccupation with possessing artifacts of wealth and status suggests a phallo-centric conception of her role in society. Her greed also distorts her perspective of relationships that direct the course of her life. Moll participates in a market-driven economy in which her sole commodity is herself. She exchanges flesh for the payment of debt, until age and experience wither her physical beauty and she must resort- to crime as means of assuaging materialist concerns: "From hence 'tis Evident to me, that when once we are harden'd in Crime, no Fear can affect us, no Example gives us any warning" (221).

Early in the narrative, Moll admits charges are still pending against her in the Old Bailey records and she must "give [her] leave" and not reveal herself "till I dare own who I have been, as well as who I am" (7). Moll acknowledges she may "not be able to be particular" about the experiences of her childhood and admits her memories are somewhat inaccurate, and she confesses how she has been "expos'd to very great Distresses" and "left a poor desolate Girl without Friends, without Cloaths, without Help or Helper in the World, as was my Fate" (8) As Moll comments, "'tis enough to mention" that she did not a "Parish to have Recourse to" (8). Her inaccurate memories cause the reader to doubt her authoritative voice and question the veracity of her recollections, even while she continuously tries to yoke the readers' sentiments to her narrative: "O Had this particular Scene of Life lasted, or had I learnt from that time I enoy'd it, to have tasted the true sweetness of it, and had I not fallen into the Poverty which is the sure Bane of Virtue . . . for while I liv'd thus, I was really a Penitent for all my Life pass'd, I look'd back on it with Abhorrence, and might truly be said to hate myself for it" (187). As Michael suggests,

> The economy of revelation suggests more than an attempt to mask a name. As Moll tells us, her "True Name" is already "well known" in certain circles (7). What she so successfully keeps hidden is her identity, the real flesh, blood, and spirit who retreats behind inventories, accounts, moral *exemplum*, and even occasional revelations of emotion: we catch glimpses of fear, remorse, and even something approaching joy from time to time, but almost without exception Moll hurriedly erects the metaphorical battlements of "Circumstance" and "Fate" in order to obscure "who I have been,"

and as often as she seems to reveal herself through her acquisitive vocabulary, she just as often clouds our understanding of "who I am" with her incessant talk of finance and Trade.[16]

The misapplication of significations of identity causes a rupture in Moll's personal narrative. She is displaced by prejudicial criteria such as landownership, wealth, and gender, which had been used to define social rank and status within the dominant culture of industrialized England.

Moll responds to the criteria by seeking traces of her identity within the emergent "criminal" counterculture she indirectly represents:

> One of the greatest Dangers I was now in, was that I was too well known among the Trade, and some of them whose hatred was rather owning to Envy, than any Injury I had done them began to be Angry, that I should always Escape when they were always catch'd and hurried to Newgate. These were they that gave me the Name of Moll Flanders: For it was no more of Affinity with my real Name, or with any of the Names I had ever gone by, than black is of Kin to white, except that once, as before I call'd my self Mrs. Flanders, when I sheltered myself in the Mint; but that these Rogues never knew, nor could I ever learn how they came to give me the Name, or what the Occasion of it was. (214)

Moll is no longer in control of her identity. When she states how she has lost her "real Name," her declaration works against the interests of the privileged class to which she desired admission, because the affirmation of her name assures her placement within the social hierarchy, even if such placement does not provide economic advancement. It further demonstrates her willingness to displace herself from her own cultural and gender orientation in order to aspire to a life of nobility and gentility. However, Moll fails to realize that the criminal counterculture provides only a fleeting opportunity to reinvent her self in opposition to traditional values, norms, and identities. Thus, as the criminal counterculture is being transformed and consumed by the dominant culture, another counterculture is taking ideological root in the fertile soil of conventional modes of discourse used to define an emergent middle-class of laborers. The middle-class laborers will repopulate the ranks of the social hierarchy through subsequent stages of social and economic revolt in response to modernization.

Moll's emotional detachment from her acquaintances, family, and suitors is demonstrated by the calculating manner in which she reduces each relationship to a financial gain or loss:

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16. Michael, p. 373.

> I was now in a dreadful condition indeed, and now I repented heartily my easiness with the eldest brother; not from any reflection of conscience, but from a view of the happiness I might have enjoyed, and had now made impossible; for though I had no great scruples of conscience, as I have said, to struggle with, yet I could not think of being a whore to one brother and a wife to the other. But then it came into my thoughts that the first brother had promised to make me his wife when he came to his estate; but I presently remembered what I had often thought of, that he had never spoken a word of having me for a wife after he had conquered me for a mistress; and indeed, till now, though I said I thought of it often, yet it gave me no disturbance at all, for as he did not seem in the least to lessen his affection to me, so neither did he lessen his bounty, though he had the discretion himself to desire me not to lay out a penny of what he gave me in clothes, or to make the least show extraordinary, because it would necessarily give jealousy in the family, since everybody knew I could come at such things no manner of ordinary way, but by some private friendship, which they would presently have suspected. (31)

Moll enjoys a "freedom from the probable psychological and social consequences of everything she does, which is the central implausibility of her character":[17]

> Moll Flanders's character, then, is not noticeably affected either by her sex, by her criminal pursuits, or indeed by any of the objective factors which might have been expected to set her apart from her author; on the other hand, she shares with Defoe and most of his heroes many of the character traits that are usually regarded as middle-class. She is obsessed with gentility and keeping up appearances; her pride is much involved in knowing how to get good service and proper accommodation; and she is in her heart a rentier, for whom life has no greater terror than when her "main stock wastes apace" (131).[18]

Thus, her freedom from punishment of sin limits her ability to value penance as a means for achieving self-awareness and is a symptom of modern economic individualism experienced by an emergent eighteenth-century middle-class.

Moll locates herself within an industrialized world that experiences cultural, social, political, and economic retooling to suit the demands of the modern age. Moll moves between masculine and feminine frames of reference to unify a fragmented past and, in the process, has become a present trace of the self:

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17. Watt, p. 114.
18. Watt, p. 114.

> I had with all these the common Vanity of my Sex (viz.). That being really taken for very Handsome, or if you please, for a great Beauty . . . but I had the Character too of a very sober, modest, and virtuous young Woman, and such I had always been; neither had I yet any occasion to think of anything else, or to know what a Temptation to Wickedness meant.   (19)

Moll comes to know herself in relation to what she is not. Moll assuages herself for the loss of her defining characteristic of "great Beauty" by reclaiming traditional feminine qualities of modesty and virtue that strengthen her narrative voice. Watt lends historic resonance to the concept of wickedness by commenting on the ways in which it was associated with conditions of poverty and alienation:

> In the Middle Ages the examples of Christ and St. Francis gave sanction to the view that poverty, far from being a disgrace, might well enhance the individual's prospects of salvation. In the sixteenth century, however, as a result of a new emphasis on economic achievement, the opposite viewpoint came to be widely accepted: indigence was both shameful in itself and pre-sumptive evidence of wickedness and future damnation. This view is shared by Defoe's heroes; they would rather steal than beg, and they would lose their own self-respect– and the reader's– if they did not exhibit this characteristic *hubris* of economic man.[19]

Watt comments that "Moll Flanders, of course, has many feminine traits . . . But . . . the essence of her character and actions is . . . essentially masculine."[20] Moll must demonstrate the "hubris of economic man" through the performative act of assuming masculine appearance and demeanor, because her society makes no place for the economic *woman*. Thus, she must exhibit masculine characteristics (e.g., greed, sexual appetites, etc.) in order to secure the economic individualism that is made possible to men and not to women.

In *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann argue that through the process of socialization "[t]he individual internalizes the new reality, but instead of its being *his* reality, it is a reality to be used by him for specific purposes. Insofar as this involves the perfor-mance of certain roles, he retains subjective detachment *vis-à-vis* them—he puts them on deliberately and purposefully."[21] The repetition of performative acts of role-playing fulfills the requirements of social identification, if only in a limited sense. Moll suc-

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19. Watt, p. 95.
20. Watt, p. 112.
21. See Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), p. 172.

cessfully plays the roles of maiden, matriarch, and man, but her mimicry and repetition of each identity further distances her from her feminine orientation.

Derrida describes repetition as the "bottomlessness of infinite doubling," or tracing "the self-identity of the origin."[22] Role-playing disrupts the process of signification and prevents Moll from authenticating her identity, and as Tammy Clewell suggests in her critical study on deconstructionism, role-playing may prevent an individual from reactivating and affirming the self:

> What the lost other and the historical past have in common is the quality of radical otherness, an alterity that resists assimilation by either the mourning subject or social present. To recognize alterity, at least in a certain sense, can appear as a dangerous and disruptive force lodged within the self and the subject's experience of the social.[23]

As Moll continuously transforms her appearance, she gains entry to restricted corridors of society that were made inaccessible to youth, to women, and to the poor, and begins to embrace the "otherness" that once inhibited her social mobility: "I kept true to this Notion, that a Woman should never be kept for a Mistress, that had Money to keep her self" (61).

Moll experiences ideological placement by expressing a willingness to participate in the greed of an emergent industrial society. Her obligation to the present and to the environments she inhabits enables her to detach herself from moral concerns in favor of economic prosperity. Her pursuit of money and power might be considered an outgrowth of a central pathology of modern societies, which is the desire to colonize the natural world by reconstructing and re-inscribing it within interlocking systems of knowledge used to signify the limits of subject-object relations.

Moll is cognizant of the process of signification, and her self-naming suggests how she has become the trace her mother disappeared without. It also alludes to her baptism into otherness. It is through a baptism of otherness that Moll sets her existence in binary opposition to her non-existence as a means for detaching herself from the process of inscription: "I might call myself any thing else, as well as Moll Flanders, and no old Sins could be plac'd to my Account" (223). Moll resists inscription and circulation of her assumed identities amongst the criminal and privileged classes by countering with the limitless possibilities of identities she might still assume.

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22. Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1978), pp. 296, 298.

23. Tammy Clewell examines the ways in which Toni Morrison responds to African American history by placing her fictions at the center of discussions about mourning and identity. Her study reflects well on the emergent. See Clewell's, "From Destructive to Constructive Haunting in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*," *West Coast Line* 37 (Spring 2002), p. 131.

The reliability of identity is put into question in the novel's introduction, when Moll's self-naming releases her from any connection to the criminal legacy of her mother. Yet she continuously deceives, subverts and manipulates men and women to achieve wealth as the principle signifier of gentility. As Watt intimates, "[M]oney is an autonomous force which determines the action at every turn."[24] Moll is, therefore, working with and against the process of signification, to fashion a more suitable identity. Even by choosing crime as a radical course of action, Moll must operate within the framework of the political, cultural, and spiritual systems of knowledge she rejects in order to achieve the ideological symmetry and certainty of identity.

Although Defoe indirectly addresses classism within the novel, he allows the rhetoric of class distinction to operate within the peripheral corridors of the narrative. Defoe establishes an historical milieu that sets the tone for character interactions within the dominant culture of industrialized England. Moll struggles to recognize her culture and history as she weaves together the threads of her origins, to compose her personal narrative: "The first account that I can Recollect, or could ever learn of myself, was, that I had wandered among a Crew of those People they call Gypsies" (9). Lacking the skills and education of her female acquaintances, Moll insinuates how she has used mimicry as a technique for social advancement: "I learn'd by Imitation and enquiry, all that they learn'd by Instruction and Direction" (18). Although Moll had "all the Advantages of Education," her vanity ("Conceit of myself" [19]), obscures the idea that she is not regarded "as much a Gentlewoman" as she had assumed (18). Thus, despite becoming more adept at mimicking the behavior of her ladies and gentlemen, she is not able to transcend her social designation and achieve gentility.

Adultery and measured silence become her mechanisms for coping with the experiences of life (7–8). Her calculated misrepresentation of identity releases her from the gender roles and responsibilities she once assumed and enables her to secure economic individualism: "I often robbed with these people, yet I never let them know who I was" (221). The ways in which Moll flaunts her deceit in name and appearance mimics how nobles of the time had begun to reject the roles and duties that defined their positions in society. It also suggests how industrialization precipitated the deterioration of social order that hinged on the ability to locate identity within a hierarchy, which was supposed to remain constant and immutable. Civic virtue had been realized by people performing their roles and fulfilling their obligations within the hierarchy. The possibility for non-normative acts within society undermines the stability of identity categories by making the performance of roles imprecise. Moll's use of role-playing might serve

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24. Watt, p. 269.

as a paradigm for evidencing how changing conceptions of self were being advanced in early modern Europe.

Moll does not use her autobiography as an act of contrition. Rather, she uses her autobiography to mend the psychological and ideological ruptures caused by the habitual misapplication of identity. The ways in which the reader is informed of the consequences of Moll's misuse of identity substantiates my claim that her autobiography might be characterized as an elliptical omission of guilt, rather than a contrived act of penance. Watt suggests Defoe's motive for limiting descriptions of Moll's moral consciousness because

> [her] loves and larcenies would obviously lose most of their attraction for the reader if they were too heavily sprinkled with the ashes of repentance; and partly because such a perspective called for a very rigorous separation in time between the consciousness that had performed the evil deeds and the reformed consciousness that was responsible for their redaction.[25]

In simple terms, Defoe allows the reader to indulge in Moll's naughtiness without any prohibitions or guilt.

Moll participates in the performative act of role-playing to elevate herself beyond the prohibitions of gender and class. She uses techniques of accommodation and deception to support her functional views of relationships: "I was more confounded with the money than I was before with love, and began to be so elevated that I scarce knew the ground I stood on" (132). Moll frequently asserts her views on the unequal socio-economic opportunities between men and women of her time, and suggests how female subservience to males has caused women much displeasure: "On the other Hand, as the Markets run very Unhappily on the Men's side, I found the Women had lost the Privilege of saying No" (67). Moll adjusts her logic to support the immoral actions of a rising criminal class that aspires to commodious individualism at all costs: "Give me not poverty. Lest I steal" (142). However, Moll's "criminal individualism leads her to sacrifice the significance of personal relationships that might provide her spiritual sustenance and continuity of identity."[26]

Watt adds a richer hue to Moll's characterization by considering her in terms of the picaresque novel which offers the "*picaro* as a cynical and amoral rascal who would rather live by . . . wits than by honorable work":[27]

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25. Watt, p. 116.
26. Watt, p. 111.
27. *Encyclopedia of Literature* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam Webster, 1995), p. 881 (my emphasis).

It is because her crimes, like the travels of *Robinson Crusoe*, are rooted in the dynamics of economic individualism that Moll Flanders is essentially different from the protagonists of the picaresque novel. The *picaro* happens to have a real historical basis – the breakdown of the feudal social order – but this is not the point of his adventures; he is not so much a complete individual personality whose actual life experiences are significant in themselves as a literary convention for the presentation of a variety of satiric observations and comic episodes.[28]

Through the manipulation of identity, Moll is able to combine gendered characteristics to make a more full and more fluid interpretative performance of identity. Moll seeks to restore the theatrical whole of identity that has been reduced and sublimated by binary oppositions like self and other, subject and object, and feminine and masculine. It is from within the performative act itself that the individual broadens and stretches a commodious self to more fully embrace alterity, difference, contradiction and contradistinction. These ideas become tools for reconstituting and preserving the self in response to the most drastic social changes.

Moll clearly lives by her wits, even if it is not always apparent in the choices she makes: "I had been trick'd once by that Cheat call'd LOVE, but the Game was over; I was resolv'd now to be Married, or Nothing, and to be well Married, or not at all (60). Moll locates social artifacts such as wealth and status which enable her to create a theatrical performance of identity that is informed by gender and class.

Watt considers Moll's motives by suggesting that "Moll Flanders, like Rastignac and Julien Sorel, is a characteristic product of modern individualism in assuming that she owes it to herself to achieve the highest economic and social rewards, and in using every available method to carry out her resolve," even if such methods require her to balance passive and aggressive tendencies within an evolving social matrix.[29] One method Moll continuously employs to attain social advancement is accessing feminine and masculine frames of reference:

Moll Flanders, of course, has many feminine traits; she has a keen eye for fine clothes and clean linen, and shows a wifely concern for the creature comforts of her males. Further, the early pages of the book undoubtedly present a young girl with a lifelike clarity, and later there are many touches of a rough cockney humour that is undeniably feminine in tone. But these are relatively external and minor matters, and the essence of her character and actions is, to one reader at least, *essentially masculine*. This is a per-

28. Watt, p. 94 (my emphasis).
29. Watt, p. 94.

sonal impression, and would be difficult, if not impossible, to establish: but it is at least certain that Moll accepts none of the disabilities of her sex, and indeed one cannot but feel that Virginia Woolf's admiration for her was largely due to admiration of a heroine who so fully realised one of the ideals of feminism: freedom from any involuntary involvement in the feminine role.[30]

Watt considers how masculine and feminine viewpoints inhabit Moll's psycho-sexual consciousness and correctly concludes that her masculine views must assert control over her identity in order for her to achieve economic sovereignty: "Men made no scruple to set themselves out as Persons meriting a Woman of Fortune, when they had really no Fortune of their own; it was but just to deal with them in their own way, and if it was possible, to Deceive the Deceiver" (77).

Moll's semantic doubling underlies motifs of calculation and deception that permeate much of the narrative, and force readers to consider whether or not she is misrepresenting not only her appearance, but her history as well. Since the narrative is reflected through a subjective lens, readers might question its consistency and veracity. As the narrator intimates, "To give the History of a wicked Life repented of, necessarily requires that the wicked Part should be made as wicked, as the real History of it will bear" (3). By suggesting the narrative may have suffered from editorial revisions that accentuated some parts rather than others, the narrator achieves an authenticity that is necessary for engaging the readers' sense of historical adequacy. In effect, readers might imply that Moll intended to tell us more but was prevented in so doing, and vouchsafe Moll's dubious narrative from further scrutiny.

Readers are left, however, with the difficult task of interpreting Moll's intentions through the fragmented language of narration, which is neither entirely truthful nor fully fabricated. Moll's questionable attempts at sustaining a coherent and reliable narrative leave us to ponder our own success or failure at removing ourselves from rigid binary categories that alienate and reduce us, and fragment our narrative stories into incoherent digressions. Derrida might offer "two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, [and] of play" that might provide readers some consolation.[31] The first interpretation is the "lost or impossible presence of the absent origin."[32] Orphaned to the world, Moll experiences displacement of origin through the loss of her mother and her struggle to successfully locate herself within the privileged class. The second interpretation is "the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of

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30. Watt, p. 113 (my emphasis).
31. Derrida, *Writing*, p. 292.
32. Derrida, *Writing*, p. 292.

signs without fault, without truth, and without origin."[33] Moll adopts a similar mode of interpretation to renegotiate her conception of self in relation to significations of social otherness, significations used to inscribe meaning and identity. Moll achieves Derrida's "joyous affirmation" through economic sovereignty and resolves the antagonistic relation between self and other, subject and object, and masculine and feminine by using the performative act as a means for challenging and reconstituting the traditional dialectic of identity. Rather than choosing one mode of being, she engages many by exceeding the limits of binaryisms and embracing a plural definition of selfhood, a definition that announces modern individualism. She, therefore, becomes the subject as *jouissance* and experiences her readers' blessing, whether she/he desired it or not.

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33. Derrida, *Writing*, p. 292.

Ana C. Vogrinčič

A Novel between Gossip and a Court Testimony

The Peculiar Case of Benjamin Victor's *Widow of the Wood* (1755)

This paper analyses a curious pseudo-documentary narrative entitled *The Widow of the Wood*, published anonymously in 1755 by a largely forgotten writer and theatre person, Benjamin Victor. It recounts real events that took place in Staffordshire in 1752 and could be best described as a cunning widow's amorous trickery. In the article I explore the subtle ways in which what is in fact a documentation of a court trial and a gossip chronicle is turned into a novel, and I try to track down the techniques of 'novelisation' as used in eighteenth century English literature, endeavouring to articulate how one discourse has been translated into another. The paper concludes by linking the case to the thematic and discursive role of gossip in eighteenth century English society and literature, namely novels.

Introduction

Today the booklet entitled *The Widow of the Wood* by theatre manager and minor writer of odes, plays and theatre history Benjamin Victor is entirely forgotten, as is more or less the author himself; but when it was published anonymously in 1755, it stirred a reaction so outrageous that its edition was almost completely seized. Knowing it was in itself an account of a real scandal, this is not entirely surprising.

The story recounts real events that took place in Staffordshire in 1752, when a new-coming resident, a young widow Ann Whitby, seduced into marriage a wealthy neighbour, William Wolesley, only to soon run away with another lover, John Robins and then accuse the groom of forcing her into a wedding. The conflict caused a long lasting law suit, bringing no benefits to either of the parties.

The offended husband, William Wolesley, was Victor's close and long-time friend – in fact Victor was the one who drew up the articles for his marriage to an alleged widow. His guilt over playing a part in this affair was perhaps the reason behind his rather curious gesture: namely, two years after the event and after the court trial was temporarily discharged, Victor wrote an account of this very same

marriage-fraud, clearly written in his friend's defence and as an attack on the deceitful wife. The names in the book were only partly concealed with the usual dash between the first and the last letter. But given the fact that Victor was described by his contemporaries as an extreme egotist,[1] and considering that in the book not even his friend Wolesley is depicted in a very favourable light, I believe Victor's engagement should be seen as a cunning exploitation of a juicy story, turning it into a saleable print narrative, rather than as an extraordinary proof of his friendly sentiments. In fact Wolesley's portrait is at times so dubious that there must have even been some grumbling on his side as well. What Sir William Wolesley himself made of the whole affair remains unknown, but the friendship with Victor seems to have remained intact, and Victor later even married his daughter. As for Ann Whitby, the role of a trickster stuck with her till the end of her life, as even in the obituary in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1782 she is– thirty years later – still referred to as the "Widow of the Wood."[2] This should suffice for the gossipy background.

However, what is just as curious is the way Victor composed his narrative: using the official court documentation on the one hand, while on the other poeticising the formal discourse and embedding it into a supposedly neutral account of the events, thus producing a hybrid text of a very different sort.

Text and Paratext

Even the reader previously acquainted with the peculiar background history of this tiny book must have been a little puzzled after finishing reading it, never mind the unsuspecting reader. Judging from the title, the duodecimo format and the number of pages (208),[3] (s)he probably expected some kind of a prose fiction narrative, presumably in the tradition of a history or memoir – especially since the character of a widow was quite a common figure in fiction at the time.

On the other hand it goes without saying that the title page oddly leaves us in the dark. Not only there is no author signature, we do not even get any kind of subtitle explaining what sort of text we are about to read - something which was in fact

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1. Quoted in P. H. Highfill, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660–1800* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973–1993), p. 157.

2. *Gentleman's Magazine* LII (London: D. Henry, July 1782), p. 358.

3. I will be throughout referring to 1755 Corbett's London edition. All parenthesised references are to this edition. The text is available on *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>.

very common in the period when title pages often provided short summaries.[4] If then the first impression leads one to believe (s)he is about to read a fictitious narrative, a novel maybe, the scarcity of labels hints at its curious genre status.

Proceeding to the contents page, things become clearer. We learn, first, that the majority of the text is composed of the affidavits – "written statements, confirmed by oath, for use as evidence in court";[5] and secondly, that this is in fact some kind of *roman à clef,* since only the first and the last letter of the characters' names are given, with a dash in the middle, which obviously suggests this is a true account, referring to real people. If the first observation inclines one to think (s)he is about to read some kind of summarized testimony, the other implies that the author is obviously taking sides in the matter and not just providing a neutral trial report.

The publishing history of the book, notably the fact that that the majority of the London editions were seized by the offended party, makes it clear that at least some circles knew the book was written by a certain Benjamin Victor and that it recounted real events, eventually causing a law-suit. Today's reader can verify this by looking up the case in *The English Reports* (ER) – a compilation of court proceedings from 1220 to 1865 – and, if willing, reading through a detailed twenty-page-long document.[6]

The author himself, however, dismisses all doubts about the fictitiousness of the story at the beginning, stating in the very first sentence that the following sheets contain the "unaccountable Facts," supported by "the Affidavits of several Persons of undoubted Credit . . . which the reader will here find properly inserted."[7] According to the contents page, it is clear that the only part of the text one can refer to as to autonomous authorial narrative (the one in fact written by Benjamin Victor himself

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4. Janine Barchas, *Graphic Design, Print Culture and the Eighteenth Century Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Even if we bear in mind that, as pointed out by Hunter and Gennette, short novel-titles became more frequent by the middle of the century, the complete absence of the titular paratext is still striking (J. P. Hunter, *Before Novels. The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* [New York, London: W. W. Norton, 1999] and Gerard Gennette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997]). Among the five documented editions of the *Widow of the Wood*, only the pirated Dublin one provides a subtitle "Being an authentic narrative of the late very remarkable transaction in Staffordshire" (see Eighteenth-Century Collection Online – ECCO).

5. Judy Pearsall and Bill Trumble, *Oxford English Reference Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 21.

6. In *The English Reports* CLXI (Edinburgh, London: W. Green & Son Limited; Stevens & Sons Limited, 1917) 391–411.

7. Trials as well as related documents were publicly accessible and it was thus indeed possible for the author to get access to the affidavits, the more so as Victor was himself one of the deponents.

and not merely transcribed) is what remains after setting aside all the judicial documents, which leaves the reader with only a tiny untitled part of the book, notably the fifty-two-page long beginning, the conclusion (202–208) and some linking paragraphs in between.

The author at work comes most to the forefront when setting the frame and designating the generic status of the text:

> If the following Narrative[8] had been sent forth into the World without those Advantages to prove the Veracity of the Facts, I am certain it would not only be received as a Romance, but by the judicious Part of its Readers, despised for its Absurdities; for even the many fictitious Stories that have lately been published (from the very fertile Brains of our present Set of Novel Writers) have all, at least, this Merit, that their INCIDENTS are within the Pale of *Probability*. (2)

The paragraph is full of implications. On the one hand claiming that all he is about to recount what really happened, the author is nevertheless quick to align his work with the fictitious by emphasizing the outrageousness and incredulity of the narrated events, which would be – considering the later trend towards depicting the more probable – very likely disapproved of even in a romance. He thus distinguishes his truthful account from novels and romances; but in this denial he in fact cunningly capitalizes on its appeal of the improbable – the very essential characteristic of a romance. When read against the title, the above quotation indeed puts the reader on the right track, but nevertheless leaves a feeling of playful tension between different genre conventions.

Reception

The *Monthly's* review of the *Widow of the Wood* seems to be 'spot on'.[9] After effectively summarizing the book as "reciting the scandalous conduct of a lady, who had a wickedness to marry a *third* husband, the *second* still living: both marriages falling within the space of one month," it points at its distinctive particularity: "that whereas many romances have imposed upon the public by title-pages contrived with design to pass them for true history; we have here a true history, with the title of a novel, which has led many into the mistaken supposition of its being a work of imagination" (392).[10]

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8. Narrative is the only word the author ever uses when referring to the *Widow of the Wood*.

9. *Monthly Review* XII (London: R. Griffiths, April 1755).

10. In 1755 the *Monthly Review* was certainly the most relevant literary magazine of the period; the rival *Critical* beginning publication only a year after Victor's curious account

In fact none of the contemporary remarks on the *Widow of the Wood* refer to it unambiguously as a fictional piece, let alone specifically as the novel. A comparably long, two column, review in the *Gentleman's Magazine*[11] does not even ascribe it a generic label; it merely summarizes the trial in detail – so much so that it almost seems as though we are reading about the events themselves and not about the written representation of them. If I add that, as is evident from the minutes in the *English Reports,* the judge, upon interrogating Benjamin Victor, referred to his book as to a pamphlet, this only confirms its being perceived as non-fiction.[12]

The picture is blurred once one becomes attentive to how the *Widow of the Wood* was categorized in contemporary magazines. While the *Gentleman's Magazine* places it under "Miscellany," the *London Magazine*[13] (which does not provide a review, but only announces publications of new books) groups it under "Entertainment and Poetry." Given the fact that neither the *Gentleman's* nor the *London Magazine* in their sections on newly published books include the category that would apply to fiction exclusively, their classification of Victor's text is not so meaningful in itself, but at least it gives a sense of its apparently disputable nature.[14] Articles in the *Monthly Review* were organized according to the importance of the reviewed publications, rather than thematically; but if the *Widow of the Wood* was in the April 1755 issue, as we have seen, described as "not being a work of imagination," the *Monthly*'s *General Index,* issued in 1786, eventually lists it under "Novels and Romances"![15]

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came out. The note on the *Widow of the Wood*, above cited in full, appeared in a "special section of short notices for the slighter works" (Derek Roper, *Reviewing Before the Edinburgh 1788–1802* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1978), p. 20.

11. *Gentleman's Magazine* XXV (London: D. Henry, April 1755), p. 191.

12. "Do you know of a pamphlet called the Widow in the Wood [note the mistake in the proposition, 'in']; did not you write or cause it to be wrote, and by whose order?" (ER 1917, 400). The idea of Victor ordering the text to be written does not seem plausible and there are no other references (that I am aware of) supporting this interpretation.

13. *London Magazine* XXIII (April 1755), p. 191.

14. Considering they both include both sections, "Entertainment" (sometimes "Entertainment and Poetry") and "Miscellany," though each places the *Widow* in the other group, suggests they interpreted it differently. It is not clear what the criteria for categorisation are, although there seems to be in both periodicals a stronger inclination towards non-fiction in the "Miscellany" and towards fiction in the "Entertainment" section.

15. *A General Index to the Monthly Review*, vol. I (London: R. Griffiths, 1786), p. 515. This is even more surprising, considering that the *Index* included the "Addenda, consisting of books, which, on reading the proofs, appeared likely to be looked for in other classes than those to which they were assigned," thus creating the impression of paying special attention to the problem of classification. The *Widow of the Wood,* however, is not included in this

Later mentions do not make the situation any clearer. While the nineteenth-century ones generally refer to the book as to "a scandalous gossip" or "a story from a current scandal,"[16] clearly regarding it as non-fiction, J. Raven in his bibliographical survey *British Fiction 1750–1770*,[17] rather than classifying it under any of the other of his categories (i.e. collection of tales or short stories, epistolary novel or miscellaneous work), defines it as a (narrative) novel.[18] But on the other hand the obvious omission of the *Widow of the Wood* from A. Forster's *Index to Book Reviews in England 1749–1774* clearly indicates that she does not take it to be a work of fiction: "As the Index could not cover all works reviewed, the decision was made to include works in English only in the categories of poetry, fiction and drama."[19]

In quest of the novelistic

All this induces me to think in more detail about what it is that might have caused and still causes confusion in anchoring the generic status of the *Widow of the Wood*. Since it at first sight appears rather as a non-fictional trial report, the question is which characteristics within a limited manoeuvring space of the authorial text could be treated as potentially novelistic.

The *Widow of the Wood* in fact consists of the author's supposedly neutral and 'correct' account of the whole intriguing affair, beginning with how the two main protagonists - the widow A–n Wh–y and the widower W–m W–y - met and how they got married, and ends with a sudden appearance of the widow's second husband, which causes general bewilderment, raises accusations and results in a trial. What follows is a series of affidavits, supported by some other material evidence,

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supplement. We may speculate that later in the century the term novel, gaining relevance and solidity, perhaps started more frequently to also include the not-so-evidently novelistic fiction, together with some of the ephemeral hybrid species – a tendency which, if anything, seemed only to intensify with time and could have to do with some sort of retrospective generalization, aiming to impose more order on things.

16. See an entry on Benjamin Victor in Highfill, p. 157; and *The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* (1966), p. 35. The uses of gossip in a novelistic narrative (in terms of content and form) makes for a proper study subject in itself, but in this essay I am primarily trying to position the work in relation to the established genres.

17. James Raven, *British Fiction, 1750–1770: A Chronological Check-list of Prose Fiction Printed in Britain and Ireland* (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1987), p. 120.

18. Raven's decision is curious, especially as his definition of a miscellaneous work includes imaginative biographies and accounts of causes-célèbres and thus appears more applicable to Victor's text (1987), p. 51.

19. Antonia Forster, *Index to Book Reviews in England 1749–1774* (London: British Library, 1996), p. 21.

which provides the reader with the two opposing versions of the story: one by the widow and her 'gang,' and the other by the widower and his supporters. Three of the nine affidavits – by the widow, her second husband and by the widower – are fully transcribed, which means that the reader has to plough through three accounts of the same story. But if the first two affidavits at least offer a new interpretation of events, the one by the widower entirely corresponds with the author's understanding of what happened. What is more, it soon becomes evident that the author's narrative is in fact based on the widower's as well as on his own (Victor's!) testimony, something that the reader painfully realizes as (s)he is faced with whole paragraphs and dialogical episodes repeated verbatim. Other (fortunately reduced) affidavits also retell the story, although each from a slightly different perspective. After summarizing the court's decision[20] the author concludes with a moralizing recapitulation in favour of the widower.

The reader may have a vague idea of the author's endeavour to compose at once a juicy story and a persuasive account of a scandalous court trial, supported by empirical evidence to boost the slander of the widow, and with a moral interpretation of the case in the end. But practically, however, the text soon falls apart and the reader quickly becomes lost amidst the fragmented judicial documentation and annoyed by the tedious repetitiveness of one and the same story, which leaves even the moral message unclear in the end.[21] What nevertheless does promise an interesting 'investigation' is the way in which the author enriches and embellishes the narrative.

There are two dimensions which appear to offer some kind of a way in. The first could be described as a quest for Jakobson's poetic function of language, the dominant and determining function of literature.[22] What I have in mind is the formal, stylistic level, the implications of how things are told, expressed and described, including the address to the reader, the use of language and the role of the narrator.

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20. The trial is much too complicated to go into detail, but suffice it to say that it started in 1752 with the widow (after having run away with the second husband) suing the widower for allegedly forcing her into marriage. The case was discharged with costs in 1754 and this is where the novel concludes, although the trial continued with the widower's lawsuit against the widow for adultery and fraud, and was not fully closed until 1759 when it was dismissed without charges (ER, 391–410).

21. It seems Victor realized this himself when, towards the end, he somewhat ambivalently offers the reader some guidance: "Before I take leave of my amazed Readers, I doubt not but they will expect me to help them to a Clue, by which they may get out of this Labyrinth" (202).

22. Roman Jakobson, *On Language* (Cambridge Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 76.

The second relates to a broader, referential or thematic frame that exceeds a mere summary of events and thus represents a surplus value, edging the text closer to the realm of the novelistic. By tackling these elements I will try to discern whether they correspond to any kind of novelistic tradition. The literariness of Victor's writing can be most effectively observed in the background of the condensed and wearisome affidavits, which, as said, take up the majority of the book.[23]

On the level of form and style, the authorial text differs in at least three ways. First, in the use of elements, such as the abundance of italics, capital letters and exclamation marks in the middle of the sentence, which reveal the author's judgement, but also express irony and create a dramatic effect, as for example, on page 11, when the narrator summarizes the objections of the widower's friend to the latter's intention to marry the widow, if only because of the age difference.

Second, in borrowing classical, literary references in order to demonstrate erudition, and form the image of respectability. For example: comparing the widower to a "happy JASON" (3); and the widow to "that *Iago*" (204), or incorporating verses by Horace (44) and citing Nicholas Rowe (36).

And third, in including such wise sayings and common-sense proverbs as: "There is not Truth more obvious than *That* in common Life; if a *Servant* gets into a *criminal Secret*, from that Moment his Deportment alters, her assumes an unmannerly Freedom" (195). All that variegates, softens and emotionalizes the otherwise tedious enumeration of events.

But the author's opinion is also articulated more explicitly by providing occasional insights into characters' states of mind, which are in fact Victor's own biased speculations, presented as the only possible and thus accurate way of seeing things.[24] The moralizing dimension strengthens towards the end, after the affidavits are presented. The scheming widow expectedly comes out as the least likeable character; a reader can observe the loosening of the author's restraint in the way he refers to her: from a "sprightly," "artful" and "enterprising Lady" in the first part (8, 36, 50), to "what a Machiaval in Petticoats!", "Female Libeller" and "base Traducer" in the end: (193, 194).

Considering that the text was at least to an extent written in the defence of Victor's deceived friend – the widower – it is surprising to note that he too is depicted

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23. Albeit these documents are indeed merely transcribed, it needs to be acknowledged that the author nevertheless had to critically engage with them simply to select and arrange them. After having difficulties reading through the *English Report*, one begins quickly to cherish Victor's reduction of the actual number of witnesses (from 16 to 9) as well as his shortenings of the affidavits, which makes the whole affair a bit more comprehensible. For an example of an inserted affidavit see pages 174–176.

24. See page 34.

in a rather dubious light, being throughout presented as passive, meek and hen-pecked,[25] which probably contributed to a theory that, as stated by the ODB (see the entry BV),[26] it was the members of Wolseley's family who bought and destroyed all the copies of the book they could get hold of. As it turns out, the theory proves this to be misleading: in the *Bibliotheca Staffordiensis* it is clearly stated that this was a ploy carried out by Ann Whitby's forth husband, the one she married even after marrying the lover she ran away with.[27] Fortunately, some of the copies survived and – at least until recently - some could still be purchased (which is mostly due to the fact that the book was [after London] also published in Dublin and Glasgow).

This ambivalent characterisation certainly weakens the pamphletic nature of the *Widow of the Wood* and again brings it closer to the novelistic.

Another point that explicitly distinguishes the authorial text from the rest is the author's address to the reader. Those acquainted with the real events and with Benjamin Victor as the proper author of the narrative might have amused themselves by observing how he at once functions as an omniscient narrator, but is also depicted as one of the side characters in the story, which means that Benjamin Victor, the first person singular author-narrator, is occasionally talking about *B–n V–r,* the widower's friend and the author of one among the many other affidavits. The direct author's address to the reader often functions as a device for switching back and forth between a linear narrative to affidavits. On the one hand this creates an air of confidential alliance as the reader is seduced into taking over the author-narrator's interpretation of the story; on the other it functions as an aid, enabling the reader to manoeuvre among the numerous testimonies, each giving a slightly different per-spective of what has happened.[28]

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25. "[Mr *V-r*] found Sir *W-m* in a CONDITION not very much like that of an IMPATIENT *Lover* – for he was FAST ASLEEP IN HIS BED!" (20); "Sir *W-m,* it seems, observed it was very uncustomary for a Bride and Bride-groom to separate on the Wedding-night – But since it was her Will, he must submit" (39).

26. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODB on-line); s.v. Benjamin Victor, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>.

27. See the exact quote: "The heroine was named Ann Northay; who m. (1) John Whitby, Esq., of Great Haywood; (2) Sir William Wolesley; Bart. of Wolseley Bridge, (3) John Robins, Esq., M. P. for Stafford (who died in 1754); (4) Mr. Hargrave, attorney – father of the Editor of the State Trials – who bought up and destroyed all the copies he could obtain" (*Bibliotheca Britannica; or A General Index to British and Foreign Literature*, ed. Robert Watt, vol. 4 [1842], p. 479).

28. Cf. "my Readers need not now be informed which Party deserve the real Name of *Con-spirators*!" (202). Or: "For the Sake of my Reader, I shall take the Liberty to omit in the Affidavits of these two worthy Persons, such Passages as correspond with, and corroborate

Even though the narrative is narrowly focused on just conveying the story and thus almost devoid of digressions, the way it is handled, the choice of sequence, together with the wise sayings and moral comments, inevitably touch upon some of the common topics that one would come across in the novels of the time, such as: town vs. country, the (mis)uses of marriage, the relationship of masters and servants, friendship, religion, economics of class and family, moralality, and most notably, the widow stereotype. Even though these motifs seem to appear almost incidentally, and the author does not seriously engage any of them, they nevertheless present some kind of a link with the literature of the time, which can help us orient within the novelistic tradition. Perused through the lens of the micro-topics, Victor's text seems to convey, albeit feebly, a rather conservative ideology: the widow pretending to love the country, but actually preferring the city; warnings about the over-confidential relationship with servants; corrupted vicars and the dangers of deceptive outward appearance. But throughout, the focus is undoubtedly on the widow and her intrigue, enhancing the negative stereotype generally describing widows as tough and unfeminine, as predatory social climbers, well equipped to survive, scheming, gossipy, vain, complacent, and vulgar. However, even though we are allowed a comparably better sense of her personality – characterizations of others rather being embedded in the plot – we are far from any kind of psychological insight. If anything, what is much more apparent is her physical, bodily presence; but far from figuring as an example of a delicate female sensibility, she appears in the unappealing light of perverted sensuality, occasionally even bordering on the vulgar and repulsive – especially in the recurring descriptions of her fits of hysterics, nausea and, notably, the episode(s) of her "violently vomiting through the window."[29] With all this in mind, I will try to locate the text in relation to contemporary types of prose fiction.

Generic implications

By skimming through the book and judging by the intensive use of heightening devices one might quickly conclude that we are dealing with a sentimental work. In truth, this is probably the only link with the conventions of sentimental fiction and has no other effect on the nature of the narrative. The *Widow of the Wood* is almost devoid of emotion. It is true that she sheds tears, but this is all presented as part of

the Facts in the foregoing copious Affidavit of Sir *W-m W-y*, which Law requires; and only insert the following material Abstracts" (151).

29. In the testimonies (see ER, 395–396) the vomiting episode indeed figures as an important alibi, but the fact that Victor chose to include this one over many others he omits certainly says something about how he wanted the reader to perceive the heroine.

her machinations and outward appearance, and is not meant to – and indeed does not – incite sympathy. Other protagonists function as mere figureheads. Even the courtship and the flirting phase are portrayed as feeble, pallid and lukewarm, and one has no sense of mutual affection. No one stands out as an exemplary model; the most sympathetically depicted is a 'worthy clergyman,' who, by the end, becomes a focus of the moral message. Bribed to make a false entry of the widow's marriage to the second husband, he is afterwards haunted by guilt, confesses and repents, but dies soon after. Victor presents him as a victim of the whole affair and holds him out as a warning, although this, on the whole, makes for a weak case. If J. Todd claims that "a sentimental work moralizes, more than it analyses,"[30] here the opposite seems to be the case.[31]

Returning to the above quoted beginning paragraph, after having read the book we find Victor's claim even more misleading. If we take what he is saying word for word – namely, that without knowing this to be true we would read the *Widow of the Wood* as a romance – the parallel seems to exceed the common ground of im-probability, as though playing on the affinity with style as well. Everyone who has read the piece, however, would know that very little in it resembles a romance – not even on the level of plot, let alone style. But on the other hand, Victor here seems to reveal more than he intended. Despite distancing his work from fiction in general, and even somewhat contemptuously picking on 'the very fertile brains of our pre-sent set of novel writers,' it is possible to read this as a proof of his own literary aspi-rations, or as a reflection of a need for some sort of a literary label. Victor's exaggerated comparison to a romance appears rather like a cunning marketing gesture, leaving the possibilities open for a reader to decide what kind of a text (s)he has stumbled upon. Yet it feels safe to say that Victor himself clearly did not want his *Widow* to be dismissed as non-fiction.

The analogy with the romance nevertheless has some weight. Even though the style is much too sober and down to earth, the plot-scheming, the enhanced pres-ence of the body and the shallow characters resemble certain features of the novels of amatory intrigue.[32] But considering the alleged purpose of the text and the effect it caused, it seems more appropriate to affiliate it with a *roman à clef*, or – if we recall that it was often referred to as a scandalous narrative – with yet another re-

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30. Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 4.

31. As for the sentimental in nature, it has to be clarified that the word 'wood' appears only as a name of the estate, and this is the most we have in terms of landscape, 'the wood' loosing all the mystery it evokes in the title.

32. Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

lated genre: *cronique scandaleuse*.[33] However, our case is not that simple. *Romans à clef* were nevertheless novels, and above all, their authors made an effort to fictionalize the story, at least to some extent. The mere fact that in Victor's account the names are not pseudonimized, but actually only concealed, already partly disqualifies the text even from labelling it a *roman à clef*. But what is much more relevant and what one observes again and again is that there seems to be no fictional dimension in the *Widow of the Wood*; as shown, the literariness of the text pertains to the form, the language and the style. *Widow of the Wood* is in fact a novelized court trial, albeit – it has to be admitted – not very successfully novelized. This acknowledges the author's obvious endeavour to translate the story in an attractive comprehensible way by using embellished language, but places the trial (i.e. the judicial discourse) at the forefront.

Conclusion

What Victor did was chronicle the scandal in order for the mischievous gossip to spread efficiently. At the time when gossip magazines were not yet that popular – the trend seriously took off in the last third of the century with the *Town and Country Magazine* and its famous *tête à tête* section – this was indeed a medium well chosen for the task.

It might be worth noting that this was Victor's only attempt of that sort; all his other work is either undoubtedly non-fictional (e.g. his *History of the Theatre*) or written by order (e.g. flattering royal odes). Even his theatre pieces can be considered as adaptations rather than creative writings in themselves. I even dare to suggest that Benjamin Victor was better in remaking and packaging than in the imaginative creation of his own making. In fact, are we not, in the case of the *Widow of the Wood*, also dealing with some kind of adaptation? Translation of a certain discourse into another? Juridical into literary? Indeed, what I can point to at the end of our quest for common ground with the contemporary novelistic tradition to a large extent boils down to the merely literary, poetical dimension, with little to show for the novelistic, apart from the fact that what is considered literary inevitably reflects, borrows from and is influenced by contemporary fiction. But all the elements of the eighteenth century prose fiction tradition I have traced in this case suffice to justify the *Widow of the Wood* as not merely literalized, but indeed a novelized court trial.

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33. The two are often referred to in pairs, because *romans á clef* indeed frequently recounted scandalous events; while on the other hand *cronique scandaleuses* were often written with concealed or fictitious names in the manner of *romans à clef*.

The way Victor concludes the story is symptomatic of and seems to support the above label. When the author, after 138 pages of affidavits, resurfaces with some kind of a moral recapitulation of what has passed – what would make for a proper and meaningful conclusion, perhaps even a worthwhile novel – the book in fact finishes with an as-though-hastily-added *N.B.,* updating the reader with the latest information regarding the witnesses involved, as though not allowing her/him to forget that the text is throughout relying on the judicial record – which is in fact the main hero of the book.

The *Widow of the Wood* is certainly not a pleasurable read, but it does make for a fascinating case study in the context of the history of publishing as well as in the way it composes and (re)employs its narrative. Last but not least, it makes one reflect on how novel and gossip are closely connected, thematically and discursively, even when there is no such tabloid story in the backround. Gossip provides a similar combination of information and speculation to a novel; it unites particularities with the common truths of life and, by making private information public, creates an illusory bond of intimacy. If one considers that the relationship between the private and the public is one of the important topics of eighteenth-century studies, Victor's curious booklet obviously reveals the spirit of the period. As such, it is certainly worth the effort of reading.

Cristina Chitanu

The Performativity of Literature

Performativity in the philosophy of language means that certain deeds may be done using language, strictly speaking in speech, and the theory has become known as "speech-act theory," its first theoreticians being J. L. Austin and John Searle. This article investigates the performativity of the text *per se*, how literature can "perform" for the reader, while also interpreting some related concepts: performance, drama, script, and intermediality through the analysis of three highly popular plays: Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* and G. B. Shaw's *Pygmalion*.

1 Introduction

Even the performativity of language (and thus, of literature) should start with the primary element of language, which is the sign. According to Saussure's theory of the linguistic sign, every sign is like a coin with its two sides: a sound pattern, the signifier (d-o-g) and a meaning attached to it, the signified (four-legged canine) within a certain system. Saussure claims that the relationship between the two faces of the coin is arbitrary, established through cultural convention.[1]

However, if language is studied not as a system of signs, but as language in use, it is the functions of language which are to be taken into consideration. Roman Jakobson identified the constitutive factors involved in verbal communication (*addresser, message, addressee, context, code, contact*) anticipating, to some extent, the theory of speech-acts:

> the addresser sends a message to the addressee. To be operative the message requires a context referred to, seizable by the addressee, and either verbal or capable of being verbalized; a code fully, or at least partially, common to the addresser and the addressee; and finally, a contact, a physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication.[2]

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1. Cf. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally *et al.*, trans. Roy Harris (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1986), p. 67.

2. Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," in *Language in Literature*, ed. Roman Jakobson *et al.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 62–94, p. 66.

Each of these elements has a corresponding function: *referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual* and *poetic*. Jakobson develops this classification and elaborates on their roles in verbal communication[3] and thus he already notices certain features of language and speech which will be further analysed in performative theory.

Speech-act theory puts greater emphasis than Saussure on those social and cultural conventions that make up the context of any discourse; and, for Austin, the performativity of language is made up of three factors: locution, illocution and perlocution. Between speaking (the locutionary act) and the effect produced by it, such as convincing, frightening etc. (perlocutionary act), he identifies the act performed *in* speaking (the illocutionary act). Performative utterances satisfy two conditions:

> A. they do not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all, are not 'true or false'; and B. the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not *normally* be described as, or as 'just,' "saying something" and "to utter the [performative] sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to *describe* doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it . . . The term performative . . . is derived, of course from 'perform,' the vocal verb with the noun 'action': it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is an action.[4]

John Searle further elaborates on Austin's definition of the performative and states that

> some illocutionary acts can be performed by uttering a sentence containing an expression that names the type of speech act. . . . These utterances, and only these, are correctly described as performative utterances. . . . Thus, though every utterance is indeed a *performance*, only a very restricted class are *performatives*.[5]

He continues with a typology of the speech acts in relation to performativity and identifies five classes: *assertives, directives*, *commissives*, *expressives* and *declarations*.[6]

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3. Cf. Jakobson, pp. 66–71.

4. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 5, 6.

5. John R. Searle, "How Performatives Work," in *Essays in Speech Act Theory*, ed. Daniel Vanderveken, Susumu Kubo (John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2002), 85–108, pp. 86–87.

6. John R. Searle, "A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts," in *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1–29, pp. 12–17.

Grice, another pioneer in the field of discourse analysis, proposed, as regards communication, the "cooperative principle," according to which people involved in linguistic interaction cooperate in its production and interpretation. According to the four maxims established by Grice (*quality*, *quantity*, *relation*, and *manner*[7]) people say what they believe is *true* (quality), their contribution is as *informative* as necessary and not more than that (quantity), their input is *relevant to the interaction between those involved* (relation) and it is *clear*, *brief*, *and orderly*, avoiding ambiguity (manner). Grice's contribution to discourse analysis helps us understand that fictional discourse, even when it "pretends," imitating real discourse, complies with the same principles, and literary criticism must take these into consideration when analyzing fictional discourse and find meanings and interpretations when transgressions occur.

2 Performativity in Literature

J. Hillis Miller claims that in definitions performativity is usually connected to performance ("the quality of performance, or the condition of someone who is capable of performing or, perhaps, the object of investigation in 'performance studies.'"), but the concept actually derives from Austin's theory of the performative: "Performativity is a concept that is related to speech acts theory" that "accounts for situations where a proposition may constitute or instaurate the object to which it is meant to refer, as in so-called 'performative utterances.' "[8] Analyzing performativity and performance, Hillis Miller suggests that a novel like *Daniel Deronda* exemplifies performance, but it can also be considered

> *an extended performative utterance of a peculiar kind*. It generates a virtual literary reality that can be "accessed" only by way of the performative efficacy of the words on the page as I read them. Those words call or conjure into existence, like specters in broad daylight, Gwendolen, Daniel, all the other characters, their "worlds," and all that they do and say.[9]

Discourse analysis applied to fictional discourse must acknowledge different layers of discourse and, thus, of performativity. Analyzing fictional discourse, Searle wishes to show that there is a set of rules that connects words to the world

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7. Paul H. Grice, *Studies in the Way of Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 26–27.

8. J. Hillis Miller, "Performativity as Performance/Performativity as Speech Act: Derrida's Special Theory of Performativity," in *Late Derrida*, ed. Ian Balfour (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 219–236, pp. 220, 221.

9. Miller, "Performativity as Performance," pp. 234–5 (my emphasis).

and that these rules get suspended by the conventions of fictional discourse in a game of pretence:

> what makes fiction possible . . . is a set of extralinguistic, nonsemantic conventions that break the connection between the words and the world established by the rules mentioned earlier. Think of the conventions of the fictional discourse as a set of horizontal conventions that . . . enable the speaker to use words with their literal meanings without undertaking the commitments that are normally required by those meanings. . . . the pretended illocutions which constitute a work of fiction are made possible by the existence of a set of conventions which suspend the normal operation of the rules relating illocutionary acts and the world. . . . The author pretends to perform illocutionary acts by way of actually uttering (writing) sentences . . . the *illocutionary act* is pretended, but the *utterance act* is real.[10]

If we introduce performance into this equation, the result is another game of pretence, as the pretended performance of the illocutionary act consists in the actual performing of utterance acts. Applied to a story or a play, we have the same "recipe" with different results:

> A fictional story is a pretended representation of a state of affairs; but a play, that is, a play as performed, is not a pretended representation of a state of affairs but the pretended state of affairs itself, the actors pretend to be the characters. In that sense the author of the play is not in general pretending to make assertions; he is giving directions as to how to enact a pretense which the actors then follow.[11]

Going back to Austin, by performative we do not refer to the reference to, or the description of, an action; the act of speech is the action: in this case *saying it does make it so.* But performativity and performance do not have anything to do with productivity. Stanley Fish, in disagreement with Wolfgang Iser, claims that the performative does not have the "quality of productiveness"; rather

> the only thing the performative or illocutionary acts produce is recognition on the part of the hearer that the procedures constitutive of a particular act have been invoked: illocutionary force is not something an illocutionary acts exerts, but something it has (by virtue of its proper execution).[12]

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10. Cf. Searle, "A Taxonomy," pp. 66–67, 68.

11. Searle, "A Taxonomy," p. 69.

12. Stanley Eugene Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 221.

Iser, indeed, is of the opinion that literary speech lacks illocutionary force, and thus concludes that literature is devoid of performativity because, even if the conventions of the illocutionary acts are in place, there is no one to recognize them as promises, commands: that is, as genuine speech-acts.[13] Fish is right in arguing that literature does have an audience; therefore the reader will recognize the illocutionary force of the performatives and the action entailed by them, and thus he acknowledges the function of speech act analysis in deciphering the meanings and intentions associated with them:

> if a character or an author is continually talking about acts he does or does not perform . . . (if questioning as an act has become the subject of discussion in a novel), then speech-act analysis will help us understand what he is doing because he is doing what it is doing . . . *illocutionary behavior* . . . is what speech-act theory is all about.[14]

If we take another element in Austin's definition and emphasize the context, we see that those "appropriate circumstances" are highly significant for the illocutionary act. When applied to literary works, we have to consider that language creates the fictional world in which the reader is invited as audience. But Austin disqualifies theatrical performances, stating that "a performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy. . . Language in such circumstances is . . . used not seriously, but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use."[15] Austin excludes theatrical performance from the field of his theory claiming, in the final analysis, that acting is lying, even though he argues that performatives, e.g. promises, should not be semantically described in terms of their truth-value but according to their 'success': i.e. in terms of their 'felicity conditions' (a promise not kept is not 'untrue' but the person who promised something and did not keep his word has failed to carry out the speech-act 'I promise'). However, the sincerity Austin requires from the performer as a condition is even harder to define; as Carlson argues, it is difficult to pinpoint "[t]he difference between doing and performing" taken out from the theatrical context and put into the social one and which "would seem to lie not in the frame of theatre versus real life but in an attitude – we may do actions unthinkingly, but when we think about them, this brings in a consciousness that gives them the quality of performance."[16]

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13. Fish, p. 222.
14. Fish, pp. 230–231.
15. Austin, p. 22.
16. Marvin A. Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (London, New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 4.

Ohmann appropriates Austin's perspective and, attempting to apply his theory to literature, considers that even though illocutionary acts exist in literature, they are without consequences for the performers:

> Writing (or speaking) a literary work is evidently an illocutionary perform-ance of a special type, logically different from the seeming acts that make it up. . . . Literary works are discourses with the usual illocutionary rules sus-pended. If you like, they are acts without consequences of the usual sort, sayings liberated from the usual burden of social bond and responsibility.[17]

Austin excluded the analysis of performatives in literature because the actors (generally speaking) involved in the communication cannot be held responsible for their speech acts. In response to this, Keir Elam states that in theatrical performance "responsibility for the utterance as a full speech act . . . is attributed to the dramatic and not the stage speaker."[18] The conventions of the fictional world do not annul the illocutionary force of the performatives; their function within that world is constructed by linguistic means, just as in the real world: the reader is aware that the world of the literary work is fictitious, but he expects everything to function 'just the same as in real life' within it. In this game of pretence that fiction entails all the actors, even the reader, play the same game and comply with the internal rules of the fictional world.

We have already seen that *performativity* is connected with, and depends on, to some extent, *performance*, be it the reading of a novel or a short story, a poem read aloud or, perhaps most obviously, the staging of a play.[19] Richard Schechner considers various theories and definitions of 'performance' and decides that the central quality taken from the theatre is "the audience-performer interaction."[20] Thus the role of the audience is essential, and even when one is not present, one is implied. So the performative quality of a novel or a short story cannot be denied because the author has in mind an addressee; she communicates her text to her reader. But when we talk about the dramatic text, the opposition between the page and the stage is strengthened by the power conferred by the performance on stage:

17. Richard Ohmann, "Speech, Literature and the Space Between," in *Essays in Modern Stylistics*, ed. Donald C. Freeman (London: Methuen, 1981), 361–376, p. 368.

18. Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 154.

19. Patrice Pavis suggests a distinction between the text read silently from the page of a book and the staged text; cf. Patrice Pavis, "Staging the Text," in *Analyzing Performance: Theatre, Dance and Film*, trans. David Williams (Ann Harbour: University of Michigan Press, 2003), 198–226.

20. Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (London, New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 22.

Stage vs. page, literature vs. theatre, text vs. performance: these simple op-
positions have less to do with the relationship between writing and enact-
ment than with power, with the ways we authorize performance, ground its
significance. Not surprisingly, both strategies of authorization – literary
and performative – share similar assumptions, what we might call a rheto-
ric of origin/essence . . . Though performance may discover meanings or
nuances not immediately available through 'reading' or 'criticism,' these
meanings are nonetheless seen as latent potentialities located in the words
on the page, the traces of the authorial work.[21]

Plays are written to be performed, they are meant for the stage and exist only in
the moment of their reception,[22] and though in this article I argue for the recogni-
tion of the performativity of the text in itself, I have to admit that through the au-
thor's intentionality the meanings and the various interpretations of a play are
emphasized in performance, especially when various performances 'throughout the
world and the ages' are considered: we cannot deny that Shakespeare's plays gained
much by the various performances over the years, and readers and critics alike can
hardly approach Shakespeare's texts without having certain performances in mind.

Performance is not something ancillary, accidental, or superfluous that can
be distinguished from the play proper. The play proper exists first and only
when it is played. Performance brings the play into existence, and the play-
ing of the play and the play itself. . . . It comes to be in representation and
in all the contingency and particularity of the occasions of its appearance.[23]

David Cole defined theatre as "an opportunity to experience imaginative life as
physical presence";[24] that is, imagination is projected on the stage, available for the
audience to be experienced by using all senses. The reader of the dramatic text
imaginatively constructs the world physically present in front of the spectator of the
theatrical performance. But the spectator deals with more varied information: "The
reader is able to imagine the dramatic context in a leisurely and pseudo-narrative
fashion, while the spectator is bound to process simultaneous and successive acous-

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21. W. B. Worthen, "Disciplines of the Text: Sites of Performance," in *The Performance
Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Bial (London: Routledge, 2004), 10–25, p. 12.
22. "All arts . . . 'perform' in this way, existing only in the moments of their reception in
different contexts, and thus change as they move through time and space" (Carlson, p. 153).
23. Hans Georg Gadamer in Carlson, p. 153
24. David Cole in Odette Caufman-Blumenfeld, *The Perspectives in the Semiotics and Po-
etics of Theatre* (Iasi: Al.I. Cuza University Press, 1990), p. 5.

tic and visual signals within strictly defined time limits."[25] Jean Alter gives us a semiotic definition of theatre as "an iconic representation of events by means of a number of codes and corresponding systems of signs. The latter is either text or stage signs."[26]

The umbrella-term intermediality is evoked in the context of theatre performance comprising audio and visual images, as the performance of the verbal literary text (adapted or not in a script) is accompanied and complemented by a combination of décor, music, dance, choreography, etc. In this context, intermediality can be defined as a border zone where two or more media meet to carry the message of the work of art. The stage performance is thus the intermedial translation of the dramatic text; "theatre becomes merely a clever way to reiterate writing by other means" where "scripted language operates at once as a kind of raw material for performance, but also as a kind of catalyst, burned off in the act of performing, transformed into something else rich and strange: an event, theatre."[27]

Freda Chapel studied the effect of intermediality in the theatre and discovered that the combination of elements (play, script, stage, actors, director, audience etc.) makes performance a display of all its instruments: "intermediality is associated with the blurring of generic boundaries, crossover and hybrid performances, intertextuality, intermediality, hypermediality and a self-conscious reflexivity that displays the devices of performance in performance";[28] he further defines intermediality as "a process of transformation of thoughts and processes where something different is formed through performance ... a re-perception of the whole, which is re-constructed through performance."[29]

Theatre is associated with the original text – the play, adapted into a script and performed on the stage. From this perspective, we can emphasize the essential role of the author as the primary addresser, while the audience is the final addressee without whom the text, in any form, looses its *raison d'être*: "the drama is what the writer writes; the script is the interior map of a particular production; the theatre is the specific set of gestures performed by the performers in any given performance;

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25. Elam, p. 99.

26. Jean Alter, "Waiting for the Referent, Waiting for Godot: On Referring in Theatre," in *On Referring in Literature*, ed. Anna Whiteside and Michael Issacharoff, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 42.

27. William B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 10, 23–24.

28. Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt, *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance*, International Federation for Theatre Research: Theatre and Intermediality Working Group. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), p. 11.

29. Chapple and Kattenbelt, p. 12.

the performance is the whole event, including audience and performers."[30] In this line, I agree with Vanden Heuvel who considered drama as the "theatrical expression that is constituted as a literary artifact . . . and empowered as a text" and its power to influence the audience through performance is "mainly textual, rooted in literary conventions of narrative, language, scene, character, and semiosis."[31]

In *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, Keir Elam starts by setting the bases for the semiotic theory of theatre with Mukarovsky's adaptation of the Saussurean theory, claiming that Saussure's sign can be equated with the work of art by

> identifying the work of art as such (e.g. the theatrical performance in its entirety) as the semiotic unit, whose *signifier* or *sign vehicle* is the work itself as 'thing,' or ensemble of material elements and whose *signified* is the 'aesthetic object' residing in the collective consciousness of the public. . . . The performance text becomes, in this view, a macro-sign, its meaning constituted by its total effect.[32]

Elam underlines that a performance is actually "a network of semiotic units belonging to different cooperative systems" and that "[a]ll that is on the stage is a sign" (Jiri Veltrusky).[33] In this context, we understand performance as a macro-sign which entails a series of signs standing for other signs, as on the stage connotation is often employed.

Elam credits theatrical interpretation with a certain power of disambiguation due to extra-textual indicators such as stress, intonation, facial expressions, and concludes that performance helps in the clear identification of the performatives in the text:

> By disambiguating (or by rendering still more ambiguous) the illocutionary mode of the utterances though such 'illocutionary force indicators' as stress, intonation, kinesic markers and facial expressions . . . the actor is able to suggest the intentions, purposes and motivations involved. If dramatic discourse were illocutionary self-sufficient on the page, the performance would be all but superfluous. It is never possible, then to determine finally and absolutely from the written text all the illocutions performed in a play.[34]

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30. Schechner, *Performance Theory*, p. 87.
31. Michael Vanden Heuvel, *Performing Drama/Dramatizing Performance: Alternative Theatre and the Dramatic Text* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp. 2–3.
32. Elam, p. 7.
33. Elam, p. 7.
34. Elam, p. 166.

Though I do not deny the power of theatrical performance to identify and emphasize speech acts, I argue for the performativity of the literary text in itself; I claim that the illocutionary acts can function even outside the theatrical performance: that is, the reader can perceive from the text alone the perlocutionary effect of the illocutionary acts in the literary work.

3. Performativity and Performance

3.1 To be or not to be Hamlet

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has been subject to endless studies and analyses regarding the dramatic text, as well as the various performances on stage and the cinematographic adaptations. One of the most relevant terms to my purpose here is the "dramatological score" coined by Keir Elam, who puts a detailed analysis of the first 79 lines in *Hamlet* forward in order to identify different levels and patterns, strategies and development, identifying discourse elements and functions, performatives, deictic elements etc. which shape the interpretation of the text.[35] In this section I will attempt an analysis meant to emphasize a few elements that pertain to a study of performatives and speech acts in literature, a concise analysis bearing in mind Austin's definitions and observations.

If we take Austin's remark that in the theatre the use of language is not taken seriously, if we accept it is void and, thus, it is a game of pretence where the performatives lose their binding quality, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*[36] is a perfect case study: there are various layers and stages upon which various games of pretence are presented to the reader/audience; we have Shakespeare's play on the stage where Hamlet plays a role for the audience and another one, within it, for the court of Denmark: he feigns insanity, disguised in rambling words, contradictory and cruel discourses. Let us consider his behaviour and the words he addresses to Ophelia: Hamlet loved her, but he does not trust anyone, so he denies his previous pledges that would now bind him to her:

> HAMLET I did love you once.
> OPHELIA Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.
> HAMLET You should have not believed me. . . . I loved you not.
> OPHELIA I was the more deceived.   (3.1.115–120)

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35. Elam, pp. 185–207.

36. All parenthesised references are to this edition: William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (Chatham: Wordsworth, 1996).

Hamlet made a commitment through his declaration[37] and, now, he wants to break it by denying its sincerity. His cruel words are meant to sever any relationship between them (precisely because he did care for her) and to convince Polonius and Claudius of his insanity (another performance he put on, aware of the fact that his conversation with Ophelia, apparently an intimate one, had a hidden audience), but they have the unexpected result of driving Ophelia insane: a game of pretence that leads to real effects inflicted upon the receiver of his discourse. His goading "Get thee to a nunnery" (3.1.121), repeated three times during the same conversation, is meant to warn her about men's deceitfulness: "We are arrant knaves, all; believe none of us" (3.1.129–130) and a woman's power to drive a man to madness: "it hath made me mad" (3.1.149), and, in a way to protect her, leads to *her* slipping into madness and, finally, perhaps even to suicide (the dubious circumstances under which Ophelia dies are well known). In this layered performance, characters build dramatic worlds through their discourse in which their reactions to this discourse are real, even when the utterances are part of an act:

> The characters are real within their own domain and time. Both actors and audiences identify with the characters. . . . Insofar as the characters partake of their own special reality, their performative utterances are efficacious. . . . But however brief or long-lasting, the aesthetic reality is neither the same, nor the opposite of ordinary daily reality. It is its own realm, an intermediary, liminal, transitional maya-lila time-space. What the "as if" provides is a time-space where *reactions can be actual while the actions that elicit these reactions are fictional.*[38]

The play itself begins with a staging when, after the ghost of his father appears to Hamlet and asks for revenge – "If thou didst ever thy dear father love . . . Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder" (1.5.25) – old Hamlet presents the scene of his own death at the hand of his own brother. Hamlet dramatizes this scene with the help of some actors and presents it in front of the king and queen to test their reaction.

HAMLET   I'll have these players
    Play something like the murder of my father

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37. Cf. Derrida's opinion according to which to say "I love you" is a special type of performative: "it is the production of an event by means of which, claiming not to lie, claiming to speak the truth . . . I tend to affect the other, to touch the other, literally or not, to give the other or to promise the other the love that I speak to him or her" (J. Hillis Miller, *Speech Acts in Literature* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001], p. 137).

38. Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York, London: Routledge, 2002), p. 124 (my emphasis).

> Before my uncle: I'll observe his looks;
> I'll tent him to the quick: if he but blench,
> I know my course.   (2.2.605–609)

His duty is to promise to revenge his father's murder, but not trusting the word of a ghost, Hamlet does not confront the killer; he chooses to test the murder scenario by staging it: as Schechner claims, Claudius reaction will be real even if it is triggered by the staged discourse of actors performing the murder in the Mousetrap-scene. The planned play-within-play has a *myse-en-abyme* effect, building a stage on the stage and blurring the borders between the reality as we know it and the theatre. Another disrupting event for the audience is brought by Hamlet's doubts regarding his own performance: he chastises himself for his reaction to the news of his father's murder, wonders whether the act he puts on in front of the court of Denmark makes him a coward and whether an actor playing his part would do a better job:

> What would he do,
> Had he the motive and the *cue* for passion
> That I have? He would drown the *stage* with tears,
> And cleave the general ear with horrid speech;
> Make mad the guilty, and appal the free,
> Confound the ignorant; and amaze, indeed,
> The very faculties of eyes and ears.   (2.2.560–566, my emphasis)

Here I wish to emphasize the words that are related to the art of the theatre and which are included by the dramatist into a soliloquy meant to be acted on stage; when Hamlet begins to doubt his emotions and his reaction because an actor can mirror them to perfection and could even be better at it, the *myse-en-abyme* reaches unexpected depths. What is the spectator's reaction to this? Should I, as spectator, wonder if my reaction and my interpretation are 'appropriate'? The perlocutionary effect of this soliloquy makes me doubt the appropriateness of my own performance, my own reaction as reader and spectator to Hamlet's performance, just as Hamlet questions the *authenticity* of his *own* reality:

> Hamlet's reality becomes at this moment inseparable from the enacted; indeed, the entire scene exerts constant pressure on the distinction between the performed and the authentic, since Hamlet uses performance as a way of trying to get at his own authentic feelings.[39]

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39. Anthony B. Dawson, *Hamlet: Shakespeare in Performance Series* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 2.

In staging what he calls "The Mouse-trap," Hamlet becomes the director who offers a script for the play he wants enacted, he offers advice about the naturalness of the acting ("Suit the action to the word, the word to the action" as the purpose of playing is "to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature" (3.2.19–20; 24–25) and then becomes spectator to the play as well as to the intended audience's reaction. For him the king's reaction to his play is the true show.

Now if we deem *Hamlet*, the entire text, as the perlocutionary effect of the ghost's request of revenge, the main performative utterance from which the whole play evolves, we can analyze the play as Hamlet's reaction to this command, his doubts regarding the reality (sic!) of the speaker (the ghost of his father, as the voice of filial duty or maybe a devil trying to tempt him) and his intentions, the play-within-play as a test and, in the end, the execution of that command. The ghost demands revenge, that is, he orders Hamlet to kill Claudius; Claudius, in his turn, orders Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, and later Laertes, to kill Hamlet. The final scene shows the performance of these orders. Even more, because the action implied by those performative utterances is not performed immediately – because of all the doubts, games of pretence, tests and delays – in the end the performance of the revenge required through the initial command results in the death of various bystanders or, as the modern report would put it, collateral damage: Polonius dies while he was a concealed spectator to Hamlet's conversation with his mother and Hamlet thought that he was killing Claudius (3.4); because of Hamlet's feigned madness, the discourses performed as a result of this pretence and the death of her father, Ophelia really slips into madness and drowns herself; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern die in the plot meant to kill Hamlet; Laertes, more direct in his quest to avenge his father and his sister, confronts Claudius and then joins a plot against Hamlet's life and dies himself. The queen dies drinking the poisoned wine meant for her son, Claudius dies stabbed with the poisoned sword meant to kill Hamlet and of the poisoned cup also prepared for the young Prince: nothing in this play works as planned – every action is thwarted, every intention is side-tracked. The bloodshed in the last scene seems to 'avenge' Austin's theory because a direct execution of old Hamlet's order, without the complications entailed by all the games of pretence, would have resulted in Claudius' death and his alone. What we understand from Shakespeare's drama is that even if fiction is pretence and its language is hollow, its effects are real.

Hamlet's last words represent another example of performative utterance addressed to Horatio, "tell my story" (5.2.348), one that closes the circle of a performative text: the plot is the performance of the ghost's order to his son to avenge his murder, while Shakespeare's text appears as the performance of Horatio's implied promise to tell Hamlet's story .

If we consider the relation between text and its performance, we must consider the necessary steps to be taken and we see that, in order to be adapted into a script and performed, any play is first of all *read*. In *Hamlet*'s case, "[b]ecause of the play's intense concern with theatricality and performance, we could even say that reading it *is* performing it."[40]

The irony is that the text of *Hamlet* is the result of different editions, some of which are actually transcriptions of staged performances.[41] The interchangeability between the dramatic text and its theatrical performance supports the linguistic theory according to which the signified of a certain sign can constitute a sign in itself with a signified of its own, reflections of reflections, layers in the triangular pyramid of signification.

3.2 The Importance of Being Earnest or The Seriousness of Pretence

Oscar Wilde's comedy of errors is a comedy of manners, a satirical reflection on modern society and the reversal of moral values, but above all, it's a word play. It is based on a pun between the name of the character, Ernest and his character, earnest. The play centres on the need to invent an alter ego on which to blame one's transgressions. Jack Worthing reinvents himself in the character of Ernest Worthing, Jack's supposedly younger and impulsive brother. In the countryside, Jack is the responsible, serious and the moral example for his ward, Cecily, granddaughter to the man (Thomas Cardew) who found and adopted him. He invented the younger brother, Ernest, so as to escape country life and enjoy the adventure of town life. While invented, and thus absent, Ernest is brought to life through some kind of performative utterance that was never questioned. Even more, Cecily continues to build this fictitious character and manages to fall in love with him. While Jack plays the role of Ernest, he meets Gwendolen, falls in love with her and intends to marry her. There are various promises, usually made in pretence and thus false situations, the central one being Jack's promise: "I would do anything in the world to ensure

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40. Dawson, p. 3.

41. For a discussion of the authority of the two quarto and the folio editions and the modern debate between the Oxford and the Cambridge editions, see Dawson, pp. 5–7. In a debate on text vs. performance, Margaret Jane Kidnie concludes that the "text," that is, a printed version of a literary work, "is indifferent to, even antithetical to, performance: a performance is 'of' the text; the text stands alone. Performance cannot be seen to form a component part of the 'play,' because performance is already constructed in language as a non-essential embellishment of, or deviation from, the play-as-text" (Margaret Jane Kidnie, "Where is *Hamlet*? Text, Performance, and Adaptation," in *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. Barbara Hogdon and William B. Worthen [Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005], p. 104).

Gwendolen's happiness" (*IBE* 21).[42] His only problem is that while he intends to 'kill' Ernest and ask for her hand in marriage as Jack, Gwendolen wants Ernest, insisting on the name, in love with a form, rather than the substance of the person bearing that name. What's in a name? Apparently for both Gwendolen and Cecily, the name is everything: it inspires confidence, loyalty and honesty.

As a fictitious character in Wilde's play and with a second degree of fictionality, the fictitious creation of each character in a play 'in general,' Ernest is absolutely real in his multiplicity and ambiguity, exemplifying the Saussurean arbitrariness of the sign and the signified:

> Ernest exists as a different individual in the imaginations of each of the play's central characters . . . each of the Ernests brought into existence by the diverse imaginations of Jack, Algy, Cecily, and Gwendolen clearly lacks the substance to enforce his dominance as a definitive concept. As a result, the reader forms his or her discrete sense of Ernest from an amalgamation and a reconstitution of all these evocations.[43]

The first Ernest to appear on stage is Algernon's. For him, Jack Worthing *is* Ernest:

> *You have always told me it* [your name] *was Ernest*. I have introduced you to every one as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest-looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards. (*IBE* 8, my emphasis)

I emphasized what seems to be the reported performative utterance through which Ernest was brought into existence. Algernon considers the introduction, the subsequent behaviour and the card as irrefutable evidence of Ernest's existence. After he accepts that Jack created his brother Ernest as a social pretext, and because he has an imaginary friend of his own, Bunbury, Algernon assumes Ernest's identity to introduce himself to Cecily.

For Jack, Ernest is a pretext, an outlet from his normal, respectable country life: "in order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who lives in the Albany, and gets into the most dreadful scrapes" (*IBE* 9).

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42. All parenthesised references are to this edition: Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (*IBE*) (Kila, MT: Kessinger, 2004).

43. Michael Patrick Gillespie, *Oscar Wilde and the Poetics of Ambiguity* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1996), p. 104.

For Lady Bracknell Ernest Worthing is worth nothing; she has some minor objections to his education, his financial situation and his properties, but when the discussion comes to parentage she accuses him of "carelessness" for losing both parents; then she is appalled to discover that he actually is a foundling and that Thomas Cardew picked him up at a railway station, gave him the name of the town of his destination, Worthing, and adopted him. This lack of the proper social position disqualifies Jack immediately. The only thing that would convince Lady Bracknell to reconsider his proposal would be lineage: "I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over" (*IBE* 21). Interestingly enough, Algernon "has nothing, but looks everything" (*IBE* 69), which makes him more than eligible (in this play about 'nothing serious,' each of these words appears 21 times).

For Cecily, Ernest is a romantic character, made interesting by the fact that he is often the topic of conversation. So she takes at face value her guardian's affirmation that he has a brother she never met and about whom she hears only in romantic contexts. So she builds her own image of him, makes up a romance between them, writes letters to herself in his name and, when Algernon introduces himself to her as Ernest and asks her to marry him, she informs him that they have already been engaged for three months. Cecily had built an imaginative world into which Algernon doesn't hesitate to enter. Cecily becomes author and addressee of love letters; then she continues to demonstrate her mastery as an author and her sensibility as a reader:

> I was forced to write your letters for you. I wrote always three times a week, and sometimes oftener. . . . The three you wrote me after I had broken off the engagement are so beautiful, and so badly spelled, that even now I can hardly read them without crying a little. (*IBE* 46)

And because everything the characters do in this play is "serious," the imaginary engagement was broken and mended and the only thing Cecily (like Gwendolen) insists upon is that her husband's name is Ernest, as it is a name that inspires confidence:

> It would hardly have been a really *serious* engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once. But I forgave you before the week was out. . . Besides, of course, there is the question of your name. . . You must not laugh at me, darling, but it had always been a girlish dream of mine to love some one whose name was Ernest. . . There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence. I pity any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest. (*IBE* 46–47; my emphasis)

For Gwendolen Fairfax, Ernest is an epitome of loyalty and honesty; he has "a strong upright Nature. He is the very soul of truth and honour. Disloyalty would be impossible to him as deception" (*IBE* 51). She is not talking about the man she knows as Ernest, but about what the name creates: the very man. In this case the importance of being Ernest lies in the performative function of the language: the name makes the person. When Gwendolen and Cecily discover the deception, they are ready to forgive the two men all their lies, except that regarding the name; but Jack and Algernon are ready to fix that by being christened Ernest. Wilde resolves the matter even better: he turns all deceptions into truths; while Lady Bracknell investigates Cecily's worthiness as Algernon's fiancée, things precipitate, Miss Prism enters the stage, and Jack's parentage is cleared up: they discover that his name really is Ernest and that he is Algernon's older brother, put in a bag – instead of a novel – and lost by Miss Prism in a railway station. So Jack never lied to Gwendolen – his name was really Ernest John, and he never lied to Cecily – he did have a younger, reckless brother: "it is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth" (*IBE* 78) and when accused of "triviality" he counters with the famous final line about the newly discovered "Importance of Being Earnest" (*IBE* 78).

The whole play is structured with the purpose of subverting language: beginning with the title and subtitle – *The Importance of Being Earnest, A Trivial Comedy for Serious People* – its importance in constructing the reality being undermined, while the performative utterances are subverted in Wilde's joke on the serious matters of life. The main character in the play is not the illusive Ernest but the ambiguous and arbitrary "earnest." Wilde writes a comedy on language in which 'earnest' and its synonym, 'serious,' are used extensively, so that their meaning is subverted and even reversed. Consider Algernon's understanding of the concept of seriousness in relation to triviality: "one must be serious about something, if one wants to have any amusement in life. I happen to be serious about Bunburying. What on earth you are serious about I haven't got the remotest idea. About everything, I should fancy. You have such an absolutely trivial nature" (*IBE* 58).

In one of his interviews Oscar Wilde explains that the quality of the dramatic text is tested when it is staged, and when dealing with a work of art, the stage is tested for the appropriateness of its theatrical rendering, while a poorer text, when staged, actually tests the audience: "When a play that is a work of art is produced on stage, what is being tested is not the play, but the stage; when a play that is not a work of art is produced on stage what is being tested is not the play, but the public."[44]

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44. Oscar Wilde in *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*, ed. Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 164.

3.3. The Fictional Pygmalion

George Bernard Shaw offers his readers his own Pygmalion, Prof. Higgins, who is able to distinguish phonetically the speaker's place of origin or dwelling on the basis of his or her pronunciation. Shaw's play begins with a demonstration of his skill, a frame for the play and a contrast against which the reader will measure the performance of the action implied in the performative which is the starting point of Pygmalion-creation.

What we have first of all is the annoyed reaction to Eliza's pronunciation:

> A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere – no right to live. Remember that you are a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech: that your native language is the language of Shakespeare and Milton and The Bible; and don't sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon. (*Pyg* 18)[45]

From this premise, and after accepting Pickering's bet, Higgins tries to transform the unintelligible woman into 'a human being' according to his own criteria of perfection, just as Pygmalion created a statue representing the perfect woman. The transformation implied in this play has different interpretations: "Higgins trains Eliza to be a lady; Eliza, conversely, attempts to touch Higgins' soul, to train him to be a human being."[46] Eric Bentley sees in Shaw's *Pygmalion* a reversal of the mythical creator: "The Pygmalion of 'natural history' tries to turn a human being into a statue."[47] Jain puts Higgins in the role of the fairy godmother (sic!) who helps Shaw's Cinderella to be the princess at the ball.[48] Shapiro analyzes Eliza semiotically and concludes that "Higgins changes Eliza's iconic aspect from that of the flower girl to that of a duchess" while Higgins is "the indexical character, although he also wears a professional iconic aspect."[49]

Shaw's play is based on a bet Higgins makes with Pickering that he can teach Eliza how to talk so she would pass for a duchess at a high society event: "Well, sir, in three months I could pass that girl off as a duchess at an ambassador's garden

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45. All parenthesised references are to this edition: George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion: A Romance in Five Acts* (*Pyg*), ed. Dan H. Lawrence and Nicholas Green, (London: Penguin, 2003).

46. Lagretta Tallent Lenker, *Fathers and Daughters in Shakespeare and Shaw* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), p. 132.

47. Eric Bentley, *Bernard Shaw*, 3rd ed. (New York: Applause, 2002), p. 143.

48. S. Jain, *Women in the Plays of George Bernard Shaw* (Delhi: Discovery, 2006), pp. 62–63.

49. Bruce G. Shapiro, *Reinventing Drama: Acting, Iconicity, Performance* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999), pp. 118, 128.

party" (*Pyg* 18). Pickering makes this boastful affirmation into a bet: "What about the ambassador's garden party? I'll say you're the greatest teacher alive if you make that good. *I'll bet you all the expenses of the experiment you can't do it*. And I'll pay for the lessons" (*Pyg* 29; my emphasis). (And "bet" appears 13 times in a play about the effects of such a performative utterance.)

This performative utterance is the real starting point of the play: Higgins teaches Eliza how to talk, how to dress and behave, and he even establishes subjects for potential conversations. For him and Pickering, Eliza is an experiment, or, as Mrs. Higgins puts it, "a pretty pair of babies playing with your live doll" (*Pyg* 65). But the two men take their "job" very seriously, their only goal being the prize of the bet: Eliza transformed into a lady, without giving a second thought to what a poor flower girl might do with her manners and elegant speech after the experiment is over.

Eliza fails her first test at Mrs. Higgins' house because Higgins had taught her a few phrases and established two subjects of conversation: weather and health. Eliza might have learned how to pronounce correctly and deliver her phrases in exquisite English ("The shallow depression in the west of these islands is likely to move slowly in an easterly direction. There are no indications of any great change in the barometrical situation. . . I bet I got it right," *Pyg* 60), but she isn't like Higgins' gramophone and in conversation she interacts with the others, the disk falters and Eliza falls into cockney with her memories about her aunt's illness. The second test, the ambassador's party, is a success, and the high society cannot recognise the flower girl in the refined duchess-like Eliza. Higgins won his bet and the experiment is over. After the ball, Higgins and Pickering take Eliza home, happy that their doll performed perfectly, and, satisfied with themselves, they talk and behave as if she were invisible. So she fights back with and in the language Higgins had taught her, and throws phrases pronounced correctly, with well played fury and high society manners, into her Professor's face, in order to make herself visible and heard: "I've won your bet for you, haven't I? That's enough for you. *I* don't matter, I suppose. . . I'm nothing to you – not so much as them slippers" (*Pyg* 76).

The action implied in the performative is performed, Eliza has become a lady as Higgins promised, but he never takes *her* into consideration: he treats her like the clay out of which he moulds his own Galatea, not for romantic, as the subtitle states, but for scientific purposes. But Eliza is more practical and though she came to him to learn how to talk like a lady, so as to find a position in a flower shop, she understands now that in her previous position she felt better, not "so cheap" (*Pyg* 78): she sold flowers, but now all she has to sell is herself. As Higgins points out, one of her options for the future is marriage: "I sold flowers. I didn't sell myself. Now you've made a lady of me I'm not fit to sell anything else. I wish you'd left me where you found me" (*Pyg* 78).

Eliza is a modern Katherine, a 'shrew' tamed not for marriage, but because it is a challenge to "to take a human being and change her into a quite different human being by creating a new speech for her" (*Pyg* 65). And Shaw himself boasted that he created "such a heroine as had not been seen on the London stage since Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*" with the amendment that "my shrew was never tamed."[50]

Shaw uses speech acts to 'perform' a person: language is used in this play to mould and create a human being. Like the mythical Pygmalion, Higgins creates a work of art and he can appreciate his creation aesthetically, the world can admire her, too; but Higgins will always remember the clay he started with. For him Eliza remains the flower girl and that is what ignites her revolt. The linguistic refinement he provided represents, ironically, just a coating for him, while for Eliza the education is complete; she is transformed by this experience, she is the living result of a bet, utterly transfigured in 'the lady' that Higgins promised: she acquires the manners, the language and even the feelings that go with the role. The play doesn't really have an ending: Higgins has another quarrel with Eliza, but he is sure she will come back with his gloves and "that's it." No happy ending for the two, (or maybe Shaw would argue that this is the real 'happy ending' for both), yet the conventional 'solution' of their marriage is rejected. So Shaw allows for an 'open ended' drama, while in a narrative "sequel" he gives Eliza the future she desired: she gets married to Freddy, she runs the flower-shop of her own, and she is still upset about Higgins.

Shaw's play is one of the most perfect examples of performativity in literature, showing how the performative utterance is developed on page to get to the performance of the action implied in it, but it is a great example of performance as well: Shaw's comedy resides in language, and therefore the reader can play with it; but this is not Wilde's type of language game; Shaw's use of language is a particularly auditory one: this play has to be performed; silent reading does not do it justice, because its salience resides in pronunciation with various accents and in various dialects. As a reader, I understand Shaw's meanings, give various interpretations, and stage the play in my mind; but at the back of my mind informing this staging will always be the cinematic production based on *Pygmalion*, *My Fair Lady*.

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As I tried to show, in literature performatives have the power to conjure up worlds while performing the action implied in the illocutionary act. A promise, a bet or a command may be starting points for various literary works, and, even if they might be considered hollow, for the addressee their perlocutionary effect may be quite real.

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50. Jean Reynolds, *Pygmalion's Wordplay: The Postmodern Shaw* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1999), p. 6.

Janka Kaščáková

Speaking Silence in "The Daughters of the Late Colonel"

Detachment from meaningful movement in time; the gradual development of history disrupted by absurdity and the cruelty of the First World War; the wasteland of European civilization and the reduction of individuals into ghastly numbers; human existence no longer firmly attached with regard to meaning: all this, in Modernist texts, translates into both scattered bits and conflicted yet meaningful juxtapositions. To use T.S. Eliot's famous line, literature becomes a "heap of broken images" and all authors wish to express this disruption and deal with it in their own particular way. One of the direct representations of the inability of writers to cope with contemporary reality is the fragmentation of the text, often accompanied by the frequent use of ellipses. This is especially noticeable in the works of the New Zealand Modernist Katherine Mansfield; her short stories build on what is said as much as on what is left unsaid; they make use of empty spaces bearing meaning, speaking silence– all this requires an active reader, drawn into the creation of the story. This paper discusses Katherine Mansfield's short story "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," with an emphasis on the unexpressed, or implied, the use of ellipses and omissions; it analyzes their interactions with the content of the story; and concludes that what has been omitted is as important as what has been included.

The fragmentation of the Modernist text is usually attributed to a consequence of two phenomena: the first is the reaction of writers to the "over-furnished"[1] fiction of the 19th century which focused on the "objective," tangible external world of their contemporary society and delighted in describing it in minute detail; the second is writers' attempts to cope with the impact of the Great War, which broke the seeming logic and order of life into shattered pieces, T. S. Eliot's "heap of broken images." The broken text leaves great portions of empty space, mostly figuratively, but sometimes literally, which have to be accounted for, contemplated, and filled in. Ellipses, omissions and things left unsaid, although far from being an invention of Modern-

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1. Willa Cather, *Not Under Forty* [online], Project Gutenberg of Australia eBook, 21 May 2008 <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks05/0500441.txt>.

ists, become more frequent than at any time before; indeed, they became the cornerstone of Modernist aesthetics.

Among those who made creative use of omissions and empty space was the New Zealand short story writer Katherine Mansfield. By its very nature the genre of the short story requires that many things be omitted, yet Mansfield went much further than most short story writers. As she once claimed "[t]he truth is one can get only *so much* into a story; there is always a sacrifice. One has to leave out what one knows and longs to use. . . . It's always a kind of race, to get in as much as one can before it *disappears*."[2] And although at first it appears to be a disadvantage of the genre, she managed to turn this "leaving out" into one of the strongest points of her writing. Through her ingenious use and selection of detail, the structuring of her texts and her use of juxtapositions, she managed to communicate much more than was usually expressed in the restricted space of the short story. Arguably the best example of this is her masterpiece, "The Daughters of the Late Colonel." Thus in this paper I will elaborate on the use of omissions and ellipses and analyze their interactions with the content of the story, highlighting Mansfield's manifold uses of silence, empty space, or "nothingness" which, I argue, contribute to the density and richness of this story.

Katherine Mansfield commented on the necessity of new forms of writing for the post-war era, especially in connection with Virginia Woolf's *Night and Day*, which she reviewed for *The Athenaeum* in 1919. Her main objection, expressed in this much quoted and commented on review, was that the novel, which she likens to a ship at sea, sails back to the port aloof, with an "air of quiet perfection," and lacks "any sign that she has made a perilous voyage."[3] Mansfield quite clearly declared that after the war no ship could be untouched, that is, no novel should be written in the pre-war, realistic tradition. She further clarified her distinct dislike of this kind of writing in a letter to J. M. Murry, where she insisted on the necessity of change in the writing of literature:

> I don't want (G. forbid) mobilization and the violation of Belgium, but the novel can't just leave the war out. There *must* have been a change of heart. . . . I feel in the *profoundest* sense that nothing can ever be the same – that, as artists, we are traitors if we feel otherwise: we have to take it into account and find new expressions, new moulds for our thoughts and feelings.[4]

2. Margaret Scott, ed., *The Katherine Mansfield Notebooks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 318.

3. Katherine Mansfield, *Novels and Novelists* (New York: Knopf, 1930), p. 108.

4. Vincent O'Sullivan and Margaret Scott, eds., *The Collected Letters of Katherine Mansfield, Volume 3: 1919–1920* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 82.

Thus the war and its brutality are not to appear directly, as themes; the cataclysm of destruction, the millions of young lives lost in the anonymous military machinery, as well as the abuse of scientific progress all must be reflected in the way literature is written. Old genres must be reassessed and reshaped; and new ones should arise to better accomplish the expression of the new reality.

Yet it would be too simplistic to claim that Mansfield's distinctly modern way of writing is a direct consequence of simply, in her case, her personal experience with war. Long before the conflict broke out, reading Symons' *Studies in Prose and Verse* she entered into her notebook:

> The partisans of analysis describe minutely the state of the soul; the secret motive of every action itself. The partisans of objectivity – give us the result of this evolution sans describing the secret processes. They describe the state of the soul through the slightest gesture – i.e. realize flesh covered bones – which is the artist's method for me – in as much as art seems to me *pure vision* – I am indeed a partisan of objectivity.[5]

This "slightest gesture," which must be carefully selected in order to produce the wished-for effect, is closely related to Joyce's epiphany, or Woolf's "moment of being." Mansfield calls it a "glimpse," and Gillian Body aptly identifies it as the "glimpse of a specific character at a specific moment, as if through an open doorway."[6] Thus the success of the story depends on the careful selection of this moment and the way it is depicted, resulting in the amount and quality of what the readers will be able to find there, and how much they will be able to understand.

Omission, repression and silence are at the core of "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," first published in 1920. This story of two sisters seemingly covers only the few days directly following the death of their father. Yet, as the story unfolds, it becomes clear that what the two sisters say, do and remember, or rather, what they fail to say, do or remember, presents their past, although this past must be assembled, reconfigured as it were, by the reader, who is also, thereby, invited to guess at their future. Thus the reader is called upon to construct a much wider stretch of time than that directly represented in the story itself. This result is achieved not only through narrative gaps, but through the structure, as well.

On the level of structure, this story is divided into 12 separate and numbered parts each covering a small portion of the daughters' present, as well as some

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5. Alexander Turnbull Library Notebook 2 – annotation of Symons' Studies in Prose and Verse 1904; quoted in Clare Hanson, ed., *The Critical Writings of Katherine Mansfield* (New York: St.Martin's Press, 1987), p. 58.

6. Gillian Body, *Katherine Mansfield: The Woman and the Writer* (Victoria, Australia: Penguin, 1988), p. 169.

selected flashbacks into a more or less distant past. The individual sections are not ordered chronologically and might, at first sight, appear to have been arranged randomly. Yet this impression lasts only until the reader realizes that the arrangement is not external but internal, functioning according to the 'logic' and ordering of the daughters' minds. Thus the story reaches an almost absurdist mode, in which the reader must enter into the story and accept its conditions rather than approach it from the outside, with traditional expectations and assumptions. To achieve this, KM employs another favourite among her narrative techniques: free indirect discourse. Thus the world is seen through the eyes of the sisters, through their thoughts and consciousnesses, which interact and mingle to the point that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish whose ideas are presented, or by whom.

Constantia and Josephine, or Con and Jug as they call each other, are middle-aged, unmarried sisters who lost their mother in childhood and have lived with their authoritative and bullying father ever since. The story opens at the time of his death, usually a traditional time for a family to reminisce about and evaluate the past and discuss the future. Yet in this story neither of the sisters is able to do either. As a result the reader, expecting a traditional story, with some turning point, climax, change, or solution, becomes frustrated because there is none. Further, there can be none because of the empty and dependent existence that the two women had been forced to endure for such a very long time. However unpleasant their lives may have been, Con and Jug are lost without their father: their life experiences have been extremely limited, their lives quite sheltered, and all their actions censored by him. Such "protection" leaves them unable to act independently after his death and even results in tragicomic situations, such as the one during his funeral:

> Josephine had had a moment of absolute terror at the cemetery, while the coffin was lowered, to think that she and Constantia had done this thing without asking his permission. What would father say when he found out? For he was bound to find out sooner or later. He always did. "Buried. You two girls had me buried!" She heard his stick thumping. Oh, what would they say? What possible excuse could they make? It sounded such an appallingly heartless thing to do. Such a wicked advantage to take of a person because he happened to be helpless at the moment. The other people seemed to treat it all as a matter of course. They were strangers; they couldn't be expected to understand that father was the very last person for such a thing to happen to. No, the entire blame for it all would fall on her and Constantia. And the expense, she thought, step-

ping into the tight-buttoned cab. When she had to show him the bills. What would he say then?

She heard him absolutely roaring. "And do you expect me to pay for this gimcrack excursion of yours?" (235–236)[7]

Nowhere in the text is it expressed that the treatment of their father was unfair or cruel, yet such reactions of the sisters express the extent of his abuse quite eloquently. "What would they say" to their father is in fact a leitmotif of their lives, implying that no answer can possibly be correct and no expense satisfyingly low for him. The old manipulator has instilled such a sense of guilt into them that they have a fit of panic when they realize they had buried him without his permission. What is more, they do not shake off this absurd idea but feel that "father will never forgive [them] for this – never!" (236)

Another example that indicates the way the sisters' were drilled and had to be obedient to the point of absurdity presents itself when, after the death of their father, Con and Jug suddenly hear an organ-grinder in the street. Obviously taught to get rid of him so that he not disturb their father, and to do so as quickly as possible, they react instinctively and immediately:

But at that moment in the street below a barrel-organ struck up. Josephine and Constantia sprang to their feet together.

"Run, Con," said Josephine. "Run quickly. There's sixpence on the –"

Then they remembered. It didn't matter. They would never have to stop the organ-grinder again. Never again would she and Constantia be told to make that monkey take his noise somewhere else. Never would sound that loud, strange bellow when father thought they were not hurrying enough. The organ-grinder might play there all day and the stick would not thump.

It never will thump again,

It never will thump again,

played the barrel-organ. (246)

The abusive behaviour of Colonel Pinner is again obvious without being explicitly expressed. He terrorized his daughters by abusive words (make that monkey take this noise somewhere else), by the thumping of the stick and shouting at them. And since the funeral episode shows that he was also watching over the expenses, it is hardly believable that he would authorize them to pay the "monkey" the sixpence they had had prepared for him. It implies they preferred to save from the little money they had and pay the organ-grinder just to be in peace.

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7. All parenthesised references are to this edition, Katherine Mansfield, *Selected Stories*, ed. Angela Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

But Colonel Pinner is not the only one the sisters are afraid of. They are even intimidated by their own servant, Kate, who, feeling their weakness and her power over them, immediately takes advantage of the situation:

> And proud young Kate, the enchanted princess, came in to see what the old tabbies wanted now. She snatched away their plates of mock something or other and slapped down a white, terrified blancmange.
> "Jam, please, Kate," said Josephine kindly.
> Kate knelt and burst open the sideboard, lifted the lid of the jam-pot, saw it was empty, put it on the table, and stalked off.   (233)

This quotation is a nice example of Mansfield's ability to present the reader with much information in a very limited space, using what Antony Alpers referred to as the "floating narrator," smoothly passing between different consciousnesses of characters and presenting the readers with a more complex and objective view of the situation. In the first two sentences the reader is presented with Kate's attitude towards her employers: she calls them old tabbies, for whom she has cooked a "mock something," which she snatches away before slapping down their meal. The sisters' fear of Kate is mirrored by that of the "terrified blancmange." But wonderfully most ambiguous here is the characterization: "the enchanted princess." One possibility is Mansfield's own ironic comment – through the narrator – about the servant. It could also represent the sister's view of this – for them surely – enigmatic person who, although a servant, is bold and arrogant, clearly terrifying for them, having power over them. But it could also depict Kate's own vision of herself: as a young girl, having a boring, menial but demanding job, she, as many young women of her age and situation, may indeed imagine that the life she is leading is just temporary and, as in the case of princesses from fairy-tales, the enchantment will one day lift and she will be able to leave this existence and lead a full life. Yet all this can be only guessed by the reader; the writer remains silent, leaving the meaning to be extracted from the text.

One of the techniques Mansfield employs to reveal the total helplessness and incapacitation of the sisters is incoherent and incomplete direct or indirect discourse. In moments of insecurity, distraction, when the sisters are confused or agitated, their thoughts are represented by broken syntax, dashes, repetitions and ellipses. A simple question from their servant Kate about the way she should prepare the fish elicits this reaction:

> "I think it might be nice to have it fried," said Constantia. "On the other hand, of course boiled fish is very nice. I think I prefer both equally well. . . Unless you. . . In that case –"   (244)

Taking into consideration the previous quotation concerning Kate, the reader might well wonder whether it is this kind of attitude that made Kate behave as she did towards them, or the other way round: that is, whether the sisters, intimidated by her rudeness (as they are by their father's), are trying to avoid trouble by this ridiculous way of giving Kate more decision-making power than she ought to have.

Their unimportance and marginal place in society is expressed by the polite yet reluctant visit of their nephew – who comes but who tries to spend as little time with them and their father as possible. His ellipses and dashes represent his unease in dealing with his aunts' world, a world so very different from his own; his belief that time is unimportant for them; that they cannot understand the matters of the "big world" and, as an attentive reader might suspect, that he is not exactly telling them the truth:

> "It is, all the same," said Cyril. "I had to meet a man at Victoria, and he kept me hanging about till. . . there was only time to get lunch and to come on here. And he gave me – phew" – Cyril put his hand to his forehead – "a terrific blow-out," he said. (241)

Although short, his visit is "one of [the sisters'] rare treats" (241), and in spite of its shortness and awkwardness, they remember it with pleasure.

The ellipses often represent the unrealized opportunities or desires of the sisters, which is why it seems difficult if not impossible for both Constantia and Josephine to articulate them. The sisters have very little experience with the outside world and that perhaps is why their dreams have a much less distinct shape than the dreams of other people, who have come across the things they desire in their real lives – if not personally, at least through the stories/experiences of people they have met:

> But Constantia's long, pale face lengthened and set, and she gazed away – away – far over the desert, to where that line of camels unwound like a thread of wool. . . (232)

This little escape into the world of fantasy occurs during a meal with their late father's nurse; and while Josephine is scandalized by the nurse's eating habits and affected speech, Constantia wanders off into the desert for a little while.

The ellipses also indicate that a great part of the sisters' lives is not worth talking about. These segments brought neither adventure nor simple satisfaction; and it is quite futile to recall them. After she realizes that there is no need to chase away the organ grinder anymore, for example, the sun falling on the old picture of their mother reminds Josephine of their tedious childhood:

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> Josephine remembered standing on a chair and pointing out that feather boa to Constantia and telling her that it was a snake that had killed their mother in Ceylon... Would everything have been different if mother hadn't died? She didn't see why. Aunt Florence had lived with them until they had left school, and they had moved three times and had their yearly holiday and... and there'd been changes of servants, of course.   (247)

The first ellipsis is rather mysterious. It can simply indicate Josephine's moment of distraction or suggest that it is all she knows or remembers about their mother. Yet it may also express doubt about the truthfulness of this story she once accepted without question. By now knowing the nasty character of Colonel Pinner, the reader's curiosity and doubts can indeed be awakened or heightened by such an ellipsis.

The second ellipsis seems to actually talk about the triviality of the sisters' existence – the long years filled with even less interesting and important things than the change of servants. Josephine's reflections bring her to the recollection of their one experience remotely suggesting romance, and even that is trivial and tragicomic:

> One read of people having adventures, being followed, and so on. But nobody had ever followed Constantia and her. Oh yes, there had been one year at Eastbourne a mysterious man at their boarding-house who had put a note on the jug of hot water outside their bedroom door! But by the time Connie had found it the steam had made the writing too faint to read; they couldn't even make out to which of them it was addressed. And he had left next day. And that was all. The rest had been looking after father, and at the same time keeping out of father's way.   (248)

The appearance and departure of the usual "mysterious man" of teenage-girl literature and fantasies results in an anticlimax, a gap of silence never to be explained. The fact that it is this incident – and that was all – which the sisters recall after so many years is another indication of the flatness of their life.

It is thus no accident that Mansfield chose to present the sisters in the only moment of their lives that can be considered a moment of crisis: the death of their father. No matter how incredible it might seem, this is, as the first sentence of the story implies, probably the most important and most exciting time of their life. It is actually the first time they are able to emerge from their silence and submission, but also to act and decide things for themselves, without their father. This could and should be the final break, the moment when they will be set free.

Yet breaking free is almost impossible for them because they have never been trusted with any responsibility, never been allowed to decide for themselves. In-

stead of relief and expansion the sisters experience even greater and more cumulative anxiety and fear: during the usual pre-funeral arrangements they are traumatized when offered "a little communion" by their priest, or nearly incapacitated when they cannot decide to whom and how to give out some of their father's possessions. The simple act of entering their father's room and sorting out his things is not an emotionally distressing task but a deeply terrifying experience:

> It was dark in the hall. It had been a rule for years never to disturb father in the morning, whatever happened. And now they were going to open the door without knocking even... Constantia's eyes were enormous at the idea; Josephine felt weak in the knees.
>
> Then the door was shut behind them, but – but they weren't in father's room at all. They might have suddenly walked through the wall by mistake into a different flat altogether. Was the door just behind them? They were too frightened to look. Josephine knew that if it was it was holding itself tight shut; Constantia felt that, like the doors in dreams, it hadn't any handle at all. (237)

The nightmarish door without a handle aptly indicates their powerlessness and their reliance on their father. Their situation now, rather than liberating, is hopeless. Their father, ruthless in his life, continues his hold on them even in death. Further, he robs them even of a decent memory of his death:

> Then, as they were standing there, wondering what to do, he had suddenly opened one eye. Oh, what a difference it would have made, what a difference to their memory of him, how much easier to tell people about it, if he had only opened both! But no – one eye only. It glared at them a moment and then... went out. (234)

The ellipses in this extract create a sense of suspension; the reader can almost feel the tension as the sisters hold their breath in this timeless moment. But it also indicates their expectations of death, and their disappointment, anger even, over his way of dying. They will lose the opportunity to talk about his last moments to people in a pleasant, perhaps romantic way. It is paradoxical that they regret that he did not die in a way that would have made it easier for them to remember, and to present to the outside world. But they also fail to recognize that he did not live that way either. He died as he lived: his eye "*glared* at them a moment and then . . . went out" (my emphasis). Only after the suspense of the ellipsis do we learn that it did not close; it went out: presumably, remaining open. Apart from it being quite an unusual thing to happen, at least this is what the sisters seem to feel; it is also an ominous portent of what their future life will be. The eye will remain open forever,

glaring at whatever they will be doing, watching them and thus never leaving them in peace.

I mentioned earlier that the narrative structure contributed to the sense of absence, though at first the arrangement of the sections seemed arbitrary. But it becomes clear that they represent moments of importance, pleasure, distress, or, as it happens, are simply etched into the sisters' consciousness more distinctively. When these clear moments pass, the sisters again dissolve into greyness, stereotype, and yet mystery.

> Constantia lifted her big, cold hands as if to catch them, and then her hands fell again. She walked over to the mantelpiece to her favourite Buddha. And the stone and gilt image, whose smile always gave her such a queer feeling, almost a pain and yet a pleasant pain, seemed to-day to be more than smiling. He knew something; he had a secret. "I know something that you don't know," said her Buddha. Oh, what was it, what could it be? And yet she had always felt there was. . . something. (247)

Don Kleine very aptly called "The Daughters" "the orphans of time"[8] – which they really are; time left them at the same moment as their mother, stuck in the groove of the gramophone record; their life is a never-ending repetition. They know there are other ways of living, but by now they have neither the courage nor the ability to try one. It is a paradox that, on the one hand, time *was* absent, on the other, only too present: developmentally they are like children but physically adult, and so doubly sensitive to the forces of the outside world. Unlike children, they have no hope of ever growing up and becoming independent. The tormentor is dead; so is any purpose of life. Theoretically his death should have set them free, but practically it made them even more confused. They are no more alive than their father.

After the publication of "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" Mansfield is recorded to have said to her friend Dorothy Brett that "even dear old Hardy told [her] to write more about those sisters. As if there was any more to say."[9] And truly, one can hardly find a better meeting between the old world and the modern one. "Dear old Hardy" wishing to be told every detail about the two sisters, and hear more stories about their life; and young Mansfield who, although with respect, cannot understand what more she should say. Every new sentence would be just a useless repetition of what had already been said. And everything *had* already been "said."

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8. Don W. Kleine, "Mansfield and the Orphans of Time," *Modern Fiction Studies* 24:3, (Autumn 1978) 423–438.

9. Anthony Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980), p. 330.

SPEAKING SILENCE IN "THE DAUGHTERS OF THE LATE COLONEL"

Katherine Mansfield managed to express so much in so restricted a space as a short story by making use of such structural innovations – in the case of this story – as the "random" assortment of incidents in the life of the daughters, as well as ellipses, dashes and other punctuation marks which gradually lose both their grammatical function as well as their character as mere accessories, and become dynamic parts of the text. Her deliberate and creative use of punctuation in occasional combination with an original structural division of the text gives her stories a new dimension, richness and density, creating a synergy whereby the whole is much greater than the sum of its parts. As Willa Cather commented on Mansfield's work:

> She communicates vastly more than she actually writes. One goes back and runs through the pages to find the text which made one know certain things about Linda or Burnell or Beryl, and the text is not there – but something was there, all the same – is there, though no typesetter will ever set it. It is this overtone, which is too fine for the printing press and comes through without it, that makes one know that this writer had something of the gift which is one of the rarest things in writing, and quite the most precious.[10]

This "something", or, more precisely, "nothing", the "empty space" which Cather feels, forms an integral part of Mansfield's writing, and confirms that the "new mould" she chose to employ did work the way she wanted it to. But it is a mould which need not be completely filled. For Mansfield's writing suggests that she, too, as did many Modernists, believed that sometimes the most important part of the work of art can be what the artist has left out[11] both in terms of what she is talking about and how she is talking about it.

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10. Cather.

11. Stéphane Mallarmé, "La Musique et les letters," *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris, 1945), 635–657; paraphrased by Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 173.

Ildikó Limpár

Seymour

Key to Salinger's Philosophy of Composition and Publication

In his rare interviews, Salinger explains his choice of retiring from publication as a private person; his stories, in contrast, provide an insight into the author's intellect, and allow us to realize the artist's motivation for writing only for the sake of writing. The present paper focuses on the artistic principles of the two author characters in Salinger's oeuvre, Buddy and Seymour Glass, considering them as the alter-ego and the artistic ideal of the author, respectively. First the Glass's way of communication is presented, emphasizing the importance of key concepts, such as perfection and the method of not-aiming. Then Seymour's suicide is investigated, making the point that it should not be considered as the poet's act aiming at ultimate perfection in his existence but as an act of a person seriously harmed by his war experiences. Therefore, Seymour is a contradictory character, shown as a perfect artist and a failed man. Ultimately, the paper suggests that Salinger saw the contradiction between his ideal and reality's limitations, which explains his attitude to publishing and his gesture of granting Buddy the authorship of his own Seymour stories.

We know of only few authors who resisted the temptation of publication when they had the chance to show the world what they had in their drawers. Emily Dickinson, for instance, claimed that "Publication – is the Auction / of the Mind,"[1] fearing that the process of publishing might damage the integrity of her art. A century later, acclaimed novelist J. D. Salinger decided that publication is the auction of private life, and chose not to publish his texts in the future despite staying an active writer. "There is a marvelous peace in not publishing. . . . Publishing is a terrible invasion of my privacy."[2] In his rare interviews, Salinger explains his choice of retiring from publication as a private person; his stories, in contrast, provide an insight into the author's intellect, and allow us to realize the artist's motivation for writing only for the sake of writing.

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1. Emily Dickinson, "Poem 704," in *The Complete Poems,* ed. Thomas H. Johnson (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), ll. 1–2.
2. Lacey Fosburgh, "J. D. Salinger Speaks About his Silence," *New York Times* (3 November, 1973), 25 March, 2010 <http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/09/13/specials/salinger-speaks.html?_r=2>.

The Glass family Salinger writes about in his fiction has the poet Seymour in its focal point. The much beloved and sadly deceased brother comes alive through the words of the other author in the family, Buddy. The investigation of the two authors' characters in Salinger's works of art reveals Salinger's "philosophy of composition," taken that Buddy appears as Salinger's alter ego, while Seymour is presented as Buddy's – that is, Salinger's – ideal as an author.

Seymour is the admired eldest brother, an outstanding talent even in this extraordinary family of Glasses, where each of the seven children was a regular guest on a radio quiz program "It's a Wise Child." The children may be very different as far character, but they definitely agree on one thing: Seymour was "all things to his brothers and sisters. . . . he was our blue-striped unicorn, our double-lensed burning glass, our consultant genius, our portable conscience, our supercargo, and our one full poet," as Buddy enumerates.[3] To play with the words: the Glasses are proud of their special burning glass – the metaphoric phrasing of Seymour as focal point and as someone who is capable of transforming what he interacts with – and they also agree on Seymour's otherwise dividing character, as if they were looking at the world – or, at least, their special world, Seymour – through the same glasses.

Seymour and his siblings share an emotional-intellectual microcosm that often seems impenetrable to outsiders. The bond that connects them is invisible like glass, and is based on Seymour, who, in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," turns out to be fragile like glass, and falls apart through his act of suicide. Buddy seems determined to collect the splinters and assemble the pieces of his memory in order to reproduce the family's lost treasure and to present it to the world, thus providing a passage for the outsiders into the initiated world of the Glasses. Yet, as he is also member of the family, he uses the Glasses' ways of communication to do so, which reinforces the impassable nature of the borderline between the Glasses and the rest of the world instead of providing a bridge between the two spheres. In fact, one of the central themes of Salinger's Seymour stories is the conflict generated by the difference in communication between what Ihab Hassan calls "Responsive Outsiders," represented by members of the Glass family, and "Assertive Vulgarians," where Muriel and her family belong.[4] Seymour's suicide proves this conflict irresolvable, despite the fact that Seymour, as Eberhard Alsen points out, does take the important step of trying to bridge his intellectual world and Muriel's more superficial,

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3. All parenthesised references are to this edition: J. D. Salinger, "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters," in *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 9–71, p. 83.

4. Ihab Hassan, *Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1961), p. 261.

material, yet, from a certain perspective, more human world by marrying the girl.[5] Therefore, when intending to break through the thick glass separating the worlds of intellectual depth and shallowness, we need to learn the mode of communication the Glasses used among one another, searching for hints that Buddy scattered in his text. Understanding the kind of communication that originates from Seymour's intellect will help us restore the picture of Seymour as an artist, ultimately revealing Salinger's principles of art.

"Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" begins by recalling the night when Seymour read out the Taoist tale of Kao's finding the superlative horse to his sister Franny (9–10). The tale is fundamental in understanding the core of the novelette, creating a connection between the Taoist tale's protagonist Kao and Buddy's protagonist, Seymour, based on their abilities to see beyond externals and recognize inner qualities.[6] While the parallel does indeed offer an explanation for Seymour's choice of marrying Muriel – a choice which is unperceivable for others, including Buddy himself – the circumstances in which the tale is used and re-used are also of great importance. The Taoist tale is chosen by Seymour to communicate with his ten-month-old sister, who is crying at night yet is obviously not hungry; twenty years later, Buddy turns the same tale into a parable in order to communicate the most important qualities he attaches to Seymour's character. Although the tale as parable is a conventional technique of communication in literature, it is also a method that demands strong participation on the reader's part; thus in no way can we judge it a simple way of communication. Seymour's use of the tale, however, is more striking. As an explanation for his choice of reading out a Taoist tale to Franny, he tells Buddy that "[babies] have ears. They can hear" (9). As Dennis L. O'Connor argues, "[b]y alluding to a biblical injunction about childlike reception of the word of God, Seymour stresses the seriousness of his action, the sacredness of the Taoist text, and the religious pluralism that characterizes Salinger's fiction."[7] Buddy's and Seymour's alternative uses of the Taoist tale point to the Glasses' atypical methods of communications.

Buddy presents the Taoist tale as a parable of what is going to follow, that is, the story of Seymour's wedding day. He places the tale at the beginning of his recollections, and he invites his readers to interpret Seymour's story in the light of the Taoist tale when he writes: "Since the bridegroom's permanent retirement from the

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5. Eberhard Alsen, "'Raise High the Roofbeam, Carpenters' and the Amateur Reader," *Studies in Short Fiction* 17 (1980) 39–47, p. 47.

6. Alsen, "Raise High," p. 46 and Dennis L. O'Connor, "J. D. Salinger's Religious Pluralism: The Example of Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters," *The Southern Review* 20.2 (1984) 316–32, pp. 319–22.

7. O'Connor, p. 317.

scene, I haven't been able to think of anybody whom I'd care to send out to look for horses in his stead" (11). At the start of "Carpenters," he calls for interpretation from the readers; then he writes of the wedding day, on which Seymour, the bridegroom, did not turn up; in the end, he concludes with an unexplained statement that again demands interpretation. The framework Salinger/Buddy places Seymour's story within makes one of the themes of his text materialize: the amateur's reader's difficulty in understanding the Glasses' way of communication.

"Carpenters" ends with Buddy's peculiar statement on a cigar end: "I still rather think [this] cigar end should have been forwarded on to Seymour, the usual run of wedding gifts being what it is. Just the cigar, in a small, nice box. Possibly with a blank sheet of paper enclosed, by way of explanation" (71). Buddy offers no other explication for this statement, either, except the blank sheet of paper that follows these lines. What he wants to communicate with a blank sheet of paper is open for interpretation.

It is the deaf-mute relative of the bride who leaves the cigar end in Buddy's apartment on the day when Seymour is to marry Muriel, but instead, he elopes with her. The three sentences quoted above reveal that the cigar end has a clear meaning for Buddy, a meaning that an enclosed blank sheet of paper may enlighten – at least, to Seymour. When it occurs to Buddy that the cigar end may pass as a wedding gift, this object of consumption, deprived of its essence, this piece of waste, is spiritualized and begins to carry a meaning that makes it suitable for functioning as a constant reminder of the wedding that does not actually take place on that day. In Buddy's mind, the cigar end transforms into a symbol.

As Buddy notes, the cigar end is the indicator of the smoker's existence (70–71). It communicates about existence in a curious way: the cigar end signals the non-existence of the smoked cigar, and this non-existence demonstrates the existence of someone who is not present. We may explain this absurd symbol in a number of ways. For one, the cigar end may stand for the behavior of the bridegroom, who leaves the waste behind himself as the old man leaves his cigar end. The object considered as a gift, on the other hand, may emphasize that this society – the bride's cultural environment – may contribute to the wedding only with waste, as it does not represent real value, at least in Buddy's view. The cigar end may also be considered as a memento of the irrevocable consequence of an act – that is, Seymour's refusal to turn up at the wedding. The incomplete cigar may be regarded as a Freudian joke (supposing that Buddy has a sense of humor), referring to Muriel's over-psychologized mother, who thinks Seymour is a latent homosexual; finally, knowing the Glass family members, who were fed on literature and who like communicating via literary quotations, we may even assume that the cigar end could evoke literary allusions they are familiar with: "the burnt-out ends of smoky days" is one possible

reference, alluding to Eliot, whose poetry was well-known by several family members, as it becomes clear from other stories.[8]

We could go on widening the symbol's horizon of elucidation, accepting the relevance of all possible religious interpretations that O'Connor learnedly enumerates,[9] but what *exactly* Buddy has in mind when he equals the cigar end with a wedding gift, we will never learn. However, it appears that all the possible interpretations rely on the idea that the cigar end may be taken as the image of lack. Yet, if the significance of the cigar end lies in the fact that it is lacking, then it is the lack itself that transforms into something. Therefore, the cigar end may actually be taken as the symbol of transformation, the change from waste into a symbol, that is, value. More precisely, the cigar end indicates the *possibility* of seeing treasure in waste. The significance of this object relies not exclusively in the various interpretations that it has triggered, but rather in its being a signifier of seeing more in general terms. This is a piece of waste in which one may find value – if he is capable of recognizing the value. This presupposes a special mode of seeing, putting on, metaphorically speaking, the Glasses' glasses.

The key to understanding this "sea-change"[10] to allude to another great poet, the tool of perceiving the transformation of what is decayed into "something rich and strange,"[11] is the blank sheet of paper, the "vehicle of enlightenment,"[12] which tries to give an explanation by its sheer existence, as it has no other information to display. Thus the lack of information becomes information, and waste becomes value. Seymour would understand, since he sees more, as his name also suggests. (That, is, he *saw* more. He has been dead for seven years when Buddy writes the story of his wedding day. His non-existence is present as literary value, though: without his death Buddy would not have written "A Perfect Day for the Bananafish," and he would not feel the urge to write even more of Seymour. This is another level of understanding that the transformation that the cigar end indicates.)

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8. When Seymour says "mixing memory and desire" in J. D. Salinger, "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," *For Esmé – with Love and Squalor* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), 1–12, p. 9, he quotes T. S. Eliot, "The Waste Land," *Collected Poems 1909–1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), 61–86, l. 3, which suggests that both he and Buddy knew Eliot's poetry. Franny also comments on Eliot in J. D. Salinger, "Franny," *Franny and Zooey* (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), 9–39, p.10.

9. O'Connor, pp. 327–32.

10. William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Frank Kermode (The Arden Shakespeare, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 1.2.403.

11. Shakespeare, 1.2.404.

12. O'Connor, p. 330.

If we want to see even more in the cigar end we must consider both the activity and the person related to it. The cigar end is the waste produced by smoking, a recurring motif in Salinger's oeuvre. As Gordon E. Slethaug observes, "to smoke in Salinger's novels is often to think deeply and spiritually. The act of inhaling indicates a meditative process, a process whereby one develops insight in a situation where insight and wisdom come none too easily."[13] In addition, the smoker, the deaf and dumb person, presents a number of analogues with Seymour, all coming from a mode of existence that distinguishes him from the average. From the Taoist perspective, "the old man resembles the Taoist ideal of the Perfect Man who 'has no self'. . . . As the Nameless One, he is egolessness and silence incarnate,"[14] just as Buddy sees his ideal, Seymour. The old man's deafness and muteness make him more sensitive to visual perception than others, actually seeing more, just as Buddy claims Seymour does. His alternative mode of communication with the world makes every written word of his emphatic and superior, taking the role of everyday chatting. Thus Muriel's deaf-mute relative counterbalances the family's strongly verbal members, and forms a bridge toward the Glass family, whose members, as we learn, are more reliant on the written word even in their everyday communications, leaving messages on the bathroom mirror, writing letters and diaries, and – last but not least – quoting poetry. Using art as communication completes the parallel between Seymour and the nameless man the moment Buddy identifies the deaf-mute's one word on the paper as poetry (41).

Poetry, as it appears from Buddy's words, comes from perception different from the normal. Art is a way of seeing differently, which, as the old man's example suggests, is also a way of existing differently. The divergence, in this world, appears as lack (which, again, adds to the significance of that left cigar end). The drawn parallel between Seymour and the old man makes Seymour's difference – identified as a psychological deficiency by Muriel's mother – visible by the old man's clearly identifiable deficiencies. Seeing differently is a prerequisite for recognizing real value, that is, the *superlative*; as a consequence, perfection and deficiency, that is, imperfection, become intertwining concepts. Perfection must include imperfection, or else it will suffer deficiency, which contradicts the concept of perfection. This is an old theological problem: Christian philosophers contemplated this question concerning the nature of God; but the root of the idea appears in the Eastern religions, too, where emptiness and perfection may become synonyms: for instance, the Buddhist "*Śūnya* or *śūnyatā*, 'emptiness,' paradoxically denotes fullness."[15]

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13. Gordon E. Slethaug, "Seymour: A Clarification," *Renascence* 23 (1971) 115–28, p. 122.
14. O'Connor, p. 323–24.
15. O'Connor, p. 332, italics in the original.

Seymour, equally influenced by Christian and Eastern philosophy and religions,[16] believes that the seemingly perfect must be perfected by imperfection. This idea explains Seymour's otherwise inexplicable acts, which have divided critics. One of the most embarrassing acts that Seymour has ever done is throw a stone at Charlotte Mayhew when he was twelve. As Buddy explains, "[h]e threw it at her because she looked so beautiful sitting there in the middle of the driveway" (69). This is a memory that the bride's family takes as an early proof of Seymour's abnormality, which they take for granted after his not turning up at his own wedding, his excuse being that he was "too *happy* to get married"(34). The two stories emphasize the near-perfection of the moment to be ruined: Charlotte's looking *so beautiful* that a stone is needed to spoil her beauty, and the bridegroom's being *too happy* to celebrate his happiness with his bride.[17] For what *seems* perfect is only appearance, preventing us from looking into its depth, appealing to our eyes. Seymour, however, does not let appearance distract his attention. He knows how to see the world, and he reveals his secret in his last haiku.

It is not by chance that the most successful poetic form in Seymour's art is the haiku, the "penultimate expression of the ultimately inexpressible."[18] As R. H. Blyth explains, "[f]or the reader, every haiku is a kôan, a question in Zen."[19] What follows from this statement is that "if these poems are kôan, there is no rational or analytic approach which will bring one enlightenment or understanding. In fact, the mystery behind kôan comes from the sudden intuitive realization that nothing is the answer and everything is,"[20] which is also congruent with the special mode of seeing Buddy attaches to Seymour's character.

Seymour's last poem, a haiku written in Japanese on the afternoon of his suicide, "tells of a little girl on an airplane who has a doll in the seat with her and turns its head around to look at the poet."[21] As Goldstein and Goldstein observe, "[w]hat is essential . . . in the doll poem is the fusion of the real and the unreal, the seeing and non-seeing, the animate world and the inanimate world. . . . The total harmony of the movement of the girl and the doll's actually seeing what the

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16. See O'Connor's article that sheds light on "Salinger's religious pluralism, in terms of his complementary use of Taoist, Buddhist, and Christian thought" (p. 317), especially part III (pp. 327–32).

17. Italics mine.

18. Bernice Goldstein and Sanford Goldstein, "Seymour's Poems," *Literature East & West* 17 (1973) 335–48, p. 338.

19. Blyth quoted in Goldstein, pp. 338–39.

20. Goldstein, p. 339.

21. J. D. Salinger, "Seymour: an Introduction," *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters and Seymour: An Introduction* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 75–157, p. 102.

girl sees."[22] Although the image does involve the sense of harmony, it also includes just its opposite, the fearful, as could be expected from a real haiku. It is not the girl but her miniature, lifeless doppelgänger that looks at the man. This Gothic image is made even scarier by the movement the doll makes: its head turns exactly as much as to be able to focus on the poet. As it is impossible for the girl to watch both the man and her doll at the same time; the horrifying aspect comes from the realization that there is a latent knowledge that helps the girl adjust her doll's head into the perfect position.

The doll becomes a mediator between the girl and Seymour, just as the cigar end connects the old deaf-mute and Seymour. The doll manifests the different way of seeing, as it watches something with eyes that are made of glass, and, hence, are not for seeing. These are the real Glass eyes, in which Seymour recognizes himself, and with which one can perceive what is essential. The point in this mode of seeing is that the spectator does not turn his eyes toward what is to be seen; instead, the viewer lets an outside force – latent knowledge, sixth sense, divine power – turn his Tiresian look, blind and all-seeing at the same time, toward the view. As follows, not aiming at seeing is what leads us to seeing more. This is the attitude that Seymour applied in all walks of life: "a paradoxical stance of simultaneous identification with but detachment from the task at hand, getting inside the activity and performing it for its own sake and not for the sake of anything outside it, such as winning, asserting one's superiority over another, achieving status."[23]

The doll Seymour writes of in his last haiku expresses a philosophy of art which is deeply rooted in a philosophy of religion. It becomes the image of reaching your goal by "not aiming so much,"[24] a fundamental attitude in one's "quest for no-knowledge."[25] As Seymour has an outstanding intellect, he knows from his childhood what path he would like to follow and what aim he aspires to. The poetry he produces as an adult nears perfection from the religious-philosophical point of view he has, as the very few examples Buddy mentions demonstrate.[26] Yet the poems he has written are practically non-existent in the world he lives in, as either the language or the form – or both of them – that Seymour applies makes his poetry un-

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22. Goldstein, p. 346.

23. Alfred F. Boe, "Street Games in J. D. Salinger and Gerald Green," *Modern Fiction Studies* 33.1 (1987) 65–72, p. 71. The importance of Seymour's technique identified as "formlessness" in sports was noted earlier in Gordon E. Slethaug, "Form in Salinger's Shorter Fiction," *Canadian Review of American Studies* 3 (1972) 50–59, p. 56.

24. Salinger, "Seymour," p. 149.

25. J. D. Salinger, "Zooey," *Franny and Zooey*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), 43–157, p. 56.

26. For a detailed analysis of Seymour's last haikus, see Goldstein, pp. 342–46.

translatable for those who surround him. His art thus perfectly mirrors his mode of existence: Seymour's life is as untranslatable for others as is his poetry, and only his closest relatives may claim that they understand his acts – artistic and private alike – to a certain extent.

Seymour's last act, taking his own life, is as much of a kôan as his last poem. But does it also aim at perfection, as many critics suggest? Let us make no mistake: stopping the state of imperfection does not necessarily mean reaching perfection. Attaining the zero state, for Seymour, is stopping existence and not fulfilling his life purpose of experiencing nirvana. His suicide is an act of despair coming from his realization that he will never reach what he aspires for even if he does everything within his capacity for it. What hinders him in his fulfillment, however, is still a disputed question.

Critics often identify Seymour's problematic sexual life as a source of his frustration and depression,[27] and fail to search for the possible reasons why his relationship with his wife may have gone wrong. Getting fed up with "phoniness" is the most we usually get as an explanation of the bananafish parable Seymour entertains Sybil with. The arguments, in addition, are hard to attack, because they do contain the truth: Seymour obviously did have problems within his marriage and he did get tired of the phoney word he lived in. However, there are certain facts that appear easy to overlook and that may help us understand Seymour's decision to commit suicide. In four separate articles Alsen writes of four details concerning Seymour's personality. Putting the four aspects together may illuminate Seymour's choice.

In his article published in 1980,[28] Alsen makes it clear that Seymour's decision to marry Muriel reflects his understanding that his search of perfection has alienated him from other people, as well as his hope of being able to bridge his world and his wife's. In Buddy's presentation, Seymour's level of enlightenment at this time appears close to Kao's in the Taoist tale of finding the superlative horse, as he sees in Muriel the hidden value of being non-judgmental. (Another point, irrelevant from the viewpoint of this argument, is that mistaking Muriel's superficiality for being non-judgmental in the Taoist sense may be a grave mistake on Seymour's part.) A year later, Alsen concentrates on the aspect of Hinduism in Salinger's work, specifically investigating the importance of this religion on Seymour's life, and arrives at the conclusion that "[h]is long-term goal being *mukti*, oneness with God,

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27. James E. Bryan, "Salinger's Seymour's Suicide," *College English* 24 (1962) 226–29; Charles V. Genthe, "Six, Sex, Sick: Seymour, Some Comments," *Twentieth-Century Literature* 10 (1965) 170–71; Frank Metcalf, "The Suicide of Salinger's Seymour Glass," *Studies in Short Fiction* 9.3 (1972) 243–46; John Russel, "Salinger's Feat," *Modern Fiction Studies* 12 (1966) 299–312.

28. Alsen, "Raise High."

Seymour was in despair when he found that he was unable to stop or reverse his spiritual decline. He therefore ended his life in order to resume his spiritual progress in his next incarnation."[29] As Alsen claims, the Bananafish story "confirms that Seymour was not a saint when he shot himself and that his suicide and spiritual deterioration were due to his estrangement from and contempt for those who did not share his intellectual and spiritual values."[30] However, this explanation only partially explicates Seymour's act of suicide, as the reason for his spiritual decline is more complex and is deeply rooted in his war experience, which is overlooked by most critics of Salinger. Actually, we might even say that it was first overlooked or at least underrated by Alsen himself, as he compiled a most useful chronology on Seymour's life in 1978, pointing out Seymour's spiritual decline.[31] He concludes that Muriel could not be the reason for Seymour's suicide, as his first attempt at suicide happened before the two met. However, Alsen does not give the reason for what may have caused Seymour's change of behavior, taking the suicidal attempt obscurely as "the symptom of something else that went wrong."[32] Years later, in his study connecting the nervous breakdowns of Seymour and Sergeant X in "For Esmé – with Love and Squalor," Alsen already highlights the importance of the war theme in Salinger's works, assuming that Salinger's own nervous breakdown due to his war experience served as a model for the two similar cases.[33] Based on Salinger's determining war experience of visiting a liberated concentration camp, Alsen assumes that Seymour's and Sergeant X's mental conditions were also due to a similar experience and not combat fatigue.

The chronological order of the facts we may know of Seymour's life from Buddy's recollections show that things go well for Seymour until 1941, when he is drafted and begins basic training in the army. He slashes his wrists the same year, subsequently begins dating Muriel, and takes up the habit of drinking. We have two data of his life from 1942: he is transferred to a B-17 base in California, and he elopes with Muriel after he fails to appear at the wedding. In 1944 he is transferred to the "European Theater of Operations" and takes part in the occupation of Germany. The following year he has a nervous breakdown, and he needs to be treated in psychiatric wards of the Army hospital for three years. In 1948 he finally flies home to New York, spends a few days with Muriel's family, drives a

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29. Eberhard Alsen, "The Role of Vedanta Hiduism in Salinger's Seymour Novel," *Renascence* 33.2 (1981) 99–116, p. 112.

30. Alsen, "The Role," p. 114.

31. Eberhard Alsen, "Seymour: A Chronology," *The English Record* 29.4 (1978) 28–30.

32. Alsen, "A Chronology," p. 30.

33. Eberhard Alsen, "New Light on the Nervous Breakdowns of Salinger's Sergeant X and Seymour Glass," *CLA Journal* 45.3 (2002) 379–87, pp. 384–87.

car into a tree,[34] then goes on a second honeymoon with Muriel to fire a bullet through his right temple in the end.

The change in Seymour's personality takes place around the time of his joining the army, reversing his spiritual development and resulting in an obvious deterioration that manifests itself in depression. The problems that primarily become visible in conflicts with people are connected to Seymour's new experiences, which make him see the world differently. Phoniness may have been difficult for Seymour to tolerate, but he managed to cope with it earlier and he was kind and helpful to other people, as his religion dictated to him, and, most importantly, he seemed to appreciate life. The war makes harm intolerable for him, as it affects his spirit and intellect. The war taints him, and this may actually be the reason why he thinks he has a tattoo on his body, as if he were also marked by the war, just like the Jews who got tattooed numbers on their arms in the concentration camps. In this respect, it is of importance that Seymour, though not a practicing Jew, was born into a half-Jewish family. It is also informative to see how Salinger commented on his most influential war experience: "[y]ou never really get the smell of burning flash out of your nostrils, no matter how long you live,"[35] he said, suggesting that the experience becomes part of you, just like a tattoo.

The bananafish parable, then, serves to translate Seymour's war experience rather than his incapacity to cope with the world's phoniness[36] or his suggested sexual problems.[37] He feels entrapped by having had too much of what transforms an ordinary person into a pig: the war that dehumanizes those who get in touch with it. Once you are caught by the war, you can't get out of it because the war makes a permanent change in you. Metaphorically speaking, the effect of the war becomes the extension of your body. Whether you see it as a tattoo or a swollen stomach makes no difference; the point is that you feel it is visible to others – like the woman in the elevator, who, as Seymour imagines, is staring at his feet – and it is impossible to get rid of it.

As Seymour is an artist, he processes his war trauma as he can: he transforms it into a piece of art, making a story out of it, a parable featuring the fantastic

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34. Interestingly, this fact is missing from Alsen's chronology, although Muriel's parents take it as a suicidal attempt.

35. Salinger quoted in Alsen, "New Light," p. 379.

36. See, for instance, James Finn Cotter, "A Source for Seymour's Suicide: Rilke's *Voices* and Salinger's *Nine Stories*," *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature* 25.1 (1989) 83–98, p. 86 and Anthony Kaufman, " 'Along this road goes no one': Salinger's 'Teddy' and the Failure of Love," *Studies in Short Fiction* 35 (1998) 129–40, p. 138.

37. See, for instance, Metcalf, who goes as far as accusing Seymour of heterosexual pedophilia, identifying Sybil with the banana in the bananafish parable (Metcalf, p. 246.).

bananafish. This is a method that enables him to speak of his experience without having to name it, thus distancing himself from it. Yet, when Sybil, modern prophetess of death, claims she has actually seen a bananafish with six bananas, the borderline between art and life breaks, and reality penetrates into the carefully created fiction that served to detach the traumatic experience. Seymour is assured that the world he returned to may not be kept intact from the taint of war. His attempt to treat his war experience as fiction fails, for what he hopes is only imaginary is actually visible to the girl, whom he considers an oracle.[38] The moment Sybil identifies with Seymour by visualizing the same phantasm, Seymour also identifies with the mythic Sibylla, whose only wish was to die, as we may learn from T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land," a line of which Seymour remembers while talking to Sybil.[39] The quote not only connects the ancient and the young oracles, but also reinforces the unbearable effect of the war, "The Waste Land" being the most influential poem treating the theme of the emotional-spiritual emptiness resulted fromthe First World War.

It is the war that causes Seymour's spiritual deterioration leading to his death. It is thus not by chance that both the gun he shoots himself with and the book of German poetry he would like Muriel to read are war souvenirs, as James Finn Cotter remarks.[40] These two objects define his post-war life and death, signaling the importance of the war effect on Seymour. And as war is an indigestible experience, it is not in Seymour's powers to reverse his falling apart. Marrying Muriel, in this light, is already a desperate act in which he hopes to succeed in making improvements in his level of existence by giving up "*jnana* and *raja yoga* in favor of *karma yoga*."[41] Muriel, however, may not counterbalance the after-effects of the war.

We may conclude that the primary reason for Seymour's decision to take his own life is the damage the war has done to him. Therefore, his suicide should not be interpreted as part of his artistic achievement. He may have been really one of the few "*very* nearly nonexpendable poets" of America,[42] but he failed to become the saint whom Buddy would like him to be. Salinger/Buddy presents an ideal, but the ideal, at the same time, is not granted a life which could be lived in contemporary America.[43]

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38. Slethaug calls attention to the importance of Sybil's name (p. 127), but it is Gary Lane who establishes the obvious connection between Sybil and Sibylla from the motto of T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" (Garry Lane, "Seymour's Suicide Again: A New Reading of J. D. Salinger's 'A Perfect Day for Bananafish,' " *Studies in Short Fiction* 10 [1973] 27–33, p. 30n9).

39. See footnote 8.

40. Cotter, p. 84.

41. Alsen, "The Role," p. 111.

42. Salinger, "Seymour," p. 103, italics in the original.

43. The same problem is investigated in Salinger's "Teddy," as Kaufman points out.

And while Buddy and his brothers and sisters may entertain the idea that Seymour's life was perfected by his death, Salinger gives us all the clues to conclude differently.

In a series of interconnected stories and novelettes, Salinger presents to us the irresolvable nature of aiming at perfection in various walks of life. He created an ideal character who was admired for his literary achievements by a small circle of learned people. He also created a whole family surrounding his fictional hero, partially identifying with several of them.[44] He knew that it was impossible to reconcile the personality of the perfect artist with reality, but he still wanted to keep his ideal. He therefore wrote about Seymour from Buddy's point of view, suggesting a strong belief in Seymour's perfection, yet giving hints to careful readers which make clear that Salinger could distinguish between reality and the fantasy of the ideal, however painful it was to see the discrepancy between the two.

While critics like to suggest that Salinger's alter ego is Buddy, and thus he only longs for the kind of perfection he associates with Seymour's character, Salinger reaches the desired artistic perfection via the alternative reality that he created. By the gesture of granting Buddy the authorship of the Glass stories, he could actually claim that his best works are the ones he has never written – at least in his fictional world, his artistic nirvana, where he reached the zero state as an artist by writing the most perfect literature he was capable of. For Salinger, publication was not simply the auction of his privacy, as he suggested in his last interview; it was also an aim, and as such, something that destroys achieving artistic perfection. In other words: publication, he thought, was the auction of the mind. Publication is what principally divides Buddy and Seymour as authors, and it is publication that places Salinger between his alter-ego and his ideal of his fictional world, making him a mythic character who was a publisher and non-publisher at the same time.

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44. See Max F. Schultz, "Epilogue to Seymour: An Introduction: Salinger and the Crisis of Consciousness," *Studies in Short Fiction* 5 (1968) 128–38.

Dominika Oramus

Woman as Alien

Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains*

This paper shows how Carter revitalizes the once-popular genre of catastrophic fiction. First I briefly characterize this genre and place *Heroes and Villains* in its context. Then I discuss decay and entropy depicted in the novel as symptomatic to the decay of pre-holocaust symbolic order. Next, I describe how the protagonist challenges the patriarchal social order based on the set of false binary oppositions and attempts to disrupt the old and to create a genuinely new feminist civilization. Similarly, Carter's novel disrupts old schemes and set formulas of disaster fiction and creates a radically new fantastic narrative of society ruled by women-aliens.

"Woman as an alien, the non-patriarchal alien in a patriarchal society, the patriarchal alien in a non-patriarchal society, the non-patriarchal alien experiencing the stress of positioning as a patriarchal subject – all are strategies used by feminist science fiction writers to deconstruct patriarchal ideology and its practice."[1] This quote taken from an essay by Anne Cranny-Francis is for me a very suitable starting point for a discussion of Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains* (1969). Written from within the counter-culture of the 1960s, this novel is Carter's excursion into the disaster story convention, a literary sub-genre which was very popular during the period of the Cold War.[2]

Heroes and Villains is a very interesting and unsettling early book, and yet, surprisingly, one that has received "far less critical attention than one might expect."[3] Apart from a few interesting essays,[4] the existing studies of the book (pri-

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1. Anne Cranny-Francis, "Feminist Futures: A Generic Study," in *Alien Zone. Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema*, ed. Annette Kuhn (London and New York: Verso, 2003), 219–228, p. 223.

2. To call Carter a "feminist science fiction writer" would perhaps be an exaggeration (though the most influential science fiction lexicon, *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* edited by Clute and Nicholls, does have an entry "Angela Carter"). Nonetheless, in some of her novels she purposefully uses fantastic literary conventions.

3. Elisabeth Mahoney, "'But Elsewhere?' The future of fantasy in *Heroes and Villains*," in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter*, ed. Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton (London and New York: Longman, 1997), 73–87, p. 73.

marily sub-chapters of monographs devoted to Carter) focus almost exclusively on the way the novel reverses gender stereotypes and undermines cultural codings of female sexuality as passive and masochistic. My point is different: I would like to show how, by having a female protagonist (and focalizer) who revolts against cultural stereotypes, Carter revitalizes the disaster story convention that in the late sixties seemed an exhausted and repetitive sub-genre of pulp fiction.

In order to do this I am going to briefly present the British disaster story tradition, place Carter within its context, and then discuss *Heroes and Villains* as an atypical disaster story that, thanks to a woman-alien who disrupts mythical frameworks that people are confined by, points to new ways of constructing narratives. I will show how the female protagonist of the novel matures and gradually learns that her post-holocaust society is based on a set of false binary oppositions it has inherited from pre-holocaust Western patriarchal society, and that her world is slowly giving way to entropy. I will then prove that *Heroes and Villains* indulges in descriptions of chaos and decay in order to show the deterioration of once potent symbols and thus of the mythical order which they represent. Only then, once the old order disappears, can the female mythmaker create a totally new civilization, one that does not repeat old and static social paradigms, but is dynamic and mutable. Similarly, *Heroes and Villains* shows that, in order not to degenerate into pulp disaster, the story should refrain from recreating already known historical epochs (for example, a new post-holocaust Middle Ages), opting instead to create radically new societies ruled by women-aliens.

Though it is rather difficult to state exactly what disaster stories are, a fair working definition of the genre seems to be the one given in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*: "stories of vast biospheric change which drastically affect human life."[5] According to John Clute and Peter Nicholls, the British disaster story was born at the end of the nineteenth century when the first anti-civilization sentiments were being felt, and people began to mistrust the idea of the white man's Empire standing for reason, progress and science. In 1884 Richard Jefferies, a Victorian naturalist and journalist, published *After London*, a novel describing the ruins of the greatest city on Earth; in a post-cataclysmic future our civilization inevitably succumbs to nature, savagery and non-reason. In the following years such writers as H.G. Wells, Conan Doyle and Alun Llewellyn published numerous fantastic ac-

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4. One has to mention Eva C. Karpinski, "Signifying Passion: Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains* as a Dystopian Romance," *Utopian Studies* 11.2 (2000) 137–51; and Roz Kaveney, "New New World Dreams: Angela Carter and Science Fiction," in *Flesh and the Mirror. Essays on the Art of Angela Carter*, ed. Lorna Sage (London: Virago, 1994), 171–88.

5. John Clute and Peter Nicholls, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (London: Orbit, 1999), p. 338.

counts of natural- or human-provoked disasters, the retrogression of humankind, new ice ages, barbarian raids, the destruction of Europe, etc.[6]

Though dating from the nineteenth century the genre did not flourish until the 1950s and early 1960s during the Cold War, when young British writers revived the old tradition by incorporating a new influence: that of American pulp magazines. American stories of the time were very pessimistic, as the recent war left many with a feeling of despair and fear of the nuclear bomb, political systems based on unlimited power and culture's imminent doom. In England there was a strong native tradition of gloomy fiction concerning authoritarian societies (George Orwell, Evelyn Waugh and Anthony Burgess), and thus the young authors of disaster stories belonging to the so-called "New Wave" of British speculative fiction (J.G. Ballard, Michael Moorcock, Brian Aldiss and others) had examples to follow.[7] Their older colleagues Walter Miller (in the United States) and John Wyndham (in Britain) were writing their post-holocaust bestsellers at that very time.

Heroes and Villains seems to belong to the same tradition as the disaster story classics: Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibovitz* or John Wyndham's *The Chrysalides*.[8] Miller and Wyndham describe the beginnings of a new civilization; their prose demonstrates how the deadly heritage of our times (pollution, mutations, decline and chaos) serve as the basis for another better world. In *A Canticle* monks of a second Middle Ages try to gather and preserve the records of our knowledge by rewriting all kinds of texts (just like the caste of Professors). Though they no longer understand what they copy, still there is hope that one day civilization will be regained. Wyndham's post-catastrophic society, in turn, is obsessed with the idea of purity and the norm. His characters want to recreate civilization in such a way as to make it immune to self-destruction. In its fear of deviations and mutants (bringing to mind the Out People) Wyndham's society is cruel and fanatical, but his novel is, just like Miller's story, full of hope for the future. Human folly and cruelty evoke terror and pity in order to improve the reader's mind. Carter's procedure in composing *Heroes and Villains* is to allude to Wyndham and Miller's tradition. Both *Heroes and Villains* and her other post-holocaust novel *The Passion of the New Eve* show to what extant literature today is repeating already known tales. Yet disaster

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6. Clute and Nicholls, pp. 337–339.

7. For details concerning the New Wave of British speculative fiction, see Judith Merril, *England Swings SF, Stories of Speculative Fiction* (New York: Ace Books, 1968). The most important disaster novels written by the New Wave writers are J.G. Ballard, *The Drowned World* (Harmondsworth and Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1974) and J.G. Ballard *The Wind from Nowhere* (Harmondsworth and Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1974).

8. Walter Miller, *A Canticle for Leibovitz* (Philadelphia, Lippincott and London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960) and John Wyndham, *The Chrysalides* (London: Joseph, 1955).

fiction, a very commercial genre, enables Carter to reuse the stock motifs and to create her own often times shocking pieces. Her disaster novels may therefore be read as modern *Menippea:* a mixture of heterogeneous literary material. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, *Menippea* was the genre which broke the demands of realism and probability: it conflated the past, present and future, states of hallucination, dream worlds, insanity, eccentric behaviour and speech and transformation.[9]

Heroes and Villains juxtaposes overt allusions to nuclear fallout and mutations caused by the self-annihilation of technological society with counter-cultural poetics: subversion of the social order, new hippie-like aesthetics, alternate lifestyles, and concentration on entropy, decay and death. Carter is no longer interested in the bomb – she does not warn against the impending holocaust; but instead describes in detail the gradual dissolution of social, sexual and cultural groupings which follows the inevitable disaster and which makes room for a new female-governed future. Thus, she deconstructs the markedly masculine tradition of after-the-end-of-the-world fantasies which deal with the creation of a new order, strong leaders and outbursts of violence (as is the case in the above-mentioned novels by Miller and Wyndham). In stock disaster stories women are either commodities or breeders who are fought for and whose reproductive abilities are to amend r the drastic decrease of population.

In *Heroes and Villains* the Cold War motif of a post-holocaust civilization allows Carter to create an exuberant world of ruin, lush vegetation and barbarism. Three groups of people live among the crumbling ruins of a pre-nuclear explosion past: the Professors, who live in concrete fortified villages and cultivate old science and ideology; the Barbarians, who attack them and lead nomadic lives in the forests; and the Out People, radiation mutants cast out by all communities.

The Professors are the guardians of this order, and they try to uphold standards and attend to appearances such as dress and accent. Marianne, the novel's focalizer, is the daughter of a professor of history brought up to live in an ordered patriarchal society and to study old books in trying to preserve knowledge. The futility of the Professors' work – abstract research done in white concrete towers, editing what nobody would ever read – demonstrates the arbitrariness of post-apocalyptic social roles. The caste of Professors, in wanting to be different than the irrational Barbarians, must devise artificial attributes of its individuality.

Unable to cope with an existence devoted to cultivation of the past and attracted by the colourful and seemingly romantic Barbarians, Marianne helps one of them – an attractive young Barbarian leader named Jewel. He is very beautiful and

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9. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, tr. by R.W. Rotsel (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1973), p. 96.

he wears an exuberant savage costume, making him look like a Hollywood film star who plays in a wilderness film. For Marianne he embodies her desire and fantasies – on one occasion she even calls him the "furious invention of my virgin nights."[10] Moreover, his name might be considered an allusion to the beautiful savage girl whom Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim made the queen of his little kingdom.[11] Marianne's name might well be read as an allusion to Jane Austen's too-romantic heroine of *Sense and Sensibility*.[12] This canonical echo is contrasted with the association with pulp fiction: Marianne, a professor's daughter lost in the wilderness, evokes the character of Jane in the *Tarzan* stories.[13] It is by such literary allusions that Carter constructs her self-conscious pastiche, thus demonstrating the whole range of possibilities offered to a female character by romance and, at the same time, she points out the exhaustion of these conventions. John Barth in his *Literature of Exhaustion* postulates that "exhausted" literature might be saved by coming back to well-known classics and by echoing their extracts in new shocking contexts.[14] In this way Carter mingles her generically heterogeneous "prior texts".

Wounded in an attack, Jewel escapes from the village and is followed by Marianne. He then takes her to his tribe and, despite her protests, proclaims her his hostage. Marianne is a total stranger among the Barbarians; they find her repulsive and unbearably alien; like a creature from outer space in a B-grade science fiction movie she provokes fear and hostility. An educated and self-assured woman in a tribe "caught in the moment of transition from the needs of sheer survival to a myth-ruled society,"[15] she is thus a woman-alien. Interestingly, as early as the 1960s Carter used a science fiction stock character to talk about women in a society that is undergoing changes: in the 1990s Donna Haraway, in her famous "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century", in a similar way makes use of the science fiction concept of a cyborg.[16] Haraway follows Carter's footsteps, and indeed makes her point even stronger, as her "cy-

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10. Angela Carter, *Heroes and Villains* (London: Virago, 1992), p. 137.

11. Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

12. Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (Harmondsworth, New York, Ringwood and Auckland: Penguin Classics, 2007).

13. Tarzan's adventures were originally created by Edgar Rice Burroughs and published in the years 1914–1950.

14. John Barth, *The Literature of Exhaustion and the Literature of Replenishment* (Northridge: Lord John Press, 1982).

15. Karpinski, p. 138.

16. Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149–181.

borg" comes from the social outside and is alien to traditional gender structures. As Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger explain:

> Haraway develops her "Manifesto" around the cyborg – product of both science fiction and the military-industrial complex – as an imaginative figure generated *outside* the framework of the Judeo-Christian history of fall and redemption, a history that unfolds between the twin absolutes of Edenic origin and apocalyptic Last Judgment. Like Derrida, Haraway warns that (nuclear) apocalypse might, in fact, be the all-too-possible outcome of our desire for the resolution of historical time. Haraway too is wary of cultural discourses that privilege resolution, completion, and totality.[17]

Marianne is alien to the tribe as she refuses to adopt traditional female roles. Thus, Carter uses science fiction literary conventions to talk about gender as performance much in the same manner Judith Butler will some twenty years later.[18] Elisabeth Mahoney in her above-mentioned study of *Heroes and Villains* reads the novel in the context of Butler's thesis, that "fantasy is the terrain to be privileged in any contestation of conventional configurations of identity, gender and the representation of desire."[19] This is a very good starting point and an interesting comparison but, as Elaine Jordan notices, "Carter did this sort of thing before Butler, so her work could just as well be used to explicate Butler."[20] The same is true for Haraway, Gordon, Hollinger and a number of other feminist critics often referred to nowadays in order to validate Carter's argument. But Carter turning to science fiction for her metaphors predates them.

The tribe (whose descriptions bring to mind a 1960s hippie commune) is apparently governed by Jewel and his brothers, but Marianne soon realizes that the real source of power is Donally, an escapee professor of sociology, Jewel's tutor, and the self-proclaimed shaman of the tribe. For Donally the tribe is a social laboratory

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17. Veronica Hollinger and Joan Gordon, ed., *Edging into the Future. Science Fiction and Contemporary Cultural Transformation* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. 162.

18. Butler talks about gender in terms of ritual practices, a role one adopts thus excluding other modes of behaviour. What is excluded forms the "constitutive outside" the zone of the suppressed from which gender roles can be challenged, much in the same way Marianne challenges social norms in the tribe. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 23.

19. Mahoney, p. 75.

20. Elanie Jordan, „Afterword," in *The Infernal Desires of Angela Carter*, ed. Joseph Bristow and Trev Lynn Broughton (London and New York: Longman, 1997), 216–219, p. 219.

where he tries to perform an experiment: to wit, to introduce a new mythology designed to be the founding stone of new type of post-holocaust society.[21]

> It seemed to me that the collapse of civilisation in the form that intellectuals such as ourselves understood it might be as good a time as any for crafting a new religion' he said modestly. 'Religion is a device for instituting the sense of a privileged group; many are called but few are chosen and, coaxed from incoherence, we shall leave the indecent condition of barbarism and aspire towards that of the honest savage.[22]

When Marianne meets Donally she immediately recognizes his professorial descent: "his voice was perfectly cultured, thin, high and soft . . . He had a thin, mean and cultured face. Marianne had grown up among such voices and faces."[23] Seeing in his study books which she remembered from her childhood (Teilhard de Chardin, Levi-Strauss, Weber, Durkheim) Marianne discovers Donally's attempts to rule the Barbarians according to the outdated formulas written down by pre-apocalyptic sociologists.

Disappointed by the tribe, Marianne runs away only to be recaptured by Jewel, who rapes her, brings her back, and then ceremoniously marries her according to a ritual devised by Donally. With the tribe again on the move, Donally quarrels with Jewel and has to leave. Marianne gradually learns how to manipulate Jewel, her quasi-royal power grows, especially once she becomes pregnant and is to be the mother of Jewel's heir. When Donally sends a message that he has been caught by the Professors, Jewel goes to rescue him and both are killed. In the novel's finale Marianne decides to become the new female leader of a new society.

This brief summary reveals that, in parallel with the action-adventure narrative, the novel also depicts Marianne's gradual psychological change. She learns how to articulate her own fantasies and to objectify the man she desires: Jewel. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that when her romantic illusions disappear she discovers her own deeper motivating desire in her relationship with Jewel: it is her newly awakened sexuality that counts, not the male himself. Though a tribal leader and a future patriarch, Jewel is in fact a passive object both Marianne and Donally struggle to possess. Linden Peach writes:

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21. Carter's numerous shamans, for example the character from *Nights at the Circus*, are usually totally different. They are given a role similar to that of a writer: they believe in the magic they perform, therefore what they do has the mystical quality of a true primary text. In their context the comments and analysis by Donally seem artificial and exhausted.

22. Carter, *Heroes and Villains*, p. 63.

23. Carter, *Heroes and Villains*, p. 49.

In the relationship between Marianne and Jewel, Carter also rewrites a further traditional story, that of a demon-lover, of whom Jewel has many characteristics – he is powerful, mysterious, supernatural; and he can be cruel, vindictive and hostile. However, in her description of him, Carter challenges the male-female binarism which ascribes so-called masculine qualities to men and feminine characteristics to women. In discovering the nature of her own desire, Marianne finds that male-female attributes exist within each individual. The demon-lover is also reconfigured as part of her own eroticisation of the male other.[24]

New ways of looking at herself and others set Marianne free and empower her. Towards the end of the book she feels ready to construct a new narrative for herself and make the world around believe in it. A woman-alien dissolves the tribe's patriarchal structure and commences a new phase in its history. The old order based on binary oppositions (hero/villain, passive/active, natural/civilized) and a number of taboos that originated in pre-holocaust times are abandoned. Carter does not do what a standard disaster story author does: she does not establish a rigid binarism between the Professors and the Barbarians, i.e., the civilized and the savage. The post-holocaust narrative is for her a space where she "explores the blurring of conventional boundaries and binarisms and the way in which such artificial boundaries are maintained."[25] She re-uses existing narrative patterns of disaster fiction in order to break the "Wyndhamesque" formula and instead create a new and radical vision of the end of the world.

Moreover, these post-holocaust times are shown to be not a new version of the old order, but an unknown epoch typified not by stability but by creative chaos. Step by step, Marianne realizes that the entire distinction Professors\Barbarians is as false and naïve as the children's role-playing game called "Soldiers and Villains". As a female child growing up in a Professors' village she always had to play the part of the Barbarian, the villain, the other, while the boy she played with, the son of a professor of mathematics, always wanted to be a male civilized hero who shoots her dead. As a small girl she was brave enough to refuse to play such a game; now as a young woman she realizes that in the real world the basis of the division between the Professors and the Barbarians is a set of myths and superstitions.[26]

The stay in the Barbarians' camp proves to Marianne that there is no other difference but old wives' tales: to her surprise (and in opposition to what she was told

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24. Linden Peach, *Angela Carter* (Oxford: Macmillan, 1998), p. 96.
25. Peach, p. 87.
26. For example, according to these beliefs, the Barbarians sew up cats in the bellies of the Professors' women, while the Professors in turn bake Barbarians alive "like hedgehogs".

in the Professors' village) the Barbarians do not represent instinct, folklore and savagery alone. They do have a lot of superstitions; they do sport ridiculous tattoos, hairdos and costumes and they do believe in folk cures – but at the same time they are very far from unreflective "nature". When Marianne first sees Jewel he seems the embodiment of the wilderness: a man fighting to survive among hostile wildlife. But he immediately destroys this impression by quoting to her a relevant bit of poetry: Tennyson's poem about Darwinism.[27] Jewel is very well-educated by Donally and likes to boast of his knowledge of philosophical theories and the Latin names of beasts, which seems as irrelevant in the dirty Barbarians' camps as the Professors' lore in their concrete towers.

The Professors and the Barbarians need each other to define themselves. Both tribes work hard to impress the opponent (the Barbarians wear tattoos and face-paint, the Professors organize armies of specially-equipped soldiers to defend their villages). They also blame each other for the hardships of post-holocaust life. Marianne's father, in explaining to her the reasons of the war between the tribes, asks at one point: "if the Barbarians are destroyed who will we then be able to blame for the bad things?"[28] Aidan Day remarks:

> The Professors, failing to recognise their own repressions, have sought to hound that which is not gentle and ordered outside themselves. They have committed the crime of finding external scapegoats for realities within their own hearts and minds that they find problematical.[29]

In a world where the Barbarians discuss philosophy and shamans comment on being shamans, even the seemingly biological distinction human\inhuman is not stable and fails to structure reality. While roaming the jungle Marianne encounters mutants whose bodies and minds transgress the human norm. What is worth noting is the origin of the Out People motif: mutants and deviations often populate the worlds of post-apocalyptic stories, the above-mentioned example of Wyndham's *The Chrysalides* being the best known; but the way they are described is usually quite different. By transgressing the norm Wyndham's mutants reinforce the notion of being human, of possessing some mysterious human factor along with all the rights and duties, while Carter's Out People are just strange, speechless bodies:

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27. Alfred Lord Tennyson, "In Memoriam A. H. H.," in *Selected Poems* (London: Penguin, 1992), Canto 56.

28. Carter, *Heroes and Villains*, p. 11.

29. Aidan Day, *Angela Carter: The Rational Glass* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 45.

> Amongst the Out People, the human form has acquired fantastic shapes. One man has furled ears like pale and delicate Arum Lilies. Another was scaled all over, with webbed hands and feet. Few had the conventional complement of limbs and features.[30]

Their appearance shows that overwhelming entropy is not external scenery the human race has to live in, but that it touches and alters the very essence of human-ness: what humans are and what humans create is falling apart. Carter is re-writing an iconic disaster story motif (that of humans genetically altered by radiation), but she gives it a new ideological meaning. In classic male post-holocaust narratives mutants are disfigured humans who suffer for the sins of the fathers: civilization should start anew, albeit preserving its essential features (humanism, liberalism, traditional family values and consequently, patriarchy). Carter's Marianne, in watching the Out People, does not believe in re-establishing the old social order with its norms and values. *Heroes and Villains* is not about the rebirth of human-kind, but about apocalypse itself.

In this chaotic world – where there are no more essential differences between phenomena, and the randomness of things does not allow for any conventional divisions – race, species, gender and even time cease to exist objectively. David Punter comments:

> The conflict . . . is a multivalent parody: of class relations, of relations be-tween the sexes, of the battle between rational control and desire. . . . There are, obviously, no heroes and no villains; only a set of silly games which men play.[31]

Each entity possesses its own characteristic features; but on their basis no classification can be made as, gradually, all the points of reference are destroyed. Such a process is particularly striking as far as temporality is concerned – in the world of the novel there is no objective measure of time; everybody lives in the temporal di-mension of his biological rhythm without calendars or chronometers. In *Heroes and Villains* the flow of time is stopped forever, as shown by the beautiful though useless chronometers that for Marianne are merely souvenirs from the past, elements of pure decoration. The book starts with a description of her father's favourite heirloom:

> [A] clock which he wound every morning and kept in the family dining-room upon a sideboard full of heirlooms . . . . She concluded the clock must

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30. Carter, *Heroes and Villains*, p. 110.

31. David Punter, *The Literature of Terror – A History of Gothic Fiction from 1795 to the Present Day* vol. II *The Modern Gothic* (London: Longman, 1996), p. 140.

be immortal but this did not impress her . . . she watched dispassionately as the hands of the clock went round but she never felt the time was passing, for time was frozen around her in this secluded place.[32]

Time itself has become an heirloom, a peculiar reminder of bygone days. For Marianne the ticking of the clock has no relation to the rhythm of life. Its ticking proved to be the sound of her childhood and her father's old age. She left it behind without regret as it had never served for her any purpose. The next chronometers she saw (dead watches worn by the Barbarian women for decoration) were signs of an even greater degree of timelessness as nobody remembered their initial function. The last clock in the book, a gigantic and dead apparatus, welcomes Marianne in the ruins of the old city:[33]

Prominent among the minarets, spires and helmets of wrought iron which protruded from the waters was an enormous clock whose hands stood still at the hour of ten, though it was, of course, no longer possible to tell whether this signified ten in the morning or ten at night.[34]

The gigantic size of this clock and its absolute deadness create the image of the total arbitrariness of any measure of time. Exhaustion and entropy know no time but the vague "now" which for a fraction of a second can at best turn into "a totally durationless present, a moment of time sharply dividing past from future and utterly distinct from both."[35] The post-holocaust landscape of ruined cities near the seaside adorned with dead clocks brings to mind a visual intertext: Salvador Dali's *The Persistence of Memory*.[36] In this surreal painting, influenced by psychoanalysis, gigantic dead clocks are melting down, showing that clock time is no longer valid. Dali and Carter (who adored the Surrealists and often wrote about them in both her fiction and non-fiction) are both trying to recreate inner landscapes: their critique of the contemporary world takes forms of fantastic neverlands.

Carter's great admiration for the Surrealist movement results from the fact that, as she holds, theirs was the art of celebration and recreation. Their techniques haphazard and idiosyncratic, the Surrealists attempted to create combinations of

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32. Carter, *Heroes and Villains*, p. 1.

33. The city is probably London and the clock Big Ben; the tribe is traveling south to spend the winter at the seaside and finally reach the gigantic ruin. Descriptions of London after various cataclysms are very common in disaster stories; examples are: Jefferies' *After London*, J.G. Ballard's *The Drowned World* and *The Wind from Nowhere* and Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffid*. Once again Carter rewrites a canonical disaster fiction motif in a new way.

34. Carter, *Heroes and Villains*, p. 138.

35. Carter, *Heroes and Villains*, p. 148.

36. Painting by Salvador Dali, *The Persistence of Memory*, 1931.

words and images which by analogy and inspiration were supposed to evoke amazement; such art was based on a strong belief in humankind's ability to recreate itself. The world shown in their works is "déjà vue", as in a nightmare we recognize separate elements which we have already seen as they date back to diverse moments of the past. It is a world deprived of time experienced in the mind. In surrealist art: "It is this world, there is no other but a world transformed by imagination and desire. You could say it is a dream made flesh."[37] In *Heroes and Villains* Carter attempts to use a similar technique to depict the post-apocalyptic world in which past, present and future intermingle.

For Carter's characters the future offers no escape: they are doomed to inhabit the ruins and repeat social scenarios from the past. Living in such a world has the haunting quality of a nightmare: the self-conscious characters feel oppressed by the same surroundings, similar activities and repeated words. What is the worst is the fact that there is no escape in space either, as there cannot be anywhere to go: "There's nowhere to go, dear,' said the Doctor. 'If there was I would have found it".[38]

Madness, drunkenness and paranoia seem to be the only ways out of the grotesque post-apocalyptic wilderness where everything is falling apart; indeed, the wild world Marianne enters (and finally renews) is entropy-ridden. The story's characters can hide only inside their troubled egos, as the outside reality is nothing but an everlasting nightmare. A stifling atmosphere of exhaustion and oppression is created by numerous images of overgrown vegetation, desolate ruins, half-destroyed houses full of fungi and rotting furniture, detailed descriptions of dirt and disease – all in the atmosphere of sexual fantasy and paranoid visions. These images are too vivid and drastic to be mere scenery; it is the power of death and the different faces of decay that constitute Carter's style.

Carter treats bits and pieces of old discourses (the above-mentioned allusions to Conrad and Austen, as well as to Edgar Rice Burroughs and John Wyndham) in the way the Barbarians use old garments and broken down pieces of machinery found in the ruins: apparently to adorn but, at the same time, to take delight in dissolution, destruction and death. Metatextually, *Heroes and Villains* depicts the de-composition of traditional modes of writing; Carter follows the example of such New Wave authors as Pamela Zoline[39] for whom the key narrative term is entropy. In the short story "The heat death of the universe" Zoline defines the entropy of a

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37. Angela Carter, "The Alchemy of the Word," in *Expletives Deleted: Selected Writings* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1992), p. 70.

38. Carter, *Heroes and Villains*, p. 95.

39. Pamela Zoline, "The heat death of the universe," in *England Swings SF, Stories of Speculative Fiction* , ed. Judith Merril (New York: Ace Books, 1968), 313–328.

system as "a measure of its degree of disorder."[40] The "system" is post-capitalist affluent society, and in order to capture the experience of living within the contemporary mediascape she both depicts the chaos of her character's life and introduces chaos to her narrative.

Zoline's "The Heat Death of the Universe" ends with the scene when the protagonist methodically smashes all pieces of equipment in her kitchen, thereby creating an irreversible mess of destruction; all forms give way to chaos. Carter's novel has a totally different post-apocalyptic setting, yet chaos and entropy are equally important. The narration of *Heroes and Villains* describes decay almost with pleasure and most certainly with great precision. The text changes into a study in decomposition, the anatomy of both our civilization and the disaster story genre: they both are killed in order to be examined. "For I am every dead thing";[41] this quotation from John Donne would best summarize the world of the novel, which does not allow for any hope. The only emotion left is curiosity: Marianne the focalizer takes some pleasure in scientific observations of decay.

Among the ruins and scattered heirlooms of the past a prominent place is given to old symbols, which at the moment of the world's death, change in significance. Deprived of their contextual power the symbols die, creating ephemeral constellations and gaining for a moment a certain new meaning. The anatomy of signification becomes a favourite pastime of Donally and, later, Marianne; but the way the two of them interpret signs differs. Donally seeks to maintain patriarchal mythical frameworks: the sharp unequal antagonism between male and female; civilized and uncivilized; reasonable and wild. Marianne tries to dismantle these oppositions: for her signs are reduced to aesthetics and the old signifying system dies. The moment she starts to observe signs for their own sake marks her growing understanding of the world around: she lives surrounded by the debris of a bygone civilization which one may study – but only for scientific purposes. New myths are yet to be created. The last conversation between her and Jewel best shows the difference between them. Jewel is still naïve enough to believe in symbols, while Marianne analyzes them:

> But when he was near enough for her to see the blurred colours of his face, she also saw he was making the gesture against the Evil Eye. Suddenly she recognised it.
> "They used to call that the sign of the Cross,' she said. 'It must be handed down among the Old Believers."

40. Zoline, p. 316.

41. John Donne, "A nocturnall upon *S. Lucies* day, Being the shortest day," in *The Complete English Poems of John Donne*, ed. C. A. Patrides (London and Melbourne: Dent, 1985), p. 90.

"Did you call me back just to give me this piece of useless information?"[42]

The anatomy of symbolic meanings and their changes is best seen in the example of clothes. Both the dress and decoration worn by the Barbarians come either from the ruins (and thus from the past) or are stolen from the Professors' villages. Worn in new and shocking combinations, old garments gain new meanings. A similar process was described in one of Carter's fashion essays from the *Nothing Sacred* collection. The essay entitled "Notes for a Theory of the Sixties Style" analyzes the nature of apparel. According to Carter clothes are the best example of the decadent fashion of the sixties, as in those years they "become arbitrary and bizarre . . . reveal a kind of logic of whizzing entropy. Mutability is having a field day."[43]

The term mutability is the key notion for this essay, one written two years before the publication of *Heroes and Villains*. In this text Carter defines style as the presentation of the self as a three-dimensional object. Wearing eclectic fragments of different vestments "robbed of their symbolic content"[44] is a way of creating a new whole whose items are not in any imposed harmony. The theory formulated in the essay seems to be the key to understanding the symbolic meaning of clothes in *Heroes and Villains*, where mutability is not a matter of individual choice, but the condition of the whole dying civilization.

In broader terms, symbols have meaning only in reference to the mythical structures behind them – and clothes are a perfect example of this process. In a patriarchal society, where the law of inheritance makes men value female chastity and pre-nuptial virginity, the wedding ritual has a deep mythical sense and the white wedding dress becomes a potent symbol. Donally makes Marianne wear an old deteriorating white robe during her marriage ceremony in a vain attempt to re-establish patriarchy in the tribe. For Marianne the dress is just an ugly relic of bygone epochs. Lost in the exhausted reality of dead symbols she feels she has to create their own future: first to escape the old symbolic order and then to devise a new mythology herself.

Thus, paradoxically, the novel combines the symbols of entropy and mutability; it shows the world in the moment of its disintegration, and yet the disintegrating elements are constantly being re-used to create changeable structures. In one moment we read a "Wyndhamesque" end-of-the-world-fantasy, in another Carter deconstructs this tradition. Roz Kaveney writes:

42. Carter, *Heroes and Villains*, p. 148.

43. Angela Carter, "Notes for a Theory of the Sixties Style," in *Nothing Sacred* (London: Virago, 1988), 85–89, p. 86.

44. Carter, "Notes for a Theory of the Sixties Style," p. 86.

The formalist aspects of Carter's work – the extent to which she combined stock motifs and made of them a collage that was entirely her own – was bound to appeal; sections of the SF readership discovered in the course of the 1970s and 1980s that they had been talking postmodernism all their lives and not noticing it, and Carter was part of that moment.[45]

Kaveney reads *Heroes and Villains* in the context of the science fiction readership in the late 20th century, and discovers how Carter makes use of SF conventions. Eva Karpinski in her essay "Signifying Passion: Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains* as a Dystopian Romance" refers in her reading of the book to the utopian tradition:

The dystopian romance proves to be a suitable vehicle for Carter's didactic allegory of the relationship between the sexes, an allegory, one might add, that uses the utopian ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in order to re-write the myth of the Fall as it structures Western representations of the social and sexual difference.[46]

Other critics, for example Elaine Jordan,[47] use the label "speculative fiction,"[48] and Carter herself in the famous interview given to John Haffenden calls her fiction "magic mannerism."[49] Thus, one can think of diverse generic formulas to describe the novel, although none of the labels is final, as the narrative itself is unstable and mutable.

The novel also celebrates new feminist myths in order to playfully laugh at them on the next page. Having got rid of Donally and having won her mental struggle with Jewel, Marianne decides on a scenario that suits her best. She has found her identity and now wants to take control over the tribe and to become a post-apocalyptic leader, which she declares by paraphrasing the Bible: "I will be the tiger-lady and I will rule them with a rod of iron."[50] In this sentence she alludes to Donally's attempt to tattoo one of the tribe's children into a tiger-girl, something which ended tragically, as the baby died in the process. But the idea of the artificial

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45. Kaveney, 175.

46. Karpinsky, 137.

47. Elaine Jordan, "Enthrallment: Angela Carter's Speculative Fictions," in *Plotting Change: Contemporary Women's Fiction*, ed. Linda Anderson (London: Edward Arnold, 1990), 19–40.

48. "A kind of sociological SF which concentrates on social change without necessarily any great emphasis on science or technology" (Clute and Nicholls, p. 1144).

49. John Haffenden, "Angela Carter," in *Novelists in Interview,* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 80.

50. Carter, *Heroes and Villains*, p. 150. This is uttered in a conversation when Marianne describes her plans for the future of the tribe: " 'they'll do every single thing I say.' 'What, will you be Queen?' 'I'll be the tiger-lady and rule them with a rod of iron.' "

creation of a "natural" tiger-human had some appeal to the Barbarians and thus Jewel wanted to get the tiger tattoo himself.

When Jewel learned that at his age it was impossible, he planned to tattoo his and Marianne's baby. And now it is Marianne who is going to symbolically possess the tiger's strength and beauty: not by getting a tattoo, but by ruling "with a rod of iron" over the tribe. Her "rod" is probably going to be her knowledge and education, the love of reason her father taught her, combined with her ability to reconcile binary oppositions and blend nature with nurture, reason with instinct, the Barbarians and the Professors. Only a woman-alien can do this by creating a third, reconciliatory way between the two patriarchal societies. Marianne is aware that she is not yet living in the post-apocalyptic order, but still within the Apocalypse itself, that is, amidst the bits and pieces of the old world which is falling apart. Thus her declaration "I will rule them with a rod of iron" echoes Saint John's *Revelation*:

> and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.
> And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.
> And the woman fled into the wilderness.[51]

Marianne misquotes St John for a purpose: she aims to give old patriarchal texts a new meaning for new times. At the end of the book Marianne is, physically speaking, "ready to deliver", as her baby is to be born very soon. But here the similarities with St John end: who can be identified with the devouring dragon? Perhaps patriarchal attempts to remodel the child so that it serves a purpose? After all, Donally and Jewel wanted him tattooed and ruling the tribe according to the old pattern of power. Moreover, Marianne (in contrast to Donally and Jewel) is not so sure the baby is going to be "a man child", and so she plans the future regardless of its sex. Finally, her flight into the wilderness is in fact an act of usurping political power herself: it is she who is going to become a tiger-lady and to rule the new "wilderness", the world outside the villages of the Professors and the camps of the Barbarians.

"People kept wild beasts such as lions and tigers in cages and looked at them for information. Who would have thought they would take to our climate so kindly, when the fire came and let them out?"[52] which is how Marianne's father once explained to her why the exotic beasts roam the countryside devouring smaller creatures. After the apocalypse carnivorous cats once again become the king of beasts;

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51. *St. John's Revelation* 12:4–6 in *The Holy Bible: Old and New Testament in the King James Version* (Hazelwood: World Aflame Press, 1973).
52. Carter, *Heroes and Villains*, p. 9.

they are the only ones that gained power instead of losing it. Predators could survive and rule. As this is true of tigers, perhaps it can also be true of people?

Tigers and lions are very prominent in the novel; we very soon learn that Jewel is attracted to wild cats, which is perhaps the effect of his own weakness. One of his most vivid memories is the scene when, as a teenager, he met a lion face to face and survived only because the beast ignored him. This story (which he told to Marianne) anticipates the end of the novel: when Jewel gives up and goes to seek his death he encounters another lion and again fails to attract its attention. Marianne sees the animal and cannot but admire its fearsome beauty:

> She had never seen a lion before. It looked exactly like pictures of itself; though darkness washed its colours off, she saw its mane and tasseled tail which flicked about as it moved out of the edge of shadow on to the dune.[53]

Marianne is not disappointed; the lion looks "like pictures of itself": the thing and its representation for once go together. The mythical meaning of wild cats is going to survive the end of civilization and shall remain a handy metaphor. Marianne decides to rule over the tribe as its tiger-lady not in an act of imitating a queen of the wilderness fairytale motif, but in an attempt to start a new epoch with its new myths.[54] As Margaret Atwood puts it in her essay on Carter's stories "Running with the Tigers", as the tiger will never lie down with the lamb, it is the lamb – the powerless female – which should learn the tigers' ways.[55] By the same token, Marianne wants to create a new definition for a power system in which the oppositions male/female, intellect/desire or civilized/wild are of no importance.[56]

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53. Carter, *Heroes and Villains*, p. 140.

54. Sarah Gamble suggests that the moment Marianne becomes a tiger-lady symbolically "implies that Marianne has now broken free of the stereotyped roles – daughter, victim, wife and whore – in which she has been complicit from the text's beginning." Sarah Gamble, *Angela Carter: Writing from the Front Line* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 79.

55. Margaret Atwood, "Running with the Tigers," in *Flesh and the Mirror*, ed. Lorna Sage (London: Virago, 1994), 117–136, p. 358.

56. A. Day elaborates upon Marianne's future reign: "But while, as tiger-lady, she is going to draw on primordial Barbarian energy, Marianne, it must be noted, does not give up her purchase on reason. It is this emphasis on maintaining reason that separates her from the Donally-inspired Barbarian cult of the irrational. At the same time as Marianne stops being a stranger to her own id during her sojourn amongst the Barbarians, reason emerges as a cardinal feature of her discovery of herself. . . . In Marianne's case reason may order, like an iron rod, the inchoate energies of the id, while the energies of the id – the energies of the tiger-lady – may enrich reason. This synthetic model is identified as specifically feminine, in contrast with the masculine insistence on self-definition through opposition to an other" (Day, pp. 51–53).

When Marianne gets to the Barbarian camp for the first time she finds herself imprisoned by the patriarchal myth of a new Creation. Both Donally and Jewel want her to act out a new Eve role in order to secure a re-enactment of history which would result in a repetition of the old social and political order. Jewel advises her at the time of her trouble in adapting to the tribe to pretend to be Eve at the end of the world. The original patriarchal myth of Eden is re-enforced by a tattoo Jewel has on his back whereby Eve offers Adam an apple, and by a number of metaphors and allusions. This myth is thus very prominent in the novel and suggests the strength of patriarchal ideology – parallel to the strength of the tribe's male leaders (and also of the Professors' village: both societies are exclusively male-governed). The rival mythical intertext – the *Revelation of Saint John* – appears not until the end of *Heroes and Villains* and marks the beginning of a genuinely new epoch when Marianne, a woman-alien, takes power.

A woman-alien sets out to create a genuinely new social order and the question is whether she is going to recreate the hegemonic power-relations of patriarchal order in both the Professors' villages and the Barbarians' camps. In science fiction narratives aliens often perceive human civilization in a new way, one that enables us to see "normal" social order in a defamiliarized manner; Marianne is a stranger to her own world, she is not interested in the reversal of binaries, but in their liquidation. Carter does not celebrate her political victory as a birth of a genuinely feminist paradise: the very concept of "tiger-lady" cannot be taken too seriously. Marianne the Queen is demythologized from the very start of a reign which is going to prefer mutability to stiff order.

Marianne the tiger-lady has a long road to power behind her. *Heroes and Villains* tells a story of her maturation in a world full of bits and pieces of old symbols and power structures. Marianne learns to see that these binding discourses are giving way to entropy, and that in her world of total chaos new myths have to be created – and that a new, post-patriarchal epoch is yet to be commenced. Moreover, a similar procedure might well be applied to the old literary genre *Heroes and Villains* pertains to: the British disaster story. By having an atypical protagonist, a female-alien strong enough to destroy patriarchal social structure, Carter manages to revive the exhausted convention and to create a genuinely new story.

Ágnes Györke

Rushdie's Postmodern Nations

This paper argues that *Midnight's Children* allegorizes India in two ways. First, the allegory of Saleem Sinai's body speaks about the official version of India, the pedagogical nation that is *modern* by definition, since it aims to parade as a transcendental, seamless, and disembodied master narrative. Second, the dissonant "noise" of the midnight's children attempts to provide an alternative: their miraculous community allegorizes an enchanting yet fragile *postmodern* nation, which reintroduces the voice of the subject into national discourses. This second allegory depicts India as an "elephantiasic" imagined community, which, even though it aims to act as an alternative, inherits the structure of the modern nation, and falls apart precisely for this reason. Unable to redefine the modern paradigm, the novel attempts to reconcile the postmodern nation with it, which overburdens this miraculous yet feeble entity. Therefore, the postmodern nation remains an enchanting but never fulfilled promise in the novel.

Salman Rushdie's nations are by no means easily definable categories. Though *Midnight's Children* is often read as a novel about India,[1] and *Shame* as a scandalous account of Pakistani affairs,[2] the nations these novels depict are hardly recognizable for Indian or Pakistani readers.[3] They are as obscure as postmodernism, Rushdie's Indian critics tend to say;[4] or, perhaps, as daring. It is hard to deny that

1. See for instance Mark Williams, "The Novel As National Epic: Wilson Harris, Salman Rushdie, Keri Hulme," in *The Commonwealth Novel since 1960*, ed. Bruce King (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1981), 185–97; Joseph Swann, "East Is East and West Is West? Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* as an Indian Novel," ed. Viney Kirpal, *The New Indian Novel in English: A Study of the 1980s* (New Delhi: Allied, 1990), 251–62, etc.

2. See for instance Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1994); Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation* (New York: St. Martin, 1989); etc.

3. G.R. Taneja, R.K. Dhawan, ed., *The Novels of Salman Rushdie* (New Delhi: Indian Society for Commonwealth Studies, 1992). S. K. Tikoo, for instance, writes that Rushdie "selects his material from history, and then fantasizes it, and by doing so, converts Pakistan into something like *Peccavistan*. This is what he calls the palimpsest on the real, existing country" (Taneja, p. 52); O. P. Matur also argues that "[t]he Pakistani reality is [. . .] very much there: it has only been tilted 'at a slight angle'" (Taneja, p. 87).

4. Aijaz Ahmad, the well-known Marxist critic, for instance, calls postmodernism a futile intellectual game, which is unable to solve vital social questions, such as mapping

these novels have an ambitious aim: nothing less than reconciling a profoundly *postmodern* framework with the category of the *modern* nation. A tantalizing venture, no doubt, since these entities are antagonistic by definition: the nation, being the product of modernity, as historians such as Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner argue,[5] has no place in postmodern discourses, which question the very assumptions it relies on.[6] Yet Rushdie's novels seem to be interested exactly in such risky and challenging endeavours, as if they were infected by a disease called "elephantiasis," as Saleem Sinai puts it.[7] I argue that *Midnight's Children* depicts India as such an "elephantiasic" entity, which inherits the structure of the modern nation, and falls apart precisely for this reason. Unable to redefine the modern paradigm, the novel attempts to reconcile it with postmodern narrative strategies, and this overburdens this miraculous yet fragile "imagined community."[8] Therefore, in the novel the nation remains an enchanting yet never fulfilled promise.

Though a number of critics regard Rushdie as one of the most distinctive postmodern writers (e.g. Keith Wilson,[9] Jean-Pierre Durix,[10] Tamás Bényei,[11] M. D.

power relations in society: "[w]ithin a postmodernist intellectual milieu where texts are to be read as the utterly free, altogether hedonistic play of the signifier, I can well empathise with a theoretical operation that seeks to locate the production of texts within a determinate, knowable field of power and signification" (Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory,' " *Social Text* 17 [1987] 3–25, p. 22). See also Ahmad, *In Theory*.

5. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991). Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992); etc.

6. My concept of the postmodern relies on Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988) and Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1992). Hutcheon argues that the postmodern is "fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical, and inescapably political" (Hutcheon, p. 4), using the term "historiographic metafiction" to describe this paradoxical poetics: a new postmodern genre, which is "both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay[s] claim to historical events and personages" (Hutcheon, p. 5).

7. Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (London: Vintage, 1981) p. 75. All parenthesised references are to this edition.

8. The term comes from Benedict Anderson, who argues that the nation "is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson, p. 6).

9. Keith Wilson, "*Midnight's Children* and Reader Responsibility," in *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*, ed. M. D. Fletcher (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 55–68.

10. Jean-Pierre Durix, "Magic Realism in *Midnight's Children*," in *Commonwealth: Essays and Studies* 8.1 (1985) 57–63.

Fletcher,[12] Linda Hutcheon,[13] Sabrina Hassumani[14]), his novels are often read, and heavily criticised, from postcolonial perspectives as well (e.g. Maria Couto,[15] Harish Trivedi,[16] Homi K. Bhabha,[17] Fawzia Afzal-Khan,[18] Neil Ten Kortenaar[19]). Timothy Brennan put him into the category of "cosmopolitan writers" as early as in 1989, claiming that the very genre that he chooses, the novel, does not fit the needs of third world countries.[20] Fletcher also claims that rather than being postcolonial, Rushdie's fiction is "primarily postmodern writing of a humorous and biting variety."[21] According to Kortenaar, however, Rushdie is a "nationalist cosmopolitan," since nationalism and cosmopolitanism are fully compatible in India.[22] He resists putting his work into either category, and does not even use these terms in his book;

11. Tamás Bényei, *Apokrif iratok: Mágikus realista regényekről* (Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 1997).

12. M. D. Fletcher, "Introduction" in *Reading Rushdie*, 1–22.

13. Hutcheon, *The Poetics of Postmodernism*.

14. Sabrina Hassumani, *Salman Rushdie: A Postmodern Reading of His Major Works*, (London: Associated UP, 2002).

15. Maria Couto, "*Midnight's Children* and Parents," *Encounter* 58.2 (1982) 61–6.

16. Harish Trivedi, "Salman the Funtoosh: Magic Bilingualism in *Midnight's Children*," in *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India*, ed. Meenakshi Mukherjee (Delhi: Oxford UP, 1985).

17. Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation" in *Nation and Narration* , ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990). Bhabha is one of those few postcolonial theorists who instead of criticising Rushdie regards *The Satanic Verses* as a profound postcolonial intervention into "Englishness": the novel "attempts to redefine the boundaries of the western nation, so that the 'foreignness of languages' becomes the inescapable cultural condition for the enunciation of the mother-tongue" (Bhabha, p. 317).

18. Fawzia Afzal-Khan, Cultural Imperialism and the Indo-English Novel: Genre and Ideology in R. K. Narayan, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, and Salman Rushdie. (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP,m 1993).

19. Neil Ten Kortenaar, "*Midnight's Children* and the Allegory of History," *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 26.2 (1995) 41–62; Neil Ten Kortenaar, *Self, Nation, Text in Salman Rushdie's* Midnight's Children (Montreal: McGill, 2004).

20. "[T]he novel has been an elitist and minority form in developing countries when compared to poem, song, television, and film. Almost inevitably it has been the form through which a thin, foreign-educated stratum (however sensitive or committed to domestic political interests) has communicated to metropolitan reading publics, often in translation" (Timothy Brennan, "The National Longing for Form," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Bhabha, p. 56). See also Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World*.

21. Fletcher, ed., *Reading Rushdie*, p. 8.

22. Kortenaar, *Self*.

yet when he claims that "[i]t is relatively easy to tell England from India in *Midnight's Children*, but difficult to distinguish where India stops and Orientalism begins,"[23] it becomes obvious for the reader that he also considers his fiction complicit with Western perspectives (though he never reflects on what orientalism means, or refers to Edward Said). As for Rushdie himself, he has a very optimistic answer: in the essay written in defence of *Midnight's Children* he claims that Indian writers, "like others who have migrated into the north from the south, are capable of writing from a kind of *double perspective*: because they, we are at one and the same time insiders and outsiders in this society."[24]

Nevertheless, it is hard to deny that his novels, and the way the nation is depicted in them, do silence subaltern voices.[25] My argument, which shows that India in *Midnight's Children* is akin to the kind of nations Benedict Anderson imagines in his well-known book, supports this fact: even though we might find parallels between the nation in this novel and the Islamic umma, as Teresa Heffernan does,[26] the way India is born in *Midnight's Children* is perfectly reconcilable with the discourse of Western nationalism studies as well. Yet instead of repeating this rather obvious, though undeniably distressing point about the subaltern's silence, my paper looks at the heuristic attempt this novel makes in order to find a space for the modern nation, this promising yet fragile category, in the postmodern literary text.

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The story of *Midnight's Children* begins in 1947, and the very first page takes the reader right to the moment of India's independence, which is also the moment when Saleem Sinai, the novel's narrator, was born. As it later turns out, however,

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23. Kortenaar, *Self,* p. 19.

24. Salman Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands," in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991* (London: Penguin, 1991) 9–20 (my emphasis).

25. Since the publication of G. C. Spivak's famous article, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" the argument that the Western academia represses subaltern stories has been widely accepted and often repeated in postcolonial studies; see also Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffits, Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989); Simon During, "Postmodernism or Post-Colonialism Today," in *Textual Practice* 1.1 (1987) 32–47; Bart-Moore Gilbert, "Postcolonialism: Between Nationaliterianism and Globalisation? A Response to Simon During," in *Postcolonial Studies* 1.1 (1998) 49–65; Stephen Slemon, "Modernism's Last Post," in *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Postcolonialism and Post-Modernism*, ed. Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991) 1–11, etc.

26. Teresa Heffernan, "Apocalyptic Narratives: The Nation in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*," in *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal* 46.4 (2000) 470–91.

during the magic hour between 12.00 am and 1.00 am, 1001 children were born, the children of midnight, so it is not only Saleem who embodies the Indian nation in the novel, but his 1001 extraordinary siblings as well. Therefore, this fantastic scenario provides two allegories that speak about the Indian nation in *Midnight's Children*: first, the body of Saleem Sinai, which, since the narrator, born exactly at the stroke of midnight, "had been mysteriously handcuffed to history" (9), and second, the voices of midnight's children, the extraordinary concerto of "national unisonance," which literally embodies the imagined community of the Indian nation. Whereas the *body* allegory reflects how official, "pedagogical" national discourses subdue Saleem, to use Homi Bhabha's terms, the *voice* of the children attempts to provide an alternative: a "performative" vision of India defined by a profound magical wholeness.[27] Unlike the first allegory, which only desires to control the subject, the miraculous community attempts to give voice to the children's silenced stories. The fact that it fails seems to be of secondary importance compared to this heroic endeavour.

The Embodied Nation

Let us first consider the allegory of Saleem's body, which becomes the "official" allegory of the Indian nation in *Midnight's Children*. The narrator informs the reader on the very first page of the novel that he has been mysteriously yet irrevocably summoned to become the representative of the newly born Indian nation:

> Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world. There were gaps. And, outside the window, fireworks and crowds. A few seconds later, my father broke his big toe; but his accident was a mere trifle when set beside what had befallen me in that benighted moment, because thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country. (9)

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27. The terms "pedagogical" and "performative" come from Homi Bhabha. He argues that the address of the nation is split: "We then have a contested cultural territory where the people must be thought in a double-time; the people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin or event; the people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as that continual process by which the national life is redeemed and signified as a repeating and reproductive process" (p. 297).

The first word already evokes the image of the body ("clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came"), subtly striking a religious chord and calling to mind the image of praying, which endows the newly born nation with transcendental importance, besides suggesting that the "hands" of the clock, similarly to Saleem's body, become helplessly subdued by a power quite inconceivable and beyond its poor, earthly "target." Then we learn that Saleem's father accidentally broke his big toe in that benign moment; his body also suffers the consequences of midnight, similarly to Saleem's, though his punishment is a "mere trifle" set beside what had befallen him, who will bear the burden of his magic "gift" all through his life: "thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously *handcuffed* to history, my destinies indissolubly *chained* to those of my country" (9). The image of the chained body, being literally handcuffed, illuminates how *Midnight's Children* envisages the place of Saleem in the nation: he becomes the representative of India as an enchained creature, since his body, paradoxically, both allegorizes the nation and becomes its helplessly subdued part, as the gesture of handcuffing suggests. His passive, feeble body is handcuffed to the nation, which leaves Saleem entirely *silenced*, "without a say in the matter": "For the next three decades, there was to be no escape. Soothsayers had prophesied me, newspapers celebrated my arrival, politicos ratified my authenticity. I was left entirely without a say in the matter" (9).

At the same time we also learn that Saleem is 31 years old when he starts to narrate the tale of his life, which is, of course, also the tale of India: "Now, however, time (having no further use for me) is running out. I will soon be thirty-one years old. Perhaps. If my crumbling, over-used body permits" (9). Being 31 years old and overtly conscious about his time running out, Saleem seems to be preparing for his final day of reckoning; thus it is not only the praying clock-hands at his birth that evoke religious overtones; but his Christ-like "last supper," the very text we are reading, also endows his life with religious significance. His body is, however, not the only one in the novel that becomes subdued by religious rituals: in another episode, still in the very first chapter, we learn how Saleem's grandfather, Aadam Aziz, lost his belief after an act of unsuccessful praying; the act subdues his body, just like handcuffing subdued Saleem. We see Aziz standing in front of the prayer-mat, "his *hands*, guided by old memories, fluttered upwards, *thumbs* pressed to *ears*, *fingers* spread," he sinks "to his *knees*" (11; my emphasis), attempts to pray, but a tussock smites him "upon the point of his *nose*" (12; my emphasis), as a result of which he becomes "unable to worship a God in whose existence he could not wholly disbelieve" (12). That is, the act of subduing the body, performed both "by the nation" embodied in "blandly saluting" clock-hands and the prescribed Islamic religious ritual, also speaks about how these acts become intertwined, how the "nation's ges-

ture" also takes up religious significance, and how the national discourse puts Saleem into a semi-religious, transcendental, Messianic position, which, at the same time, requires total submission. In other words, the body allegory, which acts as the pedagogical allegory of the nation, becomes messianic speech, similarly to the discourse of the teleological, modern nation, turning Saleem into a messiah who bears the burden of its heavy demands.

In another episode, Saleem's body literally becomes transformed into the body of India. During a geography lesson, the half-mad teacher, Mr Zagallo, who is terribly frustrated by the pupils' absence from class, takes his revenge by asking a question that almost none of them can answer. Poor Saleem, trying to help one of his classmates whom Zagallo is ruthlessly torturing, unfortunately calls attention to himself and becomes the target of the frustrated teacher's anger. Unable to explain what "human geography" is, Saleem's very body becomes the explanation, the straightforward, "corporeal" answer to Zagallo's question: "'You don't see?' he guffaws. 'In the face of thees ugly ape you don't see the whole map of *India*? [. . .] See here – the Deccan peninsula hanging down!' [. . .] 'These stains,' he cries, 'are Pakistan! Thees birthmark on the right ear is the East Wing; and thees horrible stained left cheek, the West! Remember, stupid boys: Pakistan ees a stain on the face of India!'" (231–32). Saleem's very face becomes a map of the Indian nation, a sort of elementary nucleus in the Foucauldian sense, against which power strikes, subduing individuals. The handcuffed silent material, then, the site of semi-religious entitlements, is painfully reminded of his "messianic" role as the allegorical figure of the Indian nation throughout the text.

It is no wonder that bodies tend to crack and fall apart in the novel. Unable to bear the burden of representing the nation, Saleem's body is also visibly cracking while he is narrating the novel, and apocalyptically disintegrates in the last chapter, thus literally becoming transformed into letters, into the very novel itself. Already in the third chapter Saleem discovers that his body, "buffeted by too much history" (37), is falling apart: "I ask you only to accept (as I have accepted) that I shall eventually crumble into (approximately) six hundred and thirty million particles of anonymous, and necessarily oblivious dust" (37). The body, endowed with the miraculous yet heavy burden of representing the nation, cannot bear this weight for very long; Saleem's disintegration into six hundred and thirty million particles, which refers to the population of India, is the direct result of his sacred role, which imposes an artificial homogeneity upon the otherwise heterogeneous material. In another episode, after his body has been mutilated in a number of ways, Saleem realises that this supposed homogeneity is a myth that hides a more chaotic and painful entity which might erupt to the surface at any moment. After a slamming door chops off the top third of his middle finger, and he needs a blood transfusion, it turns out that Saleem's blood group

matches neither of his parents'. The accident reveals that he is not "his" parents' son, and, therefore, not the "real" midnight's child (the baby was exchanged in the hospital by Mary Pereira, who had reasons of her own to challenge history). Saleem realises that the supposed homogeneity of the body, as well as his "identity," are nonexistent categories: the body is, apparently, "homogeneous as anything. Indivisible, a one-piece suit, a sacred temple, if you will. It is important to preserve this wholeness. But the loss of my finger [. . .] has undone all that. [. . .] Uncork the body, and God knows what you permit to come tumbling out. Suddenly you are forever other than you were" (237). The body is envisaged here as a "sacred temple," which is, again, a religious metaphor, the worthy heir of the praying clock-hands of midnight, a homogeneous "one-piece suit," yet what it contains, his very blood, challenges this sacred totality, making him alienated from his very self.

Similarly to Saleem's, his grandfather's body also disintegrates in the novel. After losing his belief in an unsuccessful attempt at praying (when, while trying to enact the prescribed religious ritual, a tussock hits his nose and he resolves "never to kiss the earth for any god or man," 10), which leaves a permanent hole "in a vital inner chamber" (10), Aadam Aziz constructs his entire secular and modern life as a proud attempt to ignore this hole, infuriating his highly religious and bigoted wife. The hole inside, however, starts to demand attention in his declining years, which his grandson, Saleem, the "true" heir of holes and substitutes, immediately notices: "What leaked into me from Aadam Aziz: a certain vulnerability to women, but also its cause, the hole at the centre of himself caused by his (which is also my) failure to believe or disbelieve in God. And something else as well – something which, at the age of eleven, I saw before anyone else noticed. My grandfather had begun to crack" (275). Aziz's body starts to crack since he is no longer able to conceal the fact that his entire life has been constructed as an attempt to hide this hole and dedicated to finding substitutes, such as women, whose semi-transcendental significance is simply due to the fact that the hole has apparently retained the power of bestowing such qualities upon anything that happens to occupy it. Saleem, who inherits his grandfather's hole, becomes a silent and passive subject; besides being handcuffed to the nation, he will also be handcuffed to a "holey" inheritance, and the substitute he is going to find, despite his reference to women in the quotation above, who have never really been able to fill his hole inside, will be the *voices* of midnight's children: "Women have fixed me all right, but perhaps they were never central – perhaps the place which they should have filled, the hole in the centre of me which was my inheritance from my grandfather Aadam Aziz, was occupied for too long by my voices" (192). The voice of the children, then, will act as a "magic glue" trying to mend the disintegration that pervades the entire novel, serving as a remedy that temporarily reduces the pain inflicted upon his body by the pedagogical national allegory.

Saleem is not only handcuffed to the nation, his body is not simply dumb matter which enacts what clock-hands demand, but he also becomes the *mirror* of India. After his magic birth, his parents receive a letter from the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, congratulating him on the happy "accident" of his birth: " 'Dear Baby Saleem, My belated congratulations on the happy accident of your moment of birth! You are the newest bearer of that ancient face of India which is also eternally young. We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own' " (122). Whereas handcuffing implies speechless subjection, mirroring suggests a certain insight into the totality of the Indian nation, though the mirror, similarly to the handcuffed body, remains dumb matter, a medium that passively "reflects" the will of others. The fact that Saleem becomes the "*newest* bearer" of the "*ancient* face of India" (emphases added) suggests that his body, put in the place of the image in the mirror, bears the double burden of the ambivalent temporality of the modern nation, manifested in its Janus-faced desire to turn towards the future yet simultaneously evoke "corresponding pasts," to use Walter Benjamin's term,[28] in order to legitimate its all too profane novelty.[29] As an eternally-young-yet-ancient-nation, Saleem's body is destined to embody the nation as a seamless "creature" with a heroic past, which is, nonetheless, also "eternally young." His body is entitled to become perfect, since he literally becomes the semi-transcendental mirror image of the nation; yet, with the very same gesture, he is also emptied of subjectivity, deprived of the basic sense of seeing the boundaries of his very own self. It is only such a perfect yet depthless imago that can counteract the tensions that haunt the modern nation; yet it is also no wonder that such an image, being empty inside, cannot bear the burden of its all too heavy perfection for long. The mirror cracks, just like Saleem's body, as well as the Indian nation, and the reader does not find her/himself in Alice's wonderland, stepping through mirrors into the magic realm that lies beyond; the emptiness which the construction conceals will return, just like the hole in Aadam Aziz's body.

Defined by silence(ing), subjection, corporeality, perfection, transcendence, and the stubborn denial of cracks, holes, and any kind of subjectivity, the pedagogical discourse of the nation constructs the subject as an all-too-perfect creature who unavoidably disintegrates under the burden of his role. Perhaps this is not the aim of the nation's discourse; perhaps its only desire is to postulate the possibility of an

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28. Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1999).

29. For the conflicting impulses of the Janus-faced nation see Anderson; Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neonationalism* (London: Verso, 1981); Mark Redfield, "Imagi-Nation: The Imagined Community and the Aesthetics of Mourning," *Diacritics* 29.4 (1999) 58–83.

identity, or, in other words, to provide the promise of an untinctured selfhood. Yet the side effect of this discourse is nonetheless that the desired selfhood turns into its exact opposite, and the empty imago of Saleem's body cracks in the mirror. Any form of subjectivity appears to be too imperfect for this discourse, which relies on the notion of a universal, omnipotent Cogito, as in Benedict Anderson: the nation is seen as an "imagin*ed* community," yet the agent who performs this act is strangely missing.[30] The omnipotent Cartesian Cogito, which defines the age of modernity as well as the modern nation, and which exercises a powerful imagination yet seems to be incapable of uttering a word, retains its omnipotence exactly at the price of his or her subjectivity. Therefore, the pedagogical nation in the novel, manifested in the apparently perfect yet underneath cracking body, is modern by definition.

Magic Voices

The children's magic voices start to speak about the nation only in the second book of the novel. Saleem, though he becomes aware of the burden of his miraculous birth at an early age, does not know that he is not the only chosen "son" until his 10th birthday. The discovery of the children's voices, which is also the moment when the second national allegory inscribes itself into the text, takes place in an utterly profane, dirty, almost obscene place: in a washing chest. Saleem, who is continuously humiliated by his family, classmates, and relatives, and who becomes less and less able to deal with their overwhelming expectations, finds his most comfortable hiding place in the family's washing chest. This place appears to be a "hole in the world," a space curiously deprived of history, blind and semi-amnesiac, and, therefore, quite safe:

> There are no mirrors in a washing-chest; rude jokes do not enter it, nor pointing fingers. The rage of fathers is muffled by used sheets and discarded brassières. A washing-chest is a hole in the world, a place which civilization has put outside itself, beyond the pale; this makes it the finest of hiding-places. In the washing-chest, I was like Nadir Khan in the underworld, safe from all the pressures, concealed from the demands of parents and history. (156)

The mirrors that identified Saleem so ruthlessly as the bearer of the ancient face of India are missing here. "The rage of fathers" seems to have evaporated as well; so Saleem feels safe "from the demands of parents and history," ready to leave his role as a midnight's child behind. In his attempt to hide from the symbolic role

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30. Anderson, p. 6.

bestowed upon him Saleem finds a "*hole* in the world," "which civilization has put outside itself," an amnesiac, forbidden, dirty, and *secret* place, situated at the very edge of the symbolic world.

The way he enters this place is also quite telling. Saleem is hiding in several confined spaces which appear to function as Chinese-boxes: first, we have to enter the house, then the bathroom, then the washing chest, and finally, Saleem's very head (or nose?), and only in this last box, the most secretive, most confined of spaces, can the midnight's children start to sing their strange concerto: "Pain. And then noise, deafening manytongued terrifying, *inside his head*! ... Inside a white wooden washing-chest, within the dark auditorium of my skull, my nose began to sing" (162, emphasis in the original). Furthermore, the text also appears to follow a similar trail: until this chapter Saleem's companion, the extremely down to earth narratee, Padma, has been listening to his stories; she, utterly disrespectful of his story-telling, acted as a "check" on his exceedingly imaginative narrative, which she quite often interrupted with sceptical remarks – such as "[b]ut what is so precious . . . to need all this writing-shiting?" (24), "So now that the writery is done, let's see if we can make your other pencil work!" (39) – and so on. Padma, however, who would clearly have entertained some disbelief concerning the events happening in this most crucial of chapters, has fortunately stormed out of Saleem's life just before he starts recounting the discovery of the midnight's children: "It has been two whole days since Padma stormed out of my life. . . . A balance has been upset; I feel cracks widening down the length of my body; because suddenly I am alone, without my necessary ear, and it isn't enough" (149). The carefully instituted balance that controlled the narrative, acting as a safety valve, is lost, leaving Saleem alone in the vacuum of this most confined of physical spaces, which, in this way, also becomes the least controlled place in the novel.

When he actually articulates the presence of the children's voice in his head, the loss of balance seems to be complete: the first person narrative shifts into the third person ("[a]nd then noise, deafening manytongued terrifying, *inside **his** head*!"[31]) as if the traumatic experience had induced a semi-schizophrenic state of mind, making Saleem act both as observer and participant in this most magic of moments. The event is a traumatic rupture for Saleem, a momentary black-out (or transcendence?), which is, after all, the logical outcome of leaving behind the authoritative gaze of parents and history. For a split second, Saleem finds himself beyond language, order, and the symbolic, and it is only after the ellipsis of three dots that he and his narrative regain balance, and the text shifts back to the first person: "Inside

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31. Emphasis added in bold.

a white wooden washing-chest, within the darkened auditorium of *my* skull, *my* nose began to sing" (162, my emphasis).

Several other factors suggest that the accident is traumatic. First, quite unexpectedly, Saleem's mother appears in the bathroom. She is, of course, unaware of her son's presence, and, believing that she is alone, whispers the name of a man who is not Saleem's father, but Nadir Khan, her former, "half-official" husband. What is more, reminiscing about what they used to do in the badly-lit cellar of her parents' house, "her hands are moving" (161): "they flutter gladly at her cheeks; they hold her bosom tighter than any brassières; and now they caress her bare midriff, they stray below decks" (161). The aforementioned brassieres return here, and, at this point, become identified with parts of the female body which acts as a spectacle in this scene, as if it literally became the thing that "muffles" the rage of fathers and the demands of history. There is a psychological impulse at work here, as if the image of the sinful (!) female has taken the place of the perfect imago, replacing Saleem-in-the-mirror and occupying the space where "history" has been before. Whereas the previous image was full of promise, purity, and perfection, the body that we encounter here is sinful and transgressive; yet the sight of it nonetheless appears to be quite irresistible for the nine-year-old Saleem. No wonder that the event is traumatic: Saleem experiences exactly what the pure symbolic discourse has denied him thus far: situated in the dirty washing chest, among used sheets and discarded brassieres, the plenitude of the "sacred temple" of the body, the very basis of the national allegory, is exchanged for sin, disorder, and *lack*.

It is at this very moment that the midnight's children start to produce their strange "noise" in Saleem's head. His mind becomes "filled with thoughts which have no shape, tormented by ideas which refuse to settle into words" (161), already suggesting that the trope he articulates will order the chaos in his mind into a conceivable "reality," or, in Paul de Man's words, will freeze "the hypothesis, or fiction, into fact."[32] When he finally articulates the metaphor, he seems to be evoking the scenario of giving birth:

> Pajama-cord rises painfully an inch further up the nostril. But other things are rising, too; hauled by that feverish inhalation, nasal liquids are being sucked relentlessly up up up, nose-goo flowing upwards, against gravity, against nature. Sinuses are subjected to unbearable pressure.... until, inside the nearlynineyearold head, something bursts. Snot rockets through a breached dam into dark new channels. Mucus, rising higher than mucus was ever intended to rise. Waste fluid, reaching as far, perhaps, as the fron-

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32. Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1982), p. 151.

tier of the brain... there is a shock. Something electrical has been mois-
tened. Pain. And then noise, deafening manytongued terrifying, *inside his
head*! (162)

In the washing chest c pajamacord irritates Saleem's nose, sending his "nose-
goo" upwards in his nasal passages until it reaches the frontiers of his brain, making
him sneeze and his nose "sing" – a very profane act indeed, almost obscenely bio-
logical by nature, just like the description of his mother's naked body. The "rising
mucus," the unbearable pressure on the sinuses, the metaphor of the "breached
dam" and the gesture of bursting evoke the pain and labour involved in the act of
giving birth. It's quite ironic that Saleem's biological birth, described on the very
first page of the novel, is seen as a less explicitly physical event: when recounting his
birth, Saleem uses metaphors such as handcuffing, chaining, and praying clock-
hands, as if he were trying to elevate his story above such "dirty" matters. Whereas
his birth was "silent" ("I was left entirely without a say in the matter"), *noise* seems
to be the very thing that is born in the washing chest: the "deafening manytongued
terrifying" voice of the children, calling the frantic cry of new born babies in mind.
The trope that is "born" here resembles what Steven Connor calls the most pro-
found manifestation of a disorderly, ventriloquial utterance, the direct antithesis of
"sonorous omnipotence" of "the Word;" the voice that acts as a semi-demonic noise,
proceeding from the demon which has taken up residence" in the human body,
producing a "voice that issues from the genitals or anus."[33]

The very place where the noise is born, Saleem's nose, is often compared to
genitals in the text. Described as the "big cucumber" on Aadam Aziz face, which
Saleem also inherits, and which is "waggling like the little one in [his] pajamas" (17),
the nose appears to perform the function of the male genital. Described from the
beginning as a miraculous organ (as Tai said to Saleem's grandfather, "[f]ollow your
nose and you'll go far," 17–18), with "dynasties waiting inside it . . . like snot" (14),
in this episode, the nose appears to embody a peculiar androgynous totality: besides
acting as the phallus, it also becomes the womb, the very place where the voices are
conceived and born. It seems as if the miraculous birth escaped the division that the
modern nation suffers, and managed to overcome the moment that splits it into a
"progressive masculine" and a "regressive feminine" face.[34] The moment takes us to

33. Steven Connor, "The Ethics of the Voice" in *Critical Ethics: Text, Theory and Respon-
sibility*, ed. Dominic Rainsford and Tim Woods (London: Macmillan, 1999) p. 224.

34. A number of critics argue that the modern nation is split into a feminine and masculine
face. Anne McClintock and Nira Yuval-Davis claim that whereas the teleological, progressive
pole of the modern nation is gendered as masculine, the nostalgic, backward-looking is usu-
ally depicted as a profoundly feminine entity in the fine arts as well as in political discourses.

the limits of language, as Francette Pacteau claims, marking a desire to return to a pre-Oedipal, androgynous sexuality, and thus escape differentiation and the symbolic order.[35] This prelapsarian state of existence makes the self feel complete and triumphant; since "the other" is not perceived as a separate entity, the self is not threatened by the horror that the lack (or denial) of recognition causes.

Since the modern nation never recognized the split at its heart, and always wanted to parade as a seamless, transcendental entity, Saleem's androgynous totality both recalls the modern paradigm and attempts to insert it into a postmodern framework, which is more conscious of the need to articulate subjectivity. The text seems to need this seamless androgynous fantasy to counteract the pedagogical discourse of the nation (i.e., the body allegory); yet a major difference between Saleem's androgyne and the modern nation is that whereas modernist discourses posit a "universal Cogito" but lack a tangible agent ("the nation is an imagin*ed* political community"[36]) Saleem's androgynous nation, due to its origin in the children's "noise," is not devoid of subjectivity.

The very first messages that Saleem receives aim to reassert the children's sense of self:

> I heard, beneath the polyglot frenzy in my head, those other precious signals, utterly different from everything else, most of them faint and distant, like far-off drums whose insistent pulsing eventually broke through the fish-market cacophony of my voices…. those secret, nocturnal calls, like calling out to like…. The unconscious beacons of the children of midnight, signalling nothing more than their existence, transmitting simply: 'I.' From far to the North, 'I.' And the South East West: 'I.' 'I.' 'And I.'   (168)

The schizophrenic state that enabled Saleem to articulate the noise metaphor seems to give way to a profound vision of transcendence: "below the surface trans-

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See Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, (New York: Routledge, 1995).

35. Several critics have investigated the harmonious wholeness that the fantasy of the androgyne designates (Francette Pacteau, Carolyn Heilbrun, etc). As Heilbrun claims, "[a]ndrogyny suggests a spirit of reconciliation between the sexes; it suggests, further, a full range of experience open to individuals who may as women, be aggressive, as men, tender; it suggests a spectrum upon which human beings choose their places without regard to propriety or custom" (x). See Francette Pacteau, "The Impossible Referent: Representation of the Androgyne," *Formations of Fantasy*, ed. Victor Burgin, James Donald and Cora Caplan (London: Routledge, 1989) 62–84; Carolyn Heilbrun, *Towards a Recognition of Androgyny* (London: Harper Colophon, 1974).

36. Anderson, p. 6. Emphasis added.

missions [. . .] language faded away, and was replaced by universally intelligible thought-forms which far transcended words" (168). The articulation of the I, the self, then, just like the androgynous fantasy, presupposes the fading away of language. It seems that the newly "born" allegory attempts to avoid the symbolic order at all costs; the symbolic has to fade away below the surface of transmissions so that the national allegory could find a space beyond pedagogical discourses. The subject that is born in this process seems to inhabit a space outside language, the symbolic, and the pedagogical, and occupy a curious blind spot, a contradictory and ambivalent "third space."[37]

The androgynous wholeness, the only space where the subject and the performative nation *hide*, is unable to guarantee a permanent intervention into nationalist pedagogy. It has two fatal flaws. First, the metaphor that is "born" will be unfaithful to its very origin: the allegory is at pains to repress its dirty birth, strangely interwoven with the very nature of the transcendental fantasy; and this forgetting, quite tragically, also does away with transcendence, androgyny, and the nation itself. Second, there are certain flaws in the very structure of the allegory; the androgynous construction itself, which promises to challenge the rigid categories of the modern nation, is unable to redefine gender in a radical way. It is these two flaws, which I discuss in the next section, that fragment the children's miraculous nation in the novel, making it fall apart after its transient yet heroic existence.

Voice and Sound

The genealogy of the noise metaphor illuminates how Saleem's nation attempts to forget its very origin. The trope that Saleem finally articulates seems to be a "blind metaphor," to use de Man's term,[38] which, if it means anything at all, refers to the very indeterminacy of its own meaning. First, the metaphor evokes the circumstances of its very birth: Saleem's fear, a totally subjective experience, which explains why he perceives the voices as "deafening manytongued terrifying"; the act of naming results from Saleem's ecstatic state of mind, hardly relying on any "objective facts," since, as it later turns out, the voices of the children are not terrifying at all, but become, after a little effort paid by Saleem, intelligible speech. The metaphor seems to have no clue as to what it names: Saleem is not aware of the children's existence yet, thus the "noise" evokes no referent except for the vague image of the crying new-born child. The "Midnight's Children's Conference," the children's

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37. The term comes from Homi K Bhabha. See Jonathan Rutherford, "The Third Space: An Interview with Homi Bhabha," in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 207–221.

38. De Man, p. 151.

nightly democratic assembly, will become the metaphor's vehicle, and the Indian nation will be its tenor, but Saleem is far from being aware of these at this stage. The "noise" that he hears is perhaps the ground of comparison at its best, but it is not yet aware of the things that it compares.

After its birth, the trope starts its pilgrimage to redefine itself, as if it wanted to forget its traumatic origins: the unacknowledged, unclaimed experience in the washing chest.[39] The first referent that it finds is a transcendental, religious one: Saleem thinks that he can hear the voices of archangels, which he proudly announces to his family: " 'I heard voices yesterday. Voices are speaking to me inside my head. I think – Ammi, Abboo, I really think – that Archangels have started to talk to me' " (164). The blow he gets from his father after his revelation makes him renounce his role as a Prophet, and he immediately starts to look for a new meaning of the noise. At this point he realizes that his voices, far from being sacred, are "as profane, and as multitudinous, as dust" (168), and instead of the sublime messages transmitted through Archangels, what he hears are "the inner monologues of all so-called teeming millions, of masses and classes alike" (168). Nevertheless, despite their profane nature, Saleem's voices seem to have preserved their transcendental aspects: they transmit "thought-forms which far *transcended* words . . . the unconscious *beacons* of the children of midnight" (168, my emphasis). Both the transcendence involved in the transmissions and the beacon metaphor suggest that Saleem's voices, despite their mundane nature, have managed to preserve the semi-religious transcendence characteristic of Archangelic utterances. This rhetoric, obviously, appeals to national pedagogy to a great extent: drawing our attention away from its ambiguous origins, the noise is becoming clear, pure, and messianic.

Finally, Saleem discovers the existence of the children on his tenth birthday, due to a bicycle accident. He wants to show off his skills to the American Evie Burns, the girl he admires for her mastery of all kinds of bicycles, but, in fact, he is cycling for the first time in his life, and, unable to find the brake, crashes into his friend, Sonny Ibrahim. This accident brings the miracle of midnight to completion; similarly to the accident in the washing chest, Saleem's head is injured ("Sonny's head greeted mine," 187), as if the head, the symbol of rationality and the thinking Cogito, had to be violated so that the miraculous vision could be born (no wonder that Padma, the very principle of materialism, is absent when the accidents happen). The Midnight Children's Conference is, then, the result of a chain of accidents that persistently deny any trace of rational judgement.

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39. For the notion of trauma as "unclaimed experience" see Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1996).

With the birth of the conference, we see a conference room, a "parliament chamber" (298), an image that gives shape to formless "noise." This "parliamentary chamber," however, is not the missing vehicle of the noise metaphor: "nothing but trouble outside my head, nothing but *miracles* inside it" (207, my emphasis), writes Saleem, signalling that the terrifying noise is now perceived as a miracle. Fear and dissonance seem to have disappeared, similarly to the dirty and sinful scenario that surrounded the trope's birth, as well as the memory of the two painful accidents. When the allegory of the nation acquires a shape, its very founding metaphor is redefined; the dirty washing chest disappears, as well as the fear and terror that led to its very articulation, as if the trope had forgotten that it originates in guilt and transgression. The metaphor seems to have been purified during its search for meaning.

This is perhaps the biggest mistake that the performative nation makes. Forgetting its very genealogy, the noise wants to become a miraculous voice, a pure and sonorous utterance; when Saleem claims that " 'I heard voices yesterday. Voices are speaking to me inside my head. I think – Ammi, Abboo, I really think – that Archangels have started to talk to me' " (164), he is already guilty of sanctifying and harmonizing dissonance, since, in this way, the painful yet miraculous subjectivity involved in this discourse, the very subjectivity that the androgynous birth created, disappears, and the allegory gradually becomes transformed into an image that is not very far from those that pedagogical discourses produce. The voice attempts to be perfect, just like Saleem's empty imago in the mirror, identified by the prime minister as representative of India, and this desire gradually moves the discourse of the performative nation towards pedagogical realms.

The difference between *sound* (or noise) and *voice* captures the subtle dividing line between these discourses, which is also the dividing line between the performative and pedagogical nation in the novel. These are differentiated in the very moment that allows the intrusion of the symbolic order into the midnight's children's discourse: after the semi-articulate and transcendent "I" starts to designate the Indian nation, the miraculous community also falls apart:

> The gradual disintegration of the Midnight's Children's Conference – which finally fell apart on the day the Chinese armies came down over the Himalayas to humiliate the Indian fauj – was already well under way. [. . .] Up in Kashmir, Narada-Markandaya was falling into the solipsistic dreams of the true narcissist, concerned only with the erotic pleasures of sexual alterations [. . .] And the sisters from Baud were content with their ability to bewitch fools young and old. 'What can this Conference help?' they inquired. 'We already have too many lovers.' " (254)

When the transcendental signals become intelligible speech, and the sound is replaced by the self-conscious voice, the disintegration is unavoidable. According to Saleem, this is due to a loss that the symbolic world imposes upon the community: "If there is a third principle, its name is childhood. But it dies; or rather, it is murdered" (256). The text postulates childhood and sound as pre- or semi-symbolic states, whereas voice acts as the self-conscious, "proprietary" notion that Steven Connor defines as "the sign of a person's self-belonging."[40] As opposed to the noise that was magical but blind of its potentials, voice designates a self-conscious but pedagogical dimension of identity.

Another episode that illuminates the difference between sound and voice is the one that tells about the short career of Mian Abdullah, the Hummingbird. Abdullah, founder and chairman of the Free Islam Convocation, similarly to Saleem, offers an alternative: his Convocation aims at founding a peaceful and moderate community for the Muslim population of India. Called "optimism disease" by Saleem's grandfather, who is continuously whistling as a demonstration of his having caught the virus, Abdullah's humming evokes an inarticulate, "demonic" noise, which is similar to Saleem's noise. His followers are called "expert ventriloquists" (45): "Abdullah had the strange habit of humming without a pause, humming in a strange way, neither musical nor unmusical, but somehow mechanical, the hum of an engine or dynamo. . ." (46). The episode also underlines the fact that this noise, despite its dirty and underground nature, or, perhaps, exactly because of it, acts as an entity that promises an alternative, similarly to the guilty noise that Saleem discovers in the washing chest.

In *Midnight's Children* the most obvious manifestation of voice is the singing of Saleem's sister, Jamila. After the family moves to Pakistan, for political reasons, they discover the talent of the fifteen-year-old girl, previously called the "Brass Monkey." Her real name was so much overshadowed by the Monkey in her that Saleem has not even mentioned it before; it is only in this episode that she becomes transformed into "Jamila Singer," and her new name already indicates that, similarly to the noise of midnight's children, her Monkey-self becomes replaced by a new image that is not quite faithful to its own genealogy. She becomes a national hero, "'Pakistan's Angel,' 'The Voice of the Nation,' the 'Bulbul-e Din' or nightingale of the faith" (313), and, unlike the hesitant sound that founded the children's allegory, her voice speaks about "blind and blinding devoutness" (314) and "right or wrong nationalism" (314). Like Saleem, she is also addressed by the President, entitling her to act as the official representative of the Pakistani nation: "'Jamila daughter,' we heard, 'your voice will be a sword for purity; it will be a weapon with which

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40. Connor, p. 227.

we shall cleanse men's souls" (315). She becomes "a superhuman being, [. . .] an angel who sang to her people all days and nights" (314); her golden voice is on "Voice-Of-Pakistan Radio" (314) all the time, literally replacing the "unconscious beacons of the children of midnight" (168) that "All India Radio" transmitted. As Saleem writes, "[m]y nose, her voice: they were exactly complementary gifts; but they were growing apart" (315): his nose, the instinctual container of the noise and the androgynous organ that gives birth to the self, becomes replaced by the pure, sonorous, public and *disembodied* Voice.

Obviously, these two allegories also implicate extra-textual references, Saleem's noise acting as an allegory of India, whereas Jamila's voice as that of Pakistan.[41] (Her allegory already foreshadows how *Shame*, the novel published two years after *Midnight's Children*, imagines Pakistan as a pedagogical, artificially created nation.) Yet these tropes also speak about alternative national discourses, the "complementary gifts" (315) of noise and voice, the pedagogical and performative visions of the nation, and it is certainly not true that India is depicted as a purely miraculous entity whereas Pakistan becomes condemned as a pedagogical venture in the text; as we have seen, the body allegory addresses Saleem as the mirror of India in spectacularly pedagogical ways. The text, in addition to commenting on extra-textual events, also seems to be interested in exploring these alternative modes of speech.

The "birth" of Jamila's allegory suggests a strong parallel between her "golden voice" (313) and Saleem's accidental noise. First, her story revolves around a perforated sheet, which recalls the dirty sheets Saleem found in the washing chest and the talisman he inherited from Aadam Aziz. Jamila's family, unwilling to put the body of their beloved daughter on the stage "in front of God knows how many strange men" (312), need the help of Uncle Puffs, who comes up with a brilliant strategy that helps to make their daughter famous without revealing her face. He devises an all-concealing, white silk chadar, with a three-inch hole cut in the middle, which literally becomes the replica of Saleem's talisman, the perforated sheet through which his grandfather had first glimpsed the body of his wife: "Jamila sang with her lips pressed against the brocaded aperture, [and] Pakistan fell in love with a fifteen-year-old girl whom it only ever glimpsed through a gold-and-white perforated sheet" (313). Just like Saleem, Jamila is hiding in a secret place, yet whereas Saleem discovered the children among dirty sheets and used underwear, Jamila is standing behind a silk chadar, "heavily embroidered in gold brocade-work and religious calligraphy" (313), which literally cuts her voice off from the body that pro-

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41. For the discussion of the ambiguous balance *Midnight's Children* creates between being self-referential and evoking extra-textual events see the analysis of Hutcheon, especially chapter 10.

duces it. In contrast with Saleem's noise, which was the very locus of subjectivity, her Voice becomes a disembodied, incorporeal, free-floating, and angelic entity.

Jamila's disembodied voice, though it appears to be a superhuman entity, is one of the best instances of what Connor calls the "proprietary voice."[42] Its proprietor is, however, not the singing girl, but the collective national "we" that "fills" her voice with reference: when the Pakistani president claims that "'your voice will be a sword for purity; it will be a weapon with which we shall cleanse men's souls" (315), he literally appropriates the trope as a militant, pure, and religious metaphor, filling it with a meaning that is supposed to radiate from behind the heavily embroidered perforated sheet. The harmonious and sonorous voice acts as the exact replica of Saleem's face in the mirror: after the perfect body now we encounter the perfect voice, as if the pedagogical discourse aimed at creating a three-dimensional being in the novel. This image, in both cases, while postulating an untouchable and perfect imago, the empty Cogito of the modern nation, entirely lacks any kind of subjectivity, similarly to the modernist discourse of the nation.

In Rushdie's novel, then, the promise of subjectivity, and, therefore, of the performative nation, lies in the accidental and dirty noise. The fact that this allegory fails is due not only to the noise metaphor's unfaithfulness to its own origins, but also to the blind spots inherent in the pre-symbolic, androgynous construction itself. The androgyne proudly ignores the presence of the other in the noise (the presence that will eventually lead to its demise: Shiva, Saleem's greatest enemy, the proper son of midnight, named after the god of destruction, whom Saleem deprives of his birthright, takes revenge on the children's conference). Furthermore, these blind spots also result from a mistake that androgynous constructions often commit – namely, from the masculine pole's desire to appropriate the entire construction for himself.[43]

First, the role of Saleem's mother in the scenario remains that of the spectacle: Amina Sinai, who enters the bathroom when Saleem is hiding in the washing chest, undressing and reminiscing about her ex-lover, serves as a sinful Eve in this postmodern creation story. The mother's naked body simply triggers the events, while Saleem is busy with the act of creation; and this is indeed what we witness: a peculiar creation of the wor(l)d. The problem is that the terms themselves are not changed; the text fails to redefine gender categories in a radical way. The feminine simply serves as a spectacle, the lack against which the androgynous construction is

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42. Connor, p. 227.

43. This is also the mistake Gelpi refers to when she claims that the androgynous vision, while imagining the feminine completing the masculine, often fails to take account of the second possibility: the feminine completed by the masculine (quoted in Brian Attebery, *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2002) p. 132.

created; and the androgyne itself is too overtly defined by a desire to appropriate the whole structure (akin to Saleem's "urge to encapsulate the whole of reality," 75). The implosion is, therefore, inevitable, since the very terms themselves are incompatible with the gender-conscious argument of the text.

Second, this is the very scenario that becomes repeated in the act of narrating the novel: Saleem, the creator, urged to "encapsulate the whole of reality," narrates his autobiography to Padma, the female listener, named after the "Dung Goddess."[44] As if intending to bring back the dirt involved in the miracle of the washing chest, writing also becomes "shitting" (as Padma puts it: "what is so precious . . . to need all this writing-shiting?" 24), a dirty yet fertile act, similarly to Padma's very name. By relying on Padma, perhaps Saleem is trying to regain his subjectivity, the very dirty and disarticulate "I" that pedagogical-symbolic constructions constantly attempt to erase.[45] This grandiose project would guarantee a challenge of nationalist pedagogy, and secure some kind of subjectivity for Saleem, yet this never happens in *Midnight's Children;* he becomes a "broken creature" at the end of the novel, disintegrating in an apocalyptic vision, just like the children's "imagined community," "spilling pieces of itself into the street" (463). Therefore, in the novel the performative nation remains an enchanting yet never fulfilled promise.

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44. Several critics read Padma's figure as the epitome of the sexist nature of the novel. According to Heffernan, "Padma, to whom Saleem tells his tale, remains on the periphery of Saleem's story. Her comments are available to the reader but are never incorporated into Saleem's narrative" (p. 482). Or, as Charu Verma claims, Padma's tragedy is that her story is not incorporated in the male narrative; cf. Charu Verma, "Padma's Tragedy: A Feminist Deconstruction of Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*," in *Feminism and Recent Fiction in English*, ed. Sushila Singh (New Delhi: Prestige, 1991), 151–62. Even Brennan remarks that "there is something offensive about the way Rushdie often depicts women, beginning with the images of Padma as *Bharat Mata* and continuing more clearly in the strangely demeaning characterisations of *The Satanic Verses*" (Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World*, p. 126).

45. For the analysis of Saleem's attempt to regain his self through writing see Bényei.

Erika Mihálycsa

(un)Wordward Ho

Decreation and the Voiding of Language in Beckett's Late Prose Work

An attempt to offer inroads into Beckett's late short prose, especially the *Stirrings Still* and *Nohow On* "trilogies," the present paper proposes an exploration of the strategies by which linguistic expectations, as well as expectations pertaining to "literariness" – stable reference, figuration, allusion – are thwarted and disrupted. This overt denial of figuration creates an absence, a transgression of normal linguistic implications which does not so much eliminate as *call into being by erasing* all such implications. Its effect of extreme compression, of baring language to the bone rests mainly on the traces, on the residua of figuration/allusion which cannot be eliminated, cultural encoding which, in a context that refuses any but the strictest literal meaning, provides the peculiar linguistic humour of these texts: a humour of absences, of structures erased yet still shaping the utterance that has displaced them. A side-effect of this rigorous reduction/erasure is a peculiar excess of language: a semiosis where the signifier undergoes semantic, referential and thematic variation. This eventually results in an epiphany of language, based on the undoing of the distinction between linguistic figure and communicative phenomenon. The radically open, self-baring self-reflexive text is (in) the event of reading, even if the reading is not (in) the text.

Less. Less seen. Less seeing. Less seen and seeing when with words than when not. When somehow than when nohow. Stare by words dimmed. Shades dimmed. Void dimmed. Dim dimmed. All there as when no words. As when nohow. Only all dimmed. Till blank again. No words again. Nohow again. Then all undimmed. Stare undimmed. That words had dimmed. (*Worstward Ho, NO* 111)[1]

Beckett's late prose texts, starting where *Textes pour rien / Texts for Nothing* end, revisiting and endlessly reworking the themes and texts of the earlier fiction, seem reduction reduced. Their most striking linguistic and stylistic feature is an apparent absence of style (in the sense of Barthes's *le degré zéro de l'écriture*), a stripping of

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1. All parenthetical references are to this edition: Samuel Beckett, *Nohow On: Company, Ill Seen Ill Said, Worstward Ho. Three Novels by Samuel Beckett* (New York: Grove Press, 1996).

language to the bone – a thorough, radical minimalism that goes against all (apparent or hidden) figuration/rhetoric. As against common language use, with its wealth of clichés and idioms, and the so-called "literary language" characterized by a heightened figuration and denser rhetoric, Beckett's texts *de*create literary works that redefine the act of reading; they constitute *events* by virtue of linguistic surfaces that work as blanks, writings without style,[2] forever striving towards pure denotation, the *perfected present* of writing. This writing permanently *undoes* itself, arguably in the manner of Bram van Velde's painting as conceived by Beckett in the *Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit*[3] or, to resort to another non-literary Beckett analogy from the famous letter to Axel Kaun, it violently exposes "drops of silence within silence" – veritable narrative, linguistic "egregious gaps"[4] – akin to the pauses which tear up the musical texture of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony: "Is there any reason why that terrifyingly arbitrary materiality of the word surface should not be dissolved, as for example the sound surface of Beethoven's Seventh

2. As early as 1932 in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (ed. Eoin O'Brien and Edith Fournier, Dublin: Black Cat, 1992) the claim of "writing without style" appears with a thematic insistence in Beckett's writing: the early, exuberantly metafictional English prose works are haunted by the realization that English (Anglo-Irish) was ill fit at core for his artistic vision, in contrast with French, in which "it was easier to write without style" (*DFMW*, p. 48). In the 1937 German letter to Axel Kaun where Beckett, tripping in the wake of Mauthner and Schopenhauer, first formulates his poetics of the "Unwort," a link between "style" and "writing in formal English" appears: "And more and more my language appears to me like a veil which one has to tear apart in order to get to those things (or the nothingness) lying beyond it. Grammar and style! To me they seem to have become as irrelevant as a Biedermeier bathing suit or the imperturbability of a gentleman. A mask." (*The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1929–1940*, Vol. I, ed. Martha Dow Fehsenfeld and Lois More Overbeck. Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 518). As Beckett confided in several interviews, "stylelessness" could be achieved via French; his chosen language appeared to him as a means to "cut away the excess" and "strip away the colour," to "boost the possibility of stylelessness" and "reach pure communication": cf. James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame: The Life of Samuel Beckett* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), pp. 357, 257. Such "excess" and "colour" seem to have been stylistic flaws that Beckett associated with the stylized language and the "Anglo-Irish exuberance and automatisms" (Knowlson 357) characteristic of Revivalist writers. For a recent discussion of Beckett's resistance to the legacy of the Revival, as well as the multifaceted incorporation of the process of translation into his writing – which also allows for an echoing of the cultural anxieties regarding questions of language/style in Ireland in the aftermath of the Revival – see Emilie Morin, "Translation as Principle of Composition" in *Samuel Beckett and the Problem of Irishness* (London-N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 55–95.

3. Samuel Beckett, *Disjecta*, ed. Ruby Cohn (New York: Grove Press, 1984), pp. 138–145.

4. I borrow the term of H. Porter Abbott, as discussed in his essay "Narrative," in *Palgrave Advances in Samuel Beckett Studies*, ed. Lois Oppenheim (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 7–29.

Symphony is devoured by huge black pauses, so that for pages on end we cannot perceive it as other than a dizzying path of sounds connecting unfathomable chasms of silence?"[5] Self-reduction, responsible for the perpetuation of the work's "I'll go on," is made into the very subject and motivation of the texts that, according to Derrida, "make the limits of our language tremble."[6]

"So again and again": writing progressive self-reductions

The extent to which self-reduction becomes the subject of these writings is best exemplified by the programmatic revisiting, rewriting, ghosting of the earlier texts, which yields a dense network of intra-intertextual relationships in the late work.[7] This (meta)thematization of the text undoing, revoking and, in the event, re-establishing the prior texts tends to become "a rhetorical turn in itself, generating new substance out of opposition made of resistance, where the tools of resistance become the thing itself."[8] In this extended intra-intertext one text may generate the other (the imaginary space of *Imagination Dead Imagine,* 1965, is rewritten into

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5. *The Letters of Samuel Beckett 1920–1940*, pp. 518–19. For a discussion of Beckett's late prose in terms of musical pauses and active fragmentation see Leslie Hill, *Beckett's Fiction in Different Words* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 121–140.

6. "This Strange Institution Called Literature: An Interview with Jacques Derrida," in *Jacques Derrida: Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 1992), 33–76. In the same interview Derrida justifies his own silence on Beckett on grounds that he feels "both too close and too distant" to the author to be able to "respond" to his writing – although the constant preoccupations of his work on the one hand and, on the other hand, his identification of writing with a desire for mastery and, consequently, his claim for resisting this mastery by "affranchising oneself – in every field where law can lay down the law" in the "institutionless institution" called literature, in the same interview (36, 41) ring with an all too perceptible resonance of Beckett. For a comprehensive treatment of Beckett and/in Derrida see Asja Szafraniec, *Beckett, Derrida, and the Event of Literature* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2007).

7. I borrow the term coined by Brian Fitch, "Just Between Texts: Intra-Intertextuality," in *The Narcissistic Text: A Reading of Camus' Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 89–108; *Beckett and Babel: An Investigation into the Status of the Bilingual Work* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 23–37. Among the seminal investigations of the writing of new texts out of, or folding upon earlier texts, as well as an ever more pronounced intra-intertextual communication across Beckett's theatre and prose works, Susan Brienza's work needs to be mentioned: *Samuel Beckett's New Worlds: Style in Metafiction* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987).

8. Andrew Renton, "Disabled Figures. From the Residua to Stirrings Still," in *The Cambridge Companion to Beckett*, ed. John Pilling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 169.

Ping, 1966) or may, with a strongly self-referential gesture, "erase" the other; strategic inversions between works may undo the prior(itized) text and, in the light of this undoing, rewrite the new texts. *Enough* (1965) opens with a passage that "annuls" the prior texts, but does so with a thorough revocation of any position of authority it might seem to claim:

> All that goes before forget. Too much at a time is too much. That gives the pen time to note . . . . When the pen stops I go on. Sometimes it refuses. When it refuses I go on. Too much silence is too much. Or it's my voice too weak at times. The one that comes out of me. So much for the art and craft.
>
> (*CSP*, 186)[9]

While the first sentence seems to confer on the text a status of priority over all the previous writing, stating its definitive character, the passage withdraws all such implications by a dismissal of the text/voice as a source of authority/meaning – the text appearing, rather, as a continuous becoming whose source is located beyond the control of the voice speaking: "so much for the art and craft." At the same time the text's radical indeterminacy and general grammatical brokenness allow for contending readings of "forget" (forgot/forgotten), turning "all that goes before" into both the subject and the object of the act of forgetting, playing on a text that thematizes the failure to remember its own pre-texts.

A reverse movement, of one text generating the other, is at work in the sequence *All Strange Away* (1963–64) – *Imagination Dead Imagine* (1965) – *Ping* (1966): the title of the second is the opening of the first, while the second's dialogic opening takes up the situation of the impossible "imagination dead" where the previous text leaves it off.

> Imagination dead imagine. A place, that again. Never another question. A place, then someone in it, that again.   (*All Strange Away*, *CSP* 169)
> No trace anywhere of life, you say, pah, no difficulty there, imagination not yet dead, yes, dead, good, imagination dead imagine. Islands, waters, azure, verdure, one glimpse and vanished, endlessly, omit. Till all white in the whiteness of the rotunda.   (*Imagination Dead Imagine*, *CSP* 182)

Similarly, the closing image of *Imagination Dead Imagine*, of a "white speck lost in whiteness," is the starting point for *Ping*: "All known all white bare white body fixed one yard legs joined like sewn" (*CSP* 193) – as though the exhortation of *The Unnamable*, to *go on*, were gradually transformed into a return to/on the text

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9. All parenthetical references are to this edition: Samuel Beckett, *The Complete Short Prose, 1929–1989*, ed. S. E. Gontarski (New York: Grove Press, 1995).

to the extent that the motivation behind the late texts, indeed their subject if one may speak of a subject in the case of these *post-narrative* (or, with Porter Abbott's term, *narratricidal*) texts becomes, how to keep *re*writing.[10]

This movement towards an ever more pronounced self-referential structure and continuous self-rewriting – culminating in the three "novels" of the *Stirrings Still* trilogy – produces texts almost entirely made up of echoes from the previous prose and drama work. Always under ways to becoming a sculptural object, of which the published version is but a temporary solidification, these texts deal not with a sought-for objectivity of language but rather, with an *objecthood* of language, the ultimate stage in such "solidification" being represented by *Worstward Ho*, the untranslatable autograph. Both the *Stirrings Still* and the *Nohow On* "trilogies" seem reproposed, reiterated attempts against (the same) content, converging in their endlessly approached moment before absolute stillness. They reach a non-narrative closure of near-stasis from where it becomes ever more problematic for writing to perpetuate itself – in the event, producing an unending/unendable text where the refusal to progress, the attempt at absolute stasis turn the writing into an endlessly self-generating and self-reading text on (*so-called*) ending.

"In a word all the summits": strategies of defiguration

The language of these late prose works, obstinately refusing figuration, is continuously reduced to the physical, purely denotative sense – an "utterly bare" use of words, a language use displaying a "hidden literality," and termed "positivist" by Stanley Cavell, in its wish to escape connotation, rhetoric, the non-cognitive as well as "awkward memories of ordinary language."[11] A turning of all figuration into the strictest physical, spatial terms is one of the most striking qualities of the texts of the *Fizzles*, as Shira Wolosky points out. *Defiguring* – with Beckett's term, *voiding* – a long tradition of journey/quest-narratives (a deconstruction of which is already proposed in the anti-picaresque narrative of *Murphy*), *Fizzle 1* maps the tortuous progress of an unidentified human figure in a closed space that resembles an under-

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10. Cf. H. Porter Abbott, "Narratricide: Samuel Beckett as Autographer," *Romance Studies* 11 (Winter 1987), pp. 35–46. That Beckett's late prose works are to be read in terms of an ever denser self-referential structure and a continuous rewriting of earlier texts is an opinion almost generally shared by recent Beckett criticism; a significant contribution to reading the last "trilogies," as indicated in the title, is Charles Krance's study, *"Worstward Ho* and On-words: Writing to(wards) the Point," in *Rethinking Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Lance St John Butler & Robin J. Davis (London: Macmillan, 1990).

11. "Ending the Waiting Game," in *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 117–37, *passim*.

ground tunnel, reducing the action and all its temporal implications to a spatial, sequential movement, to the *plotting* of a course through space. The time adverbials "now, again, yet, until, at last, yet again" measure minimal *spatial* relations, "exploring just how curtailed and restricted the meanings of such terms can become when allowed to function only within the limits of spatial context."[12] The overview of this *unworded* journey cuts off almost aggressively all the moral, emotional, religious, psychological implications of progress (becoming), paring down all traditional metaphysical associations to the point where personal "history"/progress becomes a series of shifts, gropings in space:

> In any case little by little *his history takes shape*, with if not yet exactly its good days and bad, at least studded with occasions passing rightly or wrongly *for outstanding*, such as the straitest narrow, the loudest fall, the most lingering collapse, the steepest descent, the greatest number of successive turns the same way, the greatest fatigue, the longest rest, the longest – aside from the sound of the body on its way – silence. Ah yes, and the most rewarding passage *of the hands, on the one hand*, the feet, *on the other*, over all those parts of the body within their reach. And the sweetest wall lick. *In a word all the summits*. Then other summits, hardly less elevated, such as a shock so rude that it rivalled the rudest of all.
>
> (*CSP* 227–8, *my emphasis*)

The passage *un*words such words as "good, bad, outstanding, straitest narrow, fall, collapse, steepest descent" which lose all sense but that of physical/spatial dimension and direction; stripped of all figurative overtones, "all the summits" becomes an enlisting of shifts of position. This overt denial of figuration creates an absence, a transgression of normal linguistic implications/expectations which does not so much eliminate as *call into being by erasing* such expectations. At the same time, the de-figuration performed by the text returns language to the "place" where figuration "takes place" – that is, it brings about a re-figuration which is in its own way representational. The effect of scrupulous paring down rests to no little extent on the traces, the residua of figuration which cannot be eliminated, allusion, cultural encoding which, in a context that allows for the strictest literal meaning only, give the peculiar linguistic humour of these texts: "Beckett's language is literal because it defeats expected literary figures that it inevitably recalls. It is a humour of absences, of structures erased yet still shaping the utterance that has displaced them."[13] Such humour

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12. Shira Wolosky, *Language Mysticism: The Negative Way of Language in Eliot, Beckett, and Celan* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 52.

13. Wolosky, p. 53.

may be sensed in the resonance of certain clichés, turns-of-phrase, almost in spite of the text's reductions: in the text above, for instance, in the juxtaposition of the literal and figurative use of "hand" ("on the one hand"). Such a residual dead metaphor of language throws an ironic sidelight on the (explicitly) blind crawling of the character:

> For he might well have succeeded, in the end, up to a point, which would have *brightened things up for him*, nothing like a ray of light, from time to time, to brighten things up for one. And all may yet grow light, at any moment, first dimly and then – how can one say? – then more and more, till all is flooded with light, the way, the ground, the walls, the vault, without his being one whit the wiser . . . . The heart? No complaints. It's going again, enough *to see him through*.   (*CSP* 225, *my emphasis*)

Such humour, arising from linguistic expectations frustrated and underlined at the same time, constantly turning attention to the way language is conceived of, is at work already in the *Trilogy* and *Texts for Nothing*, for instance in the Unnamable's sizing up of [his] whereabouts: "From centre to circumference in any case *it is a far cry* and I may well be situated somewhere between the two"[14] – a sentence that, despite its striving to reduce all sense to the literal (if such a statement is possible at all in the context of *The Unnamable*), foregrounds the nature of the speaker, of *mere voice*. Pure denotation exposes and undermines the appeal to reference as the controlling principle of language use: if our world is defined by the use of discourse, then Beckett's late prose anatomizes discourse as the condition of living in the world/of making sense of the world. The striving of writing against figuration reveals that figuration occurs despite itself, is built in the very structure of language:

> Closed place. All needed to be known for say is known. There is nothing but what is said. Beyond what is said there is nothing. What goes on in the arena is not said. Did it need to be known it would be. No interest. Not for imagining.   (*F5*, *CSP* 236)

Another aspect of the anti-representational stance of the late prose, closely linked to the more general context of de-figurative devices, is found in the, strangely converging, strategy of making language increasingly mathematical, in the reduction of representation to mathematical formulae and quantities.[15] While this proce-

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14. Samuel Beckett, *Three Novels: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), p. 295.

15. Although the present essay merely brackets Beckett's mathematization of language, as it does not propose to address its broader implications, it must be pointed out that this pervasive trait of both the prose and (late) theatre texts is inextricably linked to the, more gen-

dure is already playfully proposed in the Cartesian framework of *Murphy* – in the inventory of Celia's body for instance, or in the movements of the chess game between Murphy and Mr Endon – it comes into its own with *Watt* and, later, *Molloy* where, other than metafictional game, fiction makes an attempt at exhaustively comprehending the "real" through turning everything into endless lists of permutations and combinations: of the dogs systematically starved to eat the rest of Knott's dinner for instance, or of Molloy's sucking stones. The late prose works keep paring down and revisiting fictional spaces and shards of narrative (physical movement), turning these to pure (mathematical) extension, geometrical dimension. In parallel with his pursuits in the works for the theatre (ranging from *Film* to the pure mathematical abstraction of *Quad*), the short prose eliminates everything but quantitative measure – number, figure, magnitude, duration, extension. In *All Strange Away* space is presented in mathematical figures: "Five foot square, six high, no way in, none out, try for him there" (*CSP* 169), continuing in the mathematization of bodily positions and sexual intercourse. Similarly, geometry takes over in the radically reified, de-realized world of "that white speck lost in whiteness" in *Imagination Dead Imagine* and *Ping*:

> Till all white in the whiteness of the rotunda. No way in, go in, measure. Diameter three feet, three feet from ground to summit of the vault. Two diameters at right angles AB CD divide the white ground into two semicircles ACB BDA. Lying on the ground two white bodies, each in its semicircle.
>
> (*CSP* 182)

> Light heat white floor one square yard never seen. White walls one yard by two white ceiling one square yard never seen. Bare white body fixed only the eyes only just. Traces blurs light grey almost white on white. Hands hanging palms front white feet heels together right angle. (*CSP* 193)

This move into mathematical reduction eerily corresponds to the reductions of literalist language: the depiction of plots by carefully calculated mathematical/geometrical configurations, lists etc., eliminates from the text all emotional experience, rendering (or, rather, bracketing) the ineffable through placement/duration –

eral, literalism of the Beckett canon. The mathematical reductions and use of mathematical figures and formulae is congruent with the physical reductions redefining reality, by a programmatic elimination of all secondary qualities, in Cartesian-Newtonian thought – a stable subtext of Beckett's early English fiction, *Murphy* and (especially) *Watt*. These novels, as well as the late short prose where all activity is systematically reduced to pure (mathematical, geometrical) extension/dimension, have long been exhaustively discussed as forging a language for reproducing the mechanistic world of Cartesian philosophy. For a treatment of Beckett's mathematization of language in the context of de-figuration see Wolosky, pp. 51–89.

in this respect, harking back to the (similarly Cartesian-minded) exhaustive pseudo-scientific cataloguing of the "real" in Joyce's "Ithaca" which manages to highlight emotion through its ostentatious absence. This radical objectifying operates through mathematics and mathematical discourse, which comprise the non-physical and the non-sensible only, thus situating itself on the "metaphysical" pole of figuration, transferring meaning to a purely figural plane. The opposite movement, of defiguration, through delimiting meaning to the strictly literal, eliminates the possibility of a figural language/reading.[16]

From "nohow" to "nohow on": writing remainders

Beckett's (late) writing comes as close as literature has ever come to eradicating the figural – yet its existence, its "for to end yet again" is made possible by the very fact that figuration, inherent in language, resists its undoing, occurring almost despite itself. The work is founded on an impossibility: in the "obligation to express," the ultimate obligation to figuration (*Three Dialogues*) coupled with the obligation to undo figuration, to resist it in/through writing – this being extensively thematized in the recurring placement of narrative under the sign of ever-deferred ending ("yet again") and ever-deferred beginning.

A text such as *Imagination Dead Imagine* does not depict, but produces its world as it "speaks";[17] starting with *Texts for Nothing*, a movement from representation to the representation of (linguistic) representation can be seen. Beckett's "hermeneutics of experience" (Locatelli) proceeds by an ongoing unwording of narrative conventions, images, structures and even of (one's own) texts; by so doing, it probes into the elementary structure of our interpretation/construction of reality – our basic mode of being in the world. In the short prose texts and the late "novels," the (apparent) content of representation is always only given in order to be exceeded by reduction, and "the destructurization of cognitive patterns becomes a

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16. Wolosky, pp. 61–64, discusses Beckett's mathematization of language in terms of Derrida's deconstruction of the structure of metaphor, as the transposition into the realm of the non-sensible of the supposedly sensible, a transposition which rests on the distinction between the sensible and non-sensible as evoked by the terms *literal* and *figural*. Mathematics, in the order of (essentially metaphysical) Western thinking, is seen to both evade and fulfil metaphoric transfer in its attempt to assert the non-sensible ("metaphysical") pole of figuration only – thus it both completes and surpasses metaphoric structure, accomplishing the transfer of meaning to a purely figural plane. Cf. Jacques Derrida, "White Mythologies," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 207–272.

17. Susan Brienza, " 'Imagination dead imagine': The Microcosm of the Mind," in *Journal of Beckett Studies* 8 (Autumn 1982) 59–74.

successive cognitive pattern, in incessant dynamism."[18] The Beckett canon shows a trajectory from negation to subtraction, from silence to "unsaying," from "over" to "*un*over"/"not – yet – again." Beckett's work is intrinsically open: "his communicative strategies question communication as they enact it; his subtractions transform words into echoes, and echoes into pure sound, still speaking; his endless combinations corrode the cultural marking of experience, and his impotence shows ineliminable creativity."[19]

The opening sentence of *Imagination Dead Imagine* in many ways foreshadows the turning of writing into a dialogical space, towards the dramatization of writing – the realization that writing/representation is an *event* which produces its world as it speaks: "No trace anywhere of life, *you say, pah*, no difficulty there, imagination not dead yet, *yes, dead, good*, imagination dead imagine" (*CSP* 182, my emphasis). In the *Nohow On* trilogy this dialogic, communicative *event*-nature of writing proposes a reassessment of language/representation as *mis*saying: from *Ill Seen Ill Said* to *Worstward Ho,* a *Sprachgeworfenheit*, a Heideggerian being-thrown-into-language as an inescapable condition is compulsively (re)enacted, where the second novel's development towards an unreachable degree zero of representation restates the fact that speech/representation cannot be eliminated simultaneously with the fact that representation is an event, the mechanism of our being in the world. Language and its use are de-mystified, all saying exposed as *mis*saying, representation shown as a chain of semiosis – yet, paradoxically, it is missaying only that allows for a never-ending (negative) perfection of failure: "Fail again. Fail better."[20] Accordingly, Beckett's critical epistemology offers a re-evaluation of speech where the linguistic system is played off against communication, reference against representation. What is made visible is the event of communication, a communication enacted in an impersonal language, exposing inescapable representation:

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18. Carla Locatelli, *Unwording the Word: Samuel Beckett's Prose Works after the Nobel Prize* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), p. 29.

19. Locatelli, p. 29.

20. The "progress" of better(ing) failure is brought into play by the very title of *Nohow On / Worstward Ho:* the textual trope of progress, grounded in the nineteenth-century language of combat, harks back to both (nineteenth-century) Christian hymnology ("Onward, Christian soldiers!") and the ideal of expansion inherent in the great exploration sagas. The title is a parodic turning inside out of Charles Kingsley's emblematic poem of the Westward course of Victorian Britain, *Westward Ho!* (1855) – itself echoing the title of John Webster and Thomas Dekker's *Westward Hoe* (1607). See Porter Abbott, "The Trope of Onwardness," in *Beckett Writing Beckett: The Author in the Autograph* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 32–42.

> On. Say on. Be said on. Somehow on. Till nohow on. Said nohow on.
> Say for be said. Missaid. From now say for be missaid.
> Say a body. Where none. No mind. Where none. That at least. A place.
> For the body. To be in. Move in. Out of. Back into. No. No out. No back.
> Only in. Stay in. On in. Still. . . .
> It stands. What? Yes. Say it stands. Had to up in the end and stand. Say
> bones. No bones but say bones. Say ground. No ground but say ground. So
> as to say pain. No mind and pain? Say yes that the bones may pain till no
> choice but stand. Somehow up and stand. Or better worse remain.
>
> (*Worstward Ho*, *NO* 89–90)

Worstward Ho is, in the Beckett canon, the text of irreducible reductions – of a "meremost minimum" of missaying. This narratricidal text (H. Porter Abbott) thematizes processes of reduction at work. If John Pilling, as early as 1982, defined the first "novel" of the *Nohow On* trilogy, *Company/Compagnie*, as a palimpsest of compressions,[21] then the label is all the more fitting for the very last prose text Beckett produced – a palimpsest resulting from extreme compression, but also because it enacts communication, positioning an undefinable "other" in the successive withdrawals of its enunciations. The opening line – starting, significantly, with the word that enacts the non-closure ending of *The Unnamable*, and which undoes any sense of an ending in *Worstward Ho* as well ("Said nohow on") – infers by its double withdrawal how any entity/condition, proposed as self-standing, independent (of human presence/will) is linked to, in as far as mediated by, human perception/linguistic interpretation ("Say on"). In a string of sentences cut back to a grammatical "meremost minimum" which makes any filling-in of the subject position impossible, the communicative mechanics of the world is enacted: if the "On" provides a (hypothetical non-human, non-mediated) background to perception/mediation, this exists/can be hypothesized precisely in the communicative movement of "Say on." The "say," the interpretive, perceptive way of being in the world is at one with *being* in the world ("on"); by the mechanics of communication, the articulation of this interpretive way of being-in-the-world presupposes the interpreter's secondary status in relation to language in which all such position is articulated (*"be said* on"). Being can be represented, articulated only as one with perception and, specifically, as one with linguistic perception, to which no subject position can be attached. "Say" at the same time functions as the basic enunciation, enactment of conjuring up, imagining, fictionalizing – cf. say a body, "say bones . . . say ground" or, "imagination dead *imagine"* an impossible imaginative act which states the going on of imagination in the moment of decreeing its death.

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21. John Pilling's review of *Company*, *Journal of Beckett Studies* 7 (Spring 1982) 127–31.

This double thematization of being-in-language is referred to a progress from "somehow" to "nohow," a "nohow" which itself is positioned as an effect of language: "said nohow on." The condition of "nohow on" can only be imagined, turned into language, it remains outside the range of experience/of the known. "*Said* nohow on," with which the novel comes full circle, functions as a double withdrawal: on the one hand, "nohow" can be perceived only inasmuch as encoded in language, "said nohow"; on the other hand, the very linguistic encodedness of "nohow *on*" defeats inasmuch as it erases/contradicts the sense of an ending. The impossibility of saying a referential "nohow" is underlined throughout the novel, connoting it as false (*mis*said nohow), for it hides the position of *being* without which it is impossible to say it; the denotative negation in "nohow" conceals the assertive position of *being* from which it is said. As an effect of repetition, a hiatus between the "subject" and predicate of sentences is illuminated, pointing at the impossibility of absolute retraction of what has been uttered: the series of retractions produce a movement of communication, enunciation. Repetition is a prime procedure in these texts for showing semantic, referential instability; thus it constitutes an outlet for semiosis, for excess of language.

What is even more striking in this text is its openness, its dialogic structure. The orientation of the sentences, their connotative function plays a more important role than their denotative message; the "what" of the information conveyed becomes secondary to the "how" of communication, bound to the subjective positions of addresser and addressee, even if these are inscribed in a text which appears as scrupulously impersonal. The text, while unwording/"unknowing" language to its attainable extreme, nevertheless attests to the presence of residua of communication – of an addressee. The presence of this addressee, indefinite and unlocalized as "it" may be, is nevertheless inscribed in each of the successive "better failures," experiences in reduction of narrative content, authorial authority:

> It stands. What? Yes. *Say* it stands. Had to up in the end and stand. *Say* bones. *No bones but say bones*. Say ground. No ground but say ground. *So as to say pain.*

Image, narrative are evoked, enacted, and cancelled in an ongoing dialogic relation; image literally takes shape, is *embodied* in/through communication, in a text which obstinately thematizes its constituent basis, the presupposition of an addressee. The text is thus permanently on the way *on*, from a source that cannot be established and that is constantly disempowered, to an equally un-definable destination, in a permanent not-yet-again of arrival, striving for an embodiment which results in a paring down of image/in disembodiment – to a textual knowing as *unknowing*. The fragment stands for the strength of linguistic creation also in charting

the process by which the signifier defers the signified, creating a play of meaning. The reoccurrence of the signifier ("stand") accounts for its semantic transformations and thus for the expression of difference: semantic variation produces by-plays of meaning ("stand" is progressively transformed into "bear"/"remain"); referential variation, similarly, produces a play of meaning ("Say bones. No bones but *say bones*") and a combinatory, entirely narrative-textual variation ("Say yes that the bones may pain till no choice but stand"). In this way, from what seems a thorough linguistic reduction/erasure (which, however, is never turned into a negation of language, but, rather, into a reaffirmation of the event of communication), a fertile play, a multiplication of meaning emerges through the progressive discrepancy between (textual/narrative) sign and (textual) referent, and the consequent high-lighting of the relation of contextual elements with *co-textual* ones. The text exposes its apparent semantic contradictions and by this act makes its reader aware of its textual enunciations – fictional (pseudo-referents) and co-textual (of the textual space). Out of a *refusal* of absolute negation a differentiation of meaning issues: "the fact that the 'said' and the 'saying' are played off one against the other. . . points to a relevant epistemic reciprocity and to a significant *difference. . .* In fact, in *Worstward Ho* Beckett often substitutes diegetical equivalents with mimetic repetitions, so that his new conception of language reveals both an uncompromising rejection of metaphysics and an equally strong interest in an *on*going reality, perceived and perceivable as *difference.*" [22]

> Know better now. Unknow better now. Know only no out of. No knowing how know only no out of. . . No place but the one. None but the one whence none. Whence never once in. Somehow in. Beyondless. Thenceless there. Thitherless there. Thenceless thitherless there. (*NO* 92)

The *un*knowing which the text seeks to bring into being, like absolute de-figuration of language, is impossible ("Know nothing *no;*" "No future in this. *Alas yes,*" *NO* 91). The attempts to eliminate knowledge, the known from words, bring about a self-renewing *linear* narrative, an onward direction of writing beginning again and again, circling the value of progressive approximations ("Fail again. Fail *better*"). The linguistic re-*present*ation of a space that would be merely "there," with the exclusion of all allusions, suggestions of direction must proceed through a "backward" movement in language ("Back is on. Somehow on. . . *Back for somehow on,*" 109), through a progress of stripping "place" of narrative, of movement "in"/ "out of." However, space can only be defined in its relations, through movement: the hypothesized space of stasis re-enacts – in the very elimination of directions, in the

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22. Locatelli, p. 241.

act of reduction – what it is seeking to void itself of: that "*thence*less *thither*less there." The suppression of progress becomes a linear, progressive narrative through excellence about the very impossibility of such suppression. The text shows how *voided* words, terms act as figurations that come closest to accommodating the void; however, since the void cannot be represented, these terms show the *presence* of something that by definition negates the qualities pertaining to the void. The text thus turns into a negative way of pointing at the void, while itself being the sum of traces, residua of this void which cannot be represented: "It is as though the text can only retain a series of signifiers which have strayed from conventional usage. These terms themselves have been voided, in place of the unavoidable scene described. In other words, this text's attempt to describe nothing generates, in spite of its primary intention, *precisely this text*."[23]

Beckett's late prose, especially the *Stirrings Still* and *Nohow On* trilogies, seem to fly in the face of representation, working against the nature of "normal" language use by taking issue with, and disrupting, linguistic expectations and expectations pertaining to "literariness": stable reference, figuration, allusion. In so doing, these texts radically foreignize language, making it visible *as* language/enunciation. Strangely, the effect of the rigorous reductions/erasures is a peculiar excess of language: a semiosis where the signifier undergoes semantic, referential and thematic variation. Extreme paring down of language produces an epiphany of language based on the undoing of the distinction between linguistic figures of communicative phenomenon: the radically open, self-baring self-reflective text is (in) the event reading, even if the reading is not (in) the text.[24]

The event of communication/writing inscribed on the text could best be exemplified by the short piece *neither* (1976) which, by its indeterminacy both of genre and voice (routinely reproduced with short line breaks suggestive of poetry, was intended by the publisher John Calder to be included in the *Collected Poems* but for the resistance of Beckett, who considered it a prose work) stands for Beckett's writing on the threshold – between poetry and prose, between voices, between languages, between "impenetrable self" and "impenetrable unself" (ill), seeing and (mis)saying, in a state of perpetually delayed arrival:

[*neither*]

to and fro in shadow from inner to outershadow
from impenetrable self to impenetrable unself by way of neither

23. Renton, p. 175.
24. Cf. Locatelli, pp. 72–74, 266; Szafraniec, pp. 109–117.

as between two lit refuges whose doors once neared gently close,
     once turned away from gently part again
beckoned back and forth and turned away
heedless of the way, intent on the one gleam or the other
unheard footfalls only sound
till at last halt for good, absent for good from self and other
then no sound
then gently light unfading on that unheeded neither
unspeakable home   (*CSP* 258)

László Munteán

Men on Wire

Performing 9/11

The horrid sight of people jumping from the burning towers on 9/11 has been identified as one of the major causes of post-traumatic stress disorder related to the terrorist attacks. One photograph, showing a man falling headfirst as though performing a dive, appeared in hundreds of newspapers the day after the tragedy but soon became a taboo, never to be published again. Nevertheless, reverberations of its traumatizing effect can be felt in a number of works of art. By applying Roland Barthes's terminology as an analytic tool, my purpose is to reveal inherent ambiguities in the photograph's iconography that render its "verticality and symmetry" a palimpsest of interlacing significations. I will then proceed to examine artistic responses to this silenced aspect of the trauma of 9/11 in Kerry Skarbakka's photographic performances, Don DeLillo's novel *Falling Man*, and James Marsh's documentary *Man on Wire*.

> "He was trapped in the fire, and decided to jump and take his own life, rather than being burned. I don't know." (Richard Drew)[1]

> "We don't like to say they jumped. They didn't jump. Nobody jumped. They were forced out, or blown out." (New York Medical Examiner's Office)[2]

In the documentary *9/11: The Falling Man*, Associated Press photographer Richard Drew recalls the instance he spotted people leaping to their deaths from the World Trade Center in the morning of September 11, 2001:

> bodies were falling, so I picked up my camera and started taking pictures. That's what I do. . . . I take the camera as sort of a filter between me and what I'm photographing. I'm only seeing what's coming through my lens and that helps me sort of stand separated I guess.

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1. Peter Howe, "Richard Drew," *The Digital Journalist* (October 2001) <http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0110/drew.htm> (last accessed: September 3, 2010).
2. Cited in Tom Junod, "The Falling Man," *Esquire* (September 2003) <http://www.esquire.com/features/ESQ0903-SEP_FALLINGMAN> (last accessed: September 3, 2010).

Upon returning to the Associated Press headquarters, Drew transferred the photos onto his computer and looked at a sequence of twelve frames showing a man falling from the North Tower. He found one of the frames so riveting that he didn't even bother scrutinizing the rest. "You learn in photo editing to look for the frame," he says. "You have to recognize it. That picture jumped off the screen because of its verticality and symmetry."[3] The next day hundreds of newspapers published the photograph to the utter dismay of their readers, who responded with letters of complaint denouncing the photograph as irreverent and subversive. Before long, it vanished from the media, along with other depictions of death related to the attacks.[4] Meanwhile, images of the planes' spectacular thrust into the towers and the subsequent explosions were replayed *ad nauseam*, so as to make the anthropomorphized towers "stand" in for the dead.[5]

The displacement of disturbing images went hand in hand with the transformation of victims into heroes, to which Rudolph Giuliani's farewell address as mayor in December 2001 was largely conducive. As he said, "Long after we are all gone, it's the sacrifice of our patriots and their heroism that is going to be what this place is remembered for. This is going to be a place that is remembered 100 and 1000 years from now, like the great battlefields of Europe and the United States."[6] But, by this rationale, if Ground Zero is conceived of as a battlefield where death constitutes a willful sacrifice for a noble cause, what exactly does Giuliani mean by sacrifice and heroism in the context of 9/11? For, paradoxically, the only deaths that involved agency on the part of the victims were those of the firefighters who were killed in the collapse and the people who jumped out of the towers to escape death by fire. This latter form of volition, however, just wouldn't pass smoothly as heroism. Ellen Borakove, spokesperson for the New York medical examiner's office, claimed that "A 'jumper' is somebody who goes to the office in the morning knowing that they will commit suicide. These people were forced out by the smoke and flames or blown out."[7] Still, as Tom Junod contends,

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3. Cited in Junod, "The Falling Man."

4. Rob Kroes, "Shock and Awe in New York City: 9/11 or 9-1-1? The Construction of Terrorism through Photographs," in *Photographic Memories: Private Pictures, Public Images, and American History* (Lebanon, NH: UP of New England, 2007), 170–183, pp. 179–180.

5. Albert Boime, "The Fate of the Image-Monument in the Wake of 9/11," in *Now. Images of the Present Time: Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal 2003*, ed. Vincent Lavoie (Montréal: Le Mois de la Photo, 2003), 189–203, p. 199.

6. Rudolph Giuliani, cited in David Simpson, *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), p. 47.

7. Cited in Dennis Cauchon and Martha Moore, "Desperation forced a horrific decision," *USA Today* (September 2, 2002) <http://www.usatoday.com/news/sept11/2002-09-02-jumper_x.htm> (last accessed: September 3, 2010).

the tag stuck early on: "They were called 'jumpers' or 'the jumpers,' as though they represented a new lemminglike class."[8]

Therefore, even if there is an acknowledgment of the hopeless situation which no one trapped inside the buildings had the power to control the term "jumper" infuses this inevitable death with the connotation of suicide.[9] Realizing the gravity of this connotation, Giuliani described this crisis of signification in an interview as "uncharted territory."[10]

Tom Junod's article "The Falling Man," which appeared in the September 2003 issue of *Esquire* magazine, was among the first to venture into uncharted territory. In the article he embarks on an investigation into the identity of the individual in Drew's photograph who (perhaps because of the import of Junod's article) came to be known as the Falling Man. Unable to identify him for certain, Junod ends his article by returning to the photograph and re-reading it as a memorial to the Unknown Soldier: "The picture is his cenotaph," he writes, "and like the monuments dedicated to the memory of unknown soldiers everywhere, it asks that we look at it, and make one simple acknowledgment. That we have known who the Falling Man is all along." On the one hand, Junod identifies the Falling Man as an everyman, but on the other hand, by rendering him an emblem of the unknown soldier, he (re)inscribes him as a hero of a war "whose end we have not yet seen."[11] Therefore, even if the article instigates bearing witness to the Falling Man, it does so by contextualizing this identification within the narrative of war (inadvertently resonating with Giuliani's and Bush's jingoistic rhetoric in the wake of 9/11) in which the disturbing ambiguities surrounding the Falling Man's death are "domesticated" as heroic sacrifice.[12]

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8. Junod, "The Falling Man"

9. As Dennis Cauchon and Martha Moore remark, "To be sure, some who fell didn't jump. Witnesses say a few people seemed to have stumbled out of broken windows obscured by smoke. But most say those jumping appeared to make a conscious choice to die by falling rather than from smoke, heat or fire" (Cauchon and Moore).

10. Phil Hirschkorn, "Giuliani Describes 9/11 Horrors," *CNN Online* (April 8, 2006), <http://www.cnn.com/2006/LAW/04/06/moussaoui/index.html> (last accessed: September 3, 2010).

11. Junod, "The Falling Man"

12. This is by no means to belittle Junod's efforts that, without doubt, mark a watershed in the discourse on 9/11 trauma. His article has been serving as a platform for a number of discussion forums on the Internet that has become a virtual site of memory for the jumpers. His article was also the inspiration behind the documentary *9/11: The Falling Man* (Henry Singer dir., Darlow Smithson Productions, 2006) which came out on Channel 4 in England in March, 2006 and debuted in the USA on September 10, 2007.

In this essay I will take another angle to Drew's photograph. By applying Roland Barthes's terminology as an analytic tool, my purpose is to reveal inherent ambiguities in the photograph's "verticality and symmetry" that inform the applications of such terms as "falling man" and "jumper." I will then proceed to discuss Kerry Skarbakka's photographic performances, Don DeLillo's novel *Falling Man* and James Marsh's documentary *Man on Wire* as sites of memory,[13] where the repressed memory of the jumpers reverberates in multiple disguises.

The Photograph

Cathy Caruth describes trauma as an "unclaimed experience"[14] which resists integration into believable[15] narrative schemes. Unable to master it, the subject unwillingly relives the traumatic experience in the form of dreams, flashbacks, and hallucinations – symptoms that Freud calls the "compulsion to repeat."[16] These unprocessed stimuli can be conceived of as *wounds* (as the original Greek meaning of 'trauma' also suggests) imprinted on the psyche. The immediacy of this traumatic imprint and its inaccessibility for the subject that it possesses is, as Caruth suggests, inherently paradoxical:

> [T]he greatest confrontation with reality may also occur as an absolute numbing to it, that immediacy, paradoxically enough, may take the form of belatedness. . . . Central to the very immediacy of this experience, that is, is a gap that carries the force of the event and does so precisely at the expense of simple knowledge and memory. The force of this experience would appear to arise precisely, in other words, in the collapse of its understanding.[17]

13. I am using the term in Pierre Nora's sense. See: Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," *Representations* 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring, 1989) 7–24.

14. Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

15. For even memory, as Roberta Culbertson reminds us, "is not the remembered at all of course, but a socially accepted fabrication, a weaving together of the thin, sometimes delicate and intertwined threads of true memory, the remembered, so that these might be told. Memory is always in the end subjected to those conventions which define the believable." Roberta Culbertson, "Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling: Recounting Trauma, Reestablishing the Self," *New Literary History* 26, 1 (Winter, 1995) 169–195, p. 179.

16. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* trans. James Strachey (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1961), p. 29.

17. Cathy Caruth, ed., *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 6–7.

In this sense, the discrepancy between the experience and the actual knowing of that experience manifests itself in a temporal void which resists semiotic categorization.

In the realm of photography, the paradoxical structure of trauma is reflected in Walter Benjamin's concept of the *optical unconscious*, which he defines in his "Little History of Photography" as a realm of experience unavailable to the human eye but registered by the technological eye of the camera.[18] This virtual quality of the photograph, which Benjamin understood as an imprint of what remains unseen, thus offers a portal to traces of the past that resist integration into narrative schemes and render the phenomenal world a fragmented void, rather than a continuous flow.[19] Thus the photograph, as Ulrich Baer remarks, "can provide special access to experiences that have remained unremembered yet cannot be forgotten."[20] By this rationale, the twelve frames captured by the unconscious optics of Richard Drew's camera in the morning of 9/11 are portals to Benjamin's virtual reality of traumatic experience that resist easy assimilation into larger narrative schemes of 9/11. The one that he chose for publication, however, significantly differs from the rest.

In order to trace the inner dynamics of this photograph's "look," I will employ Roland Barthes's concepts of the *studium* and the *punctum*, which he describes in his seminal work on photography entitled *Camera Lucida*. The former, Barthes explains, entails taste, a general sense of like or dislike of the image contingent on the observer's cultural background. Thus the *studium* elicits culturally grounded, contextual readings of the photograph.[21] This field is disturbed by Barthes's second concept, the *punctum*: "A photograph's *punctum* is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)."[22] Significantly, the *punctum* is not something inferred from the photograph, but a wound in which there is no possibility for semiotic structuring. The power of the *punctum*, as Barthes implies, does not stem

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18. Walter Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," in *Selected Writings*. Vol. 2., ed. Howard Eiland and Gary Smith. Trans. Edmund Jephott and Kingsley Shorter (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 507–530, p. 510–511.

19. This is also reflected in Benjamin's famous analysis of Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* in his "Thesis on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations,* ed. Hannah Arendt (London: Pimlico, 1999), 249.

20. Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2002), p. 7.

21. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (London: Vintage, 1993), 25–6. For a detailed discussion of Barthes's concept of photography see also: Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 453.

22. Barthes, p. 26–7.

from "my sovereign consciousness" trained to make sense of the perceived image but rather from an unconscious, unpredictable, and highly subjective reaction particular to each and every observer.

In a later section of his book Barthes discerns another type of *punctum*, which does not occur as a detail. "This new *punctum*," he writes, "which is no longer of form but of intensity, is Time, the lacerating emphasis of the *noeme* ("*that has been*"), its pure representation."[23] To demonstrate this, Barthes takes Alexander Gardner's 1865 photo-portrait of Lewis Payne, a young man sitting in shackles leaning against the prison wall, sentenced to death for attempting to assassinate the American Secretary of State.

> The photograph is handsome, as is the boy: that is the *studium*. But the *punctum* is: *he is going to die*. I read at the same time: *This will be* and *this has been*; I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake. By giving me the absolute past of the pose (aorist), the photograph tells me death in the future. What *pricks* me is the discovery of this equivalence.[24]

Now let me turn to Richard Drew's photograph and apply Barthes's terminology to its iconography. My general interest in the image is raised by its shocking content; I see a person's imminent death suspended forever in a freeze frame. The photograph informs me of a gruesome aspect of 9/11, the fact that people jumped to their deaths after the planes hit. The background texture is defined by the dazzling repetition of vertical columns; some darker, others lighter, divided by the joints between aluminum panels forming lines that run across the picture in a diagonal fashion. This holographic texture fills the background completely, providing no clue as to the building's base, top, and side, as if the same pattern were repeated endlessly beyond the frame. The section of the façade behind the falling body looks intact, although I know from context that the man's fall was precipitated by the destruction which remains invisible in the picture. My interest is also triggered by the peculiar position of the man. His fall in midair seems to be halted as he assumes a position in harmony with the verticality of the façade. Even his bent knee, which seemingly disrupts this harmony, is positioned in parallel with the delicate diagonal lines formed by the joints between the panels. For me, this is the picture's *studium*.

Where is, then, the element which disturbs this *studium* by its capacity to wound me? Indubitably, just like the other photographic and filmic representations of the jumpers, this photo also shocks viewers; but the element of shock would not

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23. Barthes, p. 96.
24. Barthes, p. 96.

amount to a *punctum* in this particular image. More than any other detail it is the man's left leg bent at the knee that irresistibly arrests my gaze. While it is the formal detail that disrupts the uniform verticality of the photograph's texture, it also reminds me of a gymnastic performance.[25] It is as though his fall (or performance rather) were a planned spectacle, a performance, completely under control. My reading of this aesthetic dimension reverberates the qualities of verticality and symmetry that informed Drew's selection of the image in the first place. But what Drew registers as pure *punctum* here seems to fold back on itself as a means to absorb the tragic context of the man's fall by juxtaposing it with the illusion of his composed posture. What happens is that the aesthetic element of the photograph, which I registered as part of my general interest (the *studium*), here sneaks *insidiously* into the realm of the *punctum* as a signifier of control.

This illusion of controlled movement, however, is dialectically counterpointed by what Barthes calls the *punctum* of intensity. In a way similar to Barthes's reading of the *Portrait of Lewis Paine*, this second *punctum* shatters my illusion of suspended time: I know that this man is going to die. In the face of impending death, Barthes longs for the boy in the Gardner photograph to live, while he knows that his fate is already written in the "past perfect," so to speak. Having seen the other frames of Drew's sequence of the man's fall, the illusion of his composure dissolves in disorder and chaos; his emblematic pose lasted only for a fraction of a second or less, visible only to the camera's eye. In the other frames he falls just like the other jumpers, limbs flailing, shirt flying off. What wounds me is not so much the nearness of death *per se* but a manifestation of this life, this composure, assumed even if for a fraction of a second, at the moment of death.

At another level of this iconographic palimpsest, the same discrepancy between what I read into his body as a voluntary act (*punctum* as detail) and his inevitable death awaiting him (*punctum* as time) morphs into a disconcerting connection between them. For the element of agency, which I ascribe to the position of the body, simultaneously posits death a result of a voluntary act, whereby the man's

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25. There are a few other photographs on the Internet that offer similar interfaces for identification. Each of them features a detail that evokes well-imbedded cultural practices: in one photo a man seems to be holding his cell phone to his ear while jumping out of a gaping hole of smoke and fire; another photograph shows two people holding hands in their fall with the façade of one of the towers occupying the right side of the picture; while in another one a man seems to be falling with arms and legs "raised" skyward as though looking constantly upwards. Still another image, in Tom Junod's description, "shows people jumping in perfect sequence, like parachutists, forming an arc composed of three plummeting people, evenly spaced" (Junod, "The Falling Man").

controlled pose lends itself to be read as a cipher for suicide. Junod's slightly euphemistic phrasing in his article registers this unsettling effect as follows:

> Some people who look at the picture see stoicism, willpower, a portrait of resignation; others see something else – something discordant and therefore terrible: freedom. There is something almost rebellious in the man's posture, as though once faced with the inevitability of death, he decided to get on with it; as though he were a missile, a spear, bent on attaining his own end.[26]

What Junod describes through the paradoxical notion of a "terrible freedom" is in fact realized in the act of decision leading to the transgression of the taboo against suicide. Freedom is "discordant" because it constitutes a transgression of a norm which informs the viewer's gaze. For the falling man is never just perceived but, by virtue of being perceived, he is also *produced* as an object of the gaze which renders his act "discordant" with the norm. At stake here is a discordance of discordance, a transgression of the suicide taboo on the one hand and, simultaneously, a destabilization of the discursive mechanism that activates that taboo as a norm to be applied.[27] What manifests itself as a discordance, however, is thus not merely the transgression of the suicide taboo itself but the crisis of signifying processes that infuses the taboo against suicide into the confluence of the illusion of artistic performance and the realization of the inevitability of death.

The uncanny[28] emergence of the phantasmagoria of suicide constitutes a *punctum* which is neither a detail nor a temporal category, though intimately related to both. Borrowing Petra Rau's term, which she coins in her analysis of Rachel Seiffert's *The Dark Room*, I would call this a *spectral punctum*,[29] which stems from the peculiar position of the man – the same pose which allows me to invest it with the illusion of a gymnastic performance. As this aesthetic aspect trickles into the *punctum* without ceasing to be a *studium*, I recontextualize the man's fall as a performance, which simultaneously dovetails with the *punctum* of time, that is, my knowledge of his death in the past. As part of the visual palimpsest thus formed, behind the man's *fall* a phan-

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26. Junod, "The Falling Man."

27. See Enikő Bollobás, *They Aren't Until I Call Them: Performing the Subject in American Literature* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010), 71–96.

28. Throughout the essay I am using this term in Freud's sense. See: Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" in *The Uncanny,* trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003), 121–162.

29. "It occurs," she writes, "when the photograph comes to subjectively represent what its content does not record and cannot denotatively signify." Petra Rau, "Beyond Punctum and Studium: Trauma and Photography in Rachel Seiffert's *The Dark Room," Journal of European Studies* 36 (2006) 295–325, p. 298.

tasmal image of his *jump* comes into the open, without being denotatively exposed in the picture. Just as the photographic images in Seiffert's *The Dark Room* acquire a *spectral punctum* by becoming "'loaded' or supplemented with the signification of the other pictures,"[30] so does the *Falling Man* subscribe to a similar dynamic. Like the "wound" inflicted on the building that will subsequently cause its (and his) inevitable fall, the locus of the man's imagined jump settles in as a *specter* evoked contextually through my memories of other photographs and videos of the 9/11 jumpers. As the iconographic signifiers of artistic performance unleash the specter of suicide, his act comes to signify a contrived, macabre spectacle. Unlike the *punctum* as detail, which arrests my gaze at the level of denotation, the *spectral punctum* emerges uncannily from the *studium*, and exerts its effect at the connotative level. If the *spectral punctum* points to what is unseen, it is through the intrusion of this "blind field"[31] that the photograph becomes imbued with the uncanny.

Set against the monotonous verticality of the World Trade Center's façade, the position of the body simultaneously harmonizes with and contrasts the building's texture. Although his limbs are parallel with the girders behind him, the body of the Falling Man can also be perceived as a wound inflicted not so much on the face of the towers but on our anthropomorphized perception of the towers.[32] Shortly after the fall of the WTC, various entailments of the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE BUILDINGS emerged in many textual and graphic representations of 9/11. Within this urge to render anthropomorphic qualities to inanimate objects, the World Trade Center also acquired such attributes.[33] The *Falling Man*, however, subverts this conceptual dynamic of metaphorization with the intrusion of the target domain's (people) corporeality into the picture. Perfectly enveloped by the architecture behind him, the man in Drew's image constitutes a "discordant" echo of Leonardo's Vitruvian Man, whose body stands as an ideal measure for the built

30. Rau, p. 305.

31. Barthes, p. 57.

32. George Lakoff's essay "Metaphors of Terror" is illustrative of this process of attributing human qualities to buildings: "Tall buildings are metaphorically people standing erect. As each tower fell, it became a body falling. We are not consciously aware of the metaphorical images, but they are part of the power and the horror we experience when we see them. [...] If we metaphorize the building as a person and see the building fall to the ground in pieces, then we sense – again unconsciously but powerfully – that *we* are falling to the ground in pieces. Our systems of metaphorical thought, interacting with our mirror neuron systems, turn external literal horrors into felt metaphorical horrors." George Lakoff, "Metaphors of Terror," in *The Days After* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, September 16, 2001), <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/News/911lakoff.html> (last accessed: September 3, 2010).

33. Marita Sturken, Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 222.

environment around him.[34] The Falling Man, on the other hand, is defined by the architecture that enfolds him, evoking the inseparability of architectural debris and human remains in the ruins of the World Trade Center (and their hasty removal from the site).[35] In this sense both the ruins and the photographs of the jumpers had the potential to undermine the prevailing trend of anthropomorphizing the towers insofar as they translate the PEOPLE ARE BUILDINGS conceptual metaphor on the *terrain vague* of the metonym.[36]

Ironically, the monotony of the towers' geometrical façade,[37] which defines the texture of the photograph, offers nothing but the falling body as a fixed point of reference to hold onto. Because my gaze cannot rest on any other detail but the man himself, my position as a spectator is destabilized by the holographic texture of the photograph. Even though he does not look into the camera, he stares back at me. The closer I look, the less I see of his face, and the more foreign he becomes in his uncanny familiarity. This potential of the photograph to return the gaze of the viewer becomes a cipher for what Caruth calls the "unclaimed experience" of trauma, which reverberates in the works of art I am going to discuss in the following.

The Suspended Signifier: Kerry Skarbakka

Chicago, June 14, 2005. A cantilever structure equipped with pulleys and wires protrudes from the roof of the Museum of Contemporary Art to keep performance artist Kerry Skarbakka from hitting the ground, as he gets ready to jump off the museum's roof over 30 times in his first public performance. With each jump, sus-

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34. For a psychoanalytic analysis of the role of Vitruvian proportions in our appropriation with the built environment see: Neil Leach, "*Vitruvius Crucifixus:* Architecture, Mimesis, and the Death Instinct" in *Body and Building: Essays on the Changing Relation of Body and Architecture,* ed. George Dodds and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002), 210–25.

35. In her essay Patricia Yaeger points to the uncanny amalgam of human remains, architectural refuse, and poisonous residuum that the towers' ruins contained. "This is dirt that bites back, that does not lend itself to the cleanliness of ceremony" Patricia Yaeger, "Rubble as Archive, or 9/11 as Dust, Debris, and Bodily Vanishing" in *Trauma at Home: After 9/11,* ed. Judith Greenberg (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 187–94, p. 189.

36. I would like to thank Martin Kayman for calling my attention to this detail.

37. The repetition of vertical and horizontal lines dazzled the eye of the observer and exerted a hypnotic power, as Charles Jencks commented years before 9/11: "The effect of extreme repetition may be monotony or a hypnotic trance: positively it can elicit feelings of the sublime and the inevitable because it so incessantly returns to the same theme." Cited in Eric Darton, *Divided We Stand: A Biography of New York's World Trade Center* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 128.

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pended in midair, Skarbakka assumes various body positions as though captured in a freeze frame witnessed by a sizable group of onlookers and journalists. Almost immediately after the event, however, he finds himself in the crossfire of harsh criticism – primarily from New York. Mayor Michael Bloomberg denounces the performance as "nauseatingly offensive" and Governor George Pataki calls it "an utter disgrace."[38] All the charges raised against him seem to give the same reading to his performance: a distasteful and irreverent reenactment of the horrors of 9/11.

In his apology, Skarbakka acknowledges that images of people falling from the twin towers on 9/11 have partially inspired his work but no work of art, he claims, can be reduced to one single message. "In the past few years," he writes, "I have fallen from trees, porches, bridges, train trestles, stairways, ladders, roofs, mountains, volcanoes, water towers, fences and billboards – without anyone ever mistaking my work for a representation of our national tragedy."[39] What was it, then, about his performance in Chicago that caused such outrage?

Prior to the event Skarbakka had been working in isolation from the public eye, taking leaps of faith and breathtaking jumps solely for photographic documentation. In Chicago, for the first time in his career, he intended to include the public, which certainly did not go unnoticed by the media. Nevertheless, beyond such signifiers as the suit and the modernist façade, that may have been regarded by many as direct references to 9/11, Skarbakka's incorporation of performance and photography in his art or, more precisely, his performative use of photography, entails a number of other constellations of the uncanny that can be productively read as an artistic response to the traumatizing sight of the falling bodies of 9/11. If performance appears as a *spectral punctum* connoting suicide in the *Falling Man* photograph, what significations are present in the continuum of body-performance-photography in Skarbakka's work?

Before returning to his controversial performance in Chicago, let me explain the "mechanics" of Skarbakka's photo-performances by turning to his earlier work. In the photographs included in his first photo-series, entitled *The Struggle To Right Oneself*, we see him slipping, jumping, and falling in various circumstances, giving evidence of the artist's compulsive return to the experience of falling. Some of his images capture banal accidents in the home (*Kitchen*, *Naked*, *Stairs*, *Studio*, *Shower*), while others recall action movies (*Engulfed*, *Fence*, *Interstate*) and even mythological scenes, as Henry Thaggert's comparative analysis of Skarbakka's *Na-*

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38. Cited in Fred Camper, "Is Art Defaming 9/11 Deaths?" (July 10, 2005) <http://www.skarbakka.com/portfolios/lifegoeson_statement.htm> (last accessed: September 3, 2010).

39. Cited in Camper.

ked and Rubens's *Abduction of Ganymede* demonstrates.[40] Thaggert views Skarbakka's photographic performances as a sequence of an unfolding narrative of an allegorical Everyman's physical and metaphorical struggle with gravity's pull.[41]

No matter how convincingly "real" the accidents may appear, Skarbakka's performances are staged leaps and jumps, often secured by safety harnesses which he digitally erases from the final image. In her essay "Anxiety and Remediation: The Photographic Images of Kerry Skarbakka," Corey Dzenko explains how Skarbakka uses digital manipulation in order to remediate the illusion of photographic immediacy and, simultaneously, redirect attention to the image's constructedness. For instance, in *Naked*, which Thaggert compares to Rubens's *Abduction of Ganymede*, Dzenko traces manifestations of hypermediacy in such obvious signifiers of a staged performance as the "improbable positioning of the man and the overall quality of exaggeration."[42] Technology would certainly allow Skarbakka to avoid the risks of bodily performance by constructing his images completely through digital means but, as Dzenko argues, being aware of the entire process of Skarbakka's work "allows for a dynamic understanding of the ambiguity of his images as they shift between transparent documents of his body projection and digitally altered photographic constructs."[43] What seems to be at work here is a process of remediation, a digital camouflage designed to feign immediacy, which, in a self-referential gesture, becomes revealed as a staged performance. Immediacy, a central constituent of both Benjamin's and Barthes's approach to photography, here becomes not an intrinsic quality of the image, as Benjamin's notion of the *optical unconscious*

40. Henry Thaggert, "Kerry Skarbakka: Art that Takes Risks," For the exhibition *Kerry Skarbakka and Marla Rutherford: Re-Presenting the Portrait,* June 30–August 4, 2007 (Washington: Irvine Contemporary, 2007) <http://irvinecontemporary.com/pub/Thaggert-Skarbakka-Essay-IrvineContemporary.pdf> (last accessed: September 3, 2010).

41. Skarbakka's statement for his series *The Struggle to Right Oneself* reads: "Philosopher Martin Heidegger described human existence as a process of perpetual falling, and it is the responsibility of each individual to catch ourselves from our own uncertainty. This unsettling prognosis of life informs my present body of work. I continually return to questions regarding the nature of control and its effects on this perceived responsibility, since beyond the basic laws that govern and maintain our equilibrium, we live in a world that constantly tests our stability in various other forms. War and rumors of war, issues of security, effects of globalization, and the politics of identity are external gravities turned inward, serving to further threaten the precarious balance of self, exaggerating negative feelings of control," <http://www.skarbakka.com/portfolios/struggle_statement.htm> (last accessed: September 3, 2010).

42. Corey Dzenko, "Anxiety and Remediation: The Photographic Images of Kerry Skarbakka," *Hemisphere: Visual Cultures of the Americas* Vol. 1. (Spring 2008) 83–91, pp. 85–6.

43. Dzenko, p. 87.

would suggest, but a mediated surface of representation, a series of "Constructed Visions," as the general title to Skarbakka's work on his website also indicates.[44] In Benjamin's terms, as we have seen, the *optical unconscious* constitutes a portal to an instance of reality which remains inaccessible to the human eye but is registered by the camera. If, as Ulrich Baer asserts, "[p]hotographs can capture the shrapnel of traumatic time,"[45] Skarbakka's photographs dramatize that instance by approximating it through multiple layers of mediation.[46] By way of simultaneously constructing and deconstructing the illusion of immediacy, the images expose themselves as palimpsests of re-mediated performatives.

For my purposes here the photograph entitled *Sarajevo* (2003) in the series *The Struggle to Right Oneself* is illustrative of such a palimpsest. The picture is dominated by a massive cantilever structure built out of concrete. What was once a robust superstructure supported by the cantilever is now in ruins. In the foreground a man falls at such a speed that the contours of his arms and legs are blurred, but his white shirt and tie can be clearly discerned. He seems to be screaming in panic and looking straight into the camera. Although the title contextualizes the ruin as an architectural trace of violent destruction from the Bosnian War of 1992–1995, the iconography of the image cannot be reduced to a single historical reference. His shirt and tie, for instance, lend themselves to be recognized as signifiers of the business-related function of the building he is falling from. And even if the deformed chunks of thick ferroconcrete and the gigantic cantilever are architecturally alien to the World Trade Center, the businessman captured in freefall, with the ruin behind him, strongly resonates with the iconography of the images of the 9/11 jumpers. Similarly to pictures like Richard Drew's *Falling Man*, the face of the person remains indiscernible but, unlike in Drew's photograph, the man in *Sarajevo* looks into the camera in a gesture of acknowledging our presence as witnesses and, by doing so, Skarbakka's photograph dramatizes the effect of the returned gaze we have traced in the *Falling Man*. Paradoxically, he is the one who "holds" us in his gaze while we seem to be "falling" short of a narrative to hold onto him.

In the context of the other photographs, *Sarajevo* attests to an entropic repetition of traumatic experience. Because Skarbakka's staged falls are digitally remedi-

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44. <http://www.skarbakka.com/index.htm> (last accessed: September 3, 2010).

45. Baer, p. 7.

46. Among the many precursors to Skarbakka's jumps Yves Klein's *Leap Into the Void* from 1960 comes to mind as an obvious parallel to explore. As Klein's original performance remained undocumented, the photographic "document" of his jump is a manipulated image depicting a reenacted performance. See: Rebecca Schneider, "Solo solo solo," in *After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance,* ed. Gavin Butt (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 23–47.

ated to create the illusion of photographic immediacy, his performances can be seen as approximations of the inaccessible, a language that defies, even as it demands, a working through of trauma. For *Sarajevo* is not a reenactment of 9/11 *per se*, not even of the tabooed images of the jumpers, but a palimpsest of potential configurations that, like the ruin itself, operates through voids and hauntings and rejects being read as a logically comprehensible narrative.

Before his scandalous performance in Chicago in 2005, Skarbakka had been quite open about identifying the traumatic sight of people jumping to their deaths on September 11 as an inspiration behind his work. In an interview made shortly before his performance in Chicago, he said: "I wanted to be able to respond intelligently, conceptually, responsibly to what was going on. . . . They had released themselves completely. They left the constructs of society, they left their family, they left their bills they had to pay. They left everything but the choice of what they were going to do in their final moments."[47] After the Chicago-event though, such references would completely vanish from Skarbakka's statements.

Now let me return to the series of photographs entitled *Life Goes On*, taken at the Museum of Modern Art in Chicago. Unlike in Skarbakka's earlier work, public spectatorship plays a major role in the series. The last two pictures of the seven-frame sequence do not show the artist at all but merely the crowd watching and photographing his performance. Entitled *Ratings*, these photographs generate rather ambiguous meanings. On the one hand, the wide-eyed onlookers staring at something we do not see but know from context (*studium*) serve as evidence for the event as a public spectacle. On the other hand, in the context of the other photographs, which show Skarbakka falling from the top of the museum with the safety harnesses digitally erased from the images, the gaze of the onlookers in *Ratings* is similarly manipulated insofar as they are "made" to witness a horrific sight (even if we know from the *studium* that Skarbakka survived the performance). In this sense these photographs also evoke the journalistic method of making the spectators' facial expressions euphemistically stand in for the shocking experience that *they* see but the viewer of the photograph cannot.[48]

Similarly to the role of the ruin in *Sarajevo*, the museum's façade in each photograph of *Life Goes On* defines the background texture of Skarbakka's performance. On the one hand, as part of the *studium*, the museum "houses" his

47. Tori Marlan, "To Leap Without Faith," *Chicago Reader* (June 10, 2005) 28–29, p. 29.

48. The inclusion of these photographs evokes a journalistic method of implying the presence of horror by euphemistically showing the facial expressions of the spectators. Barbie Zelizer describes this technique in connection with media representations of 9/11. Barbie Zelizer, "Photography, Journalism and Trauma," in *Journalism after 9/11,* ed., Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allan (New York: Routledge, 2002), 48–68, pp. 62–3.

performance as art – both physically and metaphorically. But the negative press he received after his performance suggests that his jumps at the museum created a virtual screen for the 9/11 jumpers to emerge as a *spectral punctum*. Although charges against Skarbakka's "disgraceful" performance had been raised before he finished work on the photographs, I would suggest that the photographs' iconographies constitute ciphers for further reverberations of 9/11's falling bodies.

In *Onlookers* and *Con-emporary*, the camera's gaze gives us the illusion that we see what everybody else does but, because Skarbakka digitally retouches the photographs, the viewer of the photograph sees the "horror" (the absence of the safety harness) that the onlookers cannot. The *différance* that the artist exerts by retouching the photographs is in fact symptomatic of his compulsion to project himself into a *different* fall, one that irreversibly leads to death, with which the photographs are never "contemporary," so to speak. The rigging that suspends his fall thus serves as an uncanny simulation of the shutter of the camera like that of Richard Drew, whose unconscious optics "caught" the falling man in a freeze frame. The application and the subsequent erasure of the safety harness in the photographs attests to a layer of mediation which simultaneously constructs and deconstructs the illusion of reality. Even if the body positions he assumes in *Onlookers*, *Freefall*, and *Office* seem perfectly plausible by dint of giving the illusion of photographic immediacy, in the context of the *studium* they reveal themselves as hypermediated images.

Similar instances of hypermediacy can be traced in *Office*, in which the cross-shaped mullions of a window divide the picture into four squares of equal size. An office-worker typing on her computer in the lower left quarter looks completely unaware of the man falling outside her window, occupying the upper right quarter of the image. Obviously staged, the picture operates with clearly identifiable visual emblems. Rather than belonging to the museum, the transparent office space is projected into the skyline of soaring skyscrapers visible in a distance. This gesture, in turn, anchors Skarbakka's fall into an environment imbued with signifiers of corporate capitalism. Situated in a hypermediated context, the modern skyscraper, the office equipped with computers and telephones constitute synecdochic signs of the experience of modernity, a *studium* punctured by the obtrusive presence of the falling man as an uncanny other of the indefatigable progress with which he is rendered contemporary. The four equal squares defining the background of *Office* constitute metonyms of the Cartesian grid of the American city and at once rationalize the fall as isolatable to a single "block." The imposition of the grid is similarly palpable in *Freefall*, where the artist's body is "wedged" between two buildings, photographed from underneath. Even more significantly, however, the unremitting logic of the grid also resonates with the title of the series *Life Goes On*. Similarly to the

cliché "so it goes," which accompanies every death in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse 5*,[49] the platitudinous *Life Goes On* signifies death by rendering it unmarked. This gesture implies a critique of modernity which invites the recognition of 9/11's falling bodies not so much in the context of terrorism but rather as an "intertext" dovetailing with the falling bodies of such earlier events as the Stock Market Crash of 1929, and the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911, which forced dozens of workers to jump to their deaths from the burning building.

This brings me to *Con-emporary*, the lead photograph of the series. In this image, unlike in the others, Skarbakka is construed as a businessman levitating above the museum's entrance doors in an upright position. The erasure of the safety harness features Skarbakka in such an improbable pose that it immediately reveals his fingerprint on the image's *optical unconscious*. The artist even gives textual manifestation of this *différance* in the retouched photograph. From the museum's name, written on the overhang, the words "museum" and "art" have been digitally removed, leaving only "contemporary" in place. But even in this word a photographer's head blocks the letter "t" which the artist marks with a hyphen in the picture's title. When viewed in the sequence of the other letters, the absence of the "t" is hardly noticeable but, in a way comparable to William Carlos Williams's incorrect spelling of "unsignificantly" in his poem "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus,"[50] a gesture by which Icarus's fall is signified, the absence of the "t" becomes a marked hiatus in the typographical sign of the hyphen. Even if it reads like "contemporary," it is not so, because reading it as such already constitutes an imposition of a semantic grid, in which the "t" is inserted in the performative act of reading. The hyphen, which marks the void of the letter as negative space, also becomes a "structuring absence,"[51] one that self-reflexively exposes the layers of mediation that Skarbakka implements to create the illusion of immediacy.

Through digitally erasing the evidence of harness Skarbakka probes death-by-falling, from which the harness keeps him at a remove. What Benjamin identifies as photography's potential to reveal "image worlds, which dwell in the smallest things,"[52] appears as an uncharted territory which Skarbakka relentlessly constructs and deconstructs in his photo-performances. The act of retouching the photographs thus evinces the structure of traumatic reenactment, a gesture by which he compul-

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49. Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse 5 or the Children's Crusade – A Duty-Dance with Death* (London: Vintage, 1991).

50. Cf. "unsignificantly / off the coast / there was // a splash quite unnoticed / this was / Icarus drowning" in *The New Anthology of American Poetry: Modernisms 1900–1950,* Vol. 2., ed. Steven Gould Axelrod et al. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), p. 251.

51. I am using the term in Ulrich Baer's sense. Baer, p. 12.

52. Benjamin, "Little History," p. 512.

sively projects his body into the *optical unconscious* of *other* images, images such as Drew's *Falling Man*, where the problem of simultaneously abandoning and exercising control,[53] as we have seen in the earlier section, is most lucidly put to the test. As he writes in his artistic statement, "The captured gesture of the body is designed for plausibility of action which grounds the image in reality. However, it is the ambiguity of the body's position in space that allows and requires the viewer to resolve the full meaning of the photograph. Do we fall? Can we fly? If we fly then loss of control facilitates supreme control."[54]

"Organic Shrapnel": David Janiak

The wreckage of the towers at Ground Zero was still smoldering when Don DeLillo, among many other writers, was asked to respond to the event. "The writer begins in the towers," he writes, "trying to imagine the moment, desperately. Before politics, before history and religion, there is the primal terror. People falling from the towers hand in hand. This is part of the counter-narrative, hands and spirits joining, human beauty in the crush of meshed steel."[55] This effort to "imagine the moment," which haunts Skarbakka's alchemy of performance and photography, is palpable in Don DeLillo's novel *Falling Man* (2007).

At the beginning of *Falling Man* DeLillo's concern to "imagine the moment" manifests itself in his formulation of the body-building continuum. The male protagonist Keith, an ex-husband, stumbles out of the burning towers with his friend's blood on his shirt. "He heard the sound of the second fall, or felt it in the trembling air, the north tower coming down, a soft awe of voices in the distance. That was him coming down, the north tower."[56] Here DeLillo registers a strong sense of corporeal displacement represented linguistically – an ambiguity which pervades the entire novel. The pronoun *him* simultaneously refers to Keith escaping and the personified tower falling; him becoming the tower and the tower becoming him in the form of the ruin (and, more specifically, in its uncanny combination of architectural debris

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53. As Tori Marlan writes in the *Chicago Reader* days before Skarbakka's infamous performance, "The jumpers became a catalyst for a photographic exploration of the idea of control, an important factor in Skarbakka's own life and one he believed both spoke to the human condition and had political resonance" (Marlan, p. 29).

54. Skarbakka's statement for his series *The Struggle to Right Oneself* <http://www .skarbakka.com/portfolios/struggle_statement.htm> (last accessed: September 3, 2010).

55. Don DeLillo, "In the Ruins of the Future," *Harper's Magazine* (December 2001), 33–40, p. 39.

56. All parenthesized references are to this edition: Don DeLillo, *Falling Man* (New York: Scribner, 2007), p. 5.

and human remains). Once in the hospital, he learns about a peculiar phenomenon that takes place in the aftermath of suicide bombings. "In those places where it happens, the survivors, the people nearby who are injured, sometimes, months later, they develop bumps, for lack of a better term, an it turns out this is caused by small fragments, tiny fragments of the suicide bomber's body" (16). Although the doctor assures Keith that he doesn't have any "organic shrapnel" in his skin, the concept gains both physical and metaphorical dimensions in connection with the dynamics of traumatic experience registered as a wound of the body, yet withheld from conscious processing: "The dead were everywhere, in the air, in the rubble, on rooftops nearby, in the breezes that carried from the river. They were settled in ash and drizzled on windows all along the streets, in his hair and on his clothes" (25).

Metaphorically, a manifestation of the organic shrapnel can be traced in the performances of David Janiak, an artist known in the city as the "falling man." With his body harnessed to a rudimentary rigging, he appears at crowded places in New York only to jump and remain hanging upside-down, assuming the pose well-known from Richard Drew's photograph. Upon learning about Janiak's death (apparently of natural causes), Keith's ex-wife, Lianne, googles the performance artist and finds a heated dispute over the bodily position he maintained suspended.

> She did not read further but knew at once which photograph the account referred to. It hit her hard when she first saw it, the day after, in the newspaper. The man headlong, the towers behind him. The mass of the towers filled the frame of the picture. The man falling, the towers contiguous, she thought, behind him. The enormous soaring lines, the vertical column stripes. The man with blood on his shirt, she thought, or burn marks, and the effect of the columns behind him, the composition, she thought, darker stripes for the nearer tower, the north, lighter for the other, and the mass, the immensity of it, and the man set almost precisely between the rows of darker and lighter stripes. Headlong, free fall, she thought, and his picture burned a hole in her mind and heart, dear God, he was a falling angel and his beauty was horrific. (221–222)

Janiak's performance slides from freefall to a standstill, with his fall suspended by a harness, in a way similar to Skarbakka's harness and the unconscious optics of Drew's camera "catching" the Falling Man. His public performance is like a flash; an uncanny reenactment, the sight of which does not provide an easy exit. His repeated appearances also subscribe to a compulsion to repeat, symptomatic of the post-traumatic phase, as he renders his performance and the place that it transforms (like Skarbakka's constructed visions) a virtual site of memory.

MEN ON WIRE

On one occasion Janiak performs at the subway station at 125th Street. Lianne sees him standing still and begins to understand his purpose:

> She thought of the passengers. The train would bust out of the tunnel south of here and then begin to slow down, approaching the station at 125ᵗʰ Street, three-quarters of a mile ahead. It would pass and he would jump. There would be those aboard who see him standing and those who see him jump, all jarred out of their reveries or their newspapers or muttering stunned into their cell phones. These people had not seen him attach the safety harness. They would only see him fall out of sight. Then, she thought, the ones already speaking into phones, the others groping for phones, all would try to describe what they've seen or what others nearby have seen and are now trying to describe to them.
>
> There was one thing for them to say, essentially. Someone falling. Falling man. She wondered if this was his intention, to spread the word this way, by cell phone, intimately, as in the towers and in the hijacked planes.
>
> (164–165)

In line with the dazzling texture of Drew's photograph in which the Falling Man paradoxically constitutes a fixed point of reference, here Janiak's performance renders the fall a sequence of still images framed by the windows of the subway. By doing so, his performance reenacts the dazzling effect of Drew's sequence suspended at the well-known frame. While his pose is controlled, the passengers catching sight of him continue their ride *irreversibly* to the next stop.

One might be tempted to suggest, as Kristiaan Versluys does, that in DeLillo's novel David Janiak stands in "for the people who had no choice but to submit to their fate."[57] However, Lianne's fixation on the work of the performance artist demonstrates that, on the contrary, he stands in for the ambiguity and uncertainty surrounding their choice to take the fall. In Lianne's eyes the "flash" of the performance is punctured by a *spectral punctum* which compels her to reconnect with an experience predating 9/11. For her, Janiak's jump is an embodied yet hollow cipher for the suicide of her own father. By watching Janiak's performance, she is visually confronted with her own silenced trauma. Upon witnessing one of the jumps, Lianne conveys her ponderings in free indirect speech: "Jumps or falls. He keels forward, body rigid, and falls full-length, headfirst, drawing a rustle of awe from the schoolyard with isolated cries of alarm that are only partly smothered by the passing roar of the train" (168). Then she starts running, as if losing control over her body:

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57. Kristiaan Versluys, *Out of the Blue: September 11 and the Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 23.

> She thought, Died by his own hand.
>
> She stopped running then and stood bent over, breathing heavily. She looked into the pavement. When she ran in the mornings she went long distances and never felt this drained and wasted. She was doubled over, like there were two of her, the one who'd done the running and the one who didn't know why.   (169)

In a deferred fashion Janiak's performance activates a repressed memory that surfaces in the form of a fragment "Died by his own hand" (67, 218) – perhaps written in the coroner's report upon her father's death. As a recurring textual trace the sentence becomes a catalyst of traumatic displacement evidenced by her psychosomatic drive to run without a logically comprehensible reason, indicating her body, and not her mind, as the "knower."

It is through the traumatic memory of the suicide of Lianne's father that Janiak's performances retroactively inscribe the taboo of suicide into the context of 9/11. As a haunting void, it resonates not so much with Skarbakka's work *per se*, a parallel that might seem obvious in the first place, but, more specifically, with such pitfalls of interpretation as the marked absence of the letter "t" in *Con-emporary* and the presence of 9/11 as a *spectral punctum* in *Sarajevo* and *Life Goes On*. DeLillo's novel does not offer any resolution. Tom Junod remarks on this as a shortcoming: "It's a portrait of grief, to be sure but it puts grief in the air, as a cultural atmospheric, without giving us anything to mourn."[58] And yet it is precisely by not giving anything to mourn that DeLillo keeps his narrative from becoming a narrative of mourning. Instead, what he offers is a textual performance of Drew's photograph insofar as his fragmented, ruinous prose configures a narrative void that simultaneously defies and demands our act of witnessing.

Man on Wire: Philippe Petit

Let me return to performance art now – one that took place 36 years ago. The towers of the World Trade Center were still under construction when the French tightrope walker Philippe Petit stepped on his wire which he and his associates had strung illegally between the two towers the night before. It was 7:15 am, August 7, 1974. Petit walked the wire for 45 minutes and made 8 crossings to the amazement of the police dispatched to the top floor of the building and the bystanders down in the streets. His breathtaking tightrope walk, which came to be

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58. Tom Junod, "The Man Who Invented 9/11," *Esquire* (May 7, 2007) <http://www.esquire.com/fiction/book-review/delillo> (last accessed: September 3, 2010).

known as "the artistic crime of the century,"[59] instantly earned him recognition worldwide.

Two years ago James Marsh's Academy Award-winning documentary entitled *Man on Wire*[60] brought Petit back into the limelight. For all the critical acclaim that the film has received, little has been said about its silence on 9/11 which, as I will show, manifests itself as a telling silence.

The documentary incorporates a lot of original 8mm footage from the early 1970s showing Petit and his little team surreptitiously cooking up plans to sneak into the towers with their equipment and execute the *coup*. These filmic images are interwoven with another set of archival footage of the twin towers' construction. As the buildings' steel skeletons soar higher and higher, so does the team's plan become increasingly intricate and elaborate, so that finally the towers, having reached their planned height at a quarter of a mile, are in a position to offer space for the performance. What is missing from the film, however, is any mention of the fact that the towers no longer exist. Not that it would be mandatory, especially considering the fact that this is a documentary about Philippe Petit's achievement and not about the towers. Still, it is this uncanny silence, this visual ellipsis that evokes imagined memories[61] of the towers' destruction on 9/11.

Such a peculiar interplay of simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar images generates a strange sense of *déja vu* while watching the movie. BBC reporter Neil Smith remarks on this absence in his review but, in his search for an answer, he satisfies himself with Marsh's explanations: "It would be unfair and wrong to infect his [Petit's] story with any mention, discussion or imagery of the Towers being destroyed." And, as he says in the same interview, "I think it is possible to enjoy those buildings for the duration of the film, hopefully without that enjoyment being too infected by an awareness of their destruction."[62] In his review published in the *New York Times*, Bryan Appleyard goes a step further by characterizing *Man on Wire* as the most "poignant" film made on 9/11 to date exactly because "It says nothing and, as a result, says a very great deal."[63] In Petit's description of stepping onto the wire, he senses a resonance with the jumpers:

59. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1155592/> (last accessed: September 3, 2010).

60. James Marsh dir., Discovery Films, 2008.

61. I am using the term in Andreas Huyssen's sense: *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

62. Neil Smith, "Wire-Walk Film Omits 9/11 Tragedy," *BBC News Online* (August 2, 2008) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/7498364.stm> (last accessed: September 3, 2010).

63. Bryan Appleyard, "Is Man on Wire the Most Poignant 9/11 Film?" *The Sunday Times* (July 20, 2008) <http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/film/article4353624.ece?token=null&offset=12&page=2> (last accessed: September 3, 2010).

> "Death," says Petit of the moment he steps onto the wire, "is very close." But "what a beautiful death" it would be, not the despairing plummet of one of those jumpers from the burning towers. At every step, Marsh draws our attention to the redemptive power of Petit's walk. From the moment he sees the plan for the WTC, Petit sees it as the occasion of a wonderful dream.[64]

His insightful recognition of the film's relevance in the growing series of works on 9/11 notwithstanding, Appleyard reduces the film's poignancy to its ability to evoke nostalgia for a pre-9/11 world by remaining silent about the tower's fate. I would suggest, on the other hand, that this ellipsis needs to be theorized differently. Like the missing "t" in Skarbakka's *Con-emporary*, the absence of 9/11 in the film's narrative becomes not only a catalyst for nostalgia (as undoubtedly most viewers felt about the film) but also an emphatic void for a counter-narrative to emerge. Let me map some of the landmarks of that counter-narrative.

The archival footage showing workers fitting the gigantic steel panels into their place are evocative of those iconic frames in which exactly the same panels (awkwardly replicating the Cartesian grid of Manhattan) define the contours of the towers' ruins. In one particular take the so-called slurry wall, which was meant to withhold the Hudson River from flooding the site, is clearly visible, only to reemerge as a kind of "archeological find" in Joel Meyerowitz's photographic documentations of th0e ruins[65] and as a symbolic sign of perseverance incorporated into Daniel Libeskind's 2002 master plan for the rebuilding of Ground Zero. Evoking land artist Robert Smithson's notion of *ruins in reverse*,[66] here construction and destruction emerge as two sides of the same coin. This allusion is also present in one of the film's posters which shows a view of the dark abyss between the towers from the

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64. Appleyard.

65. Joel Meyerowitz was the only photographer to receive permission to take pictures of the rescue operations on site <http://www.joelmeyerowitz.com/photography/after911.html> (last accessed: September 3, 2010).

66. In his 1967 essay "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey," Robert Smithson writes: "That zero panorama seemed to contain *ruins in reverse,* that is – all the new construction that would eventually be built. This is the opposite of the 'romantic ruin' because the buildings don't *fall* into ruin *after* they are built but rather *rise* into ruin before they are built" (*Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996], p. 72). A distant reverberation of Smithson's concept can be felt in Don DeLillo's "In the Ruins of the Future": "We may find that the ruin of the towers is implicit in other things. The new PalmPilot at fingertip's reach, the stretch limousine parked outside the hotel, the midtown skyscraper under construction, carrying the name of a major investment bank – all haunted in a way by what has happened, less assured in their authority, in the prerogatives they offer" (DeLillo, "In the Ruins," p. 39).

imagined perspective of Petit's stepping on the wire. What looks like a construction site shrouded in the morning mist also activates allusions to the smoldering ruins of Ground Zero.

In James Marsh's hands Petit's legendary tightrope walk becomes an embodiment of a counter-narrative that emerges uncannily from the air of nostalgia that suffuses the film. The *punctum* of this counter-narrative emerges from the photographs taken from the South Tower by Petit's friend Jean-Louis Blondeau to document his walk.[67] Towards the end of the documentary these photographs appear one after the other, interrupted only by segments from interviews with Petit's friends recollecting their memories of what they saw that morning. Remarks such as "extraordinary," "profound," and, as one policeman said at the press conference after Petit's arrest, "everybody was spellbound in the watching of it," pertain to the performance but, at the same time, sound uncannily reminiscent of descriptions of the "spectacle" of the morning of September 11, 2001. In one photograph in particular we see the Frenchman balancing between the towers from underneath with a captured silhouette of an airplane flying over the buildings. In line with Barthes's illustration of the *punctum* of time in the Lewis Payne photo, this photograph simultaneously informs the viewer of what happened on August 7, 1974 and what *will* happen on September 11, 2001.

The film's rendition of Petit's stepping onto the wire and giving himself to the void between the towers is evocative of those victims of September 11 that leaped to their deaths from the burning towers. And, going one step further, Petit's entering the building by deceit and embarking on a venture that, in the eyes of many, was suicidal at least, evokes the fanaticism of the terrorists that brought down the towers just as much as the unsettling images of those that came to be known as the jumpers.[68]

Insofar as the film evokes the specter of 9/11 through Petit's performance, it also allows its narrative to be haunted by it, not so much in fragments and flashbacks, as in the *spectral punctum* of the archival footage. For in the film it is not 9/11 *per se* that is uncanny, but the absence of 9/11. It is through this absence that 9/11 enters and claims its site in the uncanny "double" of Petit's performance. Similarly to Skarbakka's pose in *Con-emporary* and Lianne's reaction to David Janiak's performance in DeLillo's *Falling Man*, the choreography of Petit's per-

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67. Although the team's preparation for the "cue" is abundantly documented on film, of Petit's performance on the top of the WTC there are only Blondeau's photographs <http://jlblondeau.com/en/detail/159.html> (last accessed: September 3, 2010).

68. As Laura Frost remarks, "Calling the people 'suicides' not only suggests that they willed their death, but it also casts them in the company of the other suicides of that day, the hijackers" (Frost, p. 188).

formance constitutes a text with which Drew's tabooed photograph retroactively converses. While Petit's walk is a performance involving the risk of death, the falling man's impending death in Drew's photograph is kept at a remove from us by the ultimate control that the verticality and symmetry of his pose suggest. The very same element of control that lends this iconic "look" to Drew's picture reenters as a signifier of suicide, which Petit's remark on the beauty of death-by-art amplifies in the context of the film. In this sense, the redemptive beauty of Petit's tightrope walk in the film may not be antithetical to the "despairing plummet of one of those jumpers from the burning towers" at all, as Appleyard suggests. Especially not if the redemption that their jumps epitomized is perhaps their most traumatizing aspect.

Educated Barbarism*

Neil Rhodes, *Shakespeare and the Origins of English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; paperback 2007)

It is hard to imagine an academic supervisor who would be happy to see the title of Neil Rhodes's recent book on a proposal for a doctoral dissertation. *Shakespeare and the Origins of English* has far too many instabilities and double meanings: as Rhodes himself explains, "Shakespeare" refers to the Elizabethan writer and also to the super-canonical product of scholarship that still "lives on" in the twenty-first century. Similarly, "English" is the vernacular that rose to literary prominence (after a protracted competition with Latin) in Shakespeare's own lifetime, but it is also convenient shorthand for "English Studies." So, the title seems to say, the book may be about several things: it may be about how Shakespeare's writings were influenced, or even made possible, by the rise of the vernacular in Renaissance England, or by his Humanist education (but did he really study "English"?), or, conversely, about how English Studies shaped, or have been shaped by, Shakespeare. The ambiguity between definiteness and plurality in "*the Origins*," together with the Janus-faced "*and*," complicate matters even further, result-

ing in a title that promises teleology, but has the immediate effect of disorientation – a perfect choice if not for a dissertation (luckily, Rhodes is already Professor at St. Andrews), then for a book that has something to say about all four questions mentioned above. *Shakespeare and the Origins of English,* as its author succinctly puts it, presents "some sort of history, though one of a rather unlinear kind" (190).

In the introduction, Rhodes calls his method historical, but one that operates "with some degree of synchronicity and anachronicity" (4). As a result, readers might approach the book in various ways: they might immerse themselves in a cultural history of Tudor rhetorical education, or read it for its acute analyses of some major Shakespeare plays (*Hamlet*, *Love's Labour Lost*, *Measure for Measure*, *Titus Andronicus* and *The Tempest* receive sustained attention), or for its running argument about how English Studies might be re-conceived in the present, based on an awareness of its past, or even for its illuminating odd connections between Shakespeare and, say, Tony Harrison, "that modern barbarian" (83). There is, of course, considerable danger in writing a book of this kind, but Rhodes is as capable of tightening his logic and getting his priorities straight as of allowing himself to digress or to make an aside. The result is a readable book that wears its learning as lightly as possible; one that can be magisterial or tentative or even provocative, as occasion requires. In all this, it has

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The views expressed in the book reviews do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors of *The AnaChronisT*.

more than a touch of the essay about it – that most un-classical of Renaissance genres – and perhaps not by accident. Rhodes has called one of his previous books, *The Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature*, a "long essay": a tentative attempt at synthesis without any pretensions to exhaustiveness.[1] Even more wide-ranging than its predecessor, *Shakespeare and the Origins of English* shares this general stance, as well as a certain circular movement of argumentation, which likes to revisit themes and to let evidence slowly accumulate, until a more complex understanding of a question can be reached.

Rhodes's previous work is relevant because it has the subject of the present book virtually carved out in it. *The Power of Eloquence* was mainly concerned with classical and Renaissance ideas of eloquence as an instrument of power (with a discussion of Tudor educational programmes and the "coming of age" of the English language), and provided extensive interpretations of works by Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson. Which means that in that book Shakespeare was conspicuous through his absence, and a "parsimonious coda" (65) devoted to Jonson's relationship to Shakespeare even suggested "that he stands apart from the development described in the main argument" (viii). *Shakespeare and the Origins of English* fills the space opened up here, and it might even be fulfilling a promise made in the earlier book's coda, which was

entitled "Afterword and Foreword." In other words, it is a supplement, and as such, it dutifully goes beyond what might have been expected, based on the earlier book, while it also retains vital connections with it. At one point in *Eloquence*, for instance, Rhodes quoted a memorable line from Emrys Jones's *The Origins of Shakespeare*: "without Erasmus, no Shakespeare."[2] As the present title indicates, *Shakespeare and the Origins of English* takes Jones's position and turns it around: the book demonstrates not only how Shakespeare's Humanist education had a formative influence on his works, but also how his schooling provided him with resources for writing in English, as opposed to Latin, and how some of the educational practices he must have encountered in a Tudor grammar school fed into the later discipline of English Studies, partly through the very works he went on to write.

The last bit of this sequence is by far the most unconventional, and it yields the most illuminating type of connections established in the book. Proposing links between Tudor school practices and more or less well-known tenets of later Shakespeare criticism, Rhodes crosses a divide rarely crossed by scholars – between Renaissance studies and the study of Shakespeare's reception – while he also manages to keep things properly distinct. Shakespeare, of course, did not study English, but his schooling included, among other things, the practice of double translation, which

Rhodes links to the figure of *hendiadys*, so characteristic of Shakespeare's rhetoric, and, more generally, to the "double voice" critics have discovered in his plays. The fullest example of how Rhodes can establish hitherto unsuspected continuities is to be found in Chapter Three, where he tackles a characteristic feature of Shakespeare's so-called problem plays: something that has been described as the "dramatic construction of moral ambiguity" or "perspectivalism" (88) – Shakespeare's propensity for seeing things from opposing points of view. Rhodes links this to the Tudor school assignment of writing speeches "*in utramque partem*, on both sides of the question" (90), which had its roots in classical *controversiae* and compositional exercises known as the *progymnasmata*. These exercises, Rhodes suggests, provided opportunities for both Renaissance schoolboys and writers to explore and test power relations in a rhetorical and legal context; therefore they might be used to put into perspective more recent claims about the radical or subversive nature of Shakespeare's dramaturgy.

"Doubleness" also plays a prominent part in the next chapter, where Rhodes explores Shakespeare's ambivalent response to the classical tradition by reconstructing the cultural competition between Latin and English in the second half of the sixteenth century – a process through which the formerly "barbarous" vernacular emerged as an exceptionally well-suited vehicle for literary expression, and began to be celebrated as a civilizing (and colonizing) force. Rhodes clarifies the ideological and poetic implications of blank verse in this context, and takes up Doctor Johnson's eighteenth-century insight about the heterogeneous – "hybrid" – nature of Shakespeare's tragedies. Analysing *Titus Andronicus*, a play rife with dislocation, which he takes to be "actually about hybridity" (140), Rhodes shows how Shakespeare both absorbed and rejected classical authority – a stance that is "reflected in double translation, double voice, and even double authorship" (148). Shakespeare's drama, in these terms, is a "strong hybrid," one that "could be described equally as neoclassical and neo-Gothic, an educated barbarism" (142). Based on this view, Rhodes argues (in opposition to Stephen Greenblatt) that even in *The Tempest*, Shakespeare exhibits a sense of kinship with the expressive "barbarism" of Caliban, as much as with the civilising power of Prospero. The Renaissance author whom Rhodes finds closest to this version of Shakespeare is neither Marlowe, nor Jonson, but the exuberant Thomas Nashe (in whose work he has a long-standing scholarly interest).[3] Blending classical rhetoric with the fluency of vernacular speech patterns and a sense of cultural relativism, their *oeuvre*, for Rhodes, exemplifies "the creative abuse" of a classical education.

While these interventions in Shakespeare criticism are both provocative and well-argued, the book has another,

more controversial line of argument, which links aspects of Elizabethan education to a range of present-day developments affecting English Studies. While far from proposing "an unbroken continuity between early modern rhetoric and modern or post-modern English" (189), Rhodes highlights "a range of literary and educational activities from the early sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries in order to point out their similarities (as well as dissimilarities) with many of our own concerns" (190). Some of these analogies are more strategic than productive, aimed at presenting Renaissance cultural phenomena in a fresh and supposedly more interesting light. So rhetoric is figured as a Renaissance form of "media studies," while educational practices in Tudor grammar schools foster "transferable skills" and endorse "creative writing." These analogies are proposed in order to put current issues in perspective and to enable reflection on them; however, few of them are pursued in any depth. To put it simply, Rhodes is not that interested in phenomena like current "media studies," at least not in this book. At the same time, he does want to reassure "traditionalists" in English Departments that what might appear to them as a contamination or disruption of their discipline (the encroachment of media studies on "English," or the introduction of creative writing courses), has in fact deep connections with its more distant past. As he argues: "The notion that there was once a core subject which is

now hopelessly splintered and diversified depends upon an artificially late date for the origins of English and a narrow formulation of what the subject comprises" (190).

"Theory" is also discussed at the beginning of the book, as something that had ushered in the transformation of English Studies from the 1970s onwards; but Rhodes's reading of Derrida on "articulation" is far too general and simplified to vie with his sophisticated account of the vagaries of "articulation" and "expression" in Renaissance texts.[4] While clearly not a devotee of Derrida's theory, Rhodes still uncovers a number of potential connections between deconstruction and Renaissance writing, even if he does not pursue them to their logical conclusions. One connection he does pursue (although in a slightly uneasy tone) is the notion that *Hamlet* can be taken as a deconstruction of the revenge play (31), and, as it seems, of a whole range of concepts entrenched in Renaissance rhetoric. The play therefore "represents the first crisis in English Studies": "Although the subject had not yet been invented, the crisis, as Derrida might have said, was always already inscribed within it" (32). This intrusion of Derridean language into the texture of the book is momentary and very tentative, but in the final chapter Rhodes returns to the matter of theory more in his own vein by demonstrating how an earlier "intrusion" of French theory had been vital to the formation of English Studies. In this unusual account of the

discipline's past, the works of Ramus and the French *belles lettres* tradition play a prominent role, as well as do those Scottish universities that adapted them in the later eighteenth century – so, as Rhodes argues, "*pace* complaints from traditionalists that English was suddenly infected by new ideas from Paris in the late 1960s, it was effectively *created* by new ideas from Paris" (191).

Rhodes's habit of making everything sound topical – calling the revenge play a Renaissance "action movie" (38), or rhetoricians "spin doctors" (97) – can be slightly off-putting, as a number of reviewers have complained.[5] Their reaction is close to the annoyance of a student who is weary of a teacher's efforts to make the subject seem "relevant" because she is interested anyway. But the book's analogies are not all like that. For instance, the discussion of Renaissance compositional techniques in the light of computer technology yields many insights – this is an area Rhodes has been working on intensely in recent years.[6] Carefully weighing differences as well as similarities, he is able to show how versions of the Renaissance "database," that is, the commonplace book and the printed anthology, influenced writing and reading practices – after they had pushed aside earlier technologies of storage and retrieval, such as the manuscript anthology and the memory theatre. Rhodes then demonstrates how Shakespeare's writings, themselves "a dizzying *hypertextual* world of multiple verbal links and commentary on com-

mentary" (165),[7] were anthologised and "commonplaced" from the 1590s onwards in volumes that can be regarded as the antecedents of the school textbook. This makes one realize that such notorious 18th-century compilations as the *Elegant Extracts*, or the *Beauties of Shakespear*e – so often criticised by their Romantic readers – were in fact closer to Shakespeare's own rhetorical context than their later detractors, who tended to prize a play's organic unity (at least in theory) above the detachable textual unit.

Rhodes's discussion ends at the threshold of Romanticism, when, in the second half of the eighteenth century, Shakespeare was recast as "the dramatist of the passions" (212) in the writings of William Richardson and Lord Kames, among others. In a gesture that might be suggestive of a next book, he remarks that the tradition he has been tracing does not stop there: "The story of the Romantic reception of Shakespeare . . . is well known, but the present discussion provides other leads into that culturally transforming phenomenon" (225). Taking a look at some well-known passages by Coleridge with that suggestion in mind, one finds much to corroborate the general point. In Chapter 15 of the *Biographia Literaria*, for instance, discussing Shakespeare's poetic genius, Coleridge quotes a sentence that also appears briefly in Rhodes's discussion of the commonplace method: "*Inopem me copia fecit*," "plenty has made me poor" – a quotation from a

passage in Ovid's *Metamorphosis* where Narcissus, enamoured with his own reflection, is about to commit suicide.[8] It is tempting to take this Ovidian moment as expressive of a typically Romantic attitude to Shakespeare: the critic looks into Shakespeare's mirror, and sees himself. Or, conversely, trying to see himself, he finds Shakespeare instead (Coleridge surely had a "smack of Hamlet," after all). Narcissus's despair might even be linked to the Romantics' sense of their own "poverty" in the face of Shakespeare's "plenty." While these suggestions are all perfectly in line with well-worn ideas about the "Romantic Shakespeare," the context that Rhodes has so meticulously established might also make one alert to the rhetorical groundwork of Coleridge's passage, which might then lead to slightly different emphases.

Coleridge in the *Biographia* passage is not only quoting a Latin *locus communis*, but does so in order to give his readers a sense of Shakespeare's *copia*, or plenty, when looking around for examples of how poetic imagery "moulds and colours itself to the circumstances, passion, or character, present and foremost in the mind" (190). Now, *copia* is a key concept of Erasmian rhetoric, which, as Rhodes has shown through various examples, informed both Shakespeare's works and their reception, while "circumstances," "passion," and "character" are all technical terms in eighteenth-century rhetoric, based on Quintilian's discussions of how language can move

its listeners.[9] These terms were also used in various 18th-century descendants of the anthology which often listed passages from Shakespeare's plays according to the different passions they illustrated (Rhodes remarks that Burgh's *Art of Speaking*, for instance, contains a "comprehensive table of the passions, where they have the status of topics or commonplaces," 187). So, when Coleridge adds that "the reader's own memory will refer him" to the "unrivalled instances of this excellence" (190) in Shakespeare's plays, one might suspect that, while speaking of an interiorized corpus, Coleridge is also informed by the long tradition of the anthology and its later descendants, as reconstructed in Rhodes's rich and suggestive book. Romantic readers, it may be argued, did not invent their own Shakespeare from scratch – sometimes they worked with the memory of an already "commonplaced" author, whose "excellence" at drawing various passions and characters had been helpfully catalogued by earlier critics and anthologists. While an inquiry into these issues clearly falls outside the scope of the book, it is probably safe to suggest that *Shakespeare and the Origins of English* will keep provoking and inspiring not only Renaissance scholars, but all kinds of students of all kinds of "Englishes."

Veronika Ruttkay

Notes

1. Rhodes, *The Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p. viii.

2. Emrys Jones, *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), p. 13. Quoted in Rhodes, *The Power of Eloquence*, p. 51.

3. Nashe is linked to Shakespeare in Rhodes's book *Elizabethan Grotesque* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980).

4. Juliet Fleming in her review essay has criticised Rhodes for misreading Derrida; see "An Apology for Reading," *Modern Philology* 104.2 (November 2006) 229–38.

5. See for instance Ralph Berry in the *Contemporary Review*, 286/1671 (April 2005) 245–6; Russ McDonald in the *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 57/3 (Fall 2006), 351–4; John Lee in *Modern Language Review* 101/3 (July 2006) 822–4.

6. See *The Renaissance Computer: Knowledge Technology in the First Age of Print*, ed. Rhodes and Sawdy (London: Routledge, 2000), or a brilliant recent article on how Marshall McLuhan's doctoral dissertation on Thomas Nashe fed into his later and more well-known writings: "On Speech, Print, and New Media: Thomas Nashe and Marshall McLuhan," in *Oral Tradition* 24.2 (October 2009). Cf. Rhodes, "Mapping Shakespeare's Contexts: Doing Things With Databases," in Andrew Murphy ed., *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare and the Text* (Blackwell, 2007), 204–220.

7. Rhodes uses this phrase to describe *The Sonnets*, but it seems expressive of his general view of Shakespeare's textual universe.

8. S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria,* ed. Nigel Leask (London: J. M. Dent & Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, 1997), p. 190.

9. Klaus Dockhorn has discussed the comparable sequence of "passions, characters, incidents" as well as the concept of "circumstances" in Wordsworth's writings in the context of classical rhetoric in "Wordsworth and the Rhetorical Tradition in England" (1944), trans. Heidi I. Saur-Stull, in Don H. Bialostosky and Lawrence C. Needham ed., *Rhetorical Traditions and British Romantic Literature* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1995), 265–280, p. 270.

Keats Posthumously Personalized

Stanley Plumly, *Posthumous Keats: A Personal Biography* (New York & London: W. W. Norton, 2008)

"A Man's Life of any worth is a continual allegory – and very few eyes can see the Mystery of his life," wrote Keats to his brother George in the spring of 1819.[1] Stanley Plumly's magnificent book, pursuing the mystery of how the poet's immortality is achieved, is perhaps more respectful of what Keats worded as the figurative aspect of one's life than any other biography. The essays, though rich in suggestions, admit again and again the need to be able to remain in uncertainties about how much we can know. Plumly's speculations about the importance and rich ambiguities of the images of mist and veiling in Keats's poetry are brilliant in this respect. Commenting on passages from *Endymion*, *The Fall of Hyperion*, "To Autumn," and the letters, Plumly writes that air is the medium of transformation and disappearance for Keats, the means of "erasure, chameleon

adaptation, anonymity, mystery, spirit, the veil, the mist, himself absorbed" (302). Yet it entails the promise of something transformed – a life mysteriously preserved, veiled and to be revealed, in the words of the poems.

Posthumous Keats reconfigures traditional biographies (such as, for instance, the famous Keats biographies of the 1960s written by Walter Jackson Bate, Aileen Ward, and Robert Gittings) by leaving behind the need for narrative and linearity. Plumly is pursuing "connections and crossovers," thus the chapters move around key ideas in a circular and essayistic fashion, often using an emblematic scene or image as central (15). This yields an occasionally anecdotal, but highly insightful and truly elegantly written book: a personal biography, which reveals its author as a keen and thorough researcher as well as a poet endowed with a Keats-like sympathetic imagination.

The central idea Plumly's book sets out to investigate is how the immortality of Keats's poetry is necessarily bound up with his mortality, his tragic early death – a biographical fact that has all too often been emphasized, yet, Plumly claims, cannot be neglected. The immortality of Keats's poetry and fame is achieved against all odds and, to use Severn's great phrase, in spite of the "intellectual lottery" of the afterlife (361). Plumly follows the ups and downs of this afterlife from the moment Keats died and was buried in the little Protestant Cemetery surrounded by green pastures with grazing sheep. He discusses the friends' disputes about a more proper monument and epitaph, the planned and postponed memoires and biographies, the idealizing images of the abundant posthumous portraits, the fate of the Keats house in Rome and of the letters written to Fanny Brawne. All of the commemorating gestures of the friends and admirers tend to the immortality of the poet's fame; yet nothing can bring about "the fragile, lucky, deferred thing that immortality is" more than the words of the poems, "scraps of words written in fire" (362–4).

Plumly's nice metaphor of words written in fire hopes to explain their survival. Yet, as he notes, not only Keats's name but also his reputation looked as though written on water in the decades-long shadowy aftermath of his death. At the worst, John Taylor, his publisher and benefactor, sold the copyright to the poems and unpublished manuscripts in 1845 for almost nothing. By this time Keats's work was effectively out of print in England. As for a written account of the poet's life, which was so absent during those decades, all the members of the Keats circle planned to write their biographies, memoires, or monographs, including, among others, George Keats, the early mentor Leigh Hunt, the friend and surrogate brother Charles Brown, and Joseph Severn, who was the only witness to Keats's last months. Their

quarrels show that each of the potential biographers claimed to know the real Keats, while, as Plumly poignantly remarks, none of the friends was a direct and complete witness to Keats's entire life, his maturation, and his growth as a poet. Although each of them left at least notes and fragmentary comments behind, as well as letters and other memorabilia, in reality they all had to die (except for Severn) before Keats's work in context with his death, and with due narrative perspective and insight, could be addressed. As is probably true in most cases of biographies, an impartial – and in time removed – outsider is needed to collect and arrange the various sources. Richard Monckton Milnes will become that collector and "arbiter of value" - his *Life and Letters of Keats* published in 1848. Ironically, he will also become the biographer of the Keats circle, underscoring the fact that our knowledge of Keats relies so much on his letters to the friends and, in turn, on their views, however fragmentary they are.

One of the strengths of *Posthumous Keats* is that it reconstructs points of view and offers historical insight through the gathering of actual material sources. The well-chosen initial chapter, for instance, follows the history of the portraiture of Keats and gives incisive comments about the numerous portraits, engravings, busts, and copies of these that wish to resurrect Keats's face and presence after his death. Plumly finds that most of them have a

"palpable design" for the viewer: they make Keats either into an overly sensitive, effeminate poet, the victim of unfavorable reviews, or an ideal handsome poet "no mere mortal harm can come to" (43). An imposed a staged image of what a poet should look like also appears; such is the case with Severn's official portrait of the contemplative young poet seated by a window, with Shakespeare's portrait hanging above his head. Most of the portraits seem to lack any knowledge of the real Keats and, masking their uncertainty about his reputation, draw the myth instead. Plumly convincingly argues that only a few of them convey the living presence of the poet: Brown's pencil sketch of Keats's face from the summer of 1819, the poet's profile on Haydon's wall painting "Christ's entry into Jerusalem," and the deathbed drawing by Severn. These are mostly sketches, drawn spontaneously, but therefore capture better the exceptional intensity of the living Keats. It is a pity that no illustrations accompany Plumly's commentary; the reader has to resort either to other sources or to the small reproductions of the most important portraits at the chapter headings.

With *Posthumous Keats* we gain a fellow poet's insight, rich in sympathetic identification with the young Keats, and bold in its leaps to connect biographical facts to their larger significances for Keats's poetry. One of the bold leaps is when Plumly writes that the intense creativity of Keats's living

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year stems from having nursed Tom and witnessed his death: "he becomes that central quality of imagination we call inspiration, a grief figure that again and again needs to be addressed, reinvoked, reconciled . . . as an enlarging emblem, a motivating measure, a rich resource of loss to which – to paraphrase Wordsworth – the poet repairs as to a fountain" (114). Tom's death will become transformative, but, as Plumly suggests, it will also signal for Keats that the slow process of death by increments – a fact about the lingering condition of consumption – has begun for him as well.

The essayistic biography is interspersed with brief but perceptive and beautifully written commentaries on the poems. In a masterly reading of the "overbrimmed" descriptions of the ode "To Autumn" and "Ode to a Nightingale" Plumly makes the important claim that the moments of immense richness still to be enjoyed as if suspended and extended beyond their proper bounds are some of the most characteristic moments of Keats's poetry. In Keats's poems it is difficult to choose between the falling dusk and the fallen day as "the richest moment of lost time" (344). Moreover, Plumly notes that the modernity of Keats's poetry lies in its ability to re-write the lyric poem as an independent entity outside the self. The odes and the best passages of the Hyperion poems emphasize a necessary distance between the poem and the poet: the sublimity of

the poem becomes "something other than the 'egotistical sublime' of the poet" (353).

Keats hoped to be "among the English poets," but as his life was wearing away, he gave up that hope, regardless of the greatness of the poetry he had already written. If "posthumous" can mean life after the death of the promise, Plumly speculates, we might date the start of Keats's posthumous existence well before the letter to Charles Brown in November 1820, in which he writes about his "habitual feeling of my real life having past" (*Letters*, p. 398). His posthumous life might have begun after the last great lines of the *The Fall of Hyperion* and the last ode, written in the autumn of 1819. For Plumly the ode "To Autumn" is therefore emblematic: the slow process of wearing away, he writes, begins with this poem of farewells and suspended endings, where the poet completely disappears into the poem. Yet, if mortality is the most important subject of Keats's mature poetry, its promise is the eternity of art: "If poetry – Keats is saying – is finally about the flesh vanishing, disappearing, turning cold . . . it is also, in its afterlife, about the word as spirit, aspirant on the air, invisible, articulate, available" (347).

Katalin Pálinkás

Note

1. All parenthesized references to the letters are to this edition: Robert Gittings ed., *Letters of John Keats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 218.

All the World's a Cage

Veronika Schandl, *Socialist Shakespeare Productions in Kádár-regime Hungary: Shakespeare Behind the Iron Curtain* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009)

Veronika Schandl's *Socialist Shakespeare Productions in Kádár-regime Hungary* was published at the end of 2008 by Edwin Mellen Press in English, a fact which immediately poses the question, "Is that of any interest for foreigners?" But in fact many more questions are triggered: is it not the business of the Hungarians? Is it not material which concerns solely the history and cultural history of Hungarians? Is it not a volume that should have been written in Hungarian for the sake of the Hungarian reading public?

Poet, translator and Shakespeare scholar István Géher asks the same in the Foreword of the volume, hence the quotation marks above. He also attempts an answer. "It should be," Géher replies. He adds, "in the post-modern world of relativity the 'doublespeak' and 'the reading between the lines' cannot be dismissed as mere provincial peculiarity" (ii). I agree: our students' generation meets only a faded memory or even less than that – a lack of record and of summary – about the theatre life of the era characterized by the unreliability of words and the swampy fields of doublespeak. We all hope these belong to the past. However, the post-socialist present

often seems equally swampy an area. Surviving characters assuming active parts on the stage of Kádár-regime theatre life often are influenced by present day politics which may affect their work retrospectively. From a more distant perspective, for the sake of our students' generation(s), it is vital that the history of Kádár-regime (1956–1989) theatre be recorded.

Such a record assumes at least three things to be successful or worth mentioning: unearthing of state documents with significant knowledge of history, unceasing work with performance details and a relatively objective or at least emotionally uninvolved bird's eye view of the narrator. I found all these in Veronika Schandl's book, and I will approach them exactly from these angles in the following pages.

* * *

The author is the daughter of a set designer, to whom the book is dedicated. From this fact could follow that the book, under the same title, would turn out to be either a sorrowful lament over creative minds ruined and talented lives wasted, or a political pamphlet burdened with a disproportionate load of political history. Either would have been a pity and would not be equal to the task. To the great relief of the reader this book is not a pathetic monument, either historical or personal. What makes it valuable, both as a reading and as a useful basic entry on a university reading list, is the colourful and sensitive picture she presents. Here the word

colourful refers to both the subject and the presentation of the work. The trap of false over-generalizations she easily avoids: by digging out a quantity of detail that itself earns respect, she manages to paint a tableau of each examined performance of the period. These, then, create the overall feeling which we often have when watching the busy crowds in action in one of the large oil paintings by Pieter Breughel the Elder. Interesting and perhaps even amusing in their minute details, the descriptions of each performance add up to a vast tableau of various and colourful groups of characters and scenes, inviting browsing and research.

Nonetheless, the latent fears, spies, double agents, denunciations and forced silences cannot be, and luckily are not, dismissed. Their representation is not reduced to a mere register of offences suffered by theatre intellectuals during the Kádár-regime. The book has no lament over missed past opportunities. Although opportunities all receive due mention and description, lament is left for the reader. And it is done well this way: the tone of the narrator is that of the attentive theatre historian, who is enthusiastic about the subject, its each and every detail. At this point a usual laudatory sentence would fit here: "Her well-documented tiny mosaic pieces are the result of persistent research executed on an impressive scale." Which translates, as all researchers know, into an awful lot of work. The balanced narration of this book appears to be objec-

tive enough to suggest that the author's person was a contemporary of Socialism. However, Veronika Schandl (currently lecturer at Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Hungary) is much younger than that, which triggers ambiguous consequences. Thus she could have had first-hand information neither of the mechanisms, nor the machinations of Party-controlled Socialist culture. Also, her not being a contemporary could aid her in the assumption of a nearly omniscient and practically impartial bird's eye view.

Historiography always requires backing one's argument with facts and first-hand sources. In the historiography of an era through theatre performances, through perhaps the most ephemeral of subjects, details may mean much more than merely supporting some argument. Details here mean a great variety of contemporary sources, and they are generously provided so that the reader may see more of the entire picture than the actual focus of the theatre historian. Undoubtedly we would never see the entire picture; this is a puzzle which will never be complete. We must always remember, as the author's critical remarks also remind us, that no theatre criticism can ever be reliable, especially not when written in a dictatorship. Schandl's book offers a surprisingly round picture of the chosen performances firstly because of the high number of sources, and secondly because of her deep knowledge of these sources. They range from the reports

and speeches at the first Soviet Writers' Congress by Zhdanov and Gorky (principal and obligatory directions for Hungarian artists as well), through Hungarian state security archives, to pieces of theatre criticism in both well-known national papers like *Népszabadság* [Liberty of the People] and some impossible factory papers like *Kazán* [Boiler], paper of the smelters. It seems credibility and the truth of the overall picture, no matter how complicated it may be (think of the twisted story of the *Hamlet* directed by Gábor Bódy, who was both an agent reporting to the police and a subject for other agents to report on, cf. 45–65), matters more than anything to the author. The flexibility of her understanding of the complexity and the delicacy of certain political and personal situations in which Shakespeare was produced (see also the twists in the career of the great survivor chameleon actor Tamás Major, pp. 169–187) allows her a deeper understanding of the productions. A prerequisite for this is handling these sources with the necessary and often different distance. Due to Schandl's research, anyone who is to write the stage history of yet another Shakespearean play on Hungarian Socialist stages may rely on the sources she has unearthed as well as on her masterly executed historical background (never too little, never too much – even for foreigners.). Also, in her Breughel-like detailed tableau readers will find their favourite scene, best documented for

their interest, which will enable them to draw their own conclusions.

All in all, a part on the historical and political back(or fore?)ground was an inherent necessity. Chapter 1 comprises the basic knowledge of cultural and political history for Hungarians and non-Hungarians equally: from those who have never been to Hungary, to Hungarians who were the audiences of those productions, to Hungarians who are too young to have lived in the era also known as 'Goulash communism,' and to anyone interested in the colourful impression of cultural life in a complicatedly and inscrutably softened version of Central-East-European Communist dictatorship and the self-suppressing atmosphere in the most cheerful of Soviet barracks.

* * *

This book is a careful compilation of performance criticism. First, of *Hamlet*s and later, as the political atmosphere triggered, of problem plays. Veronika Schandl examined no less than 27 performances and their critical and political reception. In addition to the cast lists she also included a Chronology of the performances in the Appendices (A and B) – all very practical for a Hungarian reader and researcher. Again, is that of any interest to foreigners? Was it worth translating into English all those theatre criticisms published in some Socialist self- and peer-censored newspapers, remotely but strictly and unpredictably controlled by the omnipotent Party guru György Aczél?

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The answer is yes. These sources, outdated both in sense and style, embody a part of the Hungarian national past as well as of the very particular ways of communication in a Socialist satellite country. The late nineties and the early two-noughts are the period of setting things right in these countries, in this case by the remembrance and the description of Socialist years on the stage.

While providing the reader with a seemingly omniscient bird's eye view of the era and its theatres, the author never seems to appear. Nonetheless, Veronika Schandl's approach to Shakespearean performances and performance criticisms are sensibly ever present in the background. She managed to achieve the proportionate balance between the articulation of the narrator of past performances and that of her own opinion as a Shakespeare scholar. The result is not forgiving sympathy towards bad or didactic productions popular at the time, neither is it a flaming political flare against the Soviet regime. Her interpretations all point in one direction, towards Shakespeare's continuous position and presence in Kádárist Hungary.

* * *

Shakespeare, whose appropriation had been so significant for non-English, and particularly Central European countries in the nineteenth century, seems to guarantee the transfer of continuity of (high) culture from one regime to the other. Schandl's book is built upon the widely known and accepted fact that even the Socialist dictatorship wanted to appropriate the once capitalist entrepreneur Bard only to demonstrate its cultural strength, creativity and rule over intellectuals. Marxist Shakespeare was "praised for his critical treatment of the social ills in early modern society, in which his aim was not only to criticize the bourgeoisie, but to affirm the positive nature of human progress and firm optimistic belief in the future to come. . . . The same way that Shakespearean plots were seen to parallel Socialist narratives, Shakespearean characters were viewed as early predecessors of the new Socialist hero, an active fighter for justice who never accepted compromises. . ." (13). Hence just as a play holds mirror up to human nature so does the actual Shakespeare-cult to particular society in a particular period. The examination of an actual Shakespeare cult is thus definitely worthwhile. Thence Schandl's book must be placed alongside the accounts of other Shakespeare appropriations in the Eastern bloc (e.g., *Shakespeare on the German Stage – The Twentieth Century* by Wilhelm Hortmann (1998), *On Page and Stage*: *Shakespeare in Polish and World Culture* ed. by Krystyna Kujawinska Courtney, *Redefining Shakespeare – Literary Theory and Theater Practice in the German Democratic Republic* by Lawrence J Gunther and Andrew McLean (1998), etc).

The way Veronika Schandl found a gap among these writings and ventured to fill it in was writing about the presence of Hungarianized Socialist Shakes-

peare: she reveals and points out the apparent ambiguities embedded in what she calls "the theatricality of everyday life" (9). Her book is an account of the sometimes desperate efforts of Kádár-regime theatre-makers to respond to or hint at topical public discourses. "The aim of the work is not, primarily, to reconstruct these productions of the Kádár-regime, although it wishes to delineate the major theatrical trends of the era. Rather through contemporary reviews, articles and essays, as well as current historical data available about the theatrical structure and the cultural-political establishment of Communist Hungary, this study aims to examine the dialogues that connected theatres to the political everyday lives of Kádárist citizens" (14).

Regarding the overall picture, it was a sensible idea not to insist on the performance history of a single play, as well as to not analyse more than four. The suppressed and hesitating hero in *Hamlet*, and the relativity in the worlds of the problem plays, seemed best to represent the changes in the political climate. The era/history dictated: *Hamlet* was produced eight times, while *Measure for Measure* eight times, *Troilus and Cressida* five times and *All's Well* thrice, serving as the key texts that best suited the Kádár Era. The numbers show that *Hamlet* "remained a constant favourite" (along with the comedies). The author examines both the time pattern of all these productions related to Hungarian politics (certainly no *Hamlet*s in the

fifties after 1952; the first after the 1956 revolution was in 1963) and also, casts them against the backdrop of foreign theatrical influences either on the page or on the stage: those of Brecht, Peter Brook, Jan Kott, Grotowsky. She draws the picture of Hungarian productions from several aspects (which then all unite in the "theatricalities of everyday life"). Not only does she consider them from the aspect of their uses of the text, their modes of interpretation with respect to artistic influence, but also from their modes of existence. Mainstream, avant-garde and amateur theatres received different amounts of attention in their being monitored by State Intelligence. Although each chapter deals with either a play (the problem plays, Chapters 5–8) or a period (*Hamlet*s, Chapters 2–4), the author manages to sketch the individual careers of several directors who moved from one kind of theatre to another, from one level of being monitored to another. Very importantly, she traces back the reasons for Paál's and Ruszt's tragic rise and fall, victims of "doublespeak" and "reading between the lines."

* * *

"What distinguishes the Hungarian Shakespeare repertoire from other Eastern European countries," writes Veronika Schandl – and she is a pioneer in noticing this- is the "unparalleled popularity of the problem plays in the theatrical canon of the 1970s and 1980s" (100). She goes on to explain: "The standards of living much higher than

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average for the eastern Bloc, spread the illusory sense of freedom in the everyday lives of citizens. At the same time . . . the regime still did not tolerate overt opposition." As Schandl explains, "directors in Hungary repeatedly saw a powerful tool [in Shakespearean problem comedies] to reflect on their lives, the perverse coexistence of good and bad in their political reality. Their shows became mainstream cultural events, ushering in a new Hungarian theatrical idiom, a changed concept of how Shakespeare should be performed" (100–101).

No more fairy-tale productions of *All's Well* (like Várkonyi's direction in 1961), much rather as parables of self-delusion, no more "uplifting" and "optimistic tragedies." Young directors came, and "all exhibited a more grotesque, at times even absurd, approach in their directions" (106). The *Troilus and Cressida*s in the 1970s and 1980s touched upon the "insanity of the Cold War and the segregation of public and private spheres," showed individuals who "carried on with their lives *within* the system, even after realizing its absurdity" (147). While explaining these processes the author simultaneously refers to achievements by academics: a direction of *Troilus* by university professor György Székely on the regime that never gives in; György Endre Szőnyi's essay emphasizing the darkly grotesque, even absurd undertones, which referred to the intellectual crisis as theatre; theatre criticism and the influence of Shakespeare scholarship must be considered in union. By the end of the Kádár-regime it was the *Measure for Measure*s, Schandl reveals, that shed light upon a fundamental element of the regime. The consolidation of Kádárism, the hope of a new era at the price of a compromise, is demonstrated in *Measure* productions. Of Paál's 1985 Veszprém direction she wrote, "Isabella's defiant silence [in rejection of the Duke] did receive an extra, thoroughly political connotation through the cultural, political and social surroundings of contemporary Hungary, a culture highly sensitive to forced silences, doublespeak and the interpretative technique of 'reading between the lines' " (160). However, I found it important that Veronika Schandl points out the fact that "the allowance of 'doublespeak' was an essential part of the Faustian deal artists made with those in power. The 'doublespeak' of the stage lured people into the false sense of freedom controlled by the companies themselves, most by means of self-censure. . . . The theatre created an almost pathological audience-actor relationship in which the former awaited subversion and the latter was all too willing to provide it" (175).

* * *

To both illustrate and demonstrate the operation of 'doublespeak,' Veronika Schandl turned to a poem by Géza Bereményi, sung by Tamás Cseh in the early 1980s, *The Song of Wiley William*.[1] What she found in it was inspiration, emblematic, even iconic lines for

Hungarian readers, perfect metaphors of/about the era for foreigners, and an imprint of the Hungarian Shakespeare cult ("in this picturesque country show me a man, / who could compete with Shakespeare William"). A perfect example of the practice of 'doublespeak' and 'reading between the lines.'

Quite fortunately, she recognized the weight of the song as well as its potential metaphoric significance within the book and had a young poetess, now a University of East Anglia PhD graduate, Ágnes Lehóczky, translate it. With or without prejudices about the feasibility of such a translation, foreigners and Hungarians will find it witty, sensitive, easy to sing, and all in all, surprisingly good. The poem on the fifth page not only contributes to the atmosphere of the age as a longish motto, but also serves as a governing principle and a structuring force in the book: its lines reappear in the metaphoric and also allegorical chapter titles, adding a special Eastern Bloc flavour to the production analyses. Moreover, they present the reader with a first-hand experience of reading between the lines. Both the stage history of *Hamlet* and that of the problem plays perfectly suit Bereményi's lines (no wonder, as Bereményi himself authored an adaptation of the play entitled *Halmi or the Prodigal Son*, also examined by Schandl). Let me quote some of them: " 'The world's back is curved': Shakespeare in Socialist Hungary" (Chapter 1), " 'To cover dark secrets he acted a fool': *Hamlet* on Hungarian stages between 1952–1977" (Chapter 2), or " 'Which grave as you see, is our stage prop today': *Hamlet* on Hungarian stages between 1981–1983" (Chapter 3), or, " 'What vast labyrinths zigzag in our hearts': *Troilus and Cressida* in Late Socialist Hungary" (Chapter 7) and " 'We look for the keys, for clues and for hints': *Measure for Measure* in late Socialist Hungary" (Chapter 8), etc. Nonetheless, as generations grow up reading this (which I hope will happen), clauses of this kind in the body text – "especially after Stalin's death" (14) – will need more and more annotation to be added in the next edition; here I only missed the date, yet for the sake of young Hungarians and foreigners a review of such perspective could be vital.

The dialogue of this text, at which the author aimed, works in both directions: between Hungarian theatres and everyday reality and also between Hungarian and foreign theatrical trends. "By the rule of the theater which converts all past modes into stage presence, our past becomes our present. The mockery of our cultural past, in turn, not only casts a dubious light on ancient heroic times but also on the centuries of European cultural development, an idea which could also threaten the logic of Marxist teleological historical ideology. Equating the caricature of the past with the present at the same time also allows for analogies between onstage and offstage reality. . ." (134).

The mosaic is quite full, the "chippings of our scattered mirrors / are

mended" in this volume (v). "I wish to recommend this book on Shakespeare," wrote István Géher in the Foreword, "to the inquisite consciousness and alert conscience of both Hungarian and non-Hungarian readers." So do I. Yet I think many others would be interested in reading this book in Hungarian.

Gabriella Reuss

Note

1. The following excerpts serve as eminent illustrations: "Oh why can't you see what vast labyrinths / zigzag in our hearts with no directions / we look for the keys, for clues and for hints / staring into our own trembling reflections . . . // here we are standing in awe of the man / in front the greatness of Shakespeare William" (translated by Ágnes Lehóczky).

"Only Connect!" Zadie Smith Convenes Critical Minds

Tracey L. Walters (ed.), *Zadie Smith: Critical Essays* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008)

With intertextuality as a central concern in this exploration of the fiction of a contemporary, biracial, English-speaking and internationally acclaimed novelist, the idea of texts in interaction also asserts itself on the level of related critical discourses. The reader easily gets the impression that, while part of the book is about Zadie Smith, another, just as important part, is about recent devel-

opments in literary scholarship. Yet this additional function of the collection as a kind of postcolonial reader – with its heavy concentration on theory – does not mar the accessibility of the text, and one can only profit from simultaneously learning about Smith's writing, and about current insights in contemporary, especially post-colonially attuned, literary interpretation.

On account of this exuberance of critical slants (and a kind of copious, exuberating quality in the author's fiction itself), the division of the volume into two appears to be a little forced, a mere gesture to provide a larger structure. The first section promises postcolonial and postmodernist readings of the related novels, and the second announces a primary concern with racial identities. This separation not only omits consideration of the overlap between these broad categories but it also fails to designate – even on the condensed, metaphorical manner in which most titles anticipate certain contents – the actual subject matter of a few chapters. Thus, the fifth essay about *White Teeth* as a Caribbean novel could easily be shifted from the first section into the second, because while its focus is on a kind of reversed colonial process, it prioritizes the category of race and ethnicity. Conversely, the twelfth paper, the final paper, on the international marketing of the same novel might just as legitimately be treated in the preceding unit about postmodernism, because it is much less geared towards a discussion of race than

to such concepts as simulation and the global book trade.

But regardless of order, the complex and well-written essays themselves facilitate an in-depth understanding of Smith's fiction. In the first section, after the editor's introduction, Matthew Paproth discusses a meaningful, but problematic rift between the open, typically postmodernist multiplicity of ideology and the primarily modernist, form-oriented aesthetic concern that the reader confronts in the author's novels ("The Flipping Coin: The Modernist and Postmodernist Zadie Smith"). In a well-placed second chapter, Ulka Anjaria explores the tension between the kind of aesthetic excess that scholars often posit in postcolonial responses to Western, normative concepts of the beautiful, and the particular anti-aesthetic academic attitude that is associated with the fictional character Howard Belsey ("*On Beauty* and Being Postcolonial"). Whereas these essays associate postmodernism – among other cultural phenomena – with the act of rewriting, and they highlight intriguing parallels between Forster's *Howard's End* and Smith's third novel, Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga shifts attention from this artistic gesture to examples of self-referentiality, simulation, exhaustion and pastiche in *The Autograph Man* ("The Impossible Self and the Poetics of the Urban Hyper-real"). Rewriting is once again a central concern in Maeve Tynan's paper, where the author, after concentrating on intertextuality and postcolonial self-

awareness in two separate phases, confirms a critically often-voiced connection between identity and representation (" 'Only Connect': Intertextuality and Identity in Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*"). As mentioned before, Raphael Dalleo's essay contemplates the position of *White Teeth* in British literary tradition ("Colonization in Reverse: *White Teeth* as Caribbean Novel"), arguing for a historically unusual (because indeed reversed) cultural impact as exercised by Caribbeans on Londoners.

The second section of the collection begins with a both refreshing and informative addition to the so-far discussed points of intertextual connection. While the presence of *Howard's End* in *On Beauty* is well-known and meant to be immediately perceived, Zora Neale Hurston's writings, Susan Alice Fischer demonstrates, provide a subtle, less obvious but significant context for characterization for the British novelist ("Gimme Shelter": Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*). Afterwards, Tracey L. Walters continues to explore Smith's accomplishments, as well as weaknesses, in the field of character portrayal, and investigates the possible cultural roots of the novelist's tendency to create somewhat lifeless female figures ("Still Mammies and Hos: Stereotypical Images of Black Women"). Next, scholars Sharon Raynor and Lexi Stucky read the lesser-known short story "Hanwell in Hell" ("From the Dispossessed to the Decolonized"; "Red and Yellow, Black and White: Color-Blindness as Disillusionment") and modify, as a result, the

general reader's perception of Smith's literary merits as so exclusively vested in her celebrated debut novel. Furthermore, in the first of these two pieces the short story is compared (if perhaps not closely enough) to Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, which, after one's growing a bit weary of references to Forster, is insightful and stimulating. The last chapter by Katarzyna Jakubiak offers an analysis of the multifarious manners in which *White Teeth* is commodified; yet the author skillfully combines this perspective with an intrinsic, textual interest in Smith's novel ("The International Marketing of *White Teeth*").

What may strike the reader as absent from this informative volume (in addition to better typesetting and space between initials in such names as E. M. Forster) is any discussion of *On Beauty* as an academic novel. Albeit the contributors do touch upon campus politics in their comments about the character Howard Belsey and his daughter Zora, this occurs in other, indirectly related contexts only. This default is regrettable because the novel is a remarkable exemplar of this genre featuring a variety of concerns about propriety, tenure and publishing. In a hilarious episode it even raises the question of what it really takes to survive a predictably very long departmental meeting. As in the works of Amis, Lodge or Bradbury, the narrative point is not limited to the exposure of personal grievances and private fantasies as fueling public interaction in a given place of employment, but it ex-

tends to complex analogies between the secluded, in a sense elitist field of a college and further, broader terrains of politics and sociality.

Another, quiet complaint concerns gender. As might be expected from any such publication, the essays are frequently punctuated by various observations about sexuality yet, atypically, there is only one section (out of twelve chapters) exploring this issue exclusively, and even this oscillates between analyzing the literary representation of gender in Smith's fiction, and taking the novelist to task for failing to create more complex, less stereotypical women characters. This, of course, is not to say that criticism of this kind should dominate the volume. But perhaps a better balanced relation between the predominantly postcolonial orientation of the interpretations and the various, somewhat dispersed discussions of Smith's representation of gender identity could have secured a better understanding of this oeuvre. And, to note a specific, related omission, very little is written about the male gender. While the huge, symbolically so over-determined bosom of Kiki in *On Beauty* creates numerous, if somewhat entangled, directions for feminist scholarship, the gender attitude of husband Howard remains strangely uninterpreted (even if the entire plot of this specific story is launched by a marital-sexual crisis, and even if, as noted before, editor Walters observes that the novelist is generally more competent at representing males than females).

To conclude, the volume adequately responds to many of the theoretical challenges that Zadie Smith's fiction has so far generated. It launches a dialogue, and the emerging, valuable exercises in scholarship in one collection assign yet another dimension to the moral and aesthetic imperative that Smith shares with Forster: "Only connect!"

Tamás Juhász

Commentators, Editors, Publishers, and Other Readers

Philip Goldstein & James L. Machor (ed.), *New Directions in American Reception Study* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2008)

The problem with reception studies is that there is nothing to read. As one cannot extract a reading from a reader's brain to subject it to scrutiny under a microscope, there appears to be no way but to rely on some kind of output on the readers' part when investigating what has traditionally been conceived of as the opposite of production: reception. However trivial and banal this statement may appear, it has far-reaching theoretical and practical consequences, as shown by the essays in the 2008 collection *New Directions in American Reception Study,* which stemmed from a conference held at the University of Delaware three years before. In fact, the

collection can be read as explorations of various strategies aimed at circumventing this problem.

As in the case of many books presenting novel directions in literary and cultural studies,[1] the introduction to this collection also heralds its subject as one that will finally be able to unify such age-old binaries as the historical as opposed to the rhetorical, to accommodate critical approaches of the 21st century, and, thus, serve as a new centre not only to the now-fragmented field of literary, but also to the wider area of cultural studies. But when I read that the arch-enemy of reception studies – criticism which clings to the possibility of a fixed, authoritative meaning – "the traditional essentialist method has restricted literary study and repeatedly produced impasses," and that reception study is the one that "opens literary study to its twenty-first-century constituents" (xxv), I could not help but think of the criticism of Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author," suggesting that Barthes had had to construct a dummy Author-God in order to be able to denounce what had, arguably, never been there.[2]

The editors divided the 19 essays in the anthology into five groups according to their subject matter. The collection starts with more theoretical writings, and continues with the most extensive group, analyses which are embedded in more traditional literary criticism. These are followed by three essays which are concerned with the "ordinary" reader or print culture from a historical perspec-

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tive, and three more analysing the latest branches of media: film, TV, and Internet fandom. The two essays in the fifth group are in dialogue with the preceding ones, and serve as postscripts to the anthology. Toby Miller's aptly titled "The Reception Deception," I felt, could have actually served as a more intriguing introduction to the whole collection.

The present introduction also has its special merits. It surveys the history of reception study, from being part of the investigation of authors' development guided by contemporaneous feedback to reacting against the "affective fallacy" of New Criticism, with as diverse views on the relationship between text and reader as those of David Bleich, Wolfgang Iser, Hans Robert Jauss, or Stanley Fish. It also provides summaries of all articles separately, which must, I feel, be greeted by anyone not familiar with the latest achievements in reception studies. As the essays lack abstracts, however, I think the summaries could have been even more useful if they had been prefaced to the essays directly.

Despite some irregularities in the index (a handy and welcome feature in any anthology) and occasional typographical errors, the book offers an invaluable insight into the latest achievements and concerns in reception study – and, as I shall argue, in a realm even wider than that.

Disregarding somewhat the categories set up by the editors let me proceed by investigating common strategies of the essays which deal with the problem of

the inherent inaccessibility of reception and reading in the strict sense. As we shall see, many of these approaches point toward a stage in reception and cultural studies which may have been passed, but is certainly ahead of us: the blurring of the distinction between reception and production.

The first strategy might be described as one that focuses on the output of "expert" readers, who occupy themselves with writing reading(s). These studies often cite published reviews or scholarly analyses as indices to reception, and frequently dwell on the disparity of interpretative communities separated either by time or culture. James L. Machor investigates the antebellum reception of Herman Melville's short stories, and concludes that interpretative assumptions regarding the reliability of the narrator appear to have been considerably different from those of our day. Steven Mailloux's account is, in effect, reading reading reading-reading, as the bulk of his essay reviews reactions to Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran,* in which Nafisi highlighted the nature of reading texts originating from an alien culture, and, in Hannah Arendt's footsteps, wished that the reading would change her students' thinking. Philip Goldstein contrasts reading practices that are also separated temporally. Focusing on possible readings of Richard Wright's *Native Son,* he attributes the change from seeing the text as a naturalist protest novel, to regarding Bigger Thomas's fate as an existential struggle that ends in liberation, to "the changing status of the

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naturalist and modernist movements and the emergence of black aesthetics" (120); then, surprisingly, he also suggests that it might be due to the evolving beliefs of the author himself. Going on to provide an outline of a brief history of literary criticism, the text (as Miller's and Goldstein's essays) suddenly erupts in a politically charged description of the present state of affairs, in which Goldstein sees "the modern university and the giant corporate media" (repeated twice, 130, 131) as the ultimate foe (Machor, "The American Reception of Melville's Short Fiction in the 1850s"; Mailloux, "Judging and Hoping: Rhetorical Effects of Reading about Reading"; Goldstein, "Richard Wright's *Native Son:* From Naturalist Protest to Modernist Liberation and Beyond").

The remaining three essays in this group, interestingly, all seem to revolve around the concepts of authenticity and realism as separate from contrasting strategies of "expert" reading. Modernism and the literature of the women's liberation movement alike appear to have been ridiculed by early reviews which accused them of being insincere, untrue, and inauthentic (Leonard Diepeveen, "Learning from Philistines: Suspicion, Refusing to Read, and the Rise of Dubious Modernism"; Charlotte Templin, "Discourses in Dialogue: The Reception of Alix Kates Shulman's *Memoirs of an Ex-Prom Queen*"). Critics and reviewers levelled the same accusations against Daniel Lewis James, who adopted the *nom de plume* Danny Santiago and authored a "deceptively"

authentic Chicano novel, when his true identity as a white writer was revealed. Interestingly, both Marcial González, who reviews James's fate in his "Reception and Authenticity: Danny Santiago's *Famous All over Town,*" and Templin, who investigates the reception of first generation feminist literature via Alix Kates Shulman's novel, fail to ask whether it was not the texts themselves, but preconceptions about the authors that were responsible for the apparent authenticity or its opposite which was sensed by early readers.

Researchers, however, might want to consider less scholarly or "expert" readers who do not (did not) regularly convert their readings into written accounts. In the case of readers still alive, there is the possibility of asking them to do so by conducting interviews or handing out questionnaires. This is the practice of Tony Bennett, who tests the post-Marxist theory of Pierre Bourdieu on class-based taste profiles on the data of actual sociological research. Unsurprisingly, he finds that statistical variations outweigh the vague tendency of higher classes to choose so-called high legitimacy cultural products. This finding problematizes Bourdieu's notion of the unity of class habitus, but it is a remark saved till the end of the essay that discredits Bourdieu altogether, who, in 1984, suggested that "nothing is more alien to working-class women than the typically bourgeois idea of making each object in the home the occasion for an aesthetic choice" (qtd. in Bennett, "Habitus Clivé: Aesthetics and

Politics in the Work of Pierre Bourdieu" 77). Kenneth Roemer also makes use of the results of his research among present-day readers, but his interest lies in discovering how they react to an allegedly outdated utopia, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward.* His suggestion that the people who found it the easiest to relate to the text were the ones with experience of crossing cultures or of poverty provides an important insight into the interaction between reading and the personalities of readers ("Placing Readers at the Forefront of Nowhere: Reception Studies and Utopian Literature").

But what happens when one sets out to investigate the reception of "ordinary" readers who are no longer available for questioning? Such an analysis would usually turn to alternative sources following what Toby Miller termed an "archival" method (361). The "Archives" investigated might range from preserved fan mail, which provide the source for Amy L. Blair's account of the baffling success of Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* among middlebrow readers, itself a novel satirizing middlebrow culture, to David Paul Nord's relation of the workings of the Bureau of Accuracy and Fair Play of the *New York World,* which dealt with newspaper readers' complaints. This latter essay might strike one as more a historical account than a paper belonging to reception studies, like Bennett's work, which, I believe, might find itself more at home in sociology. Problems inherent in this kind of approach already manifest themselves

in Nord's account, where all the readers he considers turn out to be professional writers, journalists, or editors (Blair, "Main Street Reading *Main Street*"; Nord, "Accuracy or Fair Play? Complaining about the Newspaper in Early Twentieth-Century New York").

This is also true of Barbara Hochman's essay entitled "Sentiment without Tears: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as History in the 1890s," in which she regards paratextual elements and illustrations in later editions of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel as indices to supposed or prescribed reading practices. Here, editors and illustrators are considered representative readers. Ellen Gruber Garvey does make a step toward finding the "ordinary" reader in history in her "The Power of Recirculation: Scrapbooks and the Reception of the Nineteenth-Century Press," as she focuses on scrapbooks containing newspaper clippings made during the Civil War. The three scrapbook-makers she scrutinizes, however, turn out to be as expert readers and writers as possible, with a suffragist newspaper columnist, a women's rights pioneer lecturer, and a publicly active abolitionist.

What is common in all these essays – as they lack any other kind of sources concerning the readers – is the tendency to regard production as a form of reception. It is not only the selections of clippings or complaints which are read as readings; but actions traditionally regarded as production (illustration) or rewriting (editing) have also come under the umbrella of reception and indices to

reading strategies. The need for this inclusion is understandable. But one might be tempted to think that all one has to do is to pair this argument with Barthes, according to whom there is no writing but re-writing: "the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original," to arrive at the conclusion that everything is, in fact, reading.³

This line of argument also surfaces in a non-historical context. Small talk is considered reception when Andrea Press and Camille Johnson-Yale analyse political conversation in a hair salon prompted by television shows in what might be called an ethnic, feminist, multimethod media reception study ("Political Talk and the Flow of Ambient Television: Women Watching *Oprah* in an African American Hair Salon"). Possibly because of the small number of cases considered, however, their conclusions, as are Hochman's and Garvey's, are somewhat weakened by speculations and self-contradictory elements in the sources.

One might also follow the opposite strategy to get around the problem of reading as something that might not be readily accessible. Just as it is possible to consider production reception, others appear to base their arguments on the idea that any kind of reception directly entails production, which has prompted mostly theoretical essays in this anthology. This train of thought seeks to *activate* the audience or the reader, turning it from a passive receptor into an active organizer, selector, and modifier of discourse.

Patrocinio Schweickart offers a development over Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action by complementing production as a communicative action with reading as a communicative action. Calling attention to the active role of readers / listeners in any communication, Schweickart shows that the symmetry among speakers envisaged by Habermas in an ideal setting of the creation of validity is, in fact, dependent upon an inherent asymmetry between speaker and listener, which Schweickart interprets via Nel Noddings's notion of care ("Understanding an Other: Reading as a Receptive Form of Communicative Action"). In a less theoretical account, however, the notion of the active audience immediately gets problematized. Rhiannon Bury, when considering discussions of a scene of dubious interpretation in one of the episodes of a TV series in her "Textual Poaching or Gamekeeping? A Comparative Study of Two *Six Feet Under* Internet Fan Forums," sets out to determine whether fans engage in deliberate misreadings of the "text," or are more interested in unearthing supposed authorial meaning. While she found that both intratextual and extratextual strategies were used to discover the "true" meaning, contributors to fan forums most often respected "the boundary between thoughtful speculation based on a close reading of the text and wild speculation based on personal whim" (303). In other words, actual readers were found less "active" than expected by many of the theoretical considerations.

It is in Jack Bratich's essay entitled "Activating the Multitude: Audience Powers and Cultural Studies" that the so-called *active audience moment* gets the most extensive consideration. Focusing on the audience from an ontological point of view, Bratich suggests that early audience research tried to come to terms with "audience powers" not via the binary active / passive, but via the active / reactive. This coming-to-terms was done, in Bratich's term, by *splitting* audience power into media and audience. This split is described using Antonio Negri's concepts constituent and constituted powers. "Constituent power is the immense pool of desire and action, the res gestae of subjective forces, that is the motor of history." Constituted power, on the other hand, "is the name given to forms and arrangements that constituent forces take" (35). Bratich argues that the audience has been wrongly constru(ct)ed as a merely reactive force by reversing the relationship between the two powers, and considering constituent power – the site of creative forces – wrongly, the result of constituted ones.

The re-reversal that would restore the "original" and desired state of affairs may remind one of Jacques Derrida's post-structuralist reversal of the order of speech and writing in order to point beyond logocentrism; just as the very notion of the constituent power manifesting itself in constituted ones is reminiscent of Derrida's différance "producing" differences. This différance, as it

"precedes" all semantic structures, cannot be talked about. And, it seems, neither can constituent power. For it is precisely at the point where Bratich considers the consequences of analysing the active audience moment, using Negri's terms, that his language becomes fragmented and performative as opposed to cohesive and argumentative. But the parallels with Derrida do not end here. Derrida, when discoursing on différance, refers to *protowriting;* Bratich, when scrutinizing the constituent power, to *prestructure.* Moreover, both *split* (as *rupture*) and *moment* (as *event*) are there around Derrida's notion of *decentering,* which might be conceived of as both an event in history and something that has not yet been attained.[4] Both propositions, as we shall see, are true for Bratich's *active audience moment.*

For after showing that the encoding / decoding model of communication and the very concept of the audience are the results of the split and the reversing of constituent and constituted powers, Bratich goes on to consider why active audience studies met with such hostility in academia. According to Bratich, active audience study ended up in a cul-de-sac because it became politicized when, following Marxist tenets, audience power was equated with consumer power, and production and reception were analysed in terms of commodification and consumption, which re-generated the very same split witnessed above: "constituent powers could

operate only via the constituted power of the consumer" (43). But there is a way out of this cul-de-sac: by turning, finally, merely reactive audiences into genuinely active ones.

What is interesting to see here is that while many of the essays in the anthology call for, or operate within a framework that presupposes, in one sense or another, the activation of the reader, Jack Bratich's account, via the interpretation of early audience research and the analysis of the backlash against active audience studies, portrays this activation as a thing of the past. The end of his essay, however, appears to call for the very same activation: the transition from reactive to active. Just as decentering, or the death of the Author, audience activation might be conceived of as belonging either to ontology or history or methodology, or to all of these at the same time.

The problematization of the concept of the active audience, as well as its dubious place in history, has not prevented scholars from merging the two opposite strategies outlined above, and from suggesting that production and reception should, in fact, be viewed as unified, equated, and capable of being studied with the very same tools. Janet Staiger, when she analyses Robert Aldrich's film adaptation of Mickey Spillane's spy novel as a reading in her "*Kiss Me Deadly:* Cold War Threats from Spillane to Aldrich, New York to Los Angeles, and the Mafia to the H-Bomb," explicitly states not only that "one of the slogans for media studies has been to

think of the media consumer as a producer" (279), but that she has been "exploring the application of the findings of media reception studies back to what is often seen as the other side of the producer–text–consumer equation" (280). Reading is taken to be writing; as writing (film adaptation) is now seen as a form of reading. But Staiger does not stop here: she meticulously considers the consequences of such an equation, and realizes that reception study still has to account for the inherent dissimilarity between producer and consumer in access to power and distribution, a dissimilarity that very much echoes Schweickart's usage of the notion of care. Perhaps even more importantly, Staiger points out a now glaring self-contradiction that has arisen out of the history of literary criticism: that while special attention is granted to the reader's frame of mind, its now equal, the author, has been rendered mute by critics as an unreliable source on his or her own writing–reading.

Janice Radway's "What's the Matter with Reception Study? Some Thoughts on the Disciplinary Origins, Conceptual Constraints, and Persistent Viability of a Paradigm," which is more an account of personal difficulties encountered during her research that would read zines and friendship networks as culture consumption, stands as an unsettling question mark at the end of the anthology. Radway, too, sees the authority of the critic preserved even as the focus has moved from reading to reading reading,

which statement also serves as a funda-mental criticism against structuralism and cognitive poetics for upholding the status quo.

With the blurring of the borderline be-tween production and reception, which, based on Bratich's account, might be called a poststructuralist or postmodern turn, practically nothing appears to be excluded from the scrutinizing gaze of reception studies as represented in this collection. From small talk to film adap-tations, from illustrations to social net-works, activities which have tradition-ally been classified as production are now analysed as reception of other art-works, media, or culture. And with read-ers and audiences activated, reception is no longer seen as passive decoding, but as an active contribution to discourse, in short, as production. But reception study has also extended itself by incor-porating neighbouring realms of other disciplines. In line with the merging of literary and cultural (media) studies, a cursory glance over the background of the contributors to the present volume reveals the truly interdisciplinary nature of the field, interacting with, among others, sociology, media and communi-cation studies. This expansion has in-deed shown a way around the problem of reading readings, but this has not been without a price. With a concept of reception that now covers everything, reception study appears less and less separable from literary, media, or cul-tural studies in general.

Előd Pál Csirmaz

Notes

1. See, for example, Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Lin-guistics and the Study of Literature* (1975) (London: Routledge, 1997), and *Cognitive Poetics in Practice,* eds. Joanna Gavins and Gerard Steen (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

2. See Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998), p. 26.

3. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Au-thor," trans. S. Heath, in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader,* ed. David Lodge (London: Longman, 1988), 167–172, p. 170.

4. Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," trans. Alan Bass, in *Critical Theory Since 1965*, ed. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle (Tallahassee: Florida State UP), 83–94.

yBa Shocks

Kieran Cashell, *Aftershock: The Ethics of Contemporary Transgressive Art* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009)

Aftershock is a novel, unique and slightly provoking attempt to canonize yBa art through a thorough theoretical analysis of the works of six artists: Ri-chard Billingham, Marc Quinn, Marcus Harvey, The Chapman Brothers, Tracy Emin and Damien Hirst. Kieran Cashell operates with theories emerging from post-structuralism (Foucault, Bataille, Kristeva, Mulvey), which she produc-tively amalgamates with recent theories of transgression (Jenks, Julius)[1] in order

to justify her argument that *transgressive art* can be used as a framework to investigate yBa art practises. The novelty of Cashell's work is that the complex theoretical approach to yBa art which she proposes is still not widespread among scholars in the field.

There are several obvious reasons why these artists were not welcomed into the academic world. One is that yBa art is rooted precisely in the works' resistance to high-brow, academic theory. Julian Stallabrass, a well-known, Courtlaud-based art historian, claims in *High art Lite* that the artistic stance of the yBa in general is a resistance to theory in two respects. On the one hand, these artists consider theory as redundant, overcome, something that is not worthy of consideration, so they do not simply resist theory as such, but ignore it, because it has ceased to play an influential role.[2] On the other hand – and here Stallabrass' scepticism about the whole yBa phenomenon abounds – these are not the kind of art works one can spend hours with since no intellectual demand is addressed to the viewer.

This negative view is precisely what Cashell challenges in her book: each chapter devoted to one of the six yBa artists shows that their works' resistance to theory can be seriously reconsidered. In fact each chapter exerts great effort to present a thorough analysis of the works, as well as to re-frame them and place them under the umbrella term: *transgressive art*. In doing so, she counterbalances the media generated preju-

dices and misunderstandings concerning the yBa as well as the unfavourable judgements of previous critics.[3]

Another problem with yBa artists is that their fame was heavily based on a media celebrity culture, including scandals and the branded bad girl or bad boy image. The phenomenon thus was interpreted as the "marriage of avant-garde shock and commodity consumption, people cannot help but know about" (Stallabrass, 4). The early accounts were also more about their personal and love relationships, the stories of their emergence into fame promoted by Saatchi (a former advertising expert who is now an uneasy mix of collector and dealer), the sky-high prices of their art, and their scandalous exhibitions like *Sensation*.[4] As Betterton puts it: "the paradoxical status of recent art in Britain was the consequence of a realignment between new art and the sphere of cultural consumption, a shift that made it possible for it to be represented as 'subversive' and yet rapidly assimilated to the art market."[5] The yBa was interpreted as a commercial success, based on such prominent galleries as Gagosian or White Cube. These galleries put emphasis on yBa's "professional" art, and on their "neo-Formalist return to a white cube situation" which "reintroduced a stylish aspect to their work for metropolitan audiences confronted by its explicitly commodified aesthetics."[6]

The emergence of different art practices from the 1990s might also have some role in the uneasiness about the

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yBa phenomenon. Artists belonging to the so called "relational," "participatory," "site-specific" or "interventionalist" art emerging around the yBa generation could better circulate and were also better received on the international scene (e.g. Mark Dion, Pierre Huyge, Thai Rirkit Tiravanija, Jeremy Deller or the somewhat younger Phil Collins).[7] These artists and their projects were more in tune with the learned approaches of high-brow theoretical (e.g. post-structuralist, feminist and post-colonialist, etc.) thought and partly countered the tendency of the commodification of the international art market and art fair culture. Claire Bishop, for instance, who writes excessively about contemporary art, hardly mentions yBa artists and if she does, then mainly as a point of contrast between yBa and "participatory" or "relational" art.[8]

The problematic point of Cashell's argument is that (similarly to Bishop's or Stallabrass'), it narrows down its scope of yBa art mainly to the debated, media–sensation-based and Saatchi-promoted group of Goldsmith artists. However, it is also important to note that the term yBa is problematic in itself: firstly, these artists and artworks have no common set of characteristics. Secondly, several artists who are categorised as yBa were not in the original group of the (in)famous Goldsmith student-based *Freeze*-exhibition (Rachel Whiteread or Yinka Shonibare) or included in *Sensation,* which boosted yBa into world fame (Douglas Gordon), nor

they are part of the media buzz around yBa. Some yBa artists' art practices are much more in tune with "relational" art; these include such highly valued artists as Mona Hatoum, Liam Gillick, Tacita Dean. Liam Gillick is especially interesting in this respect, since he is the paradigmatic example (with Rirkit Tiravanija) of Bouriaud's *Relational Aesthetic*.[9]

The controversies around yBa art are manifested also in the fact that some artists were positioned into the – debated but – somewhat elitist framework of the Venice biennials, and even into the high-brow Documenta representations. Tracy Emin, Rachel Whitread and Chris Ofili represented the English pavilion in Venice, Mona Hatoum's *Homebound* was exhibited at Documenta 11. The success of yBa, grounded by Saatchi promotion, was also furthered by Nicholas Serota – the director of the Tate(s) and one of the most influential art world characters in the UK.[10] The Tate(s) have a considerable collection of yBa artists; the works are well represented among the (also debated) Tate Turner Prize winners and are constantly on display in various thematic shows not only at the Tate(s), but at other major art institutions in London, as well. It seems that their place is becoming established despite the frequent furies.[11]

Cashell's reinterpretation is thus to be placed within an affirmative canonizing framework of an institutional background. She aims to revaluate yBa art in particular by overcoming preliminary biases against transgressive art in gen-

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eral. In her opinion the problem with receiving this type of art was that transgressive art's uncompromising mission to interrogate conservative views and to subvert conventional moral beliefs might have become excessive, so much so that it was conceived as an art which "violates the remit of enlightened culture to the extent that it is impossible to engage with transgressive practices as art" (1). In her argument however this is the case only because transgressive art genuinely expanded the horizon of artistic practises by seeking to "invalidate the principles of institutional aesthetics" (4).

To justify her argument Cashell connects *aftershock* to *transgressiveness* and seeks to find the basis for resistance in "post-Kantian institutional aesthetics" and Geenbergian formalist theories (6). In order to ground the opposition of transgressive aesthetics and institutional principles, she contrasts the Kantian disinterestedness of the aesthetic judgement of the beautiful (7) on the one hand, with the unavoidable involvement of the viewer in (the often repulsive and disquieting) transgressive art on the other, which by its form and theme thwarts the possibility of detached contemplation and provokes an irresistible moral answer in the viewer judging the work.[12] In her view this counters Kantian disinterestedness and post-Kantian formal aesthetics. Although Cashell's approach simplifies Kantian aesthetics through Greenbergian formalism, the thesis seems to be a

very demanding and productive one for reconsidering yBa art.

Here what is at stake is the impossibility of disengaging from the emotional and moral response the works provoke. Therefore, in her opinion, the effect is not aesthetic, but moral "which cannot be spirited away by creative ratiocination"; also because the works' formal aesthetic quality does not allow it – as was the case with Mappelthrope's or Serrano's photographs.[13] Although she claims that transgressive art entails a "reflective moral response," which she identifies as "the ethical aftershock of the work" (12), in her view the emphasis falls on the moral-emotional engagement with the work, that is, on the impossibility to keep the (neutralizing) aesthetic distance. This is why yBa works pull towards a new type of experience which is primarily not aesthetic or which radically re-interprets once more what the so-often criticised Greenbergian aesthetics put forward.

Her claims are manifested clearly in each chapter devoted to an artist and furthered by diverse theories. The chapter on Tracy Emin Cashell operates with Foucault's interpretation of parrhesia (fearless speech).[14] In Cahsell's view Emin does risk herself through the fearless exposure of her traumas, as in the case with her *Everyone I have ever slept with 1963–1994* – at best mistakenly interpreted as a confrontation with female promiscuity (born in 1963, Emin constantly protests against this interpretation). Cashell claims that the work is a

complex network of metaphors and personal traumas: the empty interior of the protecting womblike, yet nomadic, temporary dwelling place and the 102 names sewn into it, which evoke often traumatic experiences from childhood on – ranging from the lost comfort of the womb shared with her twin brother through the comforting of a homeless to sexual abuse or to the traumatic loss of her own foetus – point towards the anxiety of abandonment and the feeling of emptiness. Moreover, in Cashell's view "Emin's entire aesthetic project developed out of an existentially significant confrontation with suicide," whereby Emin's art engages not only at shocking audiences but, in a very intricate and complex way, the very basic existentialist questions art can raise (134).

In the chapter on Richard Billingham, Cashell focuses primarily on the Britishness of yBa: she places Billingham's works into the socio-political and socio-cultural givens of the 1990s, marked by the emerging (international) influence of Britpop culture (with such brands as Oasis, Blur or Pulp equally coming from Goldsmith) as well as by John Major's absurd vision of a "classless society" or the later Blairian idea of the "opportunity society," as well as by the clash between the idea of "creative Britain" and the working-class experience. In Cashell's view Richard Billingham's *Ray a' Laugh* photograph series of his working-class family confronts the viewer with the hidden ideology of the controversial middle-class class-tourism approach to

working-class life (e. g. also that of Brit soap idealization). She claims that Billingham's work – due to the photographs' low quality – does not allow for a disinterested aesthetic stance; to the contrary: although his photos invite the viewer to adopt the attitude of the cultural tourist or the disengaged attitude of "orthodox aesthetics," they generate a "sense of shame." In her words, Billingham's work "intensifies moral and sensory queasiness by shocking and embarrassing us . . . for approaching his family and home with the repulsive attitude of the cultural tourist" (27). These photographs make the viewers "uncomfortably conscious of the fact, that . . . everybody hates a tourist" (26–27).[15] The fact that social class or Britishness is also a critical point of Chris Townsend's approach to novel generation Brit art, *New Art from London*, or of the 2010 Saatchi exhibition of a newer generation Brit art entitled *Newspeak: The Complete Grammatology of Panic*, shows that Cashell's approach is not a unique one.[16] The curator of Newspeak, Patricia Ellis, claims that it is an art which expresses the anxiety of the younger generations and reflects the "new social order of class homogenisation, consumerist gentrification and the phenomenon of instant success culture."[17] The Orwellian newspeak in this interpretation becomes the recycling and mixing of phenomena: "[the artists] hand-make the virtual, cite history in fugue fervour and find the poetic and enduring in the cacophony of pop cul-

tural din" (Ellis, 4). On the other hand, in Townsend's account, new British art is much more about the questioning of Britishness from an outsider's point of view in a multicultural society, and the turning towards social questions of art instead of media buzz culture. Townsend's book takes a wider scope of the "creative Britain"-criticism approach and analyses several artworks which comment upon social questions as well as on the economic controversies of our everyday life. In both cases the turn towards newer generations and novel experiences become signposts of the shift in British art.[18]

The problematic or controversial chapters of Cashell's book are the ones on Harvey and The Chapman Brothers. The ethical implications of Harvey's *Myra*, or those of *Zygiotic Acceleration* or *Tragic Anatomies* by The Chapman Brothers, remain dubious even within the explanatory framework of the aftershock experience. She claims that in *Myra*'s case the victims' protests and the public outrage it raised are structural to the work's aftershock aesthetics, and highlights the "particular effectiveness of the painting" (84–85). Though the question remains whether the ethical problem which the portrait of serial killer Myra Hindly raises - because it is made of children's handprints and thereby evokes children's collaboration in the making - to use her phrase, is only "spirited away by creative ratiocination." The Chapman Brothers *Zygiotic Acceleration* and *Tragic Anatomies* are not

less problematic works: what also remains questionable is whether the oscillation between evoking sexual victimisation (pedophilia) – genital organs are grafted onto the faces of adolescent girl mannequins – and the shock of facing it explains the former by means of transgressiveness (88). The interesting part of the chapter from the aspect of theoretical revaluation is the treatment of the *Disasters of War* (the Goya series), in which she points out that Goya is a reference point for yBa art practice of shock and transgression, as is the analysis of *Bad art for Bad People* series from the aspect of the "Battaillean-Sadean heritage," which shows that, similarly to Sade's works, it is "part of a culturally significant vanguard of artistic expression" (99).

The last chapter deals with Damien Hirst, whose ouvre is probably the most debated among the works of the yBa artists: he is not only attacked by animal rights groups for the immoral way he prepares dead insects and animal corpses to be presented as art, but also for the very commercial nature of his art projects - the effect of which is allegedly based on shock manipulation.[19] Cashell, in her treatment of Hirst's works, does not resolve the ethical problem of the violation of animal rights; instead she places Hirst's works on an aesthetic plane: she approaches them in terms of Burke's sublime and concentrates on the feeling of terror evoked by art. Although she does not solely concentrate on Hirst's "Impossibility of Death in the

Mind of Someone Living," in her view it is the most representative example for her interpretation of Burke's sublime. In her opinion the shark is not simply a *memento mori,* but a sublime object which evokes the feeling of terror "that reaches down into the *id*" (179). In Cashell's view, despite the dubious ethics of the work, it "should be considered paradigmatically sublime in the Burkean sense," as the feeling of terror evoked is experienced in a safe environment which renders the possible harm innocuous.[20] To bring the concept of the sublime into the original claim of surpassing Greenbergian academic formal aesthetics through the beautiful is slightly confusing, but it well suits Cashell's claim of the shock-aesthetics of transgressive art and provides a productive approach for Hirst's reception.

Cashell's book is a challenging attempt to revaluate yBa art, and its theoretical framework might provoke and promote academic discussion; furthermore, it suggests that the yBa might take its place in the canon of art history, ironically enough when the Brit art scene has already moved on.

Tünde Varga

Notes

1. Anthony Julius, *Transgression: The Offences of Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002); Chris Jenks, *Transgression* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

2. Julian Stallabrass, *High Art Lite: The Fall and Rise of Young British Art* (London: Verso, 1999).

3. *Aftershock* came out simultaneously with *Lucky Kunst: The Rise and Fall of Young British Art* – a complex, entertaining documentary-like account of the yBa-story from the perspective of insider friend, curator and critic (also the director of Hauser and Wirth, London) Gregory Muir, also with the intent of revaluation. Cf. Gregory Muir, *Lucky Kunst: The Rise and Fall of Young British Art* (London: Aurum Press, 2009).

4. See, for instance, Rosie Millard, *The Tastemakers: U.K. Art Now* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001).

5. Rosemary Betterton, "Young British Art in the 1990s," in D. Morley and K. Robins (ed.), *British Cultural Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 288.

6. James Gaywood, "yBa as Critique," Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung (ed.), *Theory in Contemporary Art since 1985* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), p. 90.

7. The terminological categories are not clearcut. For attempts at categorisation see Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* (2004), or Claire Doherty, "New Institutionalism and the Exhibition as Situation," *Protection Reader* (Kunsthaus Graz, 2006).

8. Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn and its Discontents," *Artforum* (February 2006).

9. Nicholas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Presses du réel, 2002).

10. See *Art Review Power 100 List*, 2009.

11. Every year there is a protest by a group of artists who call themselves Stuckists (referring to Emin's opinion that their art is "stuck") led by Billy Childish.

12. Cf. §6 or "The editor's Preface," to Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of the Power of Judgement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 7. On the correlation of the moral and the aesthetic, see Rodolph Gasché, "Interest in Disinterestedness," *The Ideal of Form: Rethinking Kant's Aesthetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

13. See Lucy Lippard, "The Spirit and the Letter," *Art in America* 80 (1991) 238–45.

14. Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. J. Pearson (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001).

15. The lines are a reference to the Pulp song "Ordinary People."

16. Patricia Ellis, "The Complete Grammatology of Panic," *Newspeak: British Art Now from the Saatchi Gallery* (London: Booth-Clibborn, 2010); Chris Townsend, *New Art from London* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006).

17. The catalogue text is designed to evoke Derridean *Grammatology* in its outline of crossed-out personal names, blurred with the Orwellian idea of the shrinking vocabulary of controlled society. Interestingly, the *Newspeak*-exhibition takes place in the ex-Soviet, ex-Leniningrad St. Petersburg Hermitage (a symbolic place of art, power and cultural change) and only visits London in two parts.

18. One fascinating example is the Hungarian–British Tania Kovacs's questioning of the correlation between national borders and self-identity.

19. The European director of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals described Hirst as a "sadist" (*The Guardian,* 15 August 2003).

20. See Edmund Burke, Section VII. Of the Sublime. *A Philosophical Enquiry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 36, or Immanuel Kant, §28 of *The Critique of the Power of Judgement of Taste*, pp. 138–39.