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"The eye of man hath not heard..."

Fundamental Measurements and Perception from St Paul to Shakespeare's Bottom

The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was

(IV, 1; 209-212)[1]

— Bottom, a Weaver by profession says, after his deep slumber in the arms of beautiful Titania. "It must be accepted" – Frank Kermode wrote in his essay called *"The Mature Comedies"* –

that this is a parody of 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 [...]: 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.'[2]

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[1] References to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are from Harold Brooks, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare. A Midsummer Night's Dream.* (London and New York: Methuen, 1979, 1990). Citations from other plays by Shakespeare also follow the Arden edition of the respective works.

[2] Frank Kermode, "The Mature Comedies" In *Early Shakespeare.* (New York: St Martin's Press,. (1961), pp. 214-220, here p. 214 and p. 220.

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Kermode, as Jan Kott points out in his *"The Bottom Translation,"*[3] quotes the King James version (1611). Tyndale (1534) and the *Geneva Bible* (1557) render the last verse in the following way: "the Spirite searcheth all thinges, ye the botome of Goddes secrettes."[4] It is, indeed, more than likely that, as Kott also argues, Bottom got his name "from Paul's letter in old versions of Scripture," and that "the spirit which reaches to 'the botome' of all mysteries haunts Bottom."[5] Thus, to take Professor Kott's observation a little further, Bottom, with his long, pricking ears of an ass and in his earthly, well-meaning clumsiness and foolishness, would himself be, from "top to bottom," the 'Bottom-translation' of God's secrets.

How far Shakespeare actually ventured into what we may at first hearing call downright blasphemy is difficult to tell. Was he, for example, also aware of the possible pun on *ass* ('a well-known quadruped of the horse kind, distinguished from the horse by its smaller size, long ears, tuft at end of tail, and black stripe across the shoulders'),[6] and *arse* ('the posteriors of an animal', 'the bottom, the lower or hinder end')?[7] From the point of view of rhetoric, exchanging *arse* for *ass* ("translating" one into the other) would just be a form of the well-known *epenthesis* ("the addition of a syllable or letter in the middle of a word").[8] The *Oxford English Dictionary* mentions *ass* in the meaning of 'bottom' as a "vulgar and dialectal spelling and pronunciation" of the notorious word, *arse*, yet the confusion – though wide-spread now in contemporary informal American English – does not seem to occur before 1860.[9] However, it is hard to conceive that the playwright who so readily quibbled on *son* and *sun* (as in *Hamlet*, I,2;64,67) and on

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[3] Jan Kott, *The Bottom Translation. Marlowe and Shakespeare and the Carnival_Tradition*. Translated by Daniel Miedzyrecka and Lillian Vallee. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1987).

[4] Cf. Kott, p.37. The 1560-edition of the Geneva Bible already has: "for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deepe things of God." (See *The Geneva Bible*, A facsimile of the 1560 edition. With an Introduction by Lloyd E. Berry. (Madison, Milwaukee and London: The University of Wisconsin Press); *The King James version*, [without date]. The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testament. Translated out of the original tongues and with the former translations diligently compared and revised by His Majesty's special command. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode Limited [originally in 1611]; *The Tyndale Bible*. Ed. David Daniell. [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990]).

[5] Kott, p. 37. Cf. also Brooks, p. cxvii, Note 3, and p.99.

[6] *The Oxford English Dictionary* (The Compact Edition. Complete text reproduced micrographically. New York, etc.: Oxford University Press, 1971)

[7] *The Oxford English Dictionary.*

[8] Cf. Sister Miriam Joseph, *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language*. (London and New York: Methuen, 1947, 1962), p. 293.

[9] *The Oxford English Dictionary.*

the closeness – or identity – of the pronunciation of *nothing* and *noting* (as in *Much Ado About Nothing*; III, 3; 56-57) – to quote only two examples – would have remained ignorant of such a wonderful chance for foolery (horseplay, "ass-*arse*play"?), especially in an age when, as A. R. Humphreys puts it, "regional and plebeian speech" was more than common on the London stage[10] and the varied spellings and pronunciations in emerging "Early Modern English" served as a rich storehouse for both poets and playwrights to multiply meanings and to further ambiguities.

Yet this additional association would only contribute to the shock solidly established by Shakespeare already and so sensitively hinted at by Kermode and Kott: it is Bottom's very self which serves as the "bottom translation" of Paul's words; the Weaver both "overwrites" and "underwrites" the text of *Corinthians*; he weaves a new actor's garment from the old texture and thus he becomes an awesome, disturbing and profane "translation," i.e. the transformation, the metamorphosis, and, thereby, the scandalous "incarnation" of the Scripture, of the Word of God. Are we, watching Bottom, participating in a sacrilegious "imitatio Christi"?[11] Did Shakespeare go a bit too far here in paraphrase and distortion?

This question, indeed, brings no lesser an issue into play than the age-old problem of "how far is the-too-far," namely: is there a point when we have sufficient grounds to claim that the "overwriting," the "translation" of the "original" text already amounts to "damaging" the "original"? Do we reach a stage when we can safely say that the "interpretation" has gone too far and the gesture of it has become a mere jest, debasing the text rather than helping to understand it? Still further, and to ask an even more "radical" question: does it make sense to talk about the "original" at all if it seems that the "source," the "object" on which our "translation" operates, disappears in, and gets "digested" into, the act of interpretation? (In fact we have, as it will become clearer below, touched upon a problem pertaining to "fundamental measurements" already.) After all, the very words Bottom transforms are not the "original" ones, either; they are one of the English translations of Paul's Greek text, who, in turn, – as his

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[10] Cf. A. R. Humphreys, ed., *The Arden Shakespeare. Much Ado About Nothing* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), pp. 134-135.

[11] Tom Snout, the Tinker, who will have to get "transformed" into a Wall in the performance of the handicraftsmen, tells Bottom with the ass-head: "O Bottom, thou art changed" (III,1;109) and Peter Quince, the Carpenter, gives the "bottom-line": "Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee! Thou art translated." (III,1;ll3-114). In the Arden-edition – from which I quote the whole play – Brooks glosses *translated* as 'transformed' (Brooks p.58), and Kott says: "'Translation' was the word used by Ben Jonson for metaphor" (Kott, p.30).

"philologically" correct introductory clause, "But as it is written" (2:9) indicates – is working with a "subtext" himself, namely with *Isaiah* 64:4: "For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him" (King James version), and, of course, this crux, too, is "only" and again the rendering of an "original" in Hebrew.

I take the question of the "original" and of the "source" to be a markedly relevant question, and especially so *apropos* of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where, on the one hand, the play as a whole is acclaimed to have no direct source (like *The Tempest*, and as opposed to e.g. *As You Like It*, built out of Lodge's *Rosalind,* or *The Winter's Tale* out of Greene's *Pandosto*),[12] while, on the other hand – as Jan Kott has brilliantly shown[13] – there are a host of "subtexts" and traditions at work at the play's "bottom." Shakespeare's comedy itself seems to be, from the point of view of "intertextuality" and of "originals," a paradoxical weaving together of creation "ex nihilo" and of re-creation (both in the sense of 'restoration' and of 'leisure'). I will return to the above nagging questions at the end of this essay. Here, by way of a starting point, I first wish to call attention to the "extensions" Bottom performs on St Paul's text, as seldom mentioned in the critical literature of the play as it is zealous in pointing out the parallels.

Whereas Paul mentions only three "organs" – the eye, the ear and the heart – in Bottom's monologue we have, besides these three the *hand* and the *tongue*: altogether five. Now since all the *noun + verb (subject-predicate)* constructions seem to be *malapropisms*[14] (eye – heard; ear – seen; hand – taste; tongue – conceive; heart – report), it is immediately obvious that no absolutely symmetrical exchange is possible between the five subjects and their corresponding predicates. The first two pairs are perfectly symmetrical with respect to exchange (the eye should hear, while the ear should see): here the malapropism rests on the predicates expressing the most straightforward functions of the bodily organs respectively, so much so that Bottom's distortions almost amount to violating "analytic" statements, where the content of the predicate is, so to speak, included in the subject in advance. After all, the eyes do primarily see and the ears do, first and foremost, hear. So far, Bottom has only swapped Paul's verbs after the nouns.

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[12] Cf. e.g. David Daniell, *The Tempest.* The Critics' Debate Series. (London : Macmillan, 1989), p. 70.

[13] Cf. Kott, pp. 31-33.

[14] Cf. Joseph, p. 304.

Yet from now on we may be witness to a more subtle and complex deviation. First of all, Bottom dissents from the syntax of the English translation of Paul's words: while both the King James version and the *Tyndale Bible* have an active present perfect construction introduced by the conjunction *neither* ("neither entered into the heart of man": King James; "nether have entered into the hert of man": Tyndale),[15] Bottom switches over into *be + (not) able to* structures: "not able to taste," "to conceive," "to report." Bottom spells out the inability of the human being more emphatically, while bringing into play the *hand*, which is unable to taste, and the *tongue*, which cannot conceive. And it is here that the symmetry is broken: after the malapropism of *hand* and *taste* we would expect, with the *tongue*, something like *touch* or *clutch* or *grasp*. *Conceive*, on the other hand, would, under normal circumstances, most readily take *mind* or, even more "literally," the *womb*, the former also being able to *grasp*, as the *hand* does. So, since *hand* and *conceive* by no means form an "original" pair of the "eye – see" or "ear – hear" sort, we must either conclude that *hand* remains without the glory of lending a malapropism to any other organ mentioned, or that it is rather *tongue* and *heart* which create a new pair. But there are difficulties with symmetry this way, too. Though the tongue can indeed "report" and the heart is able to "conceive," these "originals" are by far less straightforward than the "eye – see"-type. Besides, then *tongue* would be a strange "Janus"-term, looking backwards to *hand* through *taste* and peeping forward to *heart* through *report*.

However, two disturbing features will still remain. One is that whereas there is no ordinary sense in which the *eye* could *hear*, or the *ear* could *see*, or the *hand* could *taste*, it seems that there was a sense in Shakespeare's time in which the *tongue* could indeed *conceive*: the *Oxford English Dictionary* lists this now obsolete meaning as the fifth one and defines it as 'To take on (any state or condition: e.g. *fire*, *moisture*, *disease*, *putrefaction*, or the like).'[16] One of the examples the *Dictionary* quotes is from 1695, where the word is used with a bodily organ: "Dipping your Finger in it [Spirit], and touching it with the Flame of a Candle ... it immediately conceives Flame." The other, even more disturbing feature is that to say that the *heart* is (unable) to *report* is – at least according to my non-native English competence – not a misapplication at all; it rather seems to me to be an apt and attractive metaphor. Here we are welcome to suppose already that Bottom is exploiting the traditional semantic extension of *heart*[17] in the direction of this vital

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[15] Cf. Diana Akers Rhoads, *Shakespeare's Defense of Poetry. A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Tempest.* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985), p.82.

[16] *Oxford English Dictionary.*

[17] Cf. David Daniell, ed., *The Tyndale Bible.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p.xi.

'organ' also being the 'seat' of some kind of (secret, or even mystical) *knowledge*. What should we make, then, of Bottom's more and more asymmetrical confusions of semantic fields, a territory any philosopher, especially in the footsteps of Wittgenstein, would find to be an ideal hunting ground?

First of all we may note that Bottom refers to four of the five human senses – seeing; hearing; touching through *hand;* and tasting through *tongue*, while his fifth "organ," as we have seen, is Paul's *heart*. This way he goes much further than most philosophers, who, when giving examples of perception, almost exclusively discuss only seeing and hearing, even the latter being a "poor relative."[18] Thus, maybe it is not too far-fetched to read the marked absence of *mind* in the connotational environment of *conceive* as a covert message to philosophy: "the human being is more than a head with a mind and a pair of eyes in it." This seems to corroborate our suspicion concerning Bottom's implied emphasis on the *heart* as an 'organ' of *knowing*.

Yet *smelling* or *nose* are missing even from Bottom's list, while they seem to enjoy a significant position in other Shakespearean pieces, most notably perhaps in *King Lear*.

In Lear's tragedy amidst the overall chaos of sensing and making sense, the only trustworthy mode of human perception seems precisely to be smelling, with its single reliable organ, the nose. I have such passages in mind as the Fool's question to Lear about why one's nose stands in the middle of one's face (cf. I,5;19), or Regan's proposition that the blind Gloucester should "smell / His way to Dover" (III, 7; 92), or Lear's memories of the storm, as he relates them to Edgar and Gloucester:

> When the rain came to wet me once and the wind to make me chatter, when the thunder would not peace at my bidding, there I found'em, there I smelt'em out.
>
> (IV,6;100-103)

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[18] This is true not only of such "empiricists" as Locke (cf., for example, Book 2, Chapters 3 and 9 of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, [*The Works of John Locke in Ten Volumes*. Volume I. Darmstadt: Scientia Verlag., 1963. Reprint of the 1823 edition in London], p. 104 and pp. 129-136), but also of such "idealists" like Hegel; cf., for instance: "The force of [...] truth thus lies now in the 'I', in the immediacy of my *seeing, hearing*, and so on; the vanishing of the single Now and Here that we mean is presented by the fact that I hold them fast" (G. W. F Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A. V. Miller, with analysis of the text and foreword by J. N. Findlay. [Oxford: Clarendon Press.1977], p. 61, my emphasis; see also pp. 62-103.) It is the "and so on" which is especially symptomatic in Hegel's text.

Should we say that, under the "ontological" interpretation of some sensory, "empirical" categories Shakespeare provides us with, one of the reasons for our human tragedies is that, as Gloucester puts it, we cannot "smell a fault" (I,1;15)? Is it possible that the *hand* – which is so ready to clutch a dagger in *Macbeth* – "smells," in Lear's words, "of mortality" (IV,6;132) too much? What would the "metaphysical nose" look like which could smell our "faults" at the bottom of our existence? Is the *nose* absent from Bottom's blasphemous inventory because, according to Shakespearean "metaphysics," fault-smelling in this "ontological" and "tragic" sense is reserved exclusively for God, or Christ, even in the sacrilegious presence of a "bottom"-incarnation of The Word? Shall we take a further hint from the fact that, on Bottom's list, it is the *heart* which seems to fill the void left behind by the *nose*? The series of my "rhetorical questions" above may at least, if they do nothing else, call attention to an absence I am fascinated by: the fifth human sense missing from Bottom's catalogue (perhaps really meant in the divine sense).

However, this absence is all the more interesting in view of the fact that smells do play an eminent role in the overall pattern of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The fairy-world exudes the powerful scent of flowers: it is enough to think of the "odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds" (II,1;110) Titania mentions, or of Oberon's "sweet musk-roses" (II,2;252), "large, rambling white roses, so called from their fragrance,"[19] which Titania will later "stick" into Bottom's "sleek smooth head" (IV,1;3) to wreathe him in a "coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers" (IV,1;51). On the other hand Bottom warns his fellow-actors to "eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath" in order to produce a *sweet comedy* (IV,2;40-42). Of course the sweet comedy is the "very tragical mirth" of Pyramus and Thisbe (V,1;57), the rehearsal of which in the woods starts as follows:

> Bottom: Thisbe, the flowers of odious savours sweet –
> Quince: 'Odorous'! 'odorous'!
> Bottom: Odorous savours sweet;
>   So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisbe dear.
>   (III,1;78-80)

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[19] Brooks, p. 42.

Sweet, which, in the play, is applied not only to "savours" and "breath" but to "melody," to "voice," to "look," to "sight," to "honeysuckle," and even to persons,[20] is able to connect, through its outstanding polysemous power, the whole range of our perceptive potentials. Thus, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* does become, to borrow Bottom's words, a "sweet comedy," where the fragrance of odorous flowers mixes with the "odious" stench of garlicky breath. The fibres of the "airy nothing" (V,1;16) are as much woven from the sweaty efforts of the handicraftsmen, who "now have toil'd their unbreath'd memories" (V,1;74), as from the "gait" of "every fairy," who should "each several chamber bless / Through this palace with sweet peace" (V,·1;402-404). After all, *scent* and *sense* are united etymologically forever, in their common Latin root, *sentire* ('to feel, to perceive'), to emphasise, as it were, that all human sensation and feeling starts with the nose.

So one more of my rhetorical questions seems to be in place: if smelling even "historically" seems to be so fundamental and if it is true that the play as a whole is so sensitive to smells, connecting, through *sweet*, practically the whole range of human feelings, has it not become almost symptomatic by now that it is precisely the *nose* which cannot be found in Bottom's inventory?

Yet there is something even more important to be noted concerning Bottom's monologue. His comedy, throughout his speech, is triggered by what we may call the "constant metaphorisation and back-literalisation of the negative": on the one hand, Bottom, in line with St Paul, provides us with an implied criticism of the limits of human perception and knowledge, tacitly suggesting that one would need new organs, in fact an almost total transformation ("translation") of sensation and thinking to apprehend and comprehend what he has been through, while, on the other hand, he is also absolutely and, therefore, fatally right from the point of view of his words taken literally, because, true enough, the eyes will never be able to hear and the ears will never be able to see. If there is, indeed, a play which is prepared to go to all lengths to point out the bankruptcy of human sensation in general, then it is *A Midsummer Night's*

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[20] "My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody" (I,1;189); "he [Bottom] is a very paramour for a sweet voice" (IV,2;11); "I did never, no, never can / Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye"(II,2;125-126); "Seest thou this sweet sight?" (IV,1;45); "So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle / Gently entwist"(IV,1;41); "O take the sense, sweet, of my innocence!" (II,2;44); "Sweet, do not scorn her so" (III,2;247); "And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake!" (II,2;103).

Dream. It is especially *sight* which gets a detailed treatment, the *eye* being – as is well-known and widely discussed[21] – the central metaphor of the play.

In the very first scene, for instance, Hermia expresses her disapproval of those who "choose love by another's eyes" (I,1;140), providing us with the root of all further complications. Helena thinks that she could "sway the motion of Demetrius' heart" (I,1;193) if she were like "fair Hermia": "My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye, / My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody" (I,1;187-189). Expanding the list by *ear* and *tongue* seems to allude to Bottom's crux significantly, especially in the context of the notorious word, "translated," since Helena continues: "Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated, / The rest I'd give to be to you translated" (I,l;l90-191).

In a certain sense, the whole play can indeed be said to be a challenge to some of Helena's central theses, especially to: "Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind" (I,2;234).[22] Yet the whole passage is worth quoting:

> How happy some o'er other some can be!
> Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.[i.e. Hermia]
> But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
> He will not know what all but he do know;
> And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
> So I, admiring of his qualities.
> Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
> Love can transpose to form and dignity:
> Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
> And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind;
> Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste:
> Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste.
>
> (I,2;226-237)

It is primarily the juxtaposition of "quality" and "quantity" which will prove important in my future discussion of the relationship between perception and, as the title of this essay goes, fundamental measurements, the latter having a lot to do with qualities and quantities. Helena's central thesis will, of course, prove blatantly false: Lysander, Demetrius and even Titania will all fall prey to looking with the eyes instead of the mind. Lysander, for example, insists in vain, dazzled by the juice of the love-in-

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[21] Cf., for example, Cecil S. Emden's detailed study, "Shakespeare and the Eye" in *Shakespeare Survey* 26 (1973), pp. 130-141, especially p. 135.

[22] Cf. Brooks, pp. xcii-xciv.

idleness flower upon looking at Helena, that "the will of man is by his reason sway'd, / And reason says you are the worthier maid" (II,2;114-115) – it is his very condition which falsifies his claim.

As it has also frequently been observed, the play even offers, especially in the context of the performance of the artisans, (where a Wall is a human being and a Lion should not be taken as "real"), an eye-test for the theatrical perception of the audience as well.[23] Theseus, for instance will not only contend that the "shadows" of both eminent and poor performances should be "amend"-ed by the "imagination"[24] but he will also unabashedly discuss theatrical illusion in the context of love and madness: "The lunatic, the lover, and the poet / Are of imagination all compact" (V,1;7-8). Thus, as generations of critics have argued before me, Bottom's points about the inadequacy of human sensation concerning certain "most rare vision"-s (cf. IV,1;203) perfectly fit into the overall concern of the play as a whole.

But, having dealt with the lacks in Bottom's speech at large, how are we to interpret now his "extensions," namely the mentioning of the *hand* and the *tongue*, in addition to St Paul's *eye*, *ear* and *heart*? Should we argue that more "down-to-the-earth" Bottom, after his revels and revelations in Titania's arms, has to complement St Paul's catalogue to hint at the ineffable, and, paradoxically, "airy" and "ethereal" sexual experience with the Queen of the Fairies? We know from Bakhtin's and from Kott's explorations that in the polysemy of the figure of the ass one important element is its exceptional sexual potential.[25] From this we can only infer what happened between Bottom and Titania. Here – as deconstruction would most probably put the matter – we never get the "thing," the "meaning" itself: if there is, indeed, a climax, it takes place in the realm of "shadows" and Titania only leaves "traces" behind, precisely and especially – it seems – on Bottom's tongue and hands, and, most significantly, within the texture of a *dream*. Here, again, Bottom successfully employs, in more than one way, the principle of "metaphorisation and back-literalisation of the negative" mentioned above. For a dream is a notorious thing: since Freud we know that we do not have direct access to it at all; we rather remember our "translations" of it into thoughts or speech, and part of the analyst's work consists precisely in trying to get to the "original" through deciphering the "dream-meaning" ("*Treumdeutung*") in an – as Paul

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[23] Cf. Brooks, pp. cxxxvii-cxliii

[24] "The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them" (V,1;208-209).

[25] Cf. Kott, pp. 43-52.

Ricoeur would argue[26] – ultimately hermeneutical process. The inability of communication Bottom so sensitively and sensually gives voice to thus belongs not only to "sensational or exceptional" dreams (like an encounter with a fairy) but to the very nature of any dream, too. The further complication – the "complication of the complication" – is, of course, that Bottom's dream is already within *A Midsummer Night's* Dream. Another complication – as a further application of the games with the negative[27] – is that it would indeed be hard to conceive what the tongue and hands might feel on a fairy. Is a fairy not "airy," "celestial," "ethereal" by definition? Is it not a misapplication (a "category mistake") of the "eye - hear"- type already to speak of, or at least entail, the *body* of a fairy?

Here we may once more get a glimpse of how the theatre works, a "miniature portrait," operating over the "microcosm" of Bottom' s few lines. For, in my reading, what Bottom is doing amounts to this: he is chastising human sensation and sense-making for not being able to go beyond themselves and to perform the impossible tasks he would like to prescribe them, he complains about the ineffability of dreams and about the limits of language trying to give voice to the experience of a fairy-body, while everything he implies as a lack, as a negative feature is, on the strictly literal level, straightforwardly and trivially true: eyes will not hear, ears will not see, etc., fairies do not have bodies and we are unable to give a direct account of any of our dreams. The yoking together of contradictory terms like *eye* and *hear* starts a metaphorical process and, as I pointed out above, by the time Bottom gets to "heart to report" (which I dared to take to be a handsome metaphor), he even seems to learn that the tension a "real" metaphor carries does not simply flow from putting contradictory or mutually exclusive words together, but from a "milder" juxtaposition, where the semantic content of one term finds at least as much in common with the other term as it also finds itself at odds with it. We might even say that Bottom slowly learns "translation" in the sense of Ben Jonson, who used this enigmatic word for *metaphor*.[28]

Yet Bottom's gradual metaphorisation, through its inevitable anchorage, and, thereby, its constant participation, in the literal has a counter-effect on the literal too, and the inherent lack and negativity detected as straightforwardly and trivially existing

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[26] Cf. Paul Ricoeur, "The Question of Proof in Psychoanalysis" In *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur. An Anthology of His Work*. Eds., Charles E. Reagan and David Stewart. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), pp 184-210.

[27] On the problem of metaphors which are negative in form (e.g. "Life is not a bed of roses" or "The work of art is not an egg") see David Cooper's witty discussion, *Metaphor*. Aristotelian Society Series, Volume 5. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 232-236.

[28] Cf. Kott , p. 30.

on the literal level begins to be read and "translated" in at least two ways. On the one hand, the trivial lack and negativity on the literal plane will forever trigger a need in the literal to go "beyond" itself, to find a realm where, for example, the eye is indeed capable of hearing, while implying a profound and deep criticism of the human senses and the ability of sense-making precisely in their *proper* and *trivial* functions as well: what Bottom is indirectly suggesting is, indeed, no less than the wise acknowledgement that the eyes *cannot even see*, that the ears *cannot even hear*, etc., with all the confusions and the asymmetry of the proper functions of hand, tongue and heart noted above.

On the other hand, the interplay of the literal and the metaphorical will result in the carrying over of the lack and of the negativity of the literal plane onto the level of the metaphorical as well: Bottom further – and no less wisely – implies that no matter how hard we might work on a total transformation or "translation" of our senses and sense-making, the enterprise of enriching even each and every sense-organ with all the capabilities of all the others (e.g. the eyes, besides seeing, with hearing, touching, tasting, etc.) would still mean remaining within the confines of human boundaries, and a lack and negativity will always remain, on each and every level, since, trivially again, even metaphorisation is a human process after all.

Here we have reached the lesson of the theatre again, which is always a lesson *for* it as well: the theatrical "dream-world," at least in one sense, is created to make up for the lacks in the literal realm, yet what is created and what we traditionally call the metaphorical, always feeding on the literal, gets its energy also from what it does not – and will never – have. We once more encounter the paradox of meaning: meaning shows its enormous potential where it is *not*, it creates most effectively – or at all – *before* and *after* it is gone. Hence also the significance of the fact that we will never be able to decide whether Bottom did sleep with Titania or not. Yet it is of utmost importance that we neither remain content with *celebrating* this uncertainty (as, I believe, deconstruction is sometimes prone to do), nor give up trying to fill the "lacuna," the tense "emptiness" before and after meaning, in as many ways as we can. It seems that meaning gets generated from the way I fill in the "absences" with my suppositions and inferences and, first and foremost, from the amount of *trust* I put into a chosen direction *from myself*. While necessarily and inevitably trusting language always already built on communal trust, I *wager what I am* on something *other than what I am*. Wager, of course, implies that I can also lose, and trust always involves credit, so, self-evidently, there will never ever be absolute certainty. Yet the *possibility* of my being a loser does not mean that I *am*, already, a loser: I have to allow for an *equal* chance of winning. I am more than ready to acknowledge that I do not know when and how my *actually* being a

winner (a loser) gets announced – or even predicted. For Hamlet, for example, there is Claudius to do the job: "Our son shall win" (V,2;289), a venomous wager indeed, containing the direct opposite of the final truth. Still I contend that unless I allow for the *other* alternative with *equal* force, my trust is no trust.

The above speculations about the power of meaning may even be connected with a further understanding of *mimesis*, a very well-known one provided by Paul precisely in 1 *Corinthians*. The clue that seems to make the link possible is one of Bottom's "extensions," namely his mentioning of the *tongue*, which might recall the following crux from the whole body of the "subtext" he is working with (I quote from the *Geneva Bible*):

> Though I speake with the tongues of men and Angels, and haue not loue, I am as sounding brasse, or a tinkling cymbal. And thogh I had the *gift* of prophecie, and knewe all secretes and all knowledge, yea, if I had all faith, so that I colde remoue mountaines and had no loue, I were nothing.
>
> (13:1-2)

Now towards the end of the famous "Hymn of Love" we find the following much-discussed passage:

> For now we se[e] through a glasse darkeley: but then *shal we se[e]* face to face. Now I knowe in parte: but then shal I knowe euen as I am knowen.
>
> (13:12)

St Paul juxtaposes here two worlds: the earthly one he is now subject to offers only a dim, blurred vision, identified by the quality of darkness – and we may just wonder what the *glass* can mean: is it indeed a "Platonic" looking-glass, reflecting, in faint shadows, God's "Reality" and deceptively showing everything in the reversed order, i.e. the right to be the left and the left to be the right? That, I believe, is the standard interpretation and this is no place to quarrel with it at length, though I think that even Plato's cave-image is more complex than that. Here I wish to point out one noteworthy feature: though Paul explicitly says that now my knowledge is partial, he does not spell out its opposite in *perfect*, but anchors the quality to be characteristic of my knowledge in "God's world" in the way I *am known*. This may not only mean that 'then I will know as now I am taught, then I will perfectly know what I now hear only in teaching,' as, for example, the gloss of the *Geneva Bible* interprets the passage, but also that I will then know *in the way God knows me even and already now*. Then partiality is not so much opposed to *perfection* but to *wholeness* and *intimacy*, and the sense of *know* in

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the passive voice ("as I am knowen") is understood as 'being acquainted and familiar with' rather than as 'being in the possession of a piece of information I hitherto was denied of, or did not grasp profoundly enough.' Thus the implication of Paul's words would, under my interpretation, be that God will neither add anything to my partial knowledge of, say, facts, nor will He "perfect" it in depth and thoroughness, but that He will, *really* and *truly*, acquaint me with things I think I already am familiar with, and, most notably, will make me familiar, at last, with *myself* – with myself, whom I now believe I know best. Thus – I would like to argue – "transcendence" here is given in the quality of *intimacy*, most notably triggered by the metaphor of "seeing face to face." Transcendence for Paul seems to lie in the total abolition of human separateness both from other human beings and from "the objects of the world."

This is the point where I think we may gain a valuable insight for the theatre and for a theory of mimesis: the theatre re-presents, and, at least in a certain way, undoubtedly "transcends," the "real" world, not to teach me things I have never previously heard of, or know not enough about, but to show me the very things I meet, hear and see every day and to acquaint and re-acquaint me with them precisely because I think I know them intimately – whereas I do not. Thus the aim is not to know more *about* the thing but to know *it*, to be, as it were, *one* with it. This is the sense of knowledge – intimate acquaintance, "Biblical," "Paulian" purport of *to know* – Othello, for example, desires with respect to his Desdemona.[29] The measure and extent of this acquaintance and re-acquaintance is secured in one's existential condition, namely in one's ability to know oneself (precisely, as it turns out with Othello, in his ability to get to know himself *in the Other*), which, however, may be found as wanting with respect to the quality of *wholeness* as with all the other capacities for being human. Yet, at least according to St Paul's understanding, the "real playwright," in the fullest power of His "mimetic ability" to *show*, is God and only God, Who is able to show me people and things according to the measure of His knowledge of me *as I am*.

To interpret knowledge as an antidote to human separateness does not seem to be too far-fetched in the context of the "Hymn of Love" where, for example, "Loue [...] disdaineth not: it seeketh not her owne things" (13:5) and where, in verse 2, the necessity of love is argued for, among other things, in opposition to the understanding of all mysteries. It neither seems to be too much of an exaggeration in the context of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, about which at least that much is agreed that it is a comedy of love. Yet there is, of course, nothing but disagreement concerning what *kinds* of love

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[29] Cf. Géza Kállay, *Nem puszta szó: Shakespeare Othellója nyelvfilozófiai megközelítésben*. [It is not words: Shakespeare's *Othello* from the perspective of the philosophy of language]. Budapest: Liget Műhely Alapítvány, 1996.

are dealt with as the principal themes of the play.[30] In accordance with the genre of the "comedy of love," *amor* mostly leads to confusions, accusations, quarrels, jealousy and even humiliation, yet it is precisely against this background that one scene stands out, heavily marked by the sense of intimacy.[31] This scene is the duet of Bottom and Titania, encircled by the choir of the fairies. Peaseblossom and Mustardseed are asked to scratch Bottom's head, "Monsieur" Cobweb should get him the "honey-bag" or a "peck of provender" with "good dry oats" and a "bottle of hay," while music is lulling him to sleep (cf. IV, 1; 1-44). Bottom may have the head of an ass, yet he desires things an old husband does after long years of marriage, whatever we suppose to have happened between him and Titania earlier. And, again, it is of utmost significance that the single intimate scene of the play is linked to Bottom, precisely in his transformed-translated version of an ass.

In line with a philosophical reading of the play, I wish to claim that at least one way in which Wittgenstein interprets knowledge in his *Philosophical Investigations* (and, as I argued elsewhere,[32] he understands the need for "transcendence" in his *Tractatus*) has a lot to do – as Stanley Cavell has shown[33] – with his recognition of human separateness as a condition of, and, thereby, a reason for, doing philosophy. Knowledge, in the Wittgensteinian-Cavellian approach, is thought about not only in terms of 'gain' or 'private property' but also as a form of acknowledgement and as the vehicle of an attempt at intimacy. This is precisely one of the most valuable insights which urges me to try to connect Wittgenstein's philosophy with the analysis of Shakespearean drama.

If it is true, then, that a line of interpretation gains its meaning from the amount of trust one invests into it, Bottom appears to trust his own line of interpretation well enough: he even wants Peter Quince to further "translate" and interpret his dream in a literary form: "I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called 'Bottom's Dream', because it hath no bottom" (IV, 1; 214-215). It is only later that he realises that in fact he cannot tell what "methought I was"

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[30] Cf. Brooks, pp. cxxx-cxxxiv.

[31] I owe this observation to Professor István Géher.

[32] Géza Kállay, "'The logic of depiction' and 'the baseless fabric of this vision': A Comparative Reading of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*" in *Mesotes. Zeitschrift für philosophishen Ost-West-Dialog.* 1/1994, pp. 125-135.

[33] Cf. Stanley Cavell, *This New Yet Unapproachable America. Lectures after Emerson after Wittgenstein.* The 1987 Frederick Ives Carpenter Lectures. (Albuqurque, New Mexico: Living Batch Press, 1989), pp. 29-75.

and "what methought I had" (cf. IV, 1; 206-207). When he meets his company again, he announces:

> Masters, I am to disclosure wonders: but ask me not what; for if I tell you, I
> am not true Athenian. I will tell you everything, right as it fell out.
>
> (IV, 2; 28-30)

Yet when Peter Quince, the slated author of the intended ballad, urges him with: "let us hear, sweet Bottom," he only replies: "Not a word of me" (IV,2;31-32). Meaning has already disappeared only to get richer, once again, in the "vacuum" it has left behind. Yet Bottom's simultaneous zeal and refusal to tell his tale, and his previous pun on his name (Bottom's dream, which has no bottom), as well as the application of the play's all-encompassing adjective, *sweet*, to his own character indicate that he has, indeed, become the incarnation of one of the most significant principles of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: the yoking together of incongruous elements just to discover their mutual affinities. Bottom – as it has been hinted at above – is both foolish and wise (wise in his foolishness and foolish in his wisdom), his pun "combines" – as Brooks points out –

> the old academic joke of non-sequitur nomenclature, *lucus a non lucendo*, with
> the two opposites implied: no bottom because no foundation, and no bottom
> because unfathomably profound.[34]

Thus the very figure of Bottom participates – as Kott has convincingly argued – in two traditions: in Neoplatonic metaphysics and in the *serio ludere* of the carnival legacy,[35] which appear to be irreconcilable only at first sight. The connection, and, hence, the communication between the two is possible through one of the most fundamental principles both traditions share: the "above" and the "below," the "top" and the "bottom" correspond to, and mutually test, each other, thereby becoming strangely interchangeable. In the Platonic-Plotinian tradition, the "below" is just a base and "murky shadow,"[36] yet we have nothing other than that in this world to point towards the pure and unattainable truth of the perfect *eidos* "above." In the *serio ludere* of the carnival legacy "the signs and emblems of the bottom are the earthly probation of

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[34] Brooks, p. cxvii.

[35] Cf. Kott, especially pp. 38-41.

[36] Kott, p. 38.

the signs and emblems of the top"[37] and the elevated and noble attributes of the human mind are exchanged [...] for the bodily functions (with a particular emphasis on the "lower stratum": defecation, urination, copulation, and childbirth). In carnival wisdom they are the essence of life; a guarantee of its continuity.[38]

No wonder, then, that Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is as favourite a source for quotations in one system as in the other. For learned Erasmus, for example, it was "a praise of folly" and for Rabelais, the author of perhaps the most famous piece of carnivalesque literature, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, it is the divine authentication of the essence of carnival rites according to which "the fool is wise and his madness is the wisdom of this world."[39] Here are some of the most popular quotes from Paul's letter (I am reading the King James version):

> For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.
>
> (1:19-21)

> But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.
>
> (1:27-28)[40]

So Bottom, who, after his awakening, will "peep" with his "own fool's eyes" (IV, 1; 83) – as Puck puts the matter – fits in perfectly with both traditions, with and without the ass-head. The ass is, of course, at the same time the symbol of the high and low in itself; here, in the context of the "bottom" incarnation of "God's secrets" it is enough to refer to *Matthew* 21:5: "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."

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[37] Kott, p. 38.

[38] Kott, p. 39.

[39] Kott, p. 41.

[40] For the use of most of these quotations in Neoplatonic and carnivalesqe texts, and further for these traditions see Kott, pp. 40-43.

This interchangeability of the high and the low, this merger of opposing – or seemingly opposing – qualities may really make one subscribe to Hermia's view, expressed not much before Bottom's awakening: "Methinks I see these things with parted eye, / When everything seems double" (IV, 1; 188-189). Yet, as we have seen, the play not only invites us to "seeing double" (the one in the two and the two in the one), but it intimates a profound dissatisfaction concerning the human inability to perceive and to give voice to "most rare vision"-s. Here is Bottom again: "I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what my dream was. Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream" (IV, 1 ;203-206). Here and, as it has been discussed above, in the notorious burlesque of *Corinthians*, the implication throughout is that perception would be impossible, because the experience is beyond human measure, it surpasses our lame faculties. And Paul's "original" words quoted above concerning God's turning the hierarchy of wisdom and foolishness upside down purport to make the same point. In fact, in *Corinthians* and elsewhere, Paul goes to great lengths to stress that God has upset a traditional system of measurement in favour of the human being: He devised a new scale and created counterbalancing devices so that He may be able to pass judgements which are still just, yet not condemning. In *Romans*, for instance, Paul puts the paradox this way:

> For as by one's man disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedi-
> ence of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the
> offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more
> abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign
> through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.
>
> (5:19-21)

In the context of a comedy of love it is all the more important to emphasise that it is God's love which has made Him "cook the books" and "cheat" with his scales: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were sinners, Christ died for us" (*Romans* 5:8).

Thus, in Paul's letters and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the problems of love and of perception are forever tied up with the problem of measurement. Of course, surmising an inherent bond between measuring and perception has a long tradition. Measurement has only narrowly been defined as the "correlation with numbers of

entities which are not numbers"[41] or as "the assignment of numerals to objects or events according to rules"[42] and it is usually this narrow sense which is meant when we talk about "fundamental measurements" like determining weight or length.[43] In the broad sense, measurement also includes our everyday – and usually totally unconscious – practice of delimitation, comparison and even identification, so when we say, for instance, that "this is an ass" or that "he is a bigger fool than she" or, with Bottom, that "I have a reasonable good ear in music" (IV, 1; 28), then we are, in fact, also performing acts of measurement. Ernest Nagel is right in pointing out that "the problems of measurement merge, at one end, with problems of predication" in general – measuring, from this larger point of view, can indeed be defined as "the delimitation and fixation of our ideas of things."[44] Although we need not go as far as Bishop Berkeley did and say that *esse est percipi*, we can readily admit that, in a certain sense, perception *itself* is, always already, measurement. It is all the more interesting to note that what is difficult is not only to find the proper category within which one perception can be distinguished from another, but also to give voice to what we are actually doing when we are measuring, to spell out what measuring actually consists in. In his article *"On the Theory and Scales of Measurement,"* S. Stevens relates that "for seven years a committee of the British Association for the Advancement of Science debated the problem of measurement."[45] The committee, comprising nineteen mathematicians, physicists, psychologists and philosophers, "was instructed to consider and report upon the possibility of 'quantitative estimates of sensory events' – meaning, simply: Is it possible to measure human sensation?"[46] The seven years did not prove to be enough, the committee had to remain in session for another year, and even in the final report of 1940 one of the members insisted that they should include the following:

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[41] Ernst Nagel, "Measurement" in Arthur Danto & Sidney Morgenbesser, eds., *Philosophy of Science.* (New York: Meridian Books Inc., 1960), pp. 121-140 [Originally in *Erkenntnis*, Band II Heft 5, 1932, pp. 313-333], p. 121.

[42] S. S. Stevens, "On the Theory of Scales of Measurement" in Danto and Morgenbesser pp. 141-149 [Originally in *Science*, Volume 103, No. 2684, 1946, pp. 23-31], p. 142.

[43] Cf. Stevens, pp. 142-147.

[44] Nagel, p. 121.

[45] Stevens, p. 141.

[46] Stevens, p. 141.

> Any law purporting to express a quantitative relation between sensation inten-
> sity and stimulus intensity is not merely false but is in fact meaningless unless
> and until a meaning can be given to the concept of addition as applied to sensa-
> tion.[47]

The problem, of course, is the age-old one of how we go over from the realm of quality into the terrain of quantity and vice versa. In our everyday life it is usually easy for us to cross the border between the two: when somebody says, for example, that "too much of a good thing can make you sick" or, as Lysander puts the matter, "a surfeit of the sweetest things / The deepest loathing to the stomach brings" (II, 2; 136-137), we perfectly know what is meant; the real perplexity is to tell *when*, exactly, (after which spoonful of ice-cream, after how many sniffs at sweet roses) we can really say that so much *good* has been *harmfully* too much. And neither do we fare any better when we go in the opposite direction and approach quality from quantity: we can, for instance, readily tell, as the ancient Greek "paradox of the heap" goes,[48] that one grain of wheat is not a heap, two grains of wheat are still not a heap ... – yet *precisely* how many grains does it take to feel entitled to apply the category (the idea, the quality) of "heap" to the grains? It would be absurd to claim that, say, two-thousand-five-hundred-and-twelve grains are a heap while two-thousand-five-hundred-and-eleven are not, whereas we feel that there must be, or at least should be, an exact line of demarcation.

I think that to raise the issue of measurement, in both the broad and the narrow sense, with respect to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or to Shakespearean drama in general is relevant in more than one way. Bottom's monologue, investigating the bounds of human sensation and imagination, is, indeed one of the most famous cruces. But we encounter several other instances in the play where a character's main concern is to "categorise," or at least to describe or circumscribe something the primary feature of which seems precisely to be that it is undefinable. In the company of so many "supernatural agents" this is hardly surprising. When Demetrius, with the love-potion on his eyes, wakes up and catches sight of Helena, it takes him a long time to find the proper similes and mythological parallels to express his feelings:

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[47] Stevens, p. 141.

[48] Cf. Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers. Volume I: From Thales to Zeno.* The Argument of the Philosophers Series. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 259.

O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
Crystal is muddy. O how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!

(III, 2; 137-140)

It is precisely what forever remains unspeakable in love that the handicraftsmen make, unaware, most fun of in their performance in Theseus' court:

Pyramus [Bottom]: *O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so black!*
O night, which ever art when day is not!
O night, O night, alack, alack, alack,
I fear my Thisbe's promise is forgot.

(V,1;168-171)

Here Bottom – as he promised at the first rehearsal – really "move[s] storms" and "condole[s] in some measure" (I,2;23). A wall may separate the lovers all right, yet to pinpoint what one feels when one is in love, or to delimit which of the five human senses perceives this or that "stimulus," would really belong to the "languages of the unsayable." No wonder that, in the "very tragical mirth" of Pyramus and Thisbe, malapropisms make their reoccurrence again:

Pyramus [Bottom]: *I see a voice; now will I to the chink,*
To spy and I can hear my Thisbe's face.
[...]
My soul is in the sky.
Tongue, lose thy light;
Moon, take thy flight!
Now die, die, die, die, die.

(V, 1; 190-191, 292-295)

Yet even the "supernatural agents" point towards problems of categorisation: Titania, in explaining why the weather has been so unusually wet and why "pelting" rivers "have overborne their continents" (II, 1; 91-92), complains that now "the quaint mazes in the wanton green / For lack of tread are indistinguishable" (II, 1; 91-92), and that

The spring, the summer,
The chiding autumn, angry winter, change

> Their wonted liveries: and the mazed world,
> By their increase, now knows not which is which.
>
> (II, 1; 111-114)

Besides the problem of categorisation and of going to the "edges of language" when one is in love, we also have explicit references to *proportion* and to *measuring*, still strictly within the context of love, of course. Helena is especially fond of applying the metaphors of measurement to love – Helena, who is undoubtedly the more reflexive and "philosophical" of the two girls, in this respect forming, interestingly enough, a pair rather with Lysander than with Demetrius.

Helena first succinctly formulates the well-known proportion between desire and the unattainable features of the object of desire: "O, I am out of breath in this fond chase: / The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace" (II, 2; 87-88). Later, when Lysander pledges the same oaths to her as he did to Hermia, she teaches him an elaborate lesson in quantification, demonstrating how equally proportioned qualities counterbalance, and thus annul each other, how "truth kills truth" (III, 2; 129):

> These vows are Hermia's: will you give her o'er?
> Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh:
> Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,
> Will even weigh; and both as light as tales.
>
> (III, 2; 130-133)

The subtle connection she can perceive between quality and quantity with respect to the transforming power of love has already been quoted in another context:

> And as he [Demetrius] errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
> So I, admiring of his qualities.
> Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
> Love can transpose to form and dignity:
> Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
> And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind;
>
> (I,1;230-235)

Harold Brooks glosses *holding no quantity* as: "bearing no proportion (to what they are estimated at by love)."[49] The text is extremely condensed and it is hard to pin

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[49] Brooks, p. 18.

down what Helena is actually saying. As it has been noted already, perception ("looking") really seems to be reserved for *immediate* sensing, i.e. for the "literal," "realistic" images one has when one's eyes encounter something as opposed to looking through the mental eyes of love, which carry a transforming-translating capability – love has the "biased look," the eyes the "unbiased" one. Thus love is interpreted as a kind of "form of experience" in the Kantian sense, which always already shows a quality in *this* or *that* way. The occurrence of the word *quantity* ('proportion') is all the more interesting here: Helena's point seems to be that it is precisely the quantifying, "proportioning" scale of love which can serve as a kind of mediator between such diametrically opposing qualities as "base and vile" and "form and dignity". Shall we say, then, that, according to Helena, *base* and *vile* on the one hand and *form* and *dignity* on the other, are basically the *same* qualities, gaining their difference only in the *amount* we have of them? Would it be possible to distinguish between qualities by referring exclusively to quantity?

These questions may sound less strained if we consider how central a role measuring played in Shakespeare's time. In fact, this is precisely *the* age when the idea that measurement can be made exact, pure and unbiased came to the fore. Today, when we learn Cartesian geometry in elementary school, it is hard for us to remember that "prior to Descartes, geometry was not established on a thoroughgoing numerical basis"[50] and that it was at the turn of the 16th - 17th century when it was first seriously considered that instead of the Aristotelian, basically qualitative assessment of things, another, numerically based, quantitative approach would be possible. Of course, it is neither the case that, earlier, numbers had not played, occasionally and unsystematically, any role in measurement, nor that the breakthrough, first in astronomy and later in the whole of philosophy, happened overnight. The development of this conception was, needless to say, a long and gradual process, and one may draw a line from Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* (1543), through Descartes' *Discourse on the Method* (1637) to Newton's *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687).[51] Yet the idea that quality would be "translatable" into quantity came into vogue in this period. Several of Shakespeare's immediate contemporaries were almost obsessed with the problem of measuring, and the last decades of the 16th century and the first ones of the 17th seem to be the years when the "battle" between a traditional, qualitative approach and a new, mathematically based quantitative value-system was still "in the balance," the "new

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[50] Nagel, p. 121.

[51] Cf. E. J. Dijksterhuis, *Simon Stevin. Science in the Netherlands around 1600.* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), p. 1.

method" being experimented with, rather than being elevated to the rank of a "matter of evidence," the status it has gained after Descartes and Newton.

One of the most notable forerunners of what Dirk J. Struik calls the "new science"[52] was Simon Stevin (1548-1620), native of Brugge in Flanders. Stevin combined the theoretical knowledge of the mathematician with the practical interest of the engineer and among several elaborate treatises on arithmetic, geometry, cosmology, navigation, fortification, book-keeping, perspective in painting, music, civic life, the Dutch language and even on the pressure of the bridle on the mouth of a horse, he published three essays specifically on measuring: *The Elements of the Art of Weighing (De Beghinselen der Weeghconst,* 1586), *The Practice of Weighing (De Weeghdaet,* annexed to the previous work) and *The Practice of Measuring (Van de Meetdaet,* which appeared only in 1605, but had been drafted more than twenty years earlier).[53] Stevin's work was noted and esteemed in England, too: one of his early publications, *De Thiende* (1585), known today in English as *The Tenth,* or as *The Disme,* or as *The Dime,* was translated as early as 1608 and a new translation and edition was to follow in 1619.[54] Yet then the "world of science" was relatively small and the "natural philosophers" of the time in The Netherlands, in France and in England kept borrowing ideas from one another with and without acknowledgement. For example, Stevin's book on navigation, *De Havenvinding* (1599) was not only translated into English by Edward Wright in the same year under the title *The Haven-finding Art,* but Stevin used Plancius' methods, Plancius based his theory on Gemma Frisius' findings, and Frisius was personally known by the notorious John Dee, who, besides acting as royal advisor, magician and "international impostor," was himself the author of a book on navigation, also serving, at least according to Frances Yates, as a model for Shakespeare's Prospero.[55]

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[52] Dirk J. Struik, *The Land of Stevin and Huygens. A Sketch of Science and Technology in the Dutch Republic during the Golden Century.* (Dordrecht: Reidel Publishing Company, 1981), p. 61.

[53] On these titles and dates see Dirk J. Struik, ed., *The Principal Works of Simon Stevin Volume II. Mathematics.* (Amsterdam: C. V. Sweets and Zeitlinger, 1958), p. 764, and Dijksterhuis, pp. 135-136. My information on Stevin comes from these works and from Struik, *The Land of Stevin and Huygens.* Today we would say that, roughly speaking, Stevin's first two essays are on statics while the third one is a textbook in practical geometry, yet to unproblematically apply this classification would indeed be misleading and anachronistic, since, as it has been noted, it was precisely Stevin's time when such categories were beginning to gain the sense in which we use them today.

[54] Cf. Dijksterhuis, p. 134 and Struik, ed., *The Principal Works of Simon Stevin,* Vol. II, p. 373.

[55] Cf. Struik, *The Land of Stevin and Huygens,* pp. 40-41; Dijksterhuis, p. 135; Gerald Suster, *John Dee: Essential Readings.* (London: Crucible, 1986), p. 46 and Frances A. Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age.* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), pp. 159-163.

The breakthrough for Stevin was undoubtedly *De Thiende*, in the 'Preface' of which he says the following:

> Therefore, if any will think that I vaunt myself of my knowledge, because of the explication of these utilities, out of doubt he shows himself to have neither judgement, understanding, nor knowledge, to discern simple things from ingenious inventions, but he (rather) seems envious of the common benefit. [...] Seeing then that the *matter* of this Dime [his book] [...] is number, the use and effects of which yourselves shall sufficiently witness by your continual experiences, therefore it were not necessary to use many words thereof, for the *astrologer* knows that the world is become by *computation astronomical* a paradise. [...] And the surveyor or land-meter is not ignorant of the troublesome multiplications of rods, feet, and oftentimes of inches, the one by the other, which not only molests, but also often [...] causes error, [...] to the discredit of landmeter or surveyor, and so for the money-masters, merchants, and each one in his business. [...] [T]his *Dime*, taking away those difficulties [...] teaches (to speak in a word) the easy performance of all reckonings, computations, and accounts without broken numbers, which can happen in man's business, in such sort as that the four principles of arithmetic, namely addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, by whole numbers may satisfy these effects, affording the like facility unto those that use counters.[56]

Stevin's style is pompous and tortuous, yet his purpose is clear: he not only wishes to introduce the decimal notation and the method of computation without fractions but he aims at the standardisation of "the confused systems of weights and measures of his day by a system based on the decimal division of one unit."[57] With respect to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it seems that on questions of measurement Stevin would rather side with Helena's suggestions than with the ones Bottom alludes to, yet the larger philosophical implications of Stevin's efforts, expounded to the full in the 17th century, are even more significant. In Stevin's 'Preface' we may witness the germ of the idea that "natural philosophy" should work out a single "universal method" to the benefit of the whole of mankind. The method should be simple, so that everyone might easily learn and handle it and would have the invaluable and unsurpassable merit of serving as a foundation by reference to which all things could be understood, explained and known. No wonder that the most likely candidate to take

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[56] Struik, ed., *The Principal Works of Simon Stevin*, Vol. II, pp. 391-397.
[57] Struik, ed., *The Principal Works of Simon Stevin*, Vol. II, p. 383.

the role of the backbone of such a method was number: "numbers" – as Nagel points out –

> make possible a refinement of analysis without loss of clarity and their emo-
> tionally neutral character permits a symbolic rendering of invariant relations in
> a manifold of changing qualities.[58]

Stevin was far less interested in the metaphysical underpinnings of his scientific investigations than Descartes. The Flemish scientist mostly emphasised the practical blessings of a simple and over-arching method which could be applied to various areas hitherto handled as separate and thus considered to be unrelated. However, it seems to be obvious that the desire for a "universal method" was conceived somewhere in the everyday practice of measurement – it was precisely because of his practical interests, leading to easily demonstrable, immediately assessable and convincing results that Stevin's work was taken up, ultimately contributing to a philosophy which wishes to account for all phenomena in the world by referring to a single, basic principle and which, as a corollary of this endeavour, believes itself to be in a position to talk about the "true" or "real" qualities of things. As Nagel puts it:

> It is generally only after numerical measurements have been established and
> standardised that references to the "real" properties of things begin to appear:
> those properties, that is, which appear in circumstance allowing for most fe-
> licity in their measurement.[59]

However, as it was noted above, Shakespeare's time was the period indeed when the qualitative approach to the world and the quantitative method were still genuine alternatives. Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), a senior of Stevin's only by fifteen years, was no less occupied with the question whether a universal theory of things was possible than his Flemish contemporary. And Montaigne, too, asked if human sensation and knowledge would ever be capable of giving an adequate account of the diverse phenomena that surround us, while he was also paying special attention to how human measures compare to the wisdom of God. In the late 1570-ies, just a few years before Stevin drafted his first works on measuring, he put down the following in his most famous essay, *The Apology for Raymond Sebond*:

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[58] Nagel, p. 122.
[59] Nagel, p. 122.

But they [= the philosophers] are funny when, to give some certainty to the laws, they say that there are some which are firm, perpetual, and immutable, which they call natural, which are imprinted on the human race by the condition of their very being. [...] Now the only likely sign by which they can argue certain laws to be natural is universality of approval. For what nature had truly ordered for us we would without doubt follow by common consent. [...] Let them show me just one law of that sort – I'd like to see it.[60]

This subject [truth] has brought me to the consideration of the senses, in which lies the greatest foundation and proof of our ignorance. [...] To judge the appearances that we receive of objects, we would need a judicatory instrument; to verify this instrument, we need a demonstration; to verify the demonstration an instrument: there we are in a circle.[61]

This arrogance of trying to discover God with our eyes made a great man of our religion [Tertullian] give the deity bodily form. And it is the cause of what happens to us every day, to attribute events of importance, by particular assignment, to God. Because they weigh with us, it seems as though they weigh with him also.[...] [Some philosophers] say that as the souls of the gods, without tongue, without eyes, without ears, have each a feeling of what the other feels,[...] so the souls of men, when they are free and released from the body by sleep or some trance [...] see things that they could not see when mingled with the body. 'Men,' says Saint Paul, 'professing themselves to be wise, became fools and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man'. [...] And [seeing] this divine structure of the heavenly palace that we see, do we not have to believe that it is the abode of some master worthier than we are? Isn't the highest always the worthiest? And we are placed at the bottom.[62]

"And we are placed at the bottom": this is one of the sentences – besides the well-known "What do I know?" – that could sum up, by way of a conclusion, the central message of Montaigne's essay (his, if the pun can be allowed, position). Montaigne, because he wrote essays instead of scientific treatises, is seldom taken

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[60] Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*. Translated by Donald M. Frame. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), p. 437.

[61] Montaigne, p. 443 and p. 454.

[62] Montaigne, pp. 394-395.

seriously as a philosopher,[63] yet amidst his numerous references to antique authors and poetic metaphors, we have to appreciate the detailed reasoning, too: senses are unreliable and therefore no knowledge with certainty is possible, the lack of universal consent falsifies the claim that there are indubitable propositions, and thus it is vain to think that we can go beyond individual "measurements" and to hope for a uniform assessment of either the world or of God. The implication is this, as I interpret Montaigne: quality will forever remain bound to the uniqueness of the individual and there is no way in which one could "translate" it, with the help of a "common denominator" into quantity. Therefore, for Montaigne the use of philosophy is primarily in reminding us of our "facticity," our existential position, and in making us acknowledge that it is faith and faith alone which may bring us closer to God. In fact, it was the dangerous implications of this "fideism" and the Pyrrhonian scepticism revived by Montaigne which served as one of the greatest challenges also for Descartes. Descartes did try to show, as Montaigne demanded, at least "one law of that (universal) sort," a firmly true and metaphysically certain one: "Cogito ergo sum," on the basis of which, in turn, the proof of the existence of God and of the world could be provided. Our discussion has taken us back to Descartes' overheated chamber, where, he claims, he first had his famous three dreams leading him later to his "universal method."[64] Yet this is not the time to usher Montaigne into this chamber; here my principal aim was to indicate some of the points Montaigne would agree on with Bottom rather than with Helena. I do not wish to suggest any direct influence of Montaigne or Stevin on Shakespeare, and the great likelihood that Shakespeare read Montaigne does not concern me here, either.[65] It might sound bizarre that I compare the ideas of some philosophers with the notions of some characters in a drama. Yet I believe that Shakespeare did make, in his own way, some contribution to the problem of measurement. So let me recall here for a moment the opening scenes of *Macbeth*, where we may witness an initial conflict between the quantitative and qualitative approach.

Old King Duncan and his company tend to conceive of the world in terms of an equilibrium, where the reports reaching the King about the battle already feature a

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[63] On this problem see especially Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis. The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 36–42.

[64] Cf. Géza Kállay, "'To be or not to be' and 'Cogito ergo sum'": Shakespeare's *Hamlet* against a Cartesian Background" in *The Anachronist 1996*, Eds, Ágnes Péter, et al.. (Budapest: Department of English Studies, School of English and American Studies, ELTE).

[65] On Montaigne's possible influence on Shakespeare the best treatment I know is Robert Ellrodt, "Self-Consciousness in Montaigne and Shakespeare". In *Shakespeare Survey* 28, (1975), pp. 37-50.

quantitatively balanced duality. In this balance of the scales, doubt makes its appearance with a double force, and gets counterbalanced by the twice multiplied efforts of the two noble warriors, Macbeth and Banquo. Duncan believes that the vacuum created by the disappearance of one kind of a thing can be totally filled by the opposite which takes its place. By contrast, the Weird Sisters imply that quality is a matter of perspective, that mutually exclusive categories necessarily entail each other. Their paradoxes suggested that qualities are present not in what they are but in what they, through their opposites, are not; the witches were saying that qualities are present in their antithetical absence rather than in their presence. This, somewhat to continue the Bottom-type blasphemy, does not seem to be too far from Paul's above quoted insight that "base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are" (1 *Corinthians* 1:28) and from Bottom's "vision" that it is in unsayable and inexplicable love as intimacy and even perhaps as violence that the penetration into foolishness as wisdom and to wisdom as foolishness is possible.

In *King Lear* – to give another example with a play which has already been alluded to – tragedy seems precisely to arise when Lear tries to trade quantifiable, measurable (countable and accountable) goods (plots of land on the map) for the dialectics, the qualitative disproportionateness and unbalanced tension of such human feelings as a daughter's love towards her father. Shakespeare's perception of the tragic as inherently bound up with the untranslatability of quality into quantity starts perhaps as early as *The Merchant of Venice*, which, according to István Géher's brilliant argument,[66] marks, in a certain way, the "discovery" of the tragic in the oeuvre. Here Shakespeare no longer anchors basic conflict or loss in the enigma of adolescent love and chances, as in *Romeo and Juliet*; in Shylock's story he rather measures, on the scale of businessmen and creditors (the "money-masters and merchants," as Stevin would put it) the weight of the human heart as love and - to make it even more "fundamental" -- as throbbing flesh, with the conclusion that the more Portia is cruel and merciless in the name of justice and the more she humiliates "the Jew," the greater and the more dignified he becomes. In fact there is a straight line from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* through *The Merchant of Venice, Measure for Measure, King Lear* and *Macbeth* to *The Winter's Tale* along which we may trace Shakespeare's insights into the intricacies of measuring, proportion, exchange, quantity and quality. At the end of this essay, however, by way of a conclusion, we should rather inquire into "fundamental measurements" in the primarily comic context provided by Bottom and by the texts he has invoked.

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[66] Cf. István Géher, *Shakespeare-olvasókönyv. Tükörképünk 37 darabban.* [Reading Shakespeare. The Mirror Held Up To Us in 37 Pieces.] (Budapest: Cserépfalvi & Szépirodalmi, 1991), pp. 277-287.

One way to interpret fundamental measurements is how Helena, Stevin and we, in our everyday practice, often do: to suppose that we have the adequate means to perceive and to numerically assess the world, while also assuming that even love, which can indeed transform opposing qualities into each other, looks through the mind or reason and not the heart. The other way is how Bottom and Montaigne, with acknowledged indebtedness to Paul, go at the matter: they say, and even incarnate, that we are, "placed at the bottom" and while they insist on the impossibility of translating quality into quantity and on the bankruptcy of human sensation, they also imply that it is some kind of *love* that may transcend and translate the human being. This love also results in knowledge yet the standard of the scale here is my *being* – and, most importantly, it is not *what* and *how much* I *know* that counts but how *I am known*, as well as the degree of my acquaintance and intimacy with the things I may sense both inside and outside the theatre. Hence also the significance of the single truly intimate scene of the play featuring Titania and the ass-headed Bottom. Thus, through intimacy, in Bottom's, Montaigne's and Paul's case, measurements become fundamental not in the sense of "simple" or "universal" but in the sense of "most important," pertaining to the "bottom" of our being.

If it is true that it is Bottom's manifold and "polysemous" figure that translates and incarnates the standard against which everything else in the play is measured, then it is also in his transfiguration that we should look for a clue to answer one of our initial questions, namely: how far may we go with the interpretation of a text without the feeling of "distortion"? It seems to me that all distortions are permitted, provided one simultaneously embodies the text: there is no limit to the licensing of translations if we also allow ourselves to be translated.

We will, forever, take out our measuring rods and scales and trust our senses. And we will, forever, acknowledge that our perception is inadequate and that measuring is not in our hands. Yet should we not sometimes also become Christ's *asses* to bring him, at least, to Jerusalem?

Gábor Ittzés

Laudare Necesse Est

Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and a Theology of Praise

The claim that Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* is profoundly, though by no means exclusively, concerned with praise is a claim that hardly needs much argument to be accepted. As a Roman play, it draws attention to the rich rhetorical tradition of praise in Classical Antiquity, beginning, in a sense, with Aristotle but also flourishing in Cicero's Latin oratory; as an Elizabethan play, it invites us to turn to the Renaissance appropriation of the Classical heritage or, to give the sixteenth century its due, to the literature on praise in the century after the Reformation. Much can be and has been said on these heads,[1] but I do not wish to take either of these obvious paths. Instead, I choose a different, and perhaps much more limited, approach as suggested by the subtitle of this paper.

Brutus' legitimisation of killing Caesar largely depends on his linguistic transformation of the murder into sacrifice. The controversy over the sacrificial interpretation of Caesar's assassination is central to the power struggle between Brutus and Antony. Further, there is much non-verbal (ceremonial, ritual, cultic) praise expressed and even expected in *Julius Caesar*. The play begins on this note, with the tribunes "disrob[ing] the images . . . decked with ceremonies,"[2] and a long list could be

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[1] See, e.g., András Kiséry, "The Rhetoric of Wounds: Persuasion in *Julius Caesar*" in Ágnes Péter et al., eds., *The Anachronist, 1995: A Collection of Papers*. (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd University, 1995) pp. 28-59. and Krystyna Kujawinska-Courtney, "*Julius Caesar*: Two Visions of the Past" in *"Th' Interpretation of the Time": The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Roman Plays* (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 1993) pp. 26-58.

[2] William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. Marvin Spevack (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1988) I.i.63-64.

drawn up till the closing lines of the play in which Antony's verbal praise of Brutus is answered to by Octavius' promise of ritual praise.[3] The ritual praise expressed and the sacrificial language used in the play suggest a new context for praise; it is further supported by Caesar's divinization. While the "republicans" offer Caesar as a sacrifice to the gods for the sake of Rome, he himself becomes a god. What I propose is, first, an analysis of praise in *Julius Caesar* in light of par excellence religious views, invoked at least indirectly by the play, of the same topic; and secondly, an interpretation of Caesar's divinization in the same light.

The religious matrix within which I situate the play is Christianity. The choice is to some extent arbitrary, but it was in this cultural-religious milieu that the play was born. Further, it is not merely on extratextual grounds that the choice can be argued. I will show that Shakespeare placed subtle but clear pointers to the Christian context provided by the age. Or more precisely, *Julius Caesar* may not be a Christian play, but Christianity is not simply the cultural-religious *con*text in which it was written, but it also penetrates into the play's *text*/ure. I will, accordingly, look at (chiefly Protestant) theological considerations about the nature and characteristics of praise in the shorter first part of my paper. In the more substantial second part I shall read Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and bring observations from the first part to bear on it.

I

Great art Thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised [Ps 145:3]; great is Thy power, and of Thy wisdom there is no end [Ps 147:5]. And man, being a part of Thy creation, desires to praise Thee. ... Thou movest us to delight in praising Thee; for Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee.[4]

Augustine's magnificent opening passage of the *Confessions* is one of the most famous Christian texts on the praise of God. These lines are, in fact, a commentary on the Psalms, the primary scriptural texts of praise. Augustine begins by stating, as it

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[3] To be precise, Octavius promises a funeral with military honours (V.v.68-81). For an insightful discussion of ritual in the play, see Brents Stirling, "Ritual in *Julius Caesar*" in Peter Ure, ed., *Shakespeare, 'Julius Caesar': A Casebook* (London: Macmillan, 1969) pp. 160-71.

[4] Aurelius Augustine, *Confessions*, transl. J. G. Pinkerton, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974) I.i.1.

were, his set of axioms, which are the fundamental Christian tenets: man is God's creation and as such desires to praise his creator. But these lines can be read in at least two ways. They can be read descriptively (having a "formal" or "phenomenological" sense, saying what *is*) and they can be read normatively (saying what *ought to be*).

Read as a description, Augustine's text states at least two of the basic postulates of Christian theological anthropology, *viz.*, that all humans, including those who deny it, are both created by and in need of God. The point is certainly made from within the faith circle, and thus derives from a serious commitment to a complex set of values and norms, but for those who share that commitment, the applicability and validity of the postulates go well beyond the circle within which they are accepted. Later theologians have formulated the same point in different ways. Right at the beginning of his *Large Catechism*, interpreting the first commandment of the Decalogue, Luther defines *god* as "that to which we look for all good and where we resort for help in every time of need; to have a god is simply to trust and believe in one with our whole heart. ... I say, whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God."[5] Paul Tillich's *ultimate concern*, to quote a twentieth-century theologian, is a similarly formal interpretation of the first commandment: god is the content (whatever it happens to be in actual fact) of one's ultimate concern.[6] The desire to praise, on this view, is a consequence of the createdness of human beings and an expression of their (perhaps unrecognised and/or unacknowledged) need of God. And as Christians believe that we are all created by God and in need of him,[7] we all desire to praise God. It is not of our choosing, it depends solely on God. In Augustine's words, each one of us, simply by "being a part of [God's] creation, desires to praise" him, and God "moves us to delight in praising" him.[8] Praise is thus not optional; it is a necessity: we must praise. That is what I mean by the tortured Latin phrase of the title, "laudare necesse est."

On a normative Christian reading, however, there is only one true God who should be acknowledged as such. Praise is due to the transcendent source of life, God

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[5] Martin Luther, *Large Catechism* (1529) transl. John N. Lenker (Minneapolis: Luther, 1908) Pt. 1, par. 1.

[6] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-65) Vol. I, p. 11. For a sustained discussion, see "The Reality of God" (Part II.II), esp. Vol. I, pp. 211-34.

[7] I choose the politically incorrect masculine pronoun to avoid clumsiness and awkwardness caused by the use of *God* at every turn, fully aware that male God-language is metaphorical.

[8] Augustine I.i.1.

the Creator.[9] Indeed, divine praise (in the objective and not the subjective sense of the adjectival phrase) is only due to this God, for such praise is the acknowledgement of creatureliness and the goodness of being (primarily over against non-being and only secondarily, if at all, meaning any given quality of a specific existence). In other words, what is acknowledged is not that my life is a good life according to some standard of life quality but that it is a life and therefore good; it is, so to speak, a good ontological status because it makes communion with God possible. Or put simply, it is better to be than not to be. Because we are always already created and because life (the good ontological status) is always already bestowed upon us, praise is always already due, and it can always only be a response.[10] *Response* I said because it is important to notice that, in the Christian scheme of things, human behaviour is always already a response, for it is always preceded by God's action. That underscores the necessity of praise.

Christian doctrine has it, however, that although the Fall did not alter the basic structure of the universe (the roles of creator and creature remained intact), it altered the human perception of it (we no longer see clearly in terms of those roles). We still need a god – our hearts are still restless, we still orient our lives according to some supreme value, we are still ultimately concerned – but we no longer recognise and choose the true God, the one and only Creator. (In fact, we do not recognise him, Christian theology holds, until he reveals himself, and cannot choose him until he chooses us.)[11] The fact of our createdness is not changed by our denial of it, but the acknowledgement of anything less (other is always less) than the true God as creator is blasphemy. Phenomenologically, humans cannot help being creatures and orienting their lives to some ultimate point of reference, but, normatively, they should only recognise God as the source of their creatureliness and as the content of their ultimate

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[9] Surely, praise is due to each person of the Trinity, including God the Redeemer (Jesus Christ) and God the Sanctifier and/or Sustainer (Holy Spirit), but the specifically trinitarian form of Christian praise need not concern us here. (Not to mention that a position exclusively associating the first Person of the Trinity with the creation would be untenable.)

[10] The great literary example of this perfect human behaviour, rendering praise as due and a response in the first instance, is Milton's prelapsarian Adam in *Paradise Lost*. His first speech upon his creation begins with the question "how came I thus, how here?" which he immediately answers for himself, recognising his finitude, acknowledging the goodness of being, and praising its source, the Creator: "Not of myself; by some great Maker then, / In goodness and in power preeminent; / Tell me, how may I know him, how adore, / From whom I have that thus I move and live, / And feel happier than I know" (*Paradise Lost: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Sources Criticism*, ed. Scott Elledge [New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1975] VIII.277-82).

[11] Cf. John 6:65, Romans 5:8, 9:16, etc.

concern. Worshipping anything but God is idolatry although one cannot help worshipping something. Praise, to repeat, is not optional.

I want to suggest that inasmuch as Christian theological anthropology is right in its assessment of the human situation, or, more precisely, in the assessment of humans' primary duty of praising God, all other forms of praise may be seen derivative from this always already given duty of divine praise. Or to put it the other way round, the archetypal form of praise is that of the divine, and all other forms are modelled on that. Modelled, that is, not servilely repeated. Modelling should here perhaps be best understood in the sense of analogy. And the norm of analogy, I wish to suggest, is the relationship between the two great commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ... Love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:37,39).[12] Or again, the highest *form* of praise is the praise of the divine, but it is perverted (idolatrous) if not in fact addressed to God. It is in light of these insights that I will examine my chosen text. Before turning to it, however, I want briefly to consider the nature of true divine praise, but for the sake of conciseness I shall limit my observations to the Protestant theological tradition.

The technical term for the praise of God in Christian theology is doxology.[13] In Protestant theology, it is discussed within systematics. Drawing on relevant modern literature, I want to make two basic points. The first may be called ontological. In his discussion of doxology, Edmund Schlink presses the other side of the same coin I introduced above as the currency of this paper. Praise of God, I have said, is the acknowledgement of creatureliness and the goodness of being. "Doxology," Schlink says, "is basically concerned with praising and acknowledging the divine reality. . . . [It] is the reflection of the eternal divine majesty in human praise."[14] Whereas I put the emphasis on human limitation, Schlink stresses divine infinitude. Whereas I put the emphasis on *what* follows from the recognition of the transcendent source of life, Schlink stresses *how* human finitude and the goodness of being are acknowledged.[15]

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[12] I am not prepared to transform that simply into 'praise the Lord your God with all your heart ... and praise your neighbour as yourself,' yet I think that the self indeed sets a limit to the praising of the other. Pursuing this question would, nevertheless, lead far beyond the scope of this paper.

[13] Various (e.g., liturgiological, dogmatic, form critical etc.) definitions of the term are possible. I simply use it as a synonym for the 'praise of God' (or 'divine praise' as I called it above).

[14] Edmund Schlink, *The Coming Christ and the Coming Church*, transl. G. Overlach et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968) p. 19.

[15] I am here showing the correspondence between Schlink's formulation and my own, and arguing their equivalence. However, in a properly and strictly theological treatment of the subject, I think my approach

Doxology is oriented towards the divine. So much so, argues Schlink, that the first and second person formulae yield to third person formulae. "The basic form of doxology is not, 'God, I praise Thee', but 'Let God be praised'. It is not 'God, I glorify Thee', but 'God is glorious'. ... God Himself is the one and only subject in doxology."[16]

This has two implications. First, doxology goes beyond an 'economic' view (God's relation to the world; reflection on his actions) to an 'immanent' view of God (God in himself; a reflection on his essence). Second, and more significant from our present point of view, in this reflection upon God's essence the praising self completely disappears. In doxology "the worshipper brings himself, his words and the consistency of his thought as a sacrifice of praise to God."[17] "The 'I' is sacrificed in doxology. Thus doxology is always a sacrifice of praise."[18] The praising subject, then, disappears in the act of praise, yet, Christians would argue, it attains its true identity by being completely overwhelmed by, and thus finding union with, God.

My second point is epistemological. Wolfhart Pannenberg takes up his teacher's suggestion and investigates further Schlink's understanding of doxology as the sacrifice of self in praise. Comparing doxology with analogy, he argues that all language about God has a basic doxological character. Analogy would know the unknown through the known. However, God is ultimately beyond our comprehension, and when words are applied to him, their "conceptual univocity" is sacrificed in praise together with the self.[19] Analogical language, despite its claim, fails to provide a means of access to God's essence because it mistakenly presupposes that not only "language about God but God himself [is] analogous to the world of human experience."[20] In doxology, by contrast, God is praised, on the basis of his actions, for who he is in himself. Thus doxology goes right to the essence of God, but by intention it does not want to 'derive information' about the Godhead. However, perceiving something as an act of God (on

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to doxology with its emphasis on the human side, with the simultaneous emphasis that this is always already a response, has much to recommend it. An exclusive emphasis on the Barthian 'wholly other' God seems to lead to difficulties in theological construction.

[16] Schlink p. 22.

[17] Schlink p. 42.

[18] Schlink p. 22. Incidentally, it is in this sense that worship and praise can be seen as types of life eternal (a favourite Christian image). In both cases, there is (complete) unity between divine and human, God is all in all (cf. 1 Cor 15:28).

[19] Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Analogy and Doxology" in *Basic Questions in Theology: Collected Essays*, transl. George H. Kehm (3 vols.; Vol. 1., Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970; Vols. 2 & 3, London: SCM, 1971-73) Vol. 1, p. 216.

[20] Pannenberg p. 223.

the basis of which God is praised) itself presupposes a notion of God acting in the world. This circularity cannot be broken, but it can be grounded in God's self-revelation.[21] Thus "adoring speech about God himself which is contained in doxology always points ahead to God's revelation."[22] It is in and through this revelation that God validates, by making it his own, by giving it its "ultimately valid content,"[23] the language used to praise him. The attitude of doxology "is alone appropriate for a legitimate knowledge of God."[24] The praising subject acquires right knowledge of God and self, the two are closely interconnected, in doxology.

The issues raised in this section (the necessity of praise, the problem of its appropriate object, the nature and language of doxology and its relation to the praise of the other, the ontological and epistemological significance of praise) will also be of major concern in the following reading of *Julius Caesar*, to which I shall now turn.

II

Caesar is the primary object of praise in Shakespeare's play, or rather, he is the primary object of debate over praise. How much praise is due to him? — But Caesar is also noteworthy as a subject of praise. He customarily, though not exclusively, refers to himself in the third person singular, calling himself by his name Caesar.[25] That this has a peculiar ring in modern ears, and in this respect Shakespeare's original audience was already modern, is due in large part to the fact that the name Caesar is not just like any other name. All Roman emperors kept the name as a title after Julius Caesar: the name *became* a title. Audiences of *Julius Caesar* cannot help catching that overtone whenever the name is uttered. In fact, the play itself calls attention to this quite early through Cassius' meditative comparison of Brutus' name with Caesar's (I.ii.142-47). The very utterance of Caesar's name is praise. But, quite apart from the actual meaning of the name, Caesar's third person reference to himself by name has a formal structure we may call, in light of the foregoing argument, doxological. Caesar's 'I' is offered up to Caesar. Thus the self is sacrificed, paradoxically, in praise of the same self. Further, his

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[21] Surely, this grounding itself is circular inasmuch as seeing Jesus of Nazareth as its ultimate locus is only possible through the eye of faith. The theological/hermeneutic circle is unavoidable, but the historicity and givenness of Jesus provides at least a grounding.

[22] Pannenberg p. 236.

[23] Pannenberg p. 237.

[24] Pannenberg p. 225.

[25] II.ii.10, 12, 28-29, 42, 44-45, 48, 65, 68, 112; to list the references from one scene only.

identity (or self-identification, at any rate) exhibits a similarly self-referential character. "I rather tell thee what is to be feared / Than what I fear: for always I am Caesar" (I.ii.211-12). This is surely not an ordinary self-introduction. It is almost entirely beside the point to assert that such a gesture would make no dramaturgical sense. That is true enough,[26] but the relevant thing to notice is that the *linguistic* form of the utterance precludes the interpretation of introduction. The temporal adverb (*always*) is redundant unless its function is emphatically to introduce the element of constancy, underscoring the self-sufficiency of the subject. Second, the identification appears in a *for*-clause of reason. Whatever the preceding clause claims (and it is of secondary importance that it happens to make the high claim of fearlessness), its truth derives from the self's unshakeable identity. Caesar's "for always I am Caesar" is akin to the divine tautology of Exodus 3:14, "God said to Moses, 'I am who I am'" (NIV).

Similarly self-referential is Caesar's explanation why he will not come to the Senate meeting. "The cause is in my will. I will not come: / That is enough to satisfy the Senate" (II.ii.71-72). Apparently, there is no cause external to himself that could move, or in this particular case stay, him. It must be added, however, that Caesar goes on to say, "But for your *private* satisfaction, / Because I love you, I will let you know: / Calpurnia here, my wife, stays me home" (73-75, italics mine). There is a disjunction between public and private (another important theme of the play), but that conflicts with Caesar's projected image of himself as divine (superhuman), predicated on constancy. Indeed, this 'lapse' into the private proves fatal for Caesar: Decius can reinterpret Calpurnia's dream, shake Caesar's resolve and flatter him, with the offer of impending coronation, into attending the meeting of the Senate where he is slain. Caesar's last utterance is a self-address in the characteristic third person form, carefully placing the vocative at the end, "Then fall, Caesar!" (III.i.77).[27] Caesar's last word is himself.

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[26] The lines occur towards the end of a seventeen-line speech which is addressed to Antony and is itself in the middle of a dialogue.

[27] Caesar's self-image of immovability (the unmoved mover, another subtle claim for divinity on Caesar's part, and perhaps a pointer to Christianity on Shakespeare's) is very dear to him: "I could be well moved, if I were as you; / If I could pray to move, prayers would move me. / But I am constant as the northern star ... Yet in the number I do know one / That unassailable holds on his rank, / Unshaked of motion, and that I am he / Let me a little show it" (III.i.58-71). His dying command to himself may be a last (heroic or desperate or futile) attempt to uphold that image. When he is stabbed, he only falls because he himself decides to: no power can shake him.

At the opposite end from Caesar is the *plebs*. The picture Shakespeare draws of the mob is anything but flattering. The function of the opening scene in which the tribunes chide the plebeians for forsaking Pompey for Caesar is often recognised as a preparation for III.ii, Antony's tremendous success in swaying their allegiance from Brutus. True as that is, I want to emphasise the continuity in the relations of the mob with individual leaders. We learn from Murellus that the plebeians had "many a time and oft ... sat / The livelong day, with patient expectation, / To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome" (I.i.36, 39-41). Yet the play begins with their admiring Caesar, who "comes in triumph over Pompey's blood" (50). Casca, having witnessed the crowd's expression of approval to Caesar's gestures at the Lupercal, concludes a little later that "if Caesar had stabbed their mothers they would have done no less" (264-65).

The commoners make their next appearance in III.ii, the funeral scene. They enter with Brutus and Cassius demanding satisfaction from them. This is apparently in keeping with their latest allegiance to Caesar. However, Brutus is called 'noble' even before he begins his speech (III.ii.11). It is enough that he promise them that "public reasons shall be renderèd / Of Caesar's death" (7-8), and the plebeians are already predisposed to accept them - almost regardless of what they in fact are. After his speech, Brutus is cheered, offered a statue, the crown and a triumphant procession to his house (40-45). And the same pattern is repeated with Antony, who enters with Caesar's corpse during Brutus' speech. Brutus has to entreat the crowd to stay to hear Antony, speaking by his permission, yet as soon as he exits, Antony is immediately addressed as 'noble' (56) by the commoners though Brutus is not completely discarded as yet. That only comes as a result of Antony's speech for which he is duly rewarded with the title 'most noble' (224, see also 108 and 198), and the plebeians offer their life for him (199). Caesar, who, out of sight, was declared a 'tyrant' (61) just minutes ago, is now again 'most noble' and 'royal' (233-34, also in 190). The importance of sight could hardly be overstressed in this scene, and my point is just that. The crowd praises whoever is in sight, and it is enough to be seen to invoke praise from the crowd. It is no accident, I think, that Brutus and Cassius flee Rome upon "some notice of the people, / How [Antony] had moved them" (261-62). There is no more face to face encounter between the plebeians and leading individuals.

I do not want to overstate my case, and I am not suggesting that it is possible to reason with a mob bent on mutiny. Rather, I am saying that the *omission* is noteworthy. To be sure, there is another encounter between individual and mob, and it proves disastrous for Cinna the poet, upon whom the crowd forces the identity of Cinna the conspirator (III.iii). But it also proves disastrous for the plebeians. This

scene is their last.[28] Anything beyond this simple statement is speculation, but in a speculative vein I suggest that what proves fatal for the crowd is the forsaking of its characteristic mode of speech. The crowd's function has been to praise throughout. Its laudatory speech is here replaced by interrogation. That becomes its undoing because nothing can be said after that.

Between Caesar and the crowd, Antony is the key character of praise. Before his confrontation with the conspirators, he barely speaks (only 35 words,[29] to be precise). All of his utterances are addressed to Caesar, the latter's name occurring five times. Antony's words are all words of praise. When he does not praise Caesar, he praises Cassius (I.ii.196-97). When he comes to meet the conspirators after the assassination, he sends his servant before him, carefully instructed to impart his praise of Brutus in both word and deed.[30]

> Thus, Brutus, did my master bid me kneel,
> Thus did Mark Antony bid me fall down,
> And, being prostrate, thus bade me say:
> Brutus is noble, wise, valiant, and honest;
> Caesar was mighty, bold, royal, and loving.
>
> (III.i.123-37)

The gesture of sending one's servant before or instead of one is well-established. Two famous biblical examples, somewhat anachronistic for the Julius Caesar of history, but not so for Shakespeare's audience, are Jacob's sending messengers with gifts to Esau (Genesis 32) and the Capernaum centurion sending the elders of the Jews and then his friends to Jesus (Luke 7:1-10). The significance of these parallels is enhanced by the fact that Antony's sending of his servant to Brutus cannot be found in Plutarch, Shakespeare's source. I take this small scene as of the points where Christianity does not remain merely Shakespeare's context, but penetrates into the text.

Antony continues his praises, primarily to Caesar, throughout act III. It is through praise (or perhaps its careful manipulation) that he rises; and he falls into such

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[28] The significance of this detail as the crowd's undoing was suggested to me by Harry Keyishian's article "Destructive Revenge in *Julius Caesar* and *Othello*" (in *The Shapes of Revenge: Victimization, Vengeance, and Vindictiveness in Shakespeare.* [Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities, 1995] p. 89) though I explain it in somewhat different terms.

[29] I.ii.5, 9-10, 191, 196-97, II.ii.118.

[30] I am here concentrating on the *words* of praise, but as suggested in the introduction, there is much non-verbal praise in *Julius Caesar.*

depth of abusiveness as height of praise he ascended. As he deified Caesar, so he reduces Lepidus, through language, to inanimate corporeality: first to animality and then the status of property (IV.i.18-40). Some eighty-five per cent of Antony's entire speaking role is concentrated in act III and the opening scene of IV (itself only 50 lines). And roughly the same proportion of his text is directly laudatory or (this is far the smaller part) deprecatory. In a very real sense, Antony exists in such language. The prime example is his funeral oration (III.ii.65-261), which I want to discuss in a little more detail.

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The first of the four points I want to make in this sketchy reading of the *oratio funebris*[31] concerns the relationship between showing and telling in the speech, perhaps *the* interpretive issue. Antony's speech concludes with replacing words with sight, with showing Caesar's mantle and then his corpse.[32] But the speech is built on that contrast from the very beginning. Caesar's ambition is always referred to in reported speech, "Brutus *says* he was ambitious."[33] On the other hand, Caesar's great deeds are presented in direct speech. He *was* a faithful friend (III.ii.77), compassionate with the poor (83) and furthered Rome's good (81-82), but he *was said* to be ambitious. Praise is always immediate (doxology is in the present tense). Immediacy is both a condition and a consequence of praise. It will also be noted with regard to Antony's rhetorical strategy that it conforms to a doxological pattern in that he praises Caesar for what he was through what he did. Caesar is not presented descriptively but narratively. The story of his deeds is told. More accurately, an apparently false description (he was ambitious) is repeatedly contrasted with the narrative of his life. The plebeians are thus invited to infer the 'immanent nature of Caesar' (if such a blasphemous formulation is not inexcusable) from Antony's 'economic' rendering of him. It is through praise that true knowledge of Caesar is obtained, and it is through praise that knowledge of self can also be arrived at. The plebeians learn that they are citizens not liberated from Caesar's tyranny but deprived of a generous benefactor. By demanding the will (and in the given context that is at least implicit praise) they also learn who they really are, *viz.*, heirs

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[31] Among the best recent readings known to me of Antony's speech are Kiséry's and Kujawinska-Courtney's interpretations.

[32] Kiséry cogently argues that this showing is carefully orchestrated and "its ontological status as a direct point of access to truth" is undercut (p. 52).

[33] III.ii.78, 85, 90; cf. also 69-70; emphasis added.

(III.ii.137, 233-43). "[A]doring speech ... in doxology," we recall Pannenberg's thesis, "always points ahead to God's revelation."[34] I suggest that the climax of the oration with the uncovering of Caesar's body can be read as the divine manifesting itself to the devotee(s) in the consummation of praise. At the climactic point knowledge is no longer mediated through language but revealed (apparently) directly.

Second, honour is one of the key words in the play. Cassius makes it central, "honour is the subject of my story" (I.ii.92). Brutus hinges everything on it when he begins his address to the plebeians, "Believe me for my honour, and have respect to mine honour that you may believe" (III.ii.14-15). Antony picks up the theme – the lines "Yet Brutus says he was ambitious, / And Brutus is an honourable man" (85-86) are always coupled – and subverts it. Basing, as Brutus himself did, the validity of Brutus' claim on his honour and then undermining that validity, Antony manages to undermine his honour. By the end of the oration, the conspirators, who were all mentioned as 'honourable men' at the beginning of the speech, become 'traitors' (176, 188), but only after the interpretation has first been offered by the stage audience (145).[35] Thus the real bone of contention between Antony and Brutus is not the interpretation of Caesar but of Brutus' honour. Caesar's greatness is only the particular ground on which the battle is fought.[36] That is also to say that Antony's praise of Caesar has a pragmatic goal; it is not true (albeit idolatrous) doxology but a subversion of it, primarily aimed at Antony's own divinization, to which I shall return. Ironically, his initial claim of having "come to bury Caesar, not to praise him" (66) may be truer than we usually take it to be.

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[34] Pannenberg p. 236.

[35] It is easy to locate where the pressure that Antony has been building up against his own ostensible conviction bursts, and where the new interpretation is articulated: "[Antony:] I fear I wrong the honourable men / Whose daggers have stabbed Caesar, I do fear it. / [4 Pleb:] They were traitors. Honourable men!" (III.ii.143-45).

[36] By the end of the tragedy, the battle shifts to new ground, and Brutus' own death (or body) becomes its locus. But, apparently, the prize to be captured by the war is still his honour (cf. V.i.29-47, 56-60, 110-12, iv.20-25, v.34-38, 56-57). In the last resort, he has to literally sacrifice himself in praise of his honour. The magnanimity (or otherwise) of this deed much depends on the set of values against which it is measured. In ancient Rome, no doubt, his decision was applauded. But in Renaissance (Christian) England there was a strong prohibition against suicide. And lest the audience forget about it, Shakespeare reminds them (V.i.97-112). Brutus' initial resolve is against suicide. It is only because "[h]e bears too great a mind" (112) that he is unwilling to bear the shame of being led captive to Rome. If my interpretation is not mistaken, the audience can hear a faint (or possibly quite audible) echo of a question here.

Third, Antony's speech may culminate in, but it does not end with, revealing Caesar's corpse. The oration is concluded two more times. Few critics consider the significance of the repetition, and even fewer provide persuasive explanations.[37] It lies, I believe, in Antony's ulterior motive – ulterior, that is, not simply to his avowed purpose of burying Caesar but even to his 'obvious hidden meaning' of praising him. Antony is praising himself; self-praise is the function of the repeated closures. In the second concluding passage (III.ii.200-20) he praises his own oratory and rhetorical skill in the same way he has been praising Caesar, by asserting the opposite of his true meaning and subtly subverting the past.[38] In the present passage it is the more immediate past that is subverted, the preceding part of the public gathering (funeral). This detail supports my point that Antony is here congratulating himself on his achievement. He completely erases the (recent) past. He speaks as if neither Brutus' speech nor his own had been delivered. "What private griefs they have, alas, I know not, / That made them do it. They are wise and honourable, / And will no doubt with reasons answer you" (203-5). But the 'public reasons' have already been 'renderèd' (7)!

> But were I Brutus,
> And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony
> Would ruffle up your spirits and put a tongue
> In every wound of Caesar, that should move
> The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny.
> (III.ii.216-20)

This is exactly what he has just done. The plebeians had been quite ready to "Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! / Slay! Let not a traitor live!" (III.ii.195-96) even before Antony began his second conclusion. While it appears that Antony cancels out his part of the past as well as Brutus', there is a remarkable difference in that the effects of Brutus' speech are completely gone while Antony's are stronger than ever. Subverting the past by cancelling it in this case simply epitomises his overarching rhetorical strategy: praising by ostensibly denying praise, yet maintaining the immediacy of what is to be admired (here, of his own speaking voice).

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[37] Keyishian's interpretation I find downright unconvincing. "In three separate, spasmodic movements, each more intense than the one that came before, Antony uses the crowd's curiosity about the will to focus and mobilize their revengeful anger. ... Antony calls them back in order to prevent their being swayed again to the conspirators' side" (pp. 87-88).

[38] For a brilliant discussion of Antony's subversion of history in the first part of the speech (and in general), see Kujawinska-Courtney (esp. pp. 28-29, 44-46).

The third conclusion is a blatant self-congratulation. Antony calls back the mob to remind them that they have forgotten about the will.[39] Antony is too shrewd a tactician (and orator) to leave anything to chance. He effectively (though not in detail) discloses the contents of Caesar's will when the plebeians are first manipulated into demanding it, i.e., when it is first mentioned (III.ii.121-31). Employing yet again the paradox of negation, Antony says, "'Tis good you know not that *you are his heirs*, / For if you should, O, what would come of it?" (137-38, emphasis mine.) And when he is 'compelled' (148) by the crowd to read the will, he immediately shifts the focus to Caesar's body. Having gained his point (as regards the testament), he is ready to discard it and move on. The crucial reinterpretation of the conspirators from 'honourable men' to 'traitors' has just taken place (145). Antony's position is secured; he begins to play a game with the audience. Eighty lines and two conclusions later, Antony returns to the theme, I believe, for no practical reason. Nor does this final conclusion seem to increase the mob's rage – it is already extreme. He simply indulges himself by controlling the uncontrollable and reminding his audience (at least off-stage) that he needed no aid to inflame the plebeians, to make them mad (136). When he finally lets go of the crowd[40] and is left alone on stage, Antony, at least implicitly, congratulates himself on fulfilling his own prophecy uttered by way of a promise to Caesar's corpse (III.i.259-75).[41] And the gesture is repeated in the concluding lines of the whole scene, this time addressed to Octavius' servant: "Belike they had some notice of the people, / How I had moved them" (III.ii.260-61). This self-praise gives again the lie to Antony's praise of Caesar.

Lastly, Antony's doxology performs its ontological function. He is transformed by the performance of his laudatory speech. At the opening of the scene, he is at the mercy of the conspirators. It is only "under leave of Brutus and the rest" (III.ii.73) that he can speak. Not much before, he was fleeing for his life (III.i.97).[42] When the scene

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[39] At this point Keyishian's reading breaks down completely. The crowd is not curious about the will; it has forgotten it entirely.

[40] This again is a symbolic action. Antony, the last master of the plebeians, lets them loose, formally renouncing his control. "Now let it work. Mischief, thou are afoot, / Take thou what course thou wilt!" (III.ii.250-51). We have seen what fruits his gesture bears. The master-less mob veers off course (linguistically and 'ontologically') and disintegrates.

[41] For the self-fulfilment of the prophecy, see Kiséry p. 44.

[42] It was through praise (flattery) of Brutus that Antony took the very first step from fearing for his life to be tolerated by the conspirators. Brutus calls him "a wise and valiant Roman" and claims that he has "never thought him worse" (III.i.138-39), but that is only after the servant's delivery of Antony's message and is

is over, he is the lord of Rome. The achievement is due to his oratory. Kujawinska-Courtney sees the chief cause of the failure of Brutus' speech in its calling attention to the speaker.[43] With this he "breaks the rhetorical rules of the *laudatio funebris*. ... The ideal teller of the *virtus* of a king should figuratively disappear from his own enunciated narrative."[44] Antony observes this basic rule – and succeeds.[45] He so much disappears from his narrative that at the first conclusion Caesar's corpse replaces his own body and Caesar's wounds his tongue. By offering himself in praise to Caesar, Antony shares in his divinity.

Antony's sharing of Caesar's divinity does not contradict my earlier claim that Antony is primarily concerned about praising himself, and his doxology of Caesar is not genuine. What I have just described, Antony's divinization, takes place *on stage*, on the primary plane of interaction and interpretation between Antony and the plebeians. *They* take his praise to be genuine and accord him a place next to Caesar: both are called 'most noble' in quick succession (III.ii.224, 233). Further, the mob is quite willing to hear Antony, to follow him, and to die with him (199) – there is not much room for further devotion. On the secondary plane, the audience *of* the play may see through Antony's praise of Caesar and recognise his self-aggrandising intentions. In the audience's eyes Antony's praise of Caesar may be perverted, but then the audience will also perceive that Antony does not truly become divine, merely rises in power. Phenomenologically, Antony's rise through praise is undeniable. Whether it is seen in

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somewhat disingenuous. True, Brutus did spare Antony's life, but only because he thought him insignificant and entirely dependent on Caesar (II.i.160-65, 181-83).

[43] "[I]t is not incidental that in 41 lines of Brutus' speech there are 23 personal and possessive pronouns referring to the speaker" (Kujawinska-Courtney p. 44).

[44] Kujawinska-Courtney p. 44. Following Schlink, I argued above that the sacrifice (disappearance) of the self is characteristic of doxology. I take Kujawinska-Courtney's concurrence (in fact, her reference is to L. Marin's *Portrait of the King*, trans. Marta M. Houle [Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1988] pp. 78-80) as supportive of my claim that all praise is modelled on the praise of God.

[45] While I find this contrast fascinating and insightful, it requires qualifications. Brutus' speech was no failure, or it was one only with respect to Antony's. Maintaining my point as regards praise, immediacy and the mob's tendency to take proximity as the only prerequisite for praise, I think Antony's success is due in no small part to Brutus' absence. In fact, Antony only disappears from the first part of his speech. In what I call its second conclusion (III.ii.200-20), there are thirteen pronouns referring to Antony and, in addition, his name appears twice. Further, roughly half of that passage is explicitly about himself, and only three and a half lines are directly about Caesar. These data support my claim in the previous paragraphs that the point of the repeated closures is self-praise.

ontological or relational (power) terms is a matter of interpretation, and I noted (discussing Pannenberg) the inevitable circularity in the interpretation of praise.

In various ways, then, Caesar's, Antony's and the plebeians' characteristic mode of speech is doxological. In various ways, their doxologies are all blasphemous,[46] and they all have to fall.[47] What is interesting to note is that despite the perversion these doxologies are subject to in Caesar's, Antony's and the crowd's speech, they still exhibit ontological and epistemological characteristics. It is clearest with Antony and the plebeians, who exist in and through laudatory language, but Caesar's divinity also happens in his self-referential speech.

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The conspirators can reasonably be expected not to comply with this 'caesarocratic' discourse. Indeed, their[48] speech pattern is different. It is usually more difficult to demonstrate the absence of a feature than its presence, and my best argument is to refer to the entire text of the play. The conspirators' language lacks the all-pervasive doxological character exhibited by the Caesarists' speech. But to advance less elusive arguments, a brief analysis of the use of apostrophe and proper names in Brutus' and Cassius' speech may be helpful.

They customarily call each other by name, but they almost infallibly employ the vocative form, often accompanied by the second person pronoun.[49] Similarly, with the exception of one important situation, they hardly use third person formulae with reference to themselves. When they do,[50] it is either not laudatory[51] or the context warrants it – either their honour or their life is at stake. But these instances are by far the exception. They use much more frequently the first person singular pronoun than their own name. The self-aggrandising air of Caesar's language is almost entirely absent

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[46] I shall return to the perspective from which this claim can be made in the concluding part of my paper.

[47] Antony's fall is only completed in *Antony and Cleopatra*, but there are already clear indications of his eclipse by Octavius (cf. V.i.19-20, and the structurally crucial lines are assigned to Octavius, he has the last word). Caesar's fall and the crowd's undoing (disappearance) are also complex, but cannot be treated here in detail.

[48] I focus exclusively on Brutus' and Cassius' language.

[49] "Among which number, Cassius, be you one" (I.ii.44). "I know that virtue to be in you, Brutus" (90), etc.

[50] As in I.ii.46, 116, 172, iii.90, II.i.58, III.i.21, V.i.72, 111, v.39.

[51] E.g., 'poor Brutus' (I.ii.46).

from theirs. The only notable exception is the quarrel scene. In a mere forty lines (IV.iii.77-115) they have recourse to third person forms (speaking of themselves and/or the other) more than throughout the rest of the play. But the third person form is by no means laudatory here. On the contrary, it serves a sarcastic function by creating distance (removing the self or the other to the third person) – but sarcasm is precisely perverted praise.[52] To the extent that praise of another human being is dependent on doxology, the perversion of the latter results in the perversion of the former: all mutual relationships either break down or become destructive or distorted in *Julius Caesar*.

Caesar's name is frequently uttered by both Brutus and Cassius, but it is hardly ever augmented by an adjective on their lips.[53] Nor do they often address Caesar in the first half of the play. True, there is not much interaction between them, but even so the contrast with Antony is remarkable. A striking contrast sets in with, perhaps astonishingly, the assassination scene. The staging[54] of the murder is such that the conspirators approach Caesar with an address each. Their apostrophes introduce a supplication (the plea for Publius Cimber) and express, either in word or in gesture, Caesar's praises.[55] This marks a turning point. No sooner is Caesar slain than his praises are first tolerated (Antony's pronounced at the scene pass with impunity) then encouraged (Antony is to praise Caesar at the funeral), finally loudly and actively sung. In his own 'funeral' oration, Brutus praises Caesar, finding only one (though fatal) fault with him, ambition. Superlative praise becomes so much Caesar's due that he is no longer identified by his name but by his greatness. In the quarrel scene Brutus refers to him as "the foremost man of all this world" (IV.iii.22).[56] Finally, both Cassius' and

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[52] The irony is complete when Cassius addresses Antony and Octavius in the second person while speaking of himself and Brutus in the third (IV.iii.93-99).

[53] The only noteworthy exception, not to mention Cassius' "tired Caesar" (I.ii.115), is the parenthetical "immortal Caesar" in I.ii.60. I think it is either reported speech, quoting popular opinion, or, if Cassius is inserting his own remark, it is to be taken ironically if not sarcastically. Of course, not only adjectival phrases with *Caesar* as their head can express praise or deprecation of him; cf. "So vile a thing as Caesar" (I.iii.111). Generally, the conspirators do not praise Caesar while he is alive though they may sometimes acknowledge his good qualities as in Brutus' nocturnal soliloquy (II.i.19-21).

[54] Here I mean the conspirators' 'production' though it is inseparable from the actual performance in the theatre.

[55] As in Metellus' opening line, "Most high, most mighty, and most puissant Caesar" (III.i.33).

[56] Incidentally, a few lines earlier his name did appear, duly graced by the adjective 'great' (IV.iii.19).

Brutus' dying words are addressed to Caesar. In fact, their suicides elicit from them three such apostrophes.[57]

The difficulty of identifying the hero of *Julius Caesar* is almost proverbial (some favour Caesar, others prefer Brutus, not to mention Cassius or the rise and eclipse of Antony), and the disagreement among critics on this matter was itself established as a critical commonplace a long time ago. Corresponding to the problem of the hero is the interpretation of the conspiracy. Was liberty upheld by Caesar's murder, who is then seen through Cassius' eyes an ambitious tyrant despite his frailty; or was his stabbing the basest crime against "the noblest man / That ever livèd in the tide of times" (III.i.256-57), in which case Antony's view of Caesar is adopted? The emblematic event whose interpretation epitomises the larger debate over Caesar's ambition is his refusal of the crown at Lupercal. Antony maintains that Caesar did not accept the crown though offered thrice (III.ii.87-89) while Casca, another eye witness, thinks "he was very loath to lay his fingers off it" (I.ii.238). Caesar's putting it by was "every time gentler than other" (228-29). The crucial thing to notice is, however, that the audience only has narrative accounts of the event. The Lupercal celebration takes place off stage; we have no immediate experience of the scene against which to measure its competing interpretations.

It may seem at first sight that Shakespeare prefers the 'republican reading' and makes Brutus the hero of the play.[58] In terms of my reading that would be suggested by the unattractiveness of the perverted doxological speech structures of the Caesarists and the fact that the play concludes on a note of Brutus' praise. The strict vertical organisation of human relationships in which those below are to praise, even to the point of idolisation, the one(s) above, precludes horizontal relations like friendship. And it also necessitates either the subversion (perversion) of praise or idolatry. In neither case can the claim of the other be adequately acknowledged and granted. The conspirators, on the other hand, seem to abide by the rule that the self must limit the praises of the other if idolatry is to be avoided. Cassius sets himself (or Brutus or Casca – at any rate, another self) as measure against Caesar and questions his disproportionate glory.[59] Brutus is more liberal with his acknowledgement of Caesar's greatness, he nonetheless sets himself as the limit to his ambition (III.i.16-39). However, Cassius

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[57] V.iii.45-46, 94-96, v.50-51.

[58] He is a strong candidate for the hero of the play because he sees and freely acknowledges Caesar's greatness yet he acts against him in the name of some greater value. For him, there is a tragic conflict of values and the one has to be (literally) sacrificed in order that the other may prevail.

[59] I.ii.95-131, 140-50, iii.76-78.

uses praise repeatedly to manipulate Brutus,[60] and he is rather successful in it. How much Brutus is moved by Cassius' (fake)[61] flattery is difficult to say. He *is* moved, but he may be moved in good faith.[62] Likewise, he honestly attempts to convert Caesar's murder into a ritual sacrifice. (The inherent connection between sacrifice and praise needs no further comment.) I only want to add a minor point here to Brents Stirling's careful treatment of the question. Stirling fails to notice the significance of Brutus' first soliloquy in II.i.10-34. It is here that Brutus seems to make up his mind though his resolution will (have to) be reconfirmed. And in this speech there is no mention of sacrifice. The final metaphor is that of a serpent's egg which must be destroyed because of the *potential* threat it poses. And Brutus does not hit on this (conveniently subhuman, repulsive, and dangerous) metaphor without searching. The matter must be 'fashioned' and 'thought' of in the right way if it is to look excusable because Caesar's present condition does not warrant the complaint of tyranny.[63] All subsequent talk of sacrifice and Brutus' subsequent praise of Caesar is undercut by this initial disingenuous verbal manoeuver which is performed in a soliloquy, and thus we should not doubt that it is what Brutus really thinks. Praise is no easy matter for the 'republicans' either.

But their real stumbling block is its necessity, which takes us back to the problem of Caesar as an object of praise. Conspiracy's "monstrous visage" must be hidden "in smiles and affability" (II.i.81-82); freedom's liberation must be cloaked in ambition's praises. *Laudare necesse est* – there is no way round it. The point is driven home rather forcefully by Antony in his last encounter with Brutus and Cassius before the battle of Philippi (V.i.39-44). His biting address leaves them virtually speechless. To his "flatterers" Cassius can only reply by turning against *Brutus*, and his only remark concerns how the accusation could have been physically silenced, not how it could be countered. It cannot be countered. And this paradox lies at the heart of the conspirators' quandary. Nor was it a momentary difficulty for which the principle of the end justifying the means, however dubious, could have provided the answer. The problem of Caesar's praise remains with them. They must praise Caesar in order to make their deed (and themselves) praiseworthy. They corrected what alone was amiss in him (ambition). The conspirators acted (or claim to have acted) in the name of some higher principle (Rome and her traditions, the gods, love of their country, freedom, the

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[60] I.ii.55-62, 90-91, 142-47, iii.297-309, II.i.90-93.

[61] Fake inasmuch as the letters certainly are ungenuine, and this artfulness undermines his spoken protestations of popular opinion.

[62] Cf. II.i.46-58.

[63] "And since the quarrel / Will bear no colour for the thing he is, Fashion it thus" (II.i.28-30).

common good, etc.) which was to be preferred not only to Caesar's own advancement but also to all that was great in him. The higher *he* is praised, the nobler the *principle* which is by definition to be preferred to him. In a different way from the Caesarists, the conspirators still (try to) attain to their own true selves (as champions of "'Liberty, freedom, and enfranchisement!'" III.i.81) through offering up their praises to Caesar. And as they do that, they apparently gain new knowledge of Caesar's true nature, how powerful he is.[64] Doxology again performs its ontological and epistemological functions.

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

Caesar is thus the source of life in the play. He is the fixed centre: so firmly fixed that even physical destruction cannot (re)move him. In various ways, the characters all circle around him as planets around a sun. The title is thus not misleading. True, the play may be a 'Tragedy of Brutus,' but even that is only a commentary on 'Julius Caesar' – whose name neither requires nor tolerates further syntactic modification to designate the play's theme. He remains in the centre even after his assassination. The conspirators' failure may be described in terms of iconoclasm and idolatry. Iconoclasm provides no solution for idolatry because it destroys the icon but not the idol, and they are not the same. The idol, as Luther would say, is a matter of the heart, not of the eye.[65] The attitude that alone gives rise to caesarocratic idolatry,[66] the conspirators cannot alter; in fact, by the end they also capitulate both linguistically and physically.

But to conclude that Caesar is the focus of the play is not necessarily to take sides in the Caesarist/republican debate. The centrality of Caesar may not be something that the play, as its own commentary, applauds. It may simply register it. That is precisely my claim. But it can only be seen from an outside point of view. When the icon is destroyed, the idol remains, but *Julius Caesar* as a Roman play seems to offer no distinction between that and the true addressee of doxology. Caesar, in his own historical context, *was* divinized. The play seems to revoke the perspective from which caesarocratic praise appears misplaced. But if political and military success and/or the appearance of a ghost (IV.ii.274-85) seem for us insufficient grounds to idolise Caesar,

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[64] Note the simple present tense Brutus uses: "O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet! / Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords / In our proper entrails" (V.iii.94-96).

[65] "As I have often said, the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and idol" (Luther Pt. I, par. 1).

[66] Cf. I.iii.103-06.

we need a perspective from which this intuition may be conceptualised. I have suggested that such a perspective can be provided by the theological considerations of the first part of this paper. We must praise – we need a god: whatever elicits the doxological response from us is (formally) our god. But it may not in fact (normatively) be God. That leads to idolatry. Idolatrous praise exhibits the same characteristics as true doxology, but (at least in the long run) it is destructive. *Julius Caesar* is a tragedy.

But I do not (need not) argue that it is a Christian play. Specifically Christian concerns have here belonged to the critical apparatus. The attention the play calls to a discrepancy between Roman and Christian mores concerning suicide, Antony's gesture, invoking Biblical parallels, of sending his servant before him, the pervasiveness of sacrificial language and ritual elements in it as well as Caesar's divinization provide a strong enough invitation for such a critical approach. Whether it has been fruitful may be judged by the success or failure of the foregoing analysis.

Benedek Péter Tóta

Ruminating More and More Realism

Some Contextual Aspects of Thomas More's *Utopia*

in eius mensa

CRITICAL CONTEXT

The men first to write about *Utopia*, the contemporaries of Thomas More, "were concerned with the outcome rather than the nature of More's way of thinking."[1] The same seems to be the case with the readers of later ages, too, when they search for the meaning of *Utopia*.[2] The claim "to investigate the relation between the structure of *Utopia* and the meaning and intent of its author" almost entirely results in a concentration on the latter part of the assigned task.[3] Such an imbalance leads to statements like "…the man of expedients proposes no expedients, the man of method no methods…"[4] If it were true about More, it would really mean that "…in his view of men and their affairs there was a strong and ineradicable streak of pessimism."[5]

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[1] J. H. Hexter, *More's Utopia: the Biography of an Idea* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952, rpt. 1976) p. 14.

[2] George M. Logan, *The Meaning of More's Utopia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983). Romuald Ian Lakowski, *Sir Thomas More and the Art of Dialogue* (PhD Dissertation, University of British Columbia, Fall 1993, Interactive Early Modern Literary Studies, 1995, 1996).

[3] Cf. Hexter, p. 30.

[4] Hexter, p. 59.

[5] Hexter, p. 72; cf. also R. Marius, *Thomas More: a Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), p. 269.

Opposing it, an approach could be proposed based on life-like elements in More's fictitious frames and forms of art. These are elements like meals and food of any kind, concrete or metaphoric. If they symbolise some level of communion (or communication), they should be perhaps regarded as more than formulaic and perfunctory,[6] they are not introduced hastily and without thought, interest or care, but they reflect the operation of thoughts offering some expedient method, i. e. rumination: consuming, chewing over, digesting and assimilating different components of reality. However, this ruminating method is not supposed to serve optimism either, but it can probably take the reader closer to More – and more realism.

For the sake of the immediate experience of this ruminative realism, More's texts will dominate this paper and confirm their contexts.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The idea of *Utopia* began to take shape in the summer of 1515. On 7 May More was assigned to serve as a member of a royal trade commission. The ambassadors, including More, left for Flanders on 12 May. The negotiations were suspended by 21 July, but More returned to England only on 25 October. During these three months he visited Antwerp, where he met Peter Giles who was a classical scholar, an intimate of Erasmus, and a man of practical affairs. More also kept practical matters in mind. It is revealed by the letters he and his companions sent to the Council, to Henry VIII and to Wolsey on 9 July, 21 July and 1 October, respectively.

> Lykethe it your good lordshippis to vnderstand, that as towching the state of
> our busynes her, for as moche as wee dowt not, but that our lettres, in whiche
> wee haue writton therof at large to the Kingis Grace, shall by his Highnes
> cume to your handis; wee therfor trouble not at this tyme your good
> lordshippis with the repeticion of the same, but the oonly cause of our
> present writing to your good lordshippis is to beseche the same to haue vs soo
> in your fauourable rememraunce, that wee may haue by the mean of your
> good lordshippis more money sent vnto vs. For as your lordshippis well
> remembre of lx days, for whiche wee receyued our money byfor the hand,
> and spent also a good parte therof byfor the hand, ther bee not remaynyng
> past iii or iiii days, fro the xiith day of May last at whiche day wee toke our

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[6] Kenneth Jay Wilson, *Incomplete Fictions: the Formation of the English Renaissance Dialogue* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985) pp. 144–145.

journey. And as your good lordshippis well know, that wee had soo short warnyng of this journey, that our tyme was very lityll and skarse to prepayr our self and our company forward. And noo tyme had wee to make shifte and *provision* for any substans of our own hider with vs, by reason wherof wee haue been at some payn hider to. And if wee shold make farther shifte here, it wold bee our farther payn and losse also. Wherfor wee beseche your good lordshippis, that as your wisdoomes perceyve, that wee be lyke her to abyde, soo it wol lyke you to ordre that we may haue money sent vs. In whiche dooyng, your lordshippis shal bynd vs to owe you our poore seruice and our prayer. As knoweth our Lord, whos grace long preserue your good lordshippis. From Brugis the ixth day of July. [...] [B]y reason of certaine delayes ... wee be not yet cum to any final determynacion in oure matiers ... And this knowen we shall certifye youre Grace with all diligence, moost humbly beseking youre Grace to remembre vs with sum money towardis owre *dyettes*. [...] And thus blessed Trynyte preserue your Grace. At Brugys this first day of Octobre.[7]

As it becomes clear in these letters, the most practical matter which is repeated again and again without essential difference is the need for money with which they could provide for themselves. A version of this refrain found its way into *Utopia*. As the negotiations could not go on without the rhythm of proper diet, so the discussions in *Utopia* could not be kept on without the natural rhythm of eating. Each book has been concluded with a meal.

> ... mi Raphael, inquam, quaeso te atque obsecro, describe nobis insulam: nec velis esse brevis, sed explices ... omnia quae nos putes velle cognoscere. Putabis autem velle quicquid adhuc nescimus.
> Nihil, inquit, faciam libentius, nam haec in promptu habeo. Sed res otium poscit.
> Eamus ergo, inquam, intro *pransum*. mox tempus nostro arbitratu sumemus. Fiat, inquit. Ita ingressi *prandemus. Pransi* in eundem reversi locum, in eodem sedili consedimus, ... ego ac Petrus Aegedius hortamur Raphaelem ut praestet quod erat pollicitus. Is ergo ubi nos vidit intentos atque avidos audiendi, quum paulisper tacitus et cogitabundus assedisset, hunc in modum exorsus

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[7] Elizabeth Frances Rogers, ed., *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947) pp. 20–21 and 24, italics mine.

est. PRIMI LIBRI FINIS.[8]

'... my dear Raphael,' said I, 'I beg and beseech you, describe that island to us. Do not be brief, but explain ... in fact, everything that you think we would like to know. And you can assume we want to know everything we do not know yet.'
'There is nothing,' he said, 'I shall be more pleased to do, for these things are fresh in my mind. But it will take some time.'
'In that case,' said I, 'let us go in to *lunch*. Afterwards, we shall have all the time we want.'
'Agreed,' he said. So we went in and had *lunch*. Then [after *lunch*] we returned to the same place, sat down on the same bench ... Peter Giles and I urged Raphael to fulfil his promise. When he saw that we were attentive and eager to listen, he sat silent and thoughtful a moment, and began as follows. THE END OF BOOK I[9]

Haec ubi Raphael recensuit ... tamen, quniam defessum narrando sciebam, ... idcirco et illorum institutione et ipsius oratione laudata, manu apprehendens intro *cenatum* duco ... SECUNDI LIBRI FINIS
(Logan, pp. 246–248, italics mine)

When Raphael had finished his story ... I knew, however, that he was tired with talking ... So with praise for their way of life and his account of it, I took him by the hand and led him in to *supper* ... END OF BOOK II
(cf. Logan, pp. 247–249, and CW4, pp. 245–247, italics mine)

The historical need for life seems to become a topos in making art alive through providing pulse for the work of art. Work and diet, writing and eating go together. Going a step farther: facing words provides food for thought, and this intellectual activity is metaphorically accompanied with physical nourishment.

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[8] Thomas More, *Utopia*, eds. George M. Logan, Robert M. Adams and Clarence H. Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 106., italics mine, hereafter referred to in the text as Logan
[9] Cf. Logan, p. 107, and *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*. Vol. 4. *Utopia*, ed. Edward Surtz and J. H. Hexter (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 109, hereafter referred to as CW4. Italics and an insertion mine, based on the Latin

EPISTOLARY CONTEXT

Thomas More was anxious about the publication of *Utopia*. He expresses his care for it in a letter to Peter Giles in October 1516. This first letter is published in all of the early editions of *Utopia*. In the 1516 edition it is headed as 'Prefatio' (Logan, pp. 30–39). Having been singled out among the prefatory addresses, this letter deserves special attention.

In the opening of the letter, More mentions the obligatory components of finding the material, refers to its arrangement and eloquent presentation. He repeats this classical triplet twice in the two introductory paragraphs, as he also states twice that he had only to recite what he had heard from his source. This simple task, however, nearly proved to be impossible due to the reasonable difficulties of writing among official and family ties.

> Sed huic tamen tam nihilo negotii peragendo, cetera negotia mea minus fere quam nihil temporis reliquerunt. Dum causas forenses assidue alias ago, alias audio, alias arbiter finio, alias iudex dirimo, dum hic officii cause visitur, ille negotii, dum foris totum ferme diem aliis impertior, reliquum meis; relinquo mihi, hoc est literis, nihil.
>
> (Logan, p. 32)

> Yet even to carry through this trifling task, my other tasks left me practically no leisure at all. Most of my day is constantly given to the law: pleading some cases, hearing others, arbitrating others, and deciding still others. I pay a visit of courtesy to one man and go on business to another, so I devote almost the whole day in public to other people, and what is left – to my own; and I leave for myself, that is writing, nothing.
>
> (cf. Logan, p. 33, and CW4, p. 39)

Due to the doublets, the introduction of this prefatory letter is quite tired, slow and nearly uninteresting, yet with the change of the pace in these lines – in spite of the catalogue of obligations and the cumulative repetition of lexical items – More quickly arrives at his most important activity, that is writing. The singularity of this art is emphasised by the apposition: *mihi, hoc est literis*; for myself, that is writing. This grammatical closeness in such a stylistic peak-position can probably speak about the contextual unity of the artist and his art, revealing its gravity.

Proceeding in this way, after a solemn digression concerning family and household matters, More and the reader have to face the question:

Quando ergo scribimus?
(Logan, p. 32)

When do we write then?

The answer seems to be conventional:

...mihi hoc solum temporis acquiro quod *somno ciboque* suffuror...
(Logan, p. 32, italics mine)

...I get for myself only the time I steal from *sleeping* and *eating*...
(cf. Logan, p. 33, and CW4, p. 41, italics mine)

However conventional the answer is, it can convey the inherent meaning of the activity of writing in the case of Thomas More. Staying awake and restraining from food are ascetic attitudes. The prototype of the discipline of keeping vigil and fast is provided by Jesus Christ who fasted for forty days and forty nights in the wilderness (cf., Mt 4:2). These circumstances sharpen the awareness of one's task. On the one hand, Christ focuses on his role that is characterised by obedience when he quotes the Scripture: 'Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Mt 4:4). Vigilance illuminates the acknowledgement that the word is as important as food, and in special cases it is more important than natural nourishment. It is reflected in the fact that Christ is determined to rely on the words of the Scripture alone (Mt 4:7 and 10). On the other hand, More substitutes sleeping and eating with writing, that is during his vigilant dealing with words he finds food for thought nourishing him. As Christ started his public ministry after the wilderness scene of keeping vigil and fast, so did Thomas More become known to the public of European humanists after writing *Utopia* in circumstances of vigil and fast. This public acknowledgement is echoed in other letters and poems published in critical editions: Erasmus to Johann Froben, Guillaume Bude to Thomas Lupset, Peter Giles to Jerome Busleyden, Jerome Busleyden to Thomas More, Gerard Geldenhouwer on *Utopia*, Cornelis de Schrijver to the Reader, Beatus Rhenanus to Willibald Pirckheimer, and Jean Desmarez to Peter Giles (cf. Logan, pp. 4–29, 250–265, and CW4, pp. 2–37, 252–253). This correspondence is a kind of literary digestion of More's food for thought.

In his second letter to Peter Giles in August 1517, More returns to *Utopia* anew. This letter was published in the 1517 edition of *Utopia* immediately following the

text of Book II. In this epilogue-like letter, More writes about an anonymous, perhaps fictitious critic to whom he is very much obliged (Logan, pp. 266–269).

> Tantum etenim mihi iudicio hoc suo tam ingenuo quantum nescio an quisquam alius ab edito libello gratificatus est. Nam primum sive mei studio sive ipsius operis illectus, non laboris videtur fuisse pertaesus quominus totum perlegeret, neque id quidem perfunctorie ac praecipitanter quomodo sacerdotes horarias preces solent (videlicet hi qui solent), sed ita sensim ac sedulo ut interim singula sollerter expenderit.
>
> (Logan, p. 266)

> His very frank criticism has gratified me more than any other reaction since my little book appeared. First of all, attracted either by devotion to me or the work itself, he seems not to have wearied of the labour but read it through. And he did not read carelessly or quickly, as priests pray the divine office (those who pray it at all) but slowly and carefully in order to consider the different points thoughtfully.
>
> (cf. Logan, p. 267, and CW4, p. 249)

According to this slice of the letter, More is not interested in conventional laudation, but his interest can be found in a special attitude towards writing and reading. His interest is adjusted by a pair of antithetical alliteration (*perfunctorie ac praecipitanter* and *sensim ac sedulo*) refined by an additional one (*singula sollerter*) until focusing finally on the intellectual act (*expenderit*): to consider. This consideration is tuned further with the embedded simile of the priests praying the divine office if praying it at all, which means that the receiving of the word of the Scripture is at stake. Due to this concentrated construction, the proper way of reading is not only considering what is written, but even meditating upon the writing. This mental-spiritual discipline is as ascetic as keeping vigil and fast, since the person devoted to this act has to be on the watch and has to be satisfied only with what is written, that is, he has to feed upon nothing else but the word which is written as if it were real food – for thought.

To be more exact and explicit, I would propose to call this act rumination. Both the writer and the reader ruminate: consume, chew over, and digest the thought until it is assimilated. It is only interesting from this point of view, that the writer cannot really separate himself and his work (sive *mei* studio sive *ipsius operis* illectus; attracted either by devotion to *me* or *the work itself*). This attitude of the epilogue-like letter of 1517 also repeats the characteristic apposition of the prologue-like letter of

1516: myself, that is writing. The homogeneity of these words speaks about the integrity of this art.

COMPOSITIONAL CONTEXT

In the opening sentence of his letter of October 1516 to Peter Giles, More apologises for the delayed presentation of *Utopia*:

> Pudet me propemodum, charissime Petre Aegidi, libellum hunc de Utopiana republica post annum ferme ad te mittere, quem te non dubito intra sesquimensem expectasse.
>
> (Logan, p. 30)

> I am almost ashamed, my dear Peter Giles, to send you this little book about the state of Utopia after almost a year, which I am sure you expected within a month and a half.
>
> (cf. Logan, p. 31 and CW4, p. 39)

More's certainty and Peter Giles' expectancy express that the little book of *Utopia* must have been composed by and large by the end of 1515. However, something must have happened between the end of 1515 and October 1516. Soon after he returned to England, More was offered a place in the royal service along with a pension (CW4, p. xxxiii).[10] This situation must have made him have second thoughts.

The introduction to the Yale Edition and an appendix (CW4, pp. xv–xxiii, and 572–576) work out which parts of *Utopia* were probably composed in Flanders (the introduction in Book I [CW4, pp. 46–58], and the discourse on Utopia in Book II [CW4, pp. 110–236]), and which new parts were inserted into the *Urutopia* in England (the dialogue of counsel including the exordium in Book I [CW4, pp. 58–108], the peroration and the conclusion in Book II [CW4, pp. 236–46]). As has been made evident, some changes were introduced during the period in question. More accomplished a work and returned to it: de-created the extant composition and created an original work of art.

The above reconstructed outline suggests katabolism and anabolism. Destructive and constructive activities are united in the process of rumination. One cannot appreciate the best state of a commonwealth (cf. Logan, p. 41, and CW4, p. 47)

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[10] Hexter, p. 106; Marius, pp. 190-91.

unless one accepts the worst features of a commonwealth. Hoping for the first and expecting but the latter form realism. Consuming, chewing over, digesting and assimilating this realism needs considerable time.

CHRONOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Because the duration of such a metabolism cannot be fixed properly, it is worth considering what else moved on in More's mind.

According to More's letter of 1517, the anonymous or fictitious critic observed some absurdities (quaedam subabsurda) in *Utopia* (cf. Logan, pp. 266–267, and CW4, pp. 248–249). In *Utopia*, however, More himself admits the same:

> Haec ubi Raphael recensuit, quamquam haud pauca mihi succurrebant quae in eius populi moribus legibusque perquam absurde videbantur instituta.
>
> (Logan, p. 246)

> When Raphael had finished his story, I was left thinking that many of the customs and laws of the Utopians he had described were absurdly instituted.
>
> (cf. Logan, p. 247, and CW4, p. 245)

Due to this, the letter can go on this way:

> ...non video cur sibi tam oculatus et quod Graeci dicunt οξυδερκης videri debeat quia aut subabsurda quaedam in Utopiensium institutis deprehenderit... quasi alibi nihil usquam gentium sit absurdi...
>
> (Logan, p. 266)

> ...I do not see why he should think himself so open-eyed, or, as the Greek say, 'sharp-sighted,' because he has noted some absurdities in the institutions of the Utopians... Are not there any absurdities elsewhere in the world?
>
> (cf. Logan, p. 267, and CW4, p. 249)

There is a shift in connection with the absurdities that turns our attention from the island of Utopia to other nations in the world (cf., alibi usquam gentium). This change renders to the peculiar utopian thoughts the general dimensions of this world. It is on the basis of this expedient that we can accept More's reference to himself as a historian

(cf. Logan, pp. 268–269, and CW4, pp. 250–251). More and more realism appears in connection with this work of art. With this, More brings his thoughts home.

Admitting the above recognised readjustment, one cannot be surprised seeing More the moral philosopher as More the historiographer, that is, there are two (or three?) works going side by side: *Utopia* and *The History of King Richard the Third/Historia Richardi Regis Angliae Eius Nominis Tertii*.[11] Thomas More, the humanist intellectual, engaged himself with questions which were universal and particular, local and general.

While *Utopia* was written in 1515-1516, *History/Historia* came into being between 1513 and 1518 (CW2, p. liii, and pp. lxiii–lxv). If assimilating the realism of *Utopia* consumed considerable time, the chewing over of *History/Historia* was more demanding. More ruminated *Utopia* returning to it and amending it. More rumination was required by the writing of *History/Historia* as the topic was simultaneously realised in an English and in a Latin version neither of them being the exact translation of the other (CW2, p. lviii). On the one hand, *Utopia* gives the impression of a consummate work of art, on the other hand, the composite *History/Historia* remained unfinished, undigested, so to say.

Reading the compound *History/Historia*, it is no wonder that Thomas More could not ease his stomach concerning catholic and national matters. When introducing Eduardum, Georgium ac Richardum, that is, Edwarde, George and Rycharde, More puts down the following:

> Qui vt erant omnes illustri loco nati, sic *animo* etiam elato ac sublimi fuere, auidi gerendi principatus, neque superiorum neque parium satis patiens.

> Al three as they wer great states of birthe, soo were they greate and statelye of *stomacke*, gredye and ambicious of authoritie, and impatient of parteners.
> (CW2, p. 6, italics mine)

The English version includes a common metaphor in describing the temper and disposition of the figures of history, and in turn, it becomes a telling image of history itself which yet again challenges people in history whether they can consume it or not. More relies on this set of imagery throughout his work. It goes on accordingly.

> For were it by the Queene and the Lordes of her bloode whiche highlye maligned the kynges kinred... or were it a prowde *appetite* of the Duke himself

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[11] *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More.* Vol. 2. *The History of King Richard III*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), hereafter referred to as CW2.

> entending to be king: at the lest wise heinous Treason was there layde to his charge, and finallye wer hee fautye were hee faultlesse, attainted was hee by parliament, and iudged to the death, and therupon hastely drouned in a Butte of Malmesey, whose death kynge Edwarde (albeit he commaunded it) when he wist it was done, pitiously bewailed and sorowfully repented.
>
> (CW2, p. 7, italics mine)

This passage portrays history as a digestive system. The variants of this pattern are repeated throughout history. Some lines before the above cited movement of history, More recites Edward's story in short.

> Edward reuenging his fathers death, depriued king Henrie, and attained the crown.
>
> (CW2, pp. 6–7)

Before too long, Richard has also got his share: some wise men thought that

> he long time in king Edwardes life, forethought to be king in case that [the] king his brother (whose life hee looked that euil *dyete* shoulde shorten) should happen to decease (as in dede he did) while his children wer yonge.
>
> (CW2, p. 8, italics mine)

Ruminating history results in consuming human beings. That is the world without end in *Richard's History/Historia*. As an effect of this metaphoric metabolism, even the physical-geographical parts of the world are transmuted, especially in the debate about the right of sanctuary in the cataclysm of history. The Duke of Buckingham mentions two places:

> ...e quibus alterum est vrbi propinquum, alterum in ipsis vrbis *visceribus* collocatum. Ausim profecto confirmare, quisquis asylorum commoda compararit cum incommodis, eum pronunciaturum potius, quam tot incommoda perpetienda sint, multo fore commodius ipsis etiam commodis caruisse.
>
> The tone at the *elbowe* of the Citie, the tother in the verye *bowelles*. I dare well auowe it, waye the good that they dooe, with the hurte that commeth of them, and ye shall fynde it muche better to lacke bothe, then haue bothe.
>
> (CW2, p. 30, italics mine)

Due to the metonymy of the incorporated body-image, history totally executes the metamorphosis. The external and the internal parts of the body correspond to the city both within and without. There is no place of protection. The protector's mouthpiece announces in a charming spell like an anagram: the *bowelles* consume whoever can be found at the *elbowe*, and *vice versa*. It is a curse *urbi et orbi*.

As the whole world has become a complete digestive system, none of the intimates of Richard are protected either, not even the "lorde Chamberlen,"

> Sed Hastyngum protector iussit ad mortem se <u>componeret</u>, ac si quid cum sacerdote vellet, accersendum quam primum curaret, nam ita diuum, inquit, Paulum propitium habeam, vt non ante *cibi* quicquam *gustaturus* sim quam tibi *caput* amputatum videam. Ergo ille nihil se reluctando profecturum sciens, adducto quem locus ille offerebat sacerdoti confessionem criminum qualemcunque fecit: nam prolixiorem temporis breuitas non admittebat, protectore iam ad *prandium* <u>composito</u>, & vt *caput* illi praecisum esse audiret intento.

> whom the protectour bade spede & shryue hym a pace, for by saynt Poule (quod he) I wil not to *dinner* til I se thy *hed* of. It boted him not to aske why but heuely he toke a priest at aduenture, & made a short shrift, for a longer would not be suffered, the protectour made so much hast to *dyner*: which he might not go to til this wer done for sauing of his othe.
>
> <div align="right">(CW2, p. 49, italics and emphasis mine)</div>

This strange meal was composed by Richard in a delicate way. On the morning of the day in question, Richard turns to the Bishop of Ely:

> …pater inquit, *fraga* tibi in hortis audio insignia nasci, non grauatim scio *ferculum* vnum tot nobilibus in *prandium*, velut *simbolum* tuum conferes. Vtinam, inquit ille, maius aliquid tam facile possim quam hoc, libenter faciam: simulque ministrumqui adferret emittit.
> …my lord you haue very good *strawberies* at your gardayne in Holborne, I require you let vs haue a messe of them. Gladly my lord, quod he, woulde god I had some better thing as redy to your pleasure as that. And therwith in al the hast he sent hys seruant for a messe of *strawberies*.
>
> <div align="right">(CW2, p. 47, italics mine)</div>

In such a composition the small berry of a red strawberry as an *entrée* can metonymically anticipate the main course of bloody beheading.

In between these two extremes Richard is presented "knitting the browes, frowning and *froting and knawing on hys lippes,*" "obducto supercilio, corrugata fronte *admorso labro*" (CW2, p. 47, italics mine; cf. *Declamatio Thomae Mori Lvcianicae Respondens,* where in 1506 the first person singular speaker describes the tyrant after he realises the murder of his son: "Itaque iam nunc uidere mihi uideor micantes latronis oculos obducta supercilia, contractam frontem, genas pallentes, *dentes stridentes, labra tumentia.*" That is: "Even now I seem to see the glittering eyes of the brigand, the knitted brows, the contracted forehead, the pale cheeks, *the gnashing teeth, the swelling lips.*" Then the tyrant commits suicide[12]). In his anger and anxiety, the consuming element is fretting and gnawing, that is, consuming a part of his own digestive system. At this point metabolism becomes self-destructive katabolism.

It is worth considering that it all happened "on friday" (CW2, p. 46). Friday is a day of fasting traditionally, commemorating the death of the Saviour for the lives of many (cf., Mt 20:28). Richard, however, does not observe this custom (save the strawberries), but violates it, consuming flesh, that is, having Hastings executed for his own sake. In this way he does not reflect the Prototype of kings but becomes an Antitype.

Destruction reaches its totality when Richard devises to pursue his purpose and have himself crowned before anybody "should haue space to dispute & digest the mater & make parties," that is depriving men of free assimilation, and when Edmond Shaa, the Mayor of London is ordered to "frame the cite to their appetite" (CW2, p. 58, italics mine), that is having the people of the city assimilated.

The experience of global and local destruction, universal and atomic corruption, individual and social decay is hard to digest. It can only be ruminated but never assimilated.

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[12] *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More.* Vol. 3. *Translations of Lucian,* ed. Craig R. Thompson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974) pp. 122–123.

INTERNAL CONTEXT

It is the Bishop of Ely, John Morton who ruminates and helps ruminate the matters which are hard to digest. As it has been quoted, when he was asked for his strawberries he did not only send for them in haste, but before sending his servant, he replied to Richard: "…woulde god I had some better thing as redy to your pleasure as that" (CW2, p. 47). Morton thinks first, ruminates before digesting and assimilating anything. At the end of *History*, his diplomatic words to the Duke of Buckingham would rather reveal some similar attitude:

> …for the weale of this realm, wherof his grace hath now the gouernance, & wherof I am my self one poore member, I was about to wish, that to those good habilities wherof he hath already right many, litle nedyng my prayse: it might yet haue pleased Godde for the better store, to haue geuen him some of suche other excellente vertues mete for the rule of a realm, as our lorde hath planted in the parsone of youre grace.
>
> (CW2, p. 93)

The elusive style of this concluding passage speaks about the difficulty of digestion. The initial approving praise is followed by some expectancy much to be desired. The praise expected from a man has been eluded, and the expectancy has been also passed, not only up to God, however, but also on to the addressed human person. Though it is not assimilation, yet it is rumination owing to this dual rhetoric.

Rumination in connection with John Morton, who became Archbishop of Canterbury and then also Lord Chancellor of England, re-appears in the chronological context of *History/Historia*, in *Utopia*. For political and private, social and individual reasons More turns to Morton again, and takes his fictitious figures to Morton's table ("in eius mensa," Logan, pp. 54–81, CW4, pp. 60–85) and the readers are informed of the discussion that took place there. The dialogue embedded within the dialogue of counsel serves as a demonstration and provides a practical approach to answering the question why one should not enter some king's service (Logan, pp. 51-55, CW4, pp. 54–59). More's figures are invited to discuss and digest the given question and the possible answer in the manner of the Utopians' custom of talking during meals (Logan, pp. 142–143, CW4, pp. 144–145). It was Peter Giles who recommended Raphael Hythlodaeus that he should assist a king with counsel. Raphael denounces it in giving his account of the table-talk.

Raphael points out in his conclusion that he wants his audience to see

the attitude of those who had rejected what I had said first yet who, immediately afterward, when the Cardinal did not disapprove of it, also gave their approval. In fact they went so far in their flattery that they indulged and almost took seriously ideas that their master tolerated only as the clowning of a parasite. From this episode you can see how little courtiers would value me or my advice.

(Logan, pp. 80–81, CW4, pp. 84–85)

This end reveals that Raphael cannot and will not assimilate the role of a councillor in spite of ruminating its possibility.

Chewing the cud in this demonstrative talk, he speaks about the sheep which are themselves ruminants (Logan, pp. 62–67, CW4, pp. 65–71). It is a historical problem of society and economy in England. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century the increase of sheep farming resulted from the rapid growth of wool industry. It brought about enclosure that meant large grazing lands and required little manpower. It all led to the destruction of many villages (Logan, p. 63, CW4, p. 326). With such background information More has Raphael describing the sheep:

> Oves… tam *edaces* atque indomitae esse coeperunt ut homines *devorent* ipsos: agros, domos, oppida vastent ac depopulentur.
>
> (Logan, p. 62, italics mine)

> …they have become so greedy and fierce that they *devour* human beings themselves. They devastate and depopulate fields, houses and towns.
>
> (Logan, p. 63, CW4, p. 67, italics mine)

This actually consuming image of the demonstrative part of Book I of *Utopia* assumes mythological dimensions. This visionary description recalls

> Scyllas et Celaenos *rapaces* et Laestrygonas *populivoros*

> Scyllas and *ravenous* Celaenos and *folk-devouring* Laestrygonians

of the previous part of Book I dealing with Raphael's experiences, and proves that "similar frightful monsters are common enough." The archetypal scope is ultimately emphasised by More's *populivorus*, folk-devouring neologism (Logan, pp. 48–49, italics mine).

The mythic power of these sheep are so effective, that they can turn any of the landlords, that is, "the nobility and gentry and some godly abbots – holy men" ("nobiles et generosi atque adeo abbates aliquot, sancti viri"), into "an insatiable glutton and accursed plague of his native land" ("unus helluo inexplebilis ac dira pestis patriae").

This metabolic metamorphosis of mythic effect can be located in the only building preserved in the country, and it is the church. However, the church does not house people attending sacred rituals any more, but in a prophetic-apocalyptic way the sanctuary is converted into a sheep-fold. It means that there is no room for the blessing of the Lamb of God either to save humankind and to provide the bread of life for them any more. In this sense neither the landlords nor the religious pastors tend or pasture those entrusted to them, but they go about their own business (Logan, pp. 62–63, CW4, pp. 66–67).

Following the table-talk, the misconduct of these roles is also echoed in the third, theoretical part of Book I:

> ...magis ad principem eam pertinere curam ut populo bene sit suo quam ut sibi, non aliter ac pastoris officium est oves potius quam semet pascere, quatenus opilo est.
>
> (Logan, pp. 90–92)

> ...it is the king's duty to take more care of his people's welfare than of his own, just as it is the duty of a shepherd who cares about his job to feed the sheep rather than himself.
>
> (Logan, pp. 91–93, CW4, pp. 94–95)

According to the table-talk, the consequences are devastating: destruction of settlements, degradation of people, economic malfunction, cultural and social deviance.

Finishing his discourse on the sheep, Raphael points out some ways to a solution: reconstructing settlements, restoring agriculture, and moderating the wool industry, for example. His socio-economic proposals were rejected by the lawyer present at the table. In this rumination, Raphael could not digest the unbearable socio-economic problem one had to face in England, and he could not make his proposals either understood or assimilated. On the one hand, his proposals were rebuffed by the lawyer, on the other hand, Cardinal Morton made reservations in the form of questions.

This reservation almost alludes to the failure of rumination as digestion is dubious and assimilation is questionable. Rehearsing the table-talk, Raphael's attitude and ironic remark as a conclusion can finally sound reasonable:

> ...ut hinc possis aestimare quanti me ac mea consilia aulici forent aestimaturi.
>
> (Logan, p. 80)

> From this you can estimate how little the courtiers would estimate me or my advice.
>
> (Logan, p. 81, CW4, pp. 84–85)

The estimation of this remark alludes to nil.

ALLUSIVE CONTEXT

In More's composition, what Hythlodaeus denounced also affected Morus, and Raphael's reaction must have influenced his ruminative conclusion, too, at the end of *Utopia* when Morus, "being left thinking" on whatever was related by Raphael ("pauca mihi succurrebant"), "took him by the hand and led him in to supper" ("manu apprehendens intro cenatum duco"):

> ...facile confiteor permulta esse in Utopiensium republica quae in nostris civitatibus *optarim* verius quam *sperarim*.
>
> (Logan, pp. 246–248, italics mine)

> ...I readily admit that in the Utopian commonwealth there are very many features that in our society I would rather wish than expect to see.
>
> (Logan, pp. 246–249, CW4, pp. 244–247)

The effect of Raphael on Morus can be emphasised by the latter's use of the former's vocabulary in a previous paragraph in a similar context:

> ...hanc republicae formam, quam omnibus libenter *optarim*, Utopiensibus saltem contigisse gaudeo...
>
> (Logan, p. 246, italics mine)

...I am glad that the Utopians at least have been lucky enough to achieve this republic which I wish for all mankind...

<div align="right">(cf. Logan, p. 247, CW4, p. 245)</div>

However, Morus' concluding remark does not only echo Raphael, but he also repeats himself.

In the theoretical third part of Book I, ruminating on the role of a more practical version of philosophy than academic that could be employed "in the council of kings" (Logan, pp. 94–97, CW4, pp. 98–101), Morus outlines the possible tactics relying on an extended stage-metaphor. More, writing this part back in England, makes it more precise with an authentic though common sea-and-ship metaphor:

> ...est alia philosophia civilior quae suam novit scaenam, eique sese accomodans, in ea fabula quae in manibus est suas partes concinne et cum decore tutatur. Hac utendum est tibi... Corruperis... perverterisque praesentem fabulam dum diversa permisces, etiamsi ea quae tu adfers meliora fuerint. Quaecumque fabula in manu est, eam age quam potes optime, neque ideo totam perturbes quod tibi in mentem venit alterius quae sit lepidor.
>
> Sic est in republica, sic in consultationibus principum. Si radicitus evelli non possint opiniones pravae nec receptis usu vitiis mederi queas ex animi tui sententia, non ideo tamen *deserenda* respublica est, et in tempestate navis destituenda est, quoniam ventos inhibere non possis. At neque insuetus et insolens sermo inculcandus quem scias apud diversa persuasos pondus non habiturum, sed obliquo ductu conandum est atque adnitendum tibi uti pro tua virili omnia tractes commode, et quod in bonum nequis vertere efficias saltem ut sit quam minime malum. Nam ut omnia bene sint fieri non potest, nisi omnes boni sint, quod ad aliquot adhinc annos adhuc non *exspecto*.

<div align="right">(Logan, pp. 94–96, italics mine)</div>

> ...there is another philosophy, more practical for statesmen, which knows its stage, adapts itself to the play in hand, and acts its part neatly and appropriately. This is the philosophy for you to use... You pervert a play and ruin it when you add irrelevant speeches, even if they are better than the play itself. Whatever play is in hand, act it as best you can, and do not spoil it just because you think of another which has more interest.
>
> So it is in the commonwealth, so it is in the councils of monarchs. If you cannot pluck up bad ideas by the root, or cure long-standing evils to your heart's desire, you must not therefore desert the commonwealth, as you must

<div align="right">69</div>

not give up the ship because you cannot control the winds. You must not deliver strange and out-of-the-way speeches to people of opposite conviction with whom they will carry no weight. Instead, by an indirect approach, you must seek and strive as best you can to handle everything tactfully – and what you cannot turn to good, you may at least make as little bad as possible. For it is impossible to make everything good unless all men are good, which I do not expect to see for quite a few years yet.

(cf. Logan, p. 97, CW4, pp. 99–101)

Although all these could be taken as a rehearsal of the later More in royal service, yet on the part of Morus, this last sentence in Book I anticipates the end of the rehearsed discourse in Book II, keeping the idea of wishing and the reality of expectancy apart. With this, rumination goes on without proper assimilation except for the assimilation of the two parts of *Utopia* by More.

Between these assimilating matters there is another telling comment by Morus. It precedes the closure of the composite of the two books. After Raphael finished his account of Utopia, and before taking him in to supper, Morus was left thinking on some of the absurd laws and customs of the Utopians, but he does not disclose his reservations, rather reserves them for his own later rumination (Logan, pp. 246–249, CW4, p. 244), and then he adds:

...aliud nobis tempus eisdem de rebus altius cogitandi atque uberius cum eo conferendi fore. Quod utinam aliquando contingeret.

(Logan, p. 248)

...there would be another time for thinking of these matters more thoroughly and for talking them over in more detail. Would that this would happen some day!

(cf. Logan, p. 249, CW, p. 245)

The imperfect subjunctive in the Latin implies a *casus irrealis*, a case never to be realised. The content and attitude of this fragment alludes to the reaction of the Athenians to St. Paul's discourse before the Council of the Areopagus as it is rehearsed in *The Acts of the Apostles* (17:22-33). St Paul preaches on the knowledge of God, a theme very popular in the propaganda of contemporary Hellenistic Judaism.[13] Paul's speech was terminated with the exclamation by the Greek audience (Acts 17:32):

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[13] Alexander Jones, ed., *The Jerusalem Bible* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966), p.231n.

Audiemus te de hoc iterum.

We would like to hear you talk about this again.

This sudden interruption really meant that the people present could not swallow St Paul's thoughts. Though it was a fiasco, Paul's failure in Athens was all but complete; from now on he refuses to use the devices of Greek philosophy and follows another course:

> As for me, brothers, when I came to you, it was not with any show of oratory or philosophy, but simply to tell you what God had guaranteed. During my stay with you the only knowledge I claimed to have was about Jesus, and only about him as the crucified Christ.
>
> (1 Cor 2:1–2)

The same is the case with More. In spite of the popularity of the genre of the speculum, the mirror of princes (Erasmus, *Institutio Principis Christiani* [1516], Machiavelli, *Il Principe* [1513], see also CW4, pp. clxxi–clxxix), More had other points to consider and articulate, which he was already ruminating in *Utopia*. However, More must have started it earlier, when he translated *The Life of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola* as a speculum of Christian humanists, and three of his letters, his interpretation of Psalm 16, his twelve rules of a Christian life, his twelve rules of a perfect lover and his deprecatory hymn to God in 1504 before *Utopia*; and after *Utopia*, apart from his letters written in the defence of humanism he turned to religious matters from *Responsio ad Lutherum* (1523) through *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies* (1529) and *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation* (1534) to *De Tristitia Christi* (1534-35), in which he urges his spiritual companion to meditate and ruminate (meditetur ac ruminet).[14]

Thomas More has realised this rumination in *Utopia* when in the theoretical third part of Book I he gives the essence of *speculum regum*:

> ...magis ad principem eam pertinere curam ut populo bene sit suo quam ut sibi, non aliter ac pastoris officium est potius quam semet pascere, quatenus opilio est.
>
> (Logan, pp. 90–92)

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[14] *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*. Vol. 14. *De Tristitia Christi*, ed. Clarence H. Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976) p. 253.

> ...it is the king's duty to take more care of his people's welfare than of his own, just as it is the duty of a shepherd who cares about his job to feed the sheep rather than himself.
>
> (Logan, pp. 91–93, CW4, pp. 94–95)

On the one hand, More relies indirectly on the Old Testament, the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel (cf. CW4, p. 367n):

> Doom for the shepherds who... who have not taken care of [the flock].
>
> (cf. Jer 23:1–2)

> Trouble for the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Shepherds ought to feed their flock, yet you have... failed to feed the flock. You have failed to make weak sheep strong, or to care for the sick ones, or bandage the wounded ones... my shepherds have stopped bothering about my flock, since my shepherds feed themselves rather than my flock...
>
> (Ezk 34:2b–8)

On the other hand, More directly alludes to the New Testament, *The Gospel according to Saint John* in which Jesus tells the parable of the model shepherd (Jn 10:1–18, cf. Ezk 34:11–31):

> I am the model shepherd;
> I know my own
> and mine know me
>
> (Jn 10:14)

In biblical language 'knowledge' is not merely a conclusion of an intellectual process, but also the fruit of an 'experience' (cf. Lk 15:5), a personal contact (cf. Jn 10:3b–4, 14:20, 17:21–22). The model shepherd of this *speculum perfectionis regum* is noble because he is willing to protect his sheep even in risking his own life for them (cf., Jn 10:11b, 15c, 17b) which is an expression of absolute dedication.[15]

Re-considering *Utopia*, however, it turns out, that More was privately dedicated to this model. The source of this dedication can be recognised right at the start of *Urutopia*, or to be more precise, after satisfying the requirements of dedication and the

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[15] Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John.* Vol. 1. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1971, rpt. 1978) pp. 383–400.

lines of relating the circumstances of the discourse, and before the beginning of Morus's account of his meeting Hythlodaeus. In such a constellation, the lines of conventional dedication are in a peculiarly tight relationship with the narrator's private dedication. The following revelatory lines illuminate the point in question:

> Hunc quum die quadam in templo divae Mariae… *rei divinae* interfuissem, atque peracto *sacro* pararem inde in hospitium redire…
>
> (Logan, p. 42, italics mine)

> One day I had been at *divine service* in Notre Dame… *mass* being over , I was about to return to my lodgings…
>
> (cf. Logan, p. 43, CW4, p. 49, italics mine)

Morus's dedication takes its origin from the Mass commemorating the Last Supper when Jesus taught his disciples through a discourse during the meal that anticipated the sacrifice of Christ. He is the "Lord of lords and the King of kings" and also the "Lamb" (Rev 17:14), who as a shepherd "lays down his life" for his sheep (cf., Jn 10:11b, 15c, 17b, 18b) "that they may have life and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10d-e). One can participate in it by attending the Mass. Mass consists of two parts: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In the first part one can ruminate the Word of God as food for thought, and in the second part one can consume the Bread of Life as food for the soul. Anyone who comes to this table "will never be hungry" (Jn 6:35c).

Having been weighed against this service, there is no wonder that the offer of royal service needs to be pondered and ruminated. More in *Utopia* tries assimilating the king's service but he does God's first.

PROPOSED INTERPRETATIVE CONTEXT

Having surveyed some contextual aspects of *Utopia*, it might be deemed well advisable to consider rumination as the nature of More's way of thinking. Neither the structure nor the contents, not even the relation between the structure and the contents seem to be profitable enough to taste *Utopia* adequately. Rumination proposes itself as the expedient method that can take the reader closer to More – and more realism in connection with Utopia.

Reading Thomas More's works, one can recognise the ruminative character that dominates his works of art from the cell in the Charterhouse through his legal career and political performance to the cell in the Tower.

More's torso, his *History/Historia* remained undigested in spite of its well known end. His completely composed *Utopia* also waits for assimilation despite its comforting start. The ambiguity of these closures opens unlimited possibilities for the realisation of rumination both for the reader and for More.

In this sense, *Utopia* is a "libellus vere aureus," that is "a truly golden handbook" (cf. Logan, pp. 1–2, CW4, the title pages of the text). It is golden, but not only because it is a gold-mine of diverse topics, not only because it tries hard to work out the golden mean that it cannot, and not only because its structure resembles the beginning of the golden ratio (the sequence of the Fibonacci numbers: [1:2]) from the point of view of the length of Book I compared to that of Book II. If it were golden from any of these respects only, it would denounce itself, remembering that according to the Utopians "aurum suapte natura tam inutile" (Logan, p. 154) "gold is so useless by its very nature" (cf. Logan, p. 155, CW4, p. 157). However, it is a really golden book, because it does not provide answers ready made for decisive questions, but because it offers a profitable value, an expedient method for reading, writing, and thinking, that is rumination, that can be adapted and employed by anybody.

Thus fulfilling the requirements of the humanist virtues of honestas and utilitas, the reader is neither allowed to face pessimism nor encouraged to entertain optimism, but he is invited to nourish realism. More and more.

Zsolt Komáromy

Echoing Innocence

The Figures of Memory and Echo in Blakean Pastoral

<div align="right">

"sit tibi copia nostri"
(Ovid, *Metamorphoses*)

</div>

Of all goddesses, perhaps Mnemosyne, the mother of the Muses received the harshest treatment from some of those romantic poets who regarded art as the supreme form of knowledge. Blake and Coleridge, who were .equally eager to crown poetry, with the same gesture seem to have been also eager to dethrone the governing deities of the arts. This may have its reasons in the history of ideas, but seems strange enough a gesture to provoke one into questioning. The particular question I am intrigued by is if the Goddess of Memory is indeed so easy to forget.

"Imagination has nothing to do with Memory," claims William Blake, scolding Wordsworth in one of his marginalia.[1] Though the statement would not bear much scrutiny with respect to Wordsworth's best poetry, it comes as no surprise from Blake, and Wordsworth and Coleridge also repeatedly made like claims in their critical writings. Particularly Blake's and Coleridge's rejection of memory as a part of the creative process has to do with their fundamental rejection of Locke's views on perception and knowledge, and is part of their forceful assertion of the creativity of the

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[1] David Erdman, ed.: *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* Commentary by Harold Bloom. Newly Revised edn. (New York, etc.: Doubleday, 1988.), p.666. Quotations from Erdman's edition of Blake's texts will be henceforth indicated in the text and abbreviated as E.

imagination. There is, thus, an obvious context in which the attacks on memory in the prose writings of these poets arise as a theoretical necessity for the formulation of their ideas. There is, however, a wider context in which the insistence on excluding memory from the imaginative process may appear far more radical a gesture than an opposition to certain ideas of Locke. When Blake expresses this opposition in terms of the rejection of the Daughters of Memory, he is not only personifying a mental process, but rejecting a metaphor. He is not only arguing a point of philosophy or psychology, but is claiming to exclude from poetry a trope that is conventionally very much a part of poetry. Put yet another way, he is not only saying that Lockean "reflection" is no part of imaginative perception, nor only that adherence to such a perception locks one up in the "animal self-absorption" of Selfhood.[2] He is also claiming that poetry is not presided over by the Muses, and with that he is brushing aside the *meanings* that may be involved in the existence of the convention according to which the Muses are the goddesses of the arts.

There is, I think, a distinction to be made between treating memory as a mental process, and memory as a metaphor for the imagination. In a critique of Locke, we are referring to it as a mental process; in asking what the rejection of the Muses may do to poetry – and this is the question I want to ask here – we are referring to memory as a metaphor. The two, of course, are not unrelated. I am nevertheless stressing this difference even before clarifying their relation, or the terms in which I want to discuss memory, because I want to indicate that my enquiries in this essay do not directly relate to memory as a mental process – points of psychology or of the philosophy of the mind are not among my concerns. Neither is it the peculiar ways Blake thought of perception and imagination that I wish to reflect on. When asking what role the rejection of memory has in Blake's poetry, I am asking about the work of a figure, or the results of its exclusion, in poetic texts, in the hope of coming to some kind of understanding of how, and towards what, those texts work. Here I want to begin to examine this through the analysis of a particular example, concentrating on only one segment of Blake's work, the state he calls Innocence. First, however, I want to outline what I mean by treating memory as a figure.

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[2] Frye, in *Fearful Symmetry. A Study of William Blake* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1947) pp.15 and p.58, tells us that "Blake always refers to Locke's reflection as 'memory'" and that Selfhood is Blake's term "used ... to replace 'memory' and 'reflection'."

THE FIGURE OF MEMORY

That imagination does have something to do with memory finds one of its oldest expressions in the family kinship between Mnemosyne, goddess of memory, and the Muses, the presiding deities of imaginative works. When Blake expresses his rejection of memory in terms of the rejection of the Muses, he is attacking, and getting involved in, the metaphor that expresses the relation of two mental processes through divine genealogy. Thus, when we are asking what it is that Blake is rejecting, we are in a context where the question about the relation of imagination and memory is a question about divine genealogy; in other words, asking about the origin of the idea that these mental process are related, is asking about the origin of Mnemosyne: why is it memory that is thought to mother the Muses, what are the features attributed to memory that make it suitable for fostering the imagination?

On the one hand, it seems fair enough to ask such a question, because as most scholars of myth seem to agree, these origins and genealogies are explicatory of the world.[3] But as such, they, in a certain sense, function as figures of speech: their 'explanations' are not direct (not psychological, philosophical, speculative, discursive, etc), they say more, or something other, than the actual words convey. On the first level, they are allegories; but, on the next level, they are more than one-to-one-correspondences and create explanations more by metaphorical than by allegorical means; furthermore, they are not fixed stories, they have versions, they are recreated, and in the process of this recreation the metaphors alter; in these alterations, however, the 'original' metaphor does not vanish, but in fact plays an active part in the very process of alterations, its figurative sense shaping the new figure. Mythography thus seems often to resemble an endless hunt after metaphors 'standing behind' metaphors.

Thus, on the other hand, such line of enquiry may not take us very far, because in trying to unfold the meaning of a metaphor we can only arrive at other metaphors. We need not proceed to discuss the parents of Mnemosyne and what they are metaphorical of, because it is now clear that this would lead not to a final understanding of the relation of memory and imagination, but only to more metaphors that would need to be unfolded, which would have to be unfolded through other metaphors – etcetera. However, there is something very important to be learned from

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[3] Scholars of such different disposition as Mircea Eliade or G. S. Kirk could both be recalled as authorities arguing along these lines.

observing this. We learn that not only the elements of, but genealogies themselves are metaphors; and thus we learn that the figurative meaning of genealogies cannot be other but that we cannot find our way out of metaphors to some hypothetically purely-discursive explanation (e.g. psychological or philosophical).

There is perhaps no clearer example for this than the relation of Mnemosyne and the Muses. The *stories* establishing the origins in which we seek the explanation of the relation of memory and imagination prove to be the origins, in the end, not of the deities, but of literature, of imaginative constructs – which of course are themselves presided over by deities, who are mothered by Memory. That is to say, the figurative import of the *origins* of the Muses and of Mnemosyne is to remind us that we do not know the origins and can never go beyond imagining them. To the question why the Muses originate in Mnemosyne, why imagination originates in memory, we can only get an answer that is the work of the imagination, which itself claims its origin to be memory. Mnemosyne cannot be got around: in enquiring about the origins of Mnemosyne and the Muses, the Muses are our guides, and they will vindicate the plausibility of their answers by directing us to the realm of Mnemosyne herself. The child indeed becomes mother to the woman, to alter the gender in Wordsworth's famous line attached to one of the major romantic statements on the relation of memory and imagination.[4] This, in turn, gives us a clue as to the meaning of the metaphor Mnemosyne expresses, which is the very vanity of trying to ascertain origins. If 'memory' thus expresses the necessary presence in our explanations of a mental process that is imaginative, we can only grasp the relation between memory and imagination as memory being a metaphor for the imagination.[5]

To see what it is that Blake rejects when rejecting memory through dismissing the Muses, we therefore have to rephrase the initial question and ask why, then, is it 'memory' that is thought a fit metaphor for the imagination? As we have seen, mythic genealogy works by explaining one metaphor through another. The metaphor standing behind the figure we are trying to unfold is the vindication for the meaning of that figure. Thus we arrive at the final form of our question: why is it memory that

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[4] "The Child is father of the Man" – runs a line of the 1802 lyric beginning "My heart leaps up when I behold / A rainbow in the sky." Wordsworth later attached the stanza as epigraph to the Immortality Ode.

[5] "Mythological statements," says a critic arguing in a different context along similar lines, "lead to questions. Then follows something strange, for to these questions only the story itself can make an answer. The myth turns back upon itself because *it is a question that figures its own reply* (...). This ... is not muddle or mystification, however, but *an indication of method*." Elizabeth Sewell, *The Orphic Voice. Poetry and Natural History*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960) p.4, emphases mine.

vindicates imagination? We have two mental process that seem to be metaphorically related. What are the points of similarity that make this metaphor possible, and what are the points of difference that endow the metaphor with expressive power? The point of similarity I think is this: memory as a mental process is itself a form of imagination inasmuch as it presents to the mind what is not immediately given to the senses. The important distinction between memory and imagination in this respect is that memory presents to the mind what has once, in some form, been already present to it. This is a restriction that does not, in theory, apply to the imagination: we are free to imagine whatever our capacities enable us to, while we can only remember what has (mentally or physically) taken place.[6] It is this similarity and this difference that makes memory capable of vindicating imagination, and thus this is the meaning of Mnemosyne standing behind the Muses: memory metaphorically grants a truth-claim for the imagination. If we remember what we imagine, what we imagine has in some sense taken place, and is therefore not mere make-believe but true. The Muses are not just blabbering any phantasmagoria but – because they are the Daughters of Memory – are telling us truths.

Let us throw light on this matter from another angle to see how this metaphorical vindication of imagination works in literature. I will use the most obvious example, the epic convention of invocation, where the poet directly calls on the Muses. The figurative role of the invocation, due to the genealogy of the Muses who are being called on (the first 'metaphor' standing behind a convention, behind which stands another metaphor, Mnemosyne), is a plea for the refreshing of the poet's memory. The poet must tell a story; not merely a story of make-believe, but a story that (in some sense or other) has happened – since an epic is to fulfil the function of accounting for the world, the nation, the origins and ends of our life within the time known to us, it cannot afford to be put down to make-believe. However, the poet cannot remember the events he is to recite, as they took place before his lifetime, or often, when events of heaven or hell, or Olympus are also involved, before that of any man. Thus he must ask the Daughters of Memory to render him a service and help him recall what he would

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[6] It may be a separate question, of course, if our capacities enable us to imagine anything that has not in some sense taken place. This is a question that may well pertain to one of the arch-questions of art-theories, which is if the artistic imagination creates anything new or merely imitates what is in some sense - physically, historically or even only on the level of platonic ideas - given. Luckily it is not our concern to answer this question, but it should be noticed that its very emergence in this line of thought indicates the degree to which the relation between memory and imagination penetrates thinking about art; it indicates, in other words, that Memory seems to be present in the foundations of the concept of imagination.

have no way of recalling on his own account. Neither could the poet ask his listeners to believe that what he says is in any sense true and thus should matter for them, unless he could claim that he is helped to remember what he himself could never have seen by deities who were 'actually present' at the events recited, and whose memories are therefore to be trusted.

Such a description of the convention of epic invocation may seem simplified almost into silliness, but the convention itself does seem to make sense as *an acting out of a figure.* Figuratively we are not only talking about the limited memories of the poet, but the limits of the human mind, and the limits of human knowledge: this knowledge may embrace the whole of time, but it is limited by time, i.e. it cannot reach beyond it *as knowledge* into the realm where divinities dwell. Therefore, the figurative sense of the invocation, asking the Muses to help to remember, is in fact the poet's claim that he will sing of times immemorial. This also implies that poetry presided over by the Daughters of Memory is in some sense concerned with beginnings and ends, with Creation and Apocalypse, with origins and with truth. The service the Daughters of Memory render is in fact the guiding of the mind into realms beyond time.

We find that the fact that imagination can and does move in a realm beyond time is expressed by a 'metaphor' (the Muses) that figures *human memory* as reaching beyond time. The human mind can encompass what is within time by its ability to remember. To remember what is beyond time, divine assistance is needed, and quite naturally, this assistance should come from the Daughters of Memory. If mythological figures are, as it were, metaphors relating to the world within time, the Muses are indeed metaphors for human memory and explicative of what imaginative speech does. Their assistance, in a sense then, is nothing but the figurative expression of that which is unverifiable by human knowledge, of speech about the humanly unknowable, of speech about beginnings and ends, about truth. We find that the figure of Mnemosyne looming behind works of imagination is itself a trope for the truth-claim of the imagination. Thus, we find therefore that memory is not only a form of imagination as a related mental process, but is in fact the figure for the imagination, a figure grounding the importance and validity of imaginative discourse within man's verbal wisdom.

It is such transitions of meaning that characterise figures of speech, as indeed, we have reason to think of mythic characters and stories as functioning like figures of speech. In discussing the role of memory in poetry, it is such a 'figure of memory' that I want to concentrate on. I find 'figure' or 'trope' the appropriate expression because we are not talking about mental processes, but meanings that literary convention has attached to them. When Blake dismisses the Daughters of Memory thus, he is not only

quarrelling with Locke or the imaginative quality of the works of classical antiquity, but I think he is also dismissing the figure of memory. However, as we have seen in our glance at the nature of myth as a kind of a trope, as a figure of speech, and as we know from the renewed concerns with rhetoric and with the figurative power of language our century has witnessed in philosophy and literary theory, figurative expression carries in its nature a tendency for not staying stable. We can expect the figure of memory itself to keep altering. That is to say, to observe the role of memory not as a mental process but as a figure in specific imaginative texts, the task is not simply to pin down instances where we can catch glimpses of fixed meanings carried by literary conventions (such as an invocation), but much rather to observe how the texts alter the figure and how the figure shapes the texts in their interaction. Blake's case in this respect seems especially interesting, because he explicitly exiles the Muses from his work. What happens to the figure of memory in this process can thus account for some of the things happening in Blake's texts. We have seen how difficult it is to get around Mnemosyne. Blake's attempt to do so can thus be expected to be an important element of the shaping of his poems.

BLAKE'S REDEFINITION OF THE FIGURE OF MEMORY

That for Blake the Daughters of Memory indeed determine the kind of poetry one comes to write becomes clear from, amongst others, some of the passages of *A Vision of The Last Judgement*.

> The Last Judgement is not Fable or Allegory but Vision. Fable or Allegory are a totally distinct & inferior kind of Poetry. Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally Exists. Really & Unchangeably. Fable or Allegory is Formed by the Daughters of Memory. Imagination is Surrounded by the Daughters of Inspiration who in the aggregate are called Jerusalem
>
> (E554)

The distinction Blake makes here is often cited in explaining the difference between the kind of visionary poetry Blake called for, and imaginative writing which Blake labels 'Fable or Allegory.' The difference depends on substituting the Daughters of Memory with the Daughters of Inspiration, and with that, on excluding memory from what Blake means by Imagination. The last sentence of this quote may be rather enigmatic without further explications of Blake's terms, yet even in the state of being innocent of Blake's terminology, one can notice a further difference, namely that the

Muses 'form,' while the Daughters of Inspiration 'surround,' which suggests that their role in imaginative work is not so much an activity, but merely a presence: they need to be recognised as being present instead of, like the Muses, being asked to remind. Let us also side-step the complexities of what Blake means by 'Jerusalem' throughout his work and simply read 'Jerusalem' as the Holy City – even this understanding directs us right back to "what Eternally Exists. Really & Unchangeably." This, then, on the one hand is the aggregate of the Daughters of Inspiration, and on the other it is what Imagination represents. Imagination, then, is not so much a means to artistic forming, but *the recognition of the existence* of what is unchangeably real; it is not so much a mental activity enhancing a specific way of speaking, but rather a mental state enhancing a specific way of seeing. Hence the virtual identity of Imagination and Vision in Blake.

This already tells us something about the point where Blake deviates from the figure of memory: he does not need the help of the Muses, because the poet must *see* all that they could tell us about. Why this is so, we can begin to gather from a passage a little further on:

> Jupiter usurped the Throne of his Father Saturn & brought on an Iron Age & Begat on Mnemosyne or Memory the Greek Muses which are not Inspiration as the Bible is. Reality was Forgot & the vanities of Time & Space only Remembered & called Reality. Such is the Mighty difference between Allegoric Fable & Spiritual Mystery. Let it here be Noted that the Greek Fables originated in Spiritual Mystery & Real Visions and Real Visions Which are lost & clouded in Fable and Allegory while the Hebrew Bible and the Greek Gospel are Genuine Preserved by the Saviours Mercy. The Nature of my Work is Visionary or Imaginative it is an Endeavour to Restore what the Ancients called the Golden Age
>
> (E555)

The begetting of the Daughters of Memory, as we learn from this passage, is a part of man's Fall, or, in classical terms, of the decline of the Golden Age into the Iron Age. To Blake's mind, memory encompasses only life within time and space, which themselves only arise in a fallen state, and which are thus erroneously called reality. On this account, Blake seems to be cutting out with surgical precision the very heart of the figure of memory. Blake is saying that in the state where only time and space are remembered, reality is forgotten. Now, we have seen that in its figurative sense, memory was a going-beyond-time, precisely the opposite of what Blake here seems to be saying. We have speculated that the figure of memory is expressive of imagination's journeys beyond (actually remembered) time, whereas for Blake, time and space mark

out the limits of memory, and within these limits the poet is restricted to 'Allegory and Fable.' It seems, then, that Blake is not merely dismissing the Muses, but *inverting* the role the figure of memory gives them.

Yet that "Unchangeable Reality" which belongs to the Golden Age and which Blake aims to "Restore" is not described as disappearing or becoming invisible, non-existent, but as having been *forgotten*. Is it merely splitting hairs to make such a distinction (after all, what is forgotten is invisible to the mind's eye), or is it – as I tend to think the case is – indeed significant that Blake sticks to a term within the semantic sphere of remembrance to describe the non-existence of something (here the Golden Age) in the mind's eye? There may be several explanations for his use of the word 'Forgot.' The most obvious one is the pressure of the figurative language employed: in describing how memory blots out Reality, we are merely sticking to the metaphor used when describing this process as the forgetting of that Reality. Another explanation, along similar lines, is that the word is used to emphasise the destructive work of memory, namely that it is not a recollection, but instead a forgetting of final things. This explanation suggests a higher degree of consciousness in using the word, as it is not merely produced by the rhetorical swing of the passage but by an analytical approach to the nature of memory, according to which memory, by marking out what is remembered, also defines what is forgotten. For Blake, what matters is what is forgotten. Yet this second explanation leads to a third thought: for if what is remembered and what is forgotten define each other in binary opposition, Blake's use of the word "Forgot" signals that his denouncing of memory does not mean he would have done away with the figure of memory, i.e. that he would have gone beyond metaphoric remembering. He claims he aims to restore the Golden Age, which is beyond memory. He aims to restore what is forgotten – and how else could this be done if not by extending memory further, restoring to it the forgotten. If Blake wants to "Restore" what is "Forgot," he may as well say that he wants to remember it.

Of course, there is a reason why Blake *does not* say this, and my intention is not to pretend that Blake is contradicting himself. The previously quoted passage has shown us that he does not want to remember the Golden Age, he wants instead to *see* it. The difference is in the immediacy of the experience: remembering is seeing at a remove (it is the recalling of what is not immediately given, Locke's 'reflection' and abstraction), while Blake's Vision is an experience always immediate and particular. Thus to extend his memory further is precisely what he refuses to do, as that would result in the wrong kind of imagination. Yet to avoid this fallacy, he claims to "Restore" what is "Forgot" – which is, after all, precisely what the Muses help the poet do, and

which, thus, is identical to the figure of memory. Mnemosyne is there, looming behind Blake's "Endeavour," and thus a huge part of the endeavour is to exile the goddess.

To resolve the latent contradiction helps us in understanding Blake's meanings. For instance, it follows from the above that by 'restoring' he means (belying the prefix 're-') immediate presentation. This in turn means that the Golden Age is for Blake not a past to be remembered, nor a future to be prophesied, but a present to be recognised – the analysis of what he means by the Daughters of Inspiration also pointed in this direction. Once recognised as present, the time-marker in the notion 'present' disappears because we have recognised an Eternal Present, and have reached a state beyond time (the golden age or redemption).

These are all-important shifts in meanings of words, and to understand them is of great help in coming to some kind of an understanding of Blake. Yet the endeavour of his imagination is not so different from the one we have noted as carried in the figure of memory: Blake also speaks of origins and ends, creation, apocalypse and truth. He even goes as far as speaking of his endeavour as restoring the forgotten. Only, for him origin and end, creation and apocalypse seem to be not points on a line, events in a sequence, but as eternally and simultaneously present – thus he must redefine 'restoring' into something like 'storing' (simultaneous presence of things), and memory into forgetting (we have forgotten Unchanging Realty because memory binds us to time and space). Because Blake denounces memory as a mental process, he must also denounce memory as a figure, but if he completely erased the figure of memory from his work, he would have erased much more than he would have liked to. The solution seems to be to try to deprive memory of its figurative sense. Thus the inverting we have noted: in its figurative sense memory exceeds Time, in Blake it binds to Time; thus 'extending' memory would merely be extending Time, so instead of this, the trope has to be redefined; Mnemosyne and her daughters must be deprived of authority over the imagination, because for Blake it is not them on whom the foundation of the truth-claim of the imagination is built.

But if this is the case, if we are witnessing not merely a dismissal, but a redefinition of the trope, are we not also witnessing the process in which the figure of memory shapes texts as texts are altering the figure? We have seen Blake speaking in terms of the figure of memory about his aims (a "Representation of what Eternally Exists," a condemnation of the fact that only the "Vanities of Time & Space" are "Remembered," an "Endeavour to Restore ... the [forgotten] Golden Age") and can thus discern Mnemosyne doing her figuring work when Blake has recourse to such metaphors as the Daughters of Inspiration. He thinks of the Muses as metaphors

expressing nothing but a mental process which he connects to Lockean reflection, to abstraction and generalisation. When he also thinks of it as a mental process bound by Time and thus as binding Imagination, he is already within the realm of the figure of memory, not only talking about a mental process but a metaphor he finds harmful. It is not the mental process that has to be exiled from the mind: it is the figure that has to be altered to free the imagination. When this is done "all will be set right: ... the Daughters of Memory shall *become* the Daughters of Inspiration," as he claims in the Preface to *Milton* (E95, emphasis mine). Mnemosyne, as Blake's choice of words has revealed, is not killed off – she merely refuses to stay stable, she becomes something other, she keeps altering, as figures will.

We have taken here a glimpse at how the figure of memory alters the meaning of certain words used in passages activating the figure. We have also caught sight of how the process can aid our understanding of the texts. Now I want to look at how a text alters the figure, that is, at the fate of Mnemosyne and the Muses in poems altering the figure of memory.

"INTRODUCTION" TO THE SONGS OF INNOCENCE *AS PASTORAL INVOCATION*

The first poem of *The Songs of Innocence*, "Introduction" (E7), introduces not only the following poems, but also a piper who is given the authorship of all the Songs of Innocence. This right away warns us to keep an eye on a double dimension of meaning: one given by the piper, and one by a mind creating the fiction of the *Songs of Innocence*, which is the same mind creating the fiction of the *Songs of Experience* and which therefore has a presumably wider perspective than the piper. This initial warning taken, the instruction given to the piper by the child he sees on a cloud in the opening of the first song may itself be less straightforward - in fact, it may well turn out to be something other than a plea or instruction for the writing of the Songs.

This is of major importance, because I think the poem is out to manipulate this plea and instruction and one way it can do this is to use a persona to whom the manipulation happens. The manipulation itself concerns the figure of memory, which we can start to suspect when we realise that "Introduction" takes the form of an invocation: the singer of the ensuing songs is inspired in his song by a divine intervention (the child on the cloud being quite emphatically an angelic image); the poem describes the moments of this inspiration; as the opening song, this seems to equal an appeal to a Muse to help the singer in singing what follows. On this account, Blake in fact invokes the figure of memory in his opening poem. Is Blake unaware of

this? Not at all, as we shall see. In fact, he seems so much aware of it that I am led to believe that what he does with the figure in the Songs is done almost consciously. Only almost, because Blake had no need to ponder about the nature of the figure and its figuring power. It was for him enough to be well aware of some generic peculiarities of the pastoral mode, which he employs in the Songs, and as Blake was a thorough reader of Spenser, we have every reason to suppose that he was indeed aware of the peculiarities of pastoralism, triggering the activity of certain figures. On this, more presently. For now, it suffices to observe that if "Introduction" is an invocation, it takes a peculiar form of that convention. To begin to see what Blake does with the figure of memory, it is by closely observing this peculiar invocation we should begin.

> Piping down the valleys wild
> Piping songs of pleasant glee
> On a cloud I saw a child.
> And he laughing said to me.
>
> Pipe a song about a Lamb;
> So I piped with merry chear,
> Piper pipe that song again -
> So I piped, he wept to hear.
>
> Drop thy pipe thy happy pipe
> Sing thy song of happy chear,
> So I sung the same again
> While he wept with joy to hear.
>
> Piper sit thee down and write
> In a book that all may read -
> So he vanish'd from my sight.
> And I plucked a hollow reed.
>
> And I made a rural pen,
> And I stain'd the water clear,
> And I wrote my happy songs
> Every child may joy to hear

First of all, "Introduction" begins with the piper already piping, and that the song piped before the child's appearance is to the liking of the angelic phenomenon can be discerned from the movement of the first stanza, which ends with the child's

reaction to the song, and that reaction is laughter. The piper begins to be instructed with the opening of the second stanza ("Pipe a song about a Lamb"), and even though the theme of the song is dictated to the piper, the angelic consent to his "Piping down the valleys wild" is given – he is on the one hand asked to continue piping just as he has been doing, and on the other is dictated a theme. We shall soon have more to say about this double-edged instruction that is and is not an instruction.

It may be curious to note at this point that to the song piped about the Lamb in the second stanza, the child reacts by weeping – does this signal dissatisfaction on the part of the inspirer? My conjecture is that if we take the plea of the third line for repeating the song at its face value, that is as a sign of satisfaction, then weeping is as much an expression of satisfaction as laughter. Read thus, the conclusion of the third stanza, where the child weeps with joy, is, as it were, the verification of the implication that laughing and weeping are, as it were, identical. What emerges with this understanding is that the state of Innocence is one of relatively undifferentiated feelings, where joy and sorrow can easily coincide and their expression mingle in one feeling. Naturally, the point I wish to make is *not* that laughter and weeping are the *same* things here and that thus in Innocence there is no difference between joy and sorrow. At least seven of the nineteen Songs of Innocence contain some sort of weeping and it is more often than not an expression of sorrow, though this instance is not the only one where the relation of tears and smiles to sorrow and joy seems not to be clear-cut ("A Cradle Song" and "The Blossom" are interesting examples). Without clarifying the matter further, at this point it is sufficient to emphasise that the weeping of the child is not simply an expression of sorrow and that the mingling of laughter and tears seems to be characteristic of the state of Innocence - their combination reminds us that we are to adjust our points of view while reading according to context.[7]

Though we may not yet be in a position to explain fully the meaning of this feature, what is important to stress is that we here come to see a similar ambiguity emerging as in the case of the child at once asking the piper to continue the piping that pleases him, yet at the same time also telling him to change his song. Thus we are beginning to see that there may indeed be a contradiction at work in the poem, an opposition that is not, as it used to be customary to claim, between the states of Innocence and Experience, but within Innocence. It is important to see this because it indicates the paradox that there exists some kind of a contradiction in a state that we

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[7] David Wagenknecht, *Blake's Night. William Blake and the Idea of the Pastoral* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, The Belknap Press, 1973) p. 78 calls this feature a "lexical detail of an elaborate language of perspectives."

are given to understand as pure, unified and unproblematic. We will have to grasp this inherent contradiction to understand Innocence.

The latent opposition remains present in the remaining parts of the third stanza as well. The child proceeds in instructing the piper, yet it says "sing *thy* song" - the song is by now even more clearly prompted by the child, while it nevertheless remains the song of the piper, not that of the child. The third line, triggering the third kind of reaction from the child, is in keeping with this ambiguity, as it emphasises that the piper sung the *same* song *again* -- this should enhance the argument that weeping with joy also holds together essentially the same kind of reactions and is not a progress from one to another. More important than that for the time being, however, is that these ambiguities create the sense that the song within the poem is essentially the same from the beginning – the source of and the reaction to the song are both cast in ambiguity implying that the reaction may as well be undifferentiated and the source unchanged. The child's appearance of course does create some sort of change, and if we claim that this is not a change in the song, this will have to be accounted for. The reading here offered will do this in due course. The ambiguities so far uncovered in connection to the reactions of the child, and to whether it instructs at all or not, seem related, and I will be arguing that their relation can be grasped in seeing that the change that does take place in the poem is created by the shaping activity of the figure Blake activates when he – by replacing the Muse with this ambiguously behaving child – avoids invoking the Muses, and thus, avoids the figure of memory in his invocation. But to see this, there is still some way to go.

The change that takes place in the course of the poem concerns primarily not the song itself, but only the medium: the songs may be the same, but their medium is not. The explicit movement in the poem is from pipe to voice to writing, and parallel with that is the movement from the appearance to the inspiration to the vanishing of the child. The parallel itself obviously suggests a connection, which we can at this point only safely pin down in the third stage: the child no longer thinks its presence necessary when writing begins. Most readings of the poem put emphasis on this aspect: it has been interpreted as the piper internalising the child, becoming child enough not to need the child any more, and thus arriving in the Innocence the angelic inspirer represents; or, as a process of decline from the purity of music through language to text.[8]

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[8] Cf. Joseph Wicksteed, *Blake's Innocence and Experience* (London, etc.: J. M. Dent, 1928), p.81: "The child is a mere happy vision inspiring the poet from without until he begins to work. He then cannot see the child any more for the same reason that we cannot see ourselves. The child is now something within." Wagenknecht (p.67) quotes this evaluation more or less in agreement some fifty years later. Seeing a decline

However, if we maintain the important point that the piper is an authorial persona who is within the state of Innocence (as opposed to the mind creating the fiction of Innocence), whatever should need to be internalised must be present in him from the start. The observation that the child instructs and inspires, but nevertheless keeps on calling for the same song underlines this.

Turning the song into a text may be read as a gradual distancing from the immediacy of the experience, and as such, it may indeed suggest decline. This explanation, however, relies on some theorising either about the relative value of the media for romantic poets, or the relative value of forms of expression for Blake. But Blake did not have scruples about the writing of poetry being already a loss of the immediacy of the experience expressed. As we have seen, he did have scruples about *certain kinds* of poetry, but not about writing in general, or his own writing in particular. Thus, if the changes in the poem suggest decline, that is not a general statement, but pertains only to Innocence. In other words, if the change is a critique of the lack of immediacy of expression, the critique applies only to what the piper is doing. For the piper himself, of course, there is no lack whatsoever. If the song is indeed the same from beginning to end, what the piper is doing is recapitulating, maintaining, echoing the presence of the child. This echoing is done, ultimately, in the writing. Nor can we simply say that the piper's writing falls short by merely *imitating* the child, and thereby creating a distance between himself and the child, between writing and song, since the song that is being written down, in this reading, is not only the same as the one prompted by the child, but also the same as the piper was piping before the appearance of the child. Because of the identity of the song from beginning to end, writing is not imitating, but echoing the song -- which is another reason why the piper need not be worried either about lack of immediacy, or about the vanishing of the child: in his piping, singing and writing the *same* keeps resounding. This may well be one of the reasons why Blake doubles the possible points of view of the Songs through the introduction of the piper: *within* Innocence the piping, singing and writing echo each other; the media are unproblematic as they maintain an equal degree of immediacy. If the poem does suggest any decline, this can then only be rooted in the kind of poetry the piper produces and will then apply to *The Songs of Innocence* as a whole. And the kind of poetry he produces, we are now coming to see, has to do with one specific way of maintaining immediacy.

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in the poem is not only prompted by the vanishing of the child, but also by the loaded word "stain'd" in the last stanza.

At this point it is well to remember that Blake's rejection of memory involves the rejection of (retrospective) 'reflection' on experience, of abstraction as opposed to immediacy. We have also seen that the child unmistakably resembles a Muse as the poem unmistakably resembles an invocation to the Muse. We are now also coming to see that Blake is refiguring the Muse into a barely substantial child prompting songs of Innocence to imply that in these songs memories granted by the Muse are being replaced by some sort of immediacy. Just how this immediacy is created is what we now need to observe.

So far, we have seen that part of this immediacy seems to be that regardless of the changes in medium and of the reactions to the song, the song itself does not change. This should then also imply that – as opposed to the conventional relation of poet and Muse – the piper learns nothing from, is 'reminded' of nothing by the child. "Pipe a song about a Lamb," says the child, and we could argue that it in fact *does* bring a theme to the poet from the clouds – which does seem to resemble the figure of memory, lending knowledge from above and beyond the span the piper's mind can encompass. But if in pondering just what this knowledge may be we turn to "The Lamb," we find that even though in this poem the child is teaching the lamb about its origin and identity, the child and the lamb themselves turn out to be identical: "He is meek & he is mild, / He became a little child: / I a child & though a lamb, / We are called by his name." (E.9). The "He" of these lines "calls himself a Lamb" and if the child is also "called by his name" the child, too, is a lamb - or, if he who calls himself a lamb "became a little child" then the lamb, too, is a child.[9] And if this poem establishes a virtual identity between child and lamb, then in "Introduction" the child's plea for a song about a lamb is in fact a plea for a song about the pleading child itself. This is an important interaction between these two poems as it presents to us the child of "Introduction" as so self-contained that even the song it inspires is merely an echo of itself. Moreover, this Muse has no relation to Memory, as all it can offer for subject is itself: the child inspires not by aiding the poet's memory, but solely by presenting itself to the piper.

The poem thus is indeed a peculiar sort of invocation, which undermines the figure of memory, and this undermining of the convention, in turn, tells us something

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[9] I am now overlooking the Biblical relevance of the Lamb - the poem with that in mind celebrates the identity of all creation in Christ. I am at the moment not concerned with the allegorical meaning of the poem, but only the verbal structure. Nevertheless, the fact that "The Lamb" on this allegorical reading is a central piece of the *Songs of Innocence* all the more validates bringing it into the discussion of the child who represents Innocence.

about Blake's state of Innocence. It is an entirely self-sufficient state, where knowledge is merely a spontaneous, unreflected awareness of what is present to the senses. Whatever lies beyond the immediately given – memory or foreknowledge – is practically non-existent, and the themes of the songs are thus themselves. The figure of memory, as we have seen, functions in invocations as a divine authority sanctioning the song. Innocence, however, knows no authority apart from itself: any outside authority would stain the self-sufficiency of the state. Innocence granted or demanded by an outside authority not itself in complete harmony with, and thus already within, the state, Blake seems to be implying, verges on idiocy. The almost insipid simplicity of these songs is obviously a conscious rhetorical strategy, warning us of the dangers of Innocence: this state is only valuable viewed from within - but, then, 'within' Innocence one does not 'view' at all; viewed from without, it may appear as mere childishness. The Daughters of Memory cannot be invoked because if we merely remember Innocence, we may be caught up in inane sentimentality.[10] Yet this is only one aspect of the matter. More importantly, if we see the poem as an invocation, and recall the work the figure of memory is asked to do there, we will see that in this poem Memory is the very authority that has to be evaded to keep the poem a song of Innocence describing the state from within. Memory has to be evaded because authority as such has to be evaded. This Blake does by making "Introduction" resemble an invocation that calls on the figure of memory, but an invocation in which the Daughters of Memory are replaced by an inspirer unrelated to memory. Supposing that the invocatory form of the poem is conscious, we may also suppose that Blake is in fact calling attention to his rejection of the figure of memory, and by this he is already outlining the state of Innocence.

But if this is the case, what can be said of the piper – does he 'learn' Innocence from the child, does he accept the authority of the inspirer? I have been arguing that the poem can be read as treating the same song from beginning to end, and here we come to see the significance of this possibility. If the child merely asks the piper to keep

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[10] All this may sound rather harsh if we consider the possibility that the *Songs* was a book written for children. Children's books is in fact one convention on which Blake reflects with his own book, as Heather Glen shows in *Vision and Disenchantment. Blake's* Songs *and Wordsworth's* Lyrical Ballads (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1983), but these reflections of course were not meant for children. One may even argue that the pretence of the *Songs* being a book for children itself creates the sense of the danger of Innocence: those 'innocent' adults who read it as a book for children and 'remember' their own innocence get the simplistic sentimentality anyone outside Innocence sees of Innocence; while a hypothetical 'innocent' reader (not a child, but a soul in the state of Innocence) will enjoy the songs without reflecting on them.

up his song which is to the child's liking, as the opening stanza implies, the piper is in fact not acting under authority at all. This is what we have termed as the piper not acting under the child's instruction but merely echoing the child.

It is at this point that it becomes important to involve in our discussion the fact that Blake places the Songs into a pastoral context. This enables him to capitalise on a motif that the pastoral carries among its conventions, namely the pastoral echo. The piper, we are told, is "Piping down the valleys wild" – the opening image evokes a characteristic pastoral scene, a shepherd piping his song in a natural setting.

Now, such a scene in pastorals is characteristically accompanied by the motif of nature echoing the song of the piper. This motif, I believe, is also evoked in the opening of the Songs. In a sense, it is evoked merely by the opening image, by placing the reader firmly in a conventional pastoral scene, inviting all the conventions that go with the pastoral mode. But there are instances in the illustration of this poem that also point in the direction of evoking the motif of echoing. The illustration is framed on both sides by the trunks of two trees and on the top by the entwining branches. Behind the piper are grazing sheep, the flock melting in the background into bending tress. The natural setting on the picture seems to be in motion, in movement that seems to be continuous with the movement of the piper, who is pictured striding forth, one of his arms moving back, looking up at the child, the wind blowing his hair. "The trees," as Erdman comments, "set a stately rhythm for his dance. (...) The living forest and grazing sheep [appear] as a visual chorus behind the piper ..."[11] Erdman's remarks may ensure that it is not just the present reader's/viewer's fancy to see on the illustration nature, as it were, echoing the piper. Erdman's term is "visual chorus," but it could just as well be a 'visual echo.' All the more so on account of the pastoral context, where nature is not a chorus but an echo to the piper's song.[12] Thus, taken together with the illustration, it is perhaps not too fanciful to say that as the first line sets off an echo for

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[11] David V. Erdman, *The Illuminated Blake. William Blake's Complete Illuminated Works with Plate-by-Plate Commentary* (New York: Dover Publications, 1992) p. 43.

[12] To be fair, Erdman's interpretation of the illustration is not identical with my argument. He goes on (p.43) to quote from *All Religions are One*: "all ... are alike ... & ... have one source" (I:2), and, he adds with Blake, the one source is the Poetic Genius. He also says that the cloud in which the child floats and which creates an opening in the trees above the piper's head is the opening of the realm of the imagination. Indeed, I have also argued that in the poem "all ... are alike," but as I hope to show further on in my arguments, the "one source" is not so straightforward in the state of Innocence, the Poetic Genius not being at the height of its powers here. If the opening at the top of the picture is into the realm of the imagination, in Innocence the characters, as in the picture spatially, stay metaphorically 'below' it.

the reader, the echo of pastoral poems, so the piper sets off at the same moment the echoes of his piping: as nature echoes his movement, the valleys re-sound the sound of his pipe.

Furthermore, as we shall see in more detail in a moment, it belongs to the characteristics of such pastoral echoing to cast a shadow of doubt on whether it is nature that echoes the piper, or the other way around, the piper who echoes nature. The point of blurring the source of the sound is to convey the harmony of man and nature, which is what the motif of echoing is primarily expressive of in pastoralism. Now in our poem it is obviously the piper who originates the sound, but by evoking the pastoral context and its motif of echoing, the song in the first line is set into a context in which the source of the sound is neither decidedly the piper, nor decidedly nature.

If, as has been argued, there is no progress in the nature of the song throughout the stanzas, then it also seems fair to say that what we find in the poem is the echoing of this same song in different media. If the child indeed asks the piper not for a different song, it is in fact asking him to echo the same song that is sounding already when the child appears, which song, under this reading, may almost be the product of the pastoral scene, nature, just as much as of the piper. But one does not even need to imagine nature as the source of the sound to see that the memoryless Muse of this invocation actually enters an echoing landscape, reacts with joy, and prompts further echoes.

In the opening of Virgil's First Eclogue, the opening of one of the books which we can conveniently regard as the fountainhead of pastoral poetry, Paul Alpers notes the ambiguity concerning the source of the echoing sound alluded to above. I quote the first ten lines in his translation:

> *Meliboeus.* You, Tityrus, under the spreading, sheltering beech,
> Tune woodland musings on a delicate reed;
> We flee our country's borders, our sweet fields,
> Abandon home; you, lazing in the shade,
> make woods resound with lovely Amaryllis.
> *Tityrus.* O Melibee, a god grants us this peace -
> Ever a god to me, upon whose altar
> A young lamb from our folds will often bleed.
> He has allowed, you see, my herds to wander
> And to play as I will on a rustic pipe.

These are rich stanzas, were we to compare them with Blake's pastoral Innocence with the god (who in Virgil's Eclogue turns out to be a Roman benefactor,

presumably Octavianus) granting peace and being gifted, in return, with a lamb that becomes a victim of the authority presiding over the idyllic state. But we must stick to our more restricted theme. It is noteworthy in our context to quote Paul Alpers's interpretation of the passage: "Tityrus is represented as living in a 'timeless' present, his *otium* an extended, blissful moment rather than a complete way of life. His song is represented not as the piping in the fields that he himself describes, but rather as (...) an 'echoing song' that fill the space around him."[13] Alpers does not mention Blake in his work on pastoralism, but as we shall see, the extended bliss that is not a complete way of life hauntingly resembles what Blake makes of Innocence. More important for the moment than this is the nature of the song, which is rather an echo than the piper's own product in Alpers's reading of Virgil. We have seen that the authority for the Songs of Innocence is not fully the inspiring child; taking into account the pastoral context Blake's poem evokes and the ambiguous relation of piper-nature-echo Alpers uncovers in the opening of the major source for European pastoralism, we are led to think that this authority is not in the full sense the piper either (who, furthermore, gives up authority over his song, if he ever had any, by following the instructions of the child in the further echoing of the song). We recognise an identical ambiguity as to the source of the song in Virgil, as Tityrus claims the song his own (1.10), while in Meliboeus's stanza, the same song is represented as an echo resounding in the woods.

Alpers also directs attention to a further, not unconnected, ambiguity in the Virgilian passage:

> 'He has allowed me to play as I will on a rustic pipe' both indicates his [Tityrus's] dependence on his patron and brings out, in balancing 'quae vellem' (what I want) and 'permisit' (has allowed), the problematic relation of freedom and dependency. [...] The final line of Meliboeus's speech, on the other hand, gives a quite different version of the pastoral song: *formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas* (you teach the woods to resound lovely Amaryllis). Here man and landscape are intimately responsive to each other .... The singer teaches the woods to sound his beloved's name; on the other hand, the actual sounding is attributed to the woods alone ..."[14]

In this passage Alpers implies something that is very much to our point: the blurring of the source of the echo seems to be closely connected to another ambiguity,

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[13] Paul Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996) p. 25. The English translation of the Virgilian passage is also quoted here, as is the original.

[14] Alpers p. 25.

that concerning dependence and freedom. By now, this should not surprise us, as we have seen that Blake's poem struggles with evading the authority of a Muse that an invocation demands. If the child instructs the piper or not is expressive of this very ambiguity of dependence and freedom, which also seems to be implicit in pastoral echoing.

Surely, echoes too have sources, there is, if we like, an authority producing them. But if it is precisely the source of the sound that is shrouded in ambiguity – and if this sense is created in Blake's poem, that is obviously not because he is following this Virgilian passage but because he unleashes a motif brought along by his use of the pastoral mode – then all we are left with is the echo itself: a sound that keeps resounding, repeating itself. "Piper, pipe that song again ... So I sung the same again"; "So I piped with merry chear ... Sing thy song of happy chear" – Blake's poem with its emphasis on repetitions enhances the sense that the song that sets off echoing, or, conceivably, even begins in echoes, is kept echoing throughout the poem. The child's inspiration does not take the form of advising the piper of things he himself could not have known and would have to be, as by a Daughter of Memory, told, taught or reminded of. Instead, the child merely tells the piper to echo the echoes. This is very much in keeping with the child giving itself for theme: the child in fact has the piper echo the child itself. This Muse, then, because unrelated to memory, instead of reminding of what is not known, merely echoes what is given in its own person. The authority of memory is replaced by the echoing sound of the state of Innocence.

Because memory is no part of Innocence, the child-muse offers itself for theme, and even then is only echoing the piper's song which itself may, on the account of how pastorals blur the actual source of the sound, be only an echo. The child's reactions define for us the nature of this echo, and thus also the nature of Innocence, as breaking down the distinction between sorrow and joy, that is, as presenting an undifferentiated state of emotion. This lack of differentiation seems smoothly consonant with echoing: as in sound, so in feeling, we have in Innocence a state lacking authoritative source, self-sufficient, self-generating, self-sustaining, disallowing the definitions and differentiations of the reflective, reasoning faculty. Differentiating requires a kind of awareness that spoils Innocence and that hears echoing not as sourceless resounding of sound, a kind of awareness that is capable of locating the source of the echo and of seeing that as authentic sound it is illusory.

Blake infuses into his poem through the pastoral context not only a motif, or a sound, but a figure that is laden with meanings, a metaphor expressive of the state of Innocence. My supposition is that what is at work in the poem is not merely an echoing

sound, but the 'figure of echo' (as analogous to the figure of memory). This figure is set up by the time we get to the closure of the third stanza, and thus the child can vanish and the piper can begin writing the songs of Innocence. We have seen in the discussion of the change of medium that this writing is indeed echoing the previous piping and singing, and we have said that the writing, from the piper's point of view, preserves some kind of immediacy. This is the immediacy of echoing. And because the piper is in fact *writing echoes*, we have reason to believe that the Songs of Innocence are imbued with echoing. Echoing here is a form of immediacy, it is a metaphor for the specific kind of imagination at work in Innocence, for the means of (re)presenting reality, the means of getting as close to it as possible, reproducing it in a degree that exceeds imitation, as the source of a sound and its echo are virtually the same. At least apparently so.

This is why the feature of mingling weeping and laughter is so important. It may characterise Innocence, but viewed from outside Innocence – from the perspective of the reader and also of the poet for whom the piper is just one of several personas – joy and sorrow are not merely echoes of each other: they *are* two different things, which makes it clear that sorrow, too, is part of Innocence, even if within Innocence this does not appear so. We are reminded, that is, that Innocence is not perfection, even if within Innocence there is no awareness of any lack. Our reading of the poem as an invocation has shown us that the poem displaces Memory in order to displace authority and thus create the self-sufficiency of the blissful state of Innocence. We have uncovered the figure of echoing as replacing the figure of memory to achieve this end. But if we also observe that Innocence is only a state of bliss from a certain perspective and that it, too, has its shortcomings, that writing echoes is only a form of immediacy within an echo-chamber (such as the state of Innocence may be), we may expect to find that the figure of echo, as the authority replacing the figure of memory, itself carries this shortcoming in its figurative structure: in other words, if Echo should be the presiding authority over the songs of Innocence, we can expect its figurative activity to create the shortcomings of the state of Innocence. In order to grasp how this figuration, which we have uncovered as shaping "Introduction" and presumably to a large degree the whole of Innocence, works and what it does, we must take a closer look at the figure of echo itself. I shall have more to say about "Introduction" – we have only read the first three stanzas, and the famous crux of the poem, the word "stain'd" still awaits explication, but first we must come to a better understanding of the figure of echo, so it is there we now have to turn.

THE FIGURE OF ECHO

We have already glimpsed one context of echoing in Virgil's First Eclogue and saw that implicit in the motif is an ambiguity as to the source of the echo, and connected to that, as to the freedom or dependency of the shepherds. The context was relevant not only on the account of the nature of echoing but also because Blake creates a pastoral context for the Songs, and thus while considering the figure of echo, it is well to do this primarily within the pastoral convention which is permeated with it and which Blake uses in the Songs, thereby allowing the figure to be active in his poems.

To begin with, however, let us, as we have done in our treatment of the figure of memory, observe some mythological roots of echoing, which are obviously relevant for pastoral echoing. The story of the nymph called Echo has several versions, and even in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (a text Blake knew thoroughly) two different ones are used.[15] According to one, Echo distracted and detained Juno with endless chattering so that the nymphs could flee when Juno could have caught them lying with Jupiter. In revenge, Juno reduced Echo to have "only the briefest possible use" of her voice - to mere repetition. This story tells us little about Echo herself, apart from that she had no greater power of speech before Juno's penalty than after, and implies no more than that echo is a figure for imitation lacking creativity. This, however, should already make us suspicious of the kind of authority Echo can grant the songs of Innocence. However, Ovid then goes on to a different story about her, picking up a fable that associates Echo with Narcissus, in a section of the *Metamorphoses* that John Hollander sees as the "locus classicus of echoing."[16] This story recites Echo's unrequited love for Narcissus and their unsuccessful erotic encounter is developed through echoing: to Narcissus's "Huc coeamus" ('here let us meet') Echo responds "Coeamus" ('let us make love').[17] Yet as Echo advances, Narcissus flees her and cries "emoriar, quam sit tibi copia nostri" ('may I die before I give you power over me') and is answered by the echo "sit

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[15] Cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (Penguin, 1955, prose translation by Mary M. Innes) pp.83-84.

[16] John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo. A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1981) p.25. Hollander's book has a very different focus than I do in this essay, but it may be worth mentioning that its Introduction and first chapter ("Echo Allegorical") argue for an interpretative method similar to the one used here.

[17] Originals and these translations come from Hollander's account, p. 25. He suggests for an English equivalent of the exchange: 'Here let us come together' answered by Echo's 'Let us come. Together.'

tibi copia nostri" ('I give you power over me').[18] As the reference of the pronoun changes, Echo hands over power, and by subduing herself, she is in fact resigning authority over her passion. This story, too, gives us Echo as a dubious figure for authority, and added to this is the erotic dimension – her voice being imitative rather than creative is paralleled by her lack of power in initiating sexual encounter. All this I believe is very noteworthy in the context of reading Blake, for whom mere imitation is not a form of imagination at all and for whom unhindered desire and creative imagination are related. If the figure of Echo enters "Introduction" from this Ovidian story, we can see the figuring work as two-edged. On the one hand, the figure of echo is indeed one that undermines any authority, but on the other, this lack of authority does not result in real freedom: under the authority of such a figure, Innocence is indeed devoid of exterior sanctioning, but the creative power of the state is reduced, and reduced in the form of the incapability of fulfilling erotic desire; that is, in the form of sexual impotency. This, as we shall see, does in fact apply to Innocence to a great degree, especially in the form this state of the human soul takes in the figure of Thel in the early prophetic book titled after her.

There are, however, some further associations mythology has burdened the figure of echo with. Most significant in our context is the fable reciting Pan's love for Echo. In this version, Echo is a nymph taught by the Muses to sing and who, being much concerned about her virginity, flees all erotic advances. Among the refused is Pan, who, having failed to seduce her, becomes envious of her music and "sends a madness among the shepherds" who

> tore her all to pieces and flung about them all over the earth her yet singing limbs ['adonta ta mele' - punning on 'limbs' and 'song']. The Earth in observance of the Nymphs buried them all, preserving to them still their music property and by an everlasting sentence and decree of the Muses breath out a voice. And they imitate all things now as the maid did before, the Gods, men, organs [instruments], beasts. Pan himself they might imitate when he plays on the pipe; which when he hears he bounces out and begins to post over the mountains, not so much as to catch and hold as to know what clandestine imitator that is that he has got.

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[18] In Innes's translation the exchange is: "I would die before I would have you touch me" answered by "I would have you touch me." This version emphasises erotic desire, the other dependence. Obviously what we actually have is dependence on, or as a result of, erotic desire. *Sit tibi copia nostri*, more literally 'let you have the profusion/wealth of me,' is a phrase beautifully condensing these senses.

The quoted passages are from the third century A. D. pastoral romance *Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus, which is, if not the only, but certainly the central source for this version of Echo's myth.[19] The translation in which it is quoted is George Thornley's Elizabethan version, which signals that the text may have been available for Blake, or for his own renaissance sources to pastoral echoing, notably Spenser.

The relevance of this story to "Introduction" lies on the one hand in its link to Pan, who lurks behind our context by virtue of pastoral piping. We can, however, still broaden this context and follow Hollander in tracing yet another tendency in this "tradition of interpretation," which associates Echo and Syrinx. As Hollander puts this: Pan's "sigh of disappointment at the armful of reeds he came up with when he clutched for the metamorphosed nymph [Syrinx], blowing through those very reeds and producing 'a faint and plaintive sound,' as Ovid puts it, ... is a version of an echo."[20] Not only are we back to an Ovidian story (which Blake is certain to have been familiar with) featuring a figure of echo, but also to "Introduction" featuring the "hollow reed" the piper is left with as pen at the end of the poem. Pan's pipe turns into the pen of Blake's piper and thus Pan's aborted desire and the echoes of his song turn into the *Songs of Innocence* .

We should for a moment return to *Daphnis and Chloe* and observe also the haunting resemblance in its account of Echo to the Ovidian story of Orpheus: the sexually fuelled jealousy of the opposite sex, for which Echo and Orpheus, both indulged in song, have no concern, results in their being torn apart; but - Longus even echoing the Ovidian pun – their limbs keep up their song.[21] Orpheus's remains drift to the island of Lesbos, which is where the plot of *Daphnis and Chloe* is set. Orpheus and Echo, moreover, are as it were relatives, both being a descendent of a Muse.

If so far we have noted that the figure of Echo carries in her constant imitation of sound a lack of creativity, which is also connected to incapability to fulfil sexual desire, we now also note another strain active in her figure, the Orphic strain that pastoralism seems to have taken up. Wagenknecht's study of pastoralism in Blake's poetry, following Richard Cody's analyses of the genre, points precisely to Orpheus as the mythological figure invoked by pastorals. The invocation of Orpheus "in an appropriate context of love, landscape and poetry can be said to signalize the

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[19] The English translation of this passage is from Hollander p. 8; the parenthetical comments are also Hollander's. Alpers p. 323 dates Longus's text as earlier, belonging to the second century.

[20] Hollander p.10. cf. also Ovid, I. 708; pp.47-48 in the Penguin edition.

[21] More precisely, in the case of Orpheus it is only the head that keeps singing, but this does not invalidate the resemblance of the two stories. Cf. Ovid p.247.

renaissance pastoral mode."[22] In Cody's understanding, the aim of pastoral fiction is a reconciliation between this-worldliness and otherworldliness, and Orpheus "both as lover and theologian, is credited with finding a single voice for all the intimations of this world's beauty and the other world's that solicit the human mind."[23] It seems to be no accident that scholars of the genre tell us that Orpheus is the figure invoked in pastoralism, that it is notably a pastoral romance that is the primary source for the association of Orpheus and Echo, and that we have found Blake inviting the figure of echo in his invocatory poem to a sequence set in the pastoral mode. In the figure of Echo is a motif that makes her an eligible addressee of an invocation. Moreover, especially in the pastoral mode, this figure is a likely candidate to replace the figure of memory by virtue of her relation to Orpheus, the arch-poet. "[P]astoral echoing," says Hollander, "from Theocritus and Virgil on comes to be associated with a response of nature, in kind, to poetic discourse itself." Nature, of course, responds to the song of Orpheus, and the "essence of Orpheus," as Wagenknecht comments on the figure from its other end, "is the authority and the power of the poetic voice."[24]

We are now coming more clearly to see both the importance of reading "Introduction" as an invocation, a convention that seeks for an authority for the poetic voice, and Blake's use of the pastoral context in which, via Orpheus as such an authority, the essentially authorityless Echo can be invoked as a figure presiding over the song. The mythographic connection observed between Orpheus and Echo surfaces in the transference of the "authority and the power" of Orpheus to pastoral echoing as a figure for "poetic discourse itself." We have also thus uncovered two strains active in the figure of echo. One is erotic desire, doomed to fruitlessness because of creative and sexual impotence and lack of authority over this very desire, the other is the authenticity of the poetic voice it triggers. This authenticity in pastoralism is expressed by the figure coming to mean the harmony of man and nature created in the echoing song. The dependence implied in the figure is itself two-faced: on the one hand Echo is dependent on what is said to her, on the other, the pastoral song seems to be dependent on the echoes of the landscape, and by a remove, on the authority of

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[22] Richard Cody, *The Landscape of the Mind* (Oxford: OUP, Clarendon, 1969) p.14. Quoted by Wagenknecht p.4. To remind again, references in these studies to renaissance pastoralism should not worry us because it is especially the renaissance stage of the development of the genre Blake was familiar with through his intimate knowledge of Spenser, which Robert Gleckner demonstrates in abundance in his *Blake and Spenser* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1985).

[23] Cody pp.12, 29; quoted in Wagenknecht p.4

[24] Hollander p.7; Wagenknecht p.4.

Orpheus standing behind the song as presiding figure. Yet this double-edged nature of the figure is resolved at once, as Orpheus as a 'metaphor' is expressive of poetry creating a harmony between man and nature, and thus the presiding figure behind pastoralism is that of harmony – and an authority that is in harmony with what is subdued to it no longer requires dependence. The Orphic element of the figure of echo that pastoralism brings to the surface apparently saves Echo from her dependence, turns the figure of echo from expressing dependence into expressing harmony.

However, the redeeming of Echo in pastorals is indeed only apparent, the reason for which is that figures cannot be redeemed: they stay active, carrying with them all the burdens literature has put on them and keep figuring the texts that employ them with the import of the whole of that burden. The metaphor 'standing behind' cannot be eradicated, its figuring power remains active in the new context and meaning as well. We have seen, under the magnifying glass of Paul Alpers, that the opening of Virgil's First Eclogue, a poem pastoral enough, still carries the ambiguity of freedom and dependence, and moreover that this ambiguity finds its way into the ambivalence of the source of the echo, which otherwise would be put down to expressing the harmony of man and nature. To point out that pastoralism does not in fact resolve the contradiction in the figure (the contradiction of harmony and dependence, of the presiding figure being a completely authorityless authority) by way of making it expressive of harmony, it is instructive to put briefly beside each other two differing views on pastoralism. Alpers claims that in the observed Virgilian passage we find the development of two distinguishable versions of the pastoral, one in Meliboeus's stanza, and another in Tityrus's. The first, labelled by a "woodland muse," is one in which the idyllic world is longed after and is thus connected to desire and unreachabilty in which erotic pleasures are imagined to sound in the echoing woods, thus connecting the longing after the idyllic state with erotic desire.[25] This version seems to be prominently connected to echoing, as it is Meliboeus's stanza that describes the song Tityrus claims as his own as an echoing sound. The second is a version labelled by Tityrus's "rustic pipe," in which the longing of Meliboeus is accommodated primarily as a result of the acceptance of the ordering and authority of ethical and social norms, which acceptance brings fulfilment to the longing after the Golden Age. If we put beside this Thomas Rosenmeyer's observation that what made Virgil transfer the scene of Theocritan bucolics into the woods of Arcadia is that woodlands are a more suitable place for the continual resounding of echoes, and thus for the responses of nature, we have a line of development that gives increasing prominence to echoing to give prominence to

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[25] See for instance Virgil, Eclogue I, 35-40.

harmony, but with that (as the 'woodland muse' is associated with the version of pastoral that emphasises longing) also to the presence of an unfulfilled desire. The figure, it seems, does not allow itself to be redeemed, it is beyond salvage as it keeps figuring its contexts with all its import. Rosenmeyer also argues that Theocritus hardly works with echoes and that his herdsmen move in freedom without awareness of any obligation or authority.[26] This latter statement is of course also applicable to Blake's Innocence, but the fact that Blake *does* use echoing shows that his application of the pastoral context limits this freedom via the dependence implicit in the figure of echo. And the form this dependence takes is Echo's futile longing, which obviously is a limitation to spontaneous freedom.

Let us now finally collect all these threads and point to the relation of what we have learned about the figure of echo to Blake's own pastoral. We have seen on the one hand Echo's figurative association to Orpheus, which establishes pastoral echoing as poetic discourse creating harmony between man and nature. Blake's use of the pastoral context implies that Innocence is such a state of harmony. All the more so, because if the echoing we have observed in the first three stanzas of "Introduction" is a reverberating sound with the figure itself casting doubt on the source of the sound, the Songs derive from no particular authority, and the poetry the echoing inspirer prompts presents a state of self-sufficient, self-sustaining harmony and spontaneous, unreflected freedom. This is what Blake brings to the Songs by the use of the convention.

Yet this is not *all* that he brings to them, because, on the other hand, we have also seen that Echo is connected to a lack of creativity and a lack of sexual fulfilment. Her handing over of power in the Ovidian story (handing over her capability to initiate, to be the source of sound and, by a remove, of authority over voice) reflects a rather different nature of her separation from authority, as the lack of authority in this case results not in a notion of harmonious equality but endless, and endlessly futile, desire. If Echo echoes the sound of nature, she is also dependent on nature. Pastoral echoing may turn echo into an expression of harmony, but the figuring power brings to light an element of dependency in this harmony. Echo echoing nature is metaphorically echoing the natural instinct of man, i.e. man's dependence on natural instinct, which thus limits spontaneous freedom and unreflected joy. *Sit tibi copia nostri*: 'I give you power over me'; 'I would have you touch me'; 'let you have the profusion of me': in the realm of Echo man is giving power over himself to nature, admitting that until nature cuddles us, until

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[26] In this passage I have condensed (in a harshly simplified but hopefully not distorted way) analyses from Alpers pp.24-26, 161-163, and Thomas Rosenmeyer, *The Green Cabinet. Theocritus and the European Pastoral Lyric* (Berkeley – Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1969) pp. 148-150, 186, 237.

we are in the laps of nature, as the children are so often cuddled in the texts and designs of the Songs in the lap of a protective mother, we are also cuddled by our own nature, in which desire may at any minute erupt into fruitless longing, undermining the harmony apparently achieved in the lap of mother nature. Harmony with nature actually means a protection from longing, but as in nature longing is not eradicable since desire is part of nature, this protection leads to the impossibility of fulfilment: *harmony expressed through the figure of echoing subsumes desire instead of fulfilling it*. It is this mechanism that the figure of echo activates. It may well be worth noting at this point that perhaps the most memorable and thus most strongly reverberating echoes of English poetry in Spenser's *Epithalamion* are silenced (or begged to be silent) as night descends and love at the end of the marriage day is finally fulfilled.

Ovid's story of Pan and Syrinx, obviously important in Blake's pastoral recapitulating even the "hollow reed" of that story, works to the same effect. Pan's sighing into the hollow reed is a version of echoing, and the piper's song and its echoes carry in them the sound of Pan's unfulfilled desire that survives as the undertone of pastoral piping and echoing landscapes that came to express the harmony of man and nature. We may also note that if this harmony created by poetry roots in the story of nature responding and being tamed by the song of Orpheus, then the undertone in question can be found in this story as well, as Orpheus himself suffered from unfulfilled desire after having lost Euridyce to the underworld, and as he was torn apart by those whose desire he was not willing to fulfil, being instead concerned with his own longing and creating harmony with nature. In this story, the deceptiveness of this harmony beautifully comes into the open, as while Orpheus is busily harmonising, not only is he numbed by his own longing, but ends up torn apart by sex-driven women – not a soothing image of harmony, to be sure. It is an image of harmony with nature that carries the seeds of its own destruction in that harmony. Orpheus's fate is as much carried in the figure of echo as in his harmonising song – we may well read the episode where the head of Orpheus is singing as an echo ·· previous songs, if we remember Longus's account in his pastoral romance, r·   ·   · of echo along the lines of the fate of Orpheus.

THE STATE OF INNOCENCE AND THE WRITING OF ECHOES

The child appears in "Introduction" in place of a Muse and activates, instead of the figure of memory, the figure of echo. When it vanishes from the poem in the fourth stanza and leaves the piper behind to write echoes, the undertones of the figure are also

activated: the piper picks a "hollow reed" and makes a "rural pen" – applies, in a sense, Pan's pipe to write his pastoral Innocence; but after having seen what kind of a sound emanates from Pan's reed-pipe, which is the source of much pastoral echoing, we may not be surprised at the ambiguity of the word "stain'd" in the next line as the piper "stain'd the water clear" for ink for his reed-pen. As he sets the hills echoing (echoing his inspirer, who's instructions themselves resembled echoes), he also activates an undercurrent of longing and desire, inimical to that blissful, spontaneous state of joy and fulfilment we come to know as Innocence.

The ambiguity of the word "stain'd" signals the presence of such an undercurrent of meaning by implying a stain on the purity of Innocence as soon as the piper obeys his inspirer and begins to write echoes. It seems that it is precisely the echoing that creates this stain: Blake replaces the authority of a Muse over his song to exclude memory from the state of Innocence by a self-generated sound consonant with the self-sufficiency of Innocence, and introduces instead, as the form of that self-generating sound, echoes. In this sense, Echo becomes the authority over the song, and her figurative relation to Orpheus in the pastoral tradition does seem to make her fit for such a role. With the same gesture, however, the songs of Innocence are also made to resound with Echo's phrase, *sit tibi copia nostri*. In Blake's context, the power given over is the power of imagination. Writing echoes may be a form of writing that eludes the authority of memory, which, as we have seen, for Blake is a prerequisite for the writing he calls Vision, but, paradoxically, this detachment from authority creates dependence. As reverberating echoing, as sound voiding itself of authority, the figure of echo is suitable for expressing a harmony of man and nature (harmony being based not on dependence but equality) and the spontaneous joy and memoryless imagination of Innocence; yet the undercurrents of this figure seem to create dependence on nature and lack of creative ability to fulfil the desires incurred by that dependence. (Man's natural instincts and desires are of course part of what is meant by 'nature,' as the figure of echo itself has implied.) This may well explain the ambiguities of the child instructing-yet-merely-echoing and of its laughing-yet-weeping observed earlier: it is in fact the figure of echo that may be creating these ambiguities. As if, by using such ambiguities in the Songs, Blake were indeed echoing Echo, making Innocence yield to the power of the figure, saying 'I give you power over me.' Which, going further, may well throw light on how these poems are shaped, and that, quite naturally, should also tell us something about the nature of Innocence.

The staining in the last stanza, then, seems to be the staining of Innocence by the figure of echo: echoing as pure poetic discourse – the figure finally set up by the

poem's movement from piping and singing to the writing of the *same* song – is stained by echoing as fruitless desire. The shortcoming of the state of Innocence is, on the one hand, that its safety from the despairs of natural desire is only apparent, and on the other that at the same time it lacks sexual potency and, by one remove, it lacks creative energy. Memory may have been displaced, but writing echoes is still not a sufficient form of imagination. Thus, as the piper begins to write echoes, he stains the clear water with Pan's reed: he, as we have said, through the figure of echo, infuses futile longing into the apparently idyllic state, and he also writes the wrong kind of poetry. This poetry is perhaps of a higher order than the one written under the authority of the Muse, as it excludes abstraction and reflection, but is still not "Visionary or Imaginative" (E555). On the same score, one may suspect that Mnemosyne has not been fully exiled – her Daughters have merely been refigured, and they keep refiguring the poems, as a Muse is being refigured into Echo. But then, in mythic genealogy Echo and Orpheus are themselves descendants of the Muses.

Of course, to the piper the word "stain'd" has no connotations that would throw shadows on Innocence or his writing. The majority of the ambiguities of the Songs work on this principle: the face value of the such words expresses the point of view within Innocence. For this reason, one must not be quick to undo the apparent innocence of ambiguous words in the poems. It is by continually switching our perspective between the explicit and the implicit that we are given both an outline of Innocence, and a critique of the state or form of imagination that Innocence outlines.

Thus, when we read that darkness descends over the pastures in the concluding line of "The Echoing Green" (E8), we are invited to interpret this as signalling with equal force the end of the day in the simplistic fiction of the poem, and as a threat to the bliss the fiction describes. In fact, one need not move beyond the verbal structure of the poem to hear the ominous ring of the last line. There is an easily visible movement in the poem from "The Sun does arise" (l.1) to "The sun does descend" (l.23) and from "On the Echoing Green" (l.10) to "On the darkening Green" (l.30). It is again worth working out just how the echoing of the Green is created in the first stanza:

> The Sun does arise,
> And make happy the skies.
> The merry bells ring
> To welcome the Spring.
> The sky-lark and thrush,

The birds of the bush,
Sing louder around,
To the bells cheerful sound.
While our sports shall be seen
On the Echoing Green.

It is by the end of the stanza that the Green is set echoing with all sorts of sounds of nature. The first sound is that of the bells, which sound is then echoed by the birds (they sing "to the bells ... sound"). The bells themselves sound in welcome to Spring, thus, by analogy, they echo Spring as the birds echo the bells. Spring being conventionally metaphorical for birth, a metaphor enforced here by the rising of the Sun in the first line, the sounding of the bells echoes this birth by setting the landscape into motion - or, better, echoing metaphorical 'Spring' by setting the landscape echoing, giving it voice or imaginative birth. In this sense, then, it is Spring that is the source of the echoing, and this makes it necessary to postpone the reading of this poem and turn to "Spring" (E14-15) to see more clearly the nature of these echoes.

Sound the Flute!
Now it's mute.
Birds delight
Day and Night.
Nightingale
In the dale
Lark in Sky
Merrily
Merrily Merrily to welcome in the Year

Little Boy
Full of joy.
Little Girl
Sweet and small,
Cock does crow
So do you.
Merry voice
Infant noise
Merrily Merrily to welcome in the Year

Little Lamb
Here I am,

Come and lick
My white neck.
Let me pull
Your soft Wool.
Let me kiss
Your soft face.
Merrily Merrily we welcome in the Year

This poem, in Wagenknecht's reading, is "very much in the Orphic tradition," and presents the "process of creation."[27] Nature responds to the sound of the flute, comes out of the silence into day and night, the flute animates birds, and then children. As in "The Echoing Green," everything that is animated in this poem 'welcomes' the year with its sounds and actions. The poem also depicts, in the process of responses, the arising of erotic desire as the child woos the lamb in the fashion of a lover in the last stanza.

Yet if this is indeed, as Wagenknecht suggests, a dance of the season to an Orphic pipe, why does the pipe become "mute" already in the second line? The sound of the flute seems to be replaced by birdsong in the third line, and the fourth line affirms that this birdsong is bound to nature, to the nature the pipe has awoken. The natural world and the powers of the piper indeed are in harmony, as we would expect from an Orphic poem, but it is noteworthy that at the first sound of the pipe, other voices take over, as if the pipe was no longer needed, because its echoes are henceforth sufficient to keep the poem in motion – as indeed the echoing refrain suggests. This closely resembles the vanishing of the child in "Introduction." Thus when we ask if the motion of the poem can reach as far as completing the kiss, we are also asking if writing echoes (which the piper begins after the vanishing of the child) can achieve the imaginative rebirth that in the union of child and lamb would here repeat the Orphic creation or the coming of Spring to the echoing green.

Blake etched this poem on two different plates; on the first, there is a child in the lap of a mother figure, and some sheep farther off, while on the second the child is seen with a smaller and two bigger lambs, pulling the face of the small one towards its face. This enforces the sense of movement towards eroticism. Yet the two bigger lambs on the second plate seem to be the parents of the small lamb – as the protecting mother disappears from the first plate, protective parents appear on the other side on

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[27] Wagenknecht p.25. My reading here owes to Wagenknecht's analyses of this poem and its illustrations (cf. pp. 24-29).

the second. This is yet another instance of what we have called a visual echo. It must also be noted that there is a slight change in the refrain in the third stanza: "to welcome" changes into "we welcome," suggesting the harmony of child and lamb, or, if we like, the success of the wooing. The illustrations, however, imply that there is in fact no exposure of the 'lovers' to the dangers of an independent relationship, the dangers implied by the biblical reference of betrayal in the second stanza ("Cock does crow / So do you"). The ever-present guides (the mother on the first, the parent-sheep on the second etching) are there to protect child and lamb from a world where betrayal has also been evoked. Design and text together imply that the appearance of "we" in the third refrain may well indicate harmony, but is not the consummation of the kiss. The poem's development stops short before this would take place, and the consummation is replaced by the return of the line that echoes through the poem, as the image of the mother is 'echoed' on the second plate by the image of the parent-sheep.

The two-fold nature of echoing comes out very clearly on these plates. The pictorial echoing of the mother by the parent-sheep on the designs is also expressive of their harmony, just as the word "we" in the last refrain is expressive of the harmony of child and lamb in the text. At the same time, the echoing itself, both by pictorial means and by means of the refrain, is what stops the kiss short of being actually made. The protection of the parents is present and is necessitated by the potential betrayal, implying the dangers of the world beyond the pastoral that approach with the poem's approach towards eroticism. Innocence is not entirely safe, not entirely devoid of desire, the innocent require protection. Harmony here is not exactly a fulfilment of love; it seems to coincide, paradoxically, with a stopping short of fulfilment, which is necessary in order to stop short of exposure to an unprotected state. Neither is this a bad thing *within* Innocence. There, it is plainly harmony. Harmony, expressed by Orphic piping and pastoral echoing.

But the figure of echo does its work here as well: while Echo, unsatisfied by Narcissus, resounds her words of longing, her voice turns into the pastoral echo expressive of the harmony of man, song and nature. 'I give you power over me' – in Blake's Songs, Echo gives power over to the harmony of pastoral song; the song admits her desire, but instead of fulfilling it, subsumes it in a harmony that claims to protect us from the despairs of longing. This protection is benevolent, as it keeps up the realm of Innocence, but is abortive in that with the same gesture it keeps up the echoes of longing. The work the figure of echo does in the poem beautifully comes to the open as the refrain, with the word "we" inserted, follows the phrase "Let me kiss / Your soft face": we get harmony instead of fulfilment.

Spring, as the birth of the Year, is in this poem heralded in by the sound of a flute – it is, in this sense, itself an echo, as it is an answer to the Orphic song. If we now return to "The Echoing Green" with what we have learned about Spring here, that it is itself an echo, giving birth to a year that will be spent under the ambiguous authority of the figure of echo, we will have a by now rather unsurprising answer to our initial question concerning the source of echoing in that poem. The birds echo the bells, the bells metaphorically echo Spring, and this sets up the Blakean scene of Echoing Innocence, as Spring itself is an echo initiating further echoing. "The Echoing Green" is not an 'Orphic poem' in the sense Wagenknecht describes "Spring" – here we have no initiating flute. With the rising of the Sun Spring arrives and echoing is set off to "make happy the skies." The source of this happiness is of course pastoral echoing, the children's harmony with nature. The turning of the "Echoing Green" into "darkening Green" within Innocence is only the end of one blissful day that will be followed by the next; viewed from without, however, we may well suspect that more than that is implied. The more ominous sense is made almost explicit by saying that the children who retire to the laps of their mothers at the end of the day "No more can be merry" (l.22). This, of course, is also the moment when echoing comes to an end. As opposed to Spenser's *Epithalamion*, however, the descending night and the dying down of echoing is no Hymen, but a night spent in the mother's lap – in the lap of mother nature, if we like, that maintains the potential for longing.

If the poem indeed describes a natural cycle, as seems to be the case, then this implies that the bliss of Innocence is dependent on this cycle. It is perhaps well to remind ourselves at this point that echoing is not only a figure, but also a physical phenomenon in which the figure roots: as such, echoing depends on nature. If Blake replaces the figure of memory with the figure of echo, he also replaces a mental process with one that is dependent on nature. If he is replacing it to escape imaginative dependence on a Muse, he is playing a deceptive game. If we set up a metaphoric connection between memory and echo saying that what we remember are echoes from our past, then there is still an important difference between the two: while memory can and does reshape the remembered, echoes recapitulate the same. Under the authority of the figure of echo, dependence on nature cannot be escaped. The figure itself turns this dependence into a harmonious relation, which is precisely the sense of Blake's use of pastoral echoing. But this does not erase the dependence inherent in the figure. The children in their mother's laps, which features often in the designs and texts of the *Songs of Innocence*, is expressive of just this dependence. But this also means that with natural decay, Innocence also decays. The "organic decay" Harold Bloom notes in the threat of

the 'darkening' green[28] is itself encoded into the Songs from the start by the echoing invocation.

That this decay is in fact a regressive element in the imagination that writes echoes can also be discerned in the "The Echoing Green." The poem counterbalances the approaching darkness by the lines

> Round the laps of their mothers,
> Many sisters and brothers,
> Like birds in their nest,
> Are ready for rest.

The children retire into safety; but they are also retiring into their dependence on (mother) nature. That the retiring of the children into their natural safety should coincide with the darkening of the green brings into the open the threat inherent in the harmony of Innocence. So far, however, we have not treated the middle stanza of the poem, to which we must now turn.

> Old John with white hair
> Does laugh away care,
> Sitting under the oak,
> Among the old folk,
> They laugh at our play,
> And soon they all say.
> Such such were the joys.
> When we all girls and boys,
> In our youth-time were seen,
> On the Echoing Green.

The elders, too are in harmony with the natural scene and the children: their age does not contrast them to the little ones, as they, too, by seeing the children, "laugh away care." The old folk, however, speak in the past tense – this apparently connects them to memory, since what they utter is what they remember. Yet they share in the present bliss and remember their own past bliss at the same time. They also join into the echoing scene by, as it were, echoing the joy of the children. Their experience is one from the past, actualised by resounding in the present – and this is precisely what an

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[28] Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company. A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961) p. 31

echo does to sound. The relation is nicely brought out aurally (by the repetition) and conceptually (by the past tense) in the line "Such such were the joys." In Innocence, the reminiscences of the old folk are turned into echoes instead of memories. This, I believe, is once again the means to lend their joy immediacy instead of making it nostalgic.

Now if we imagine Innocence to be an eternal state of bliss and take "darkening" at its face value, that is, as the end of a day followed by a next blissful day and so on, the children who now retire into their mothers' laps will after a good number of such days become the "old folk" sitting in this scene under the oak. In other words, the echoing of the Green will remain the form of experience for the children as it is now for the old folk. But the children themselves are even now playing on an *echoing* green, their form of experience being thus no different from the direct yet indirect experience of the old folk. "Darkening" with all its ominous connotations describes the state when echoing remains the form of experience for ever. By inversion, the old folk echoing the children themselves remain children. The old and the young are not contrasted; they echo each other; they are the versions of each other. True, this also implies that the old folk remain innocent – in this sense, they are the positive contrast to the elders of Experience who are not in harmony with, but repress children. But then, these old folk also keep retiring to the laps of their mothers. They do not exceed the protective cuddling of nature, they do not become creative minds, they lack the power for imaginative rebirth because they sing under the authority of Echo.

The elders in this poem are absolutely positive figures, but that is only because we are here within Innocence. Viewed from an other perspective, it is in the unengraved prophetic book written around the same time as the Songs, *Tiriel*, that we find the equivalents of these elders:

> And Har & Heva like two children sat beneath the Oak
> Mnetha now aged waited on them. & brought them food & clothing
> But they were as the shadow of Har. & as the years forgotten
> Playing with flowers. & running after birds they spent the day
> And in the night like infants slept delighted with infant dreams
>
> (E277)

I do not think it is exaggerating to say that where "shadow" is written in this passage we may easily have 'echo.' A shadow is the visual equivalent of an echo, but that is not the only reason. The elders of "The Echoing Green" are viewing their former selves, they echo the children, in a sense they are the echoes of themselves. The

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vales of Har, of which Har and Heva are the shadows, is the pastoral world of *Tiriel*. Likewise, the elders are themselves the echoes of the pastoral scene of Innocence – their laugh is presumably also echoing in the landscape as they echo the laughs of the children. Were we not within Innocence in the poem, as we are not in *Tiriel*, we may as well weep at seeing them. The relation of the 'shadow' in *Tiriel* to the echo in the Songs seems even more tenable by recalling a passage from the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: "Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained ... And being restrained it by degrees becomes passive till it is only the shadow of desire" (E34). The figure of echo, as we have seen, infuses into the Songs the echo of desire, which, as Echo's own desire, can only be passive. The figures of Har and Heva make explicit the regressivness the figure of echo creates implicitly in the old folk of "The Echoing Green."

It is also noteworthy that in *Tiriel* Mnetha, "tutelary genius" of the state of Har and Heva, the regressed innocents, bears a name that is presumably made up of the names of Athena and Mnemosyne, goddesses of wisdom and of memory.[29] Thus in *Tiriel* those who are incapable of imaginative rebirth are presided over (partly) by the Mother of the Muses, by memory, while in the Songs, where the shortcomings of Innocence are essentially the same as what produces the vales of Har, Echo has been found to be the governing figure. The echoing green valleys of Innocence and the vales of Har are, one could argue, of course *not* the same place, but as Northrop Frye reminds us, "all imaginative places are the same place" for Blake.[30] Mnemosyne and Echo are no aliens to each other, echoing does not defeat memory by its illusory immediacy. Innocence seems to be Beulah instead of the vale of Har of *Tiriel* in Blake's mythology merely by virtue of the viewpoint, by the imaginative act of taking up a viewpoint *inside* Innocence.

The imaginative act in question – the form of imagination in Innocence – is one that claims to do away with memory as a part of the imagination. But this, as Blake achieves it through the reliance on pastoralism, as we have seen, has its own consequences. Not only does this form of imagination appear in a sense regressive, not only is it not "Vision," but consequently it also has the added shortcoming that once we are within this state, there is no way to exceed the limits of Innocence.[31] The

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[29] Bloom, Commentary in E, p.946.

[30] Frye, "Blake's Introduction to Experience" in Frye, ed.: *Blake. A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice – Hall, 1966) p. 27

[31] The vale of Har in Bloom's phrasing (pp. 45-6) is "a lower paradise and seed bed of potential life which undergoes its own cycles but never dies into the life of human existence and so never becomes altogether

conclusion of *The Book of Thel* makes explicit just how ultimately binding this state of the soul and the writing of echoes are. Thel is allowed a glimpse beyond her pastoral world and upon hearing the "voice of sorrow" she flees aghast:

> Why cannot the ear be closed to its own destruction?
> Or the glistening Eye to the poison of a smile!
> Why are Eyelids stord with arrows ready drawn,
> Where a thousand fighting men in ambush lie?
> Or an Eye of gifts & graces, show'ring fruits & coined gold!
> Why a Tongue impress'd with honey from every wind?
> Why an Ear, a whirlpool fierce to draw creations in?
> Why a Nosetril wide inhaling terror trembling & affright.
> Why a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy!
> Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?
>
> The Virgin started from her seat, & with a shriek.
> Fled back unhindered till she came into the vales of Har
>
> (E6)

Thel is obviously being frightened away from the world beyond her pastoral bliss by the exposure of the sensuality awaiting her. This is completely in keeping with what we have observed about Innocence, with Echo's incapacity to participate in this sensuality, and in *Tiriel* Blake shows us what becomes of the virgin who flees back into the vales of Har, the pastoral world – our reading of "The Echoing Green" has revealed the same process. Furthermore, as Robert Gleckner has pointed out, the sex of the voice of sorrow remains ambiguous and "Blake is at some pains ... to allow the voice to be, in effect, Thel's own as well."[32] With this in mind, the first line of this speech – "Why cannot the Ear be closed to its own destruction?" – may well be read also as Thel's own lament on her captivity in echoing Innocence. The "destruction" is, in this reading, that of echoes, for it is to her, who cannot hear but echoes, that the world of sensuality appears as terror. She has fully given power over herself to the figure of echo, and thus she is doomed to imaginative passivity.

   The Book of Thel, The Songs of Innocence and *Tiriel*, all of which employ or reflect on pastoralism, outline a similar state of the soul and the imagination, though from

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real." We are now throwing a glance at the cycle of this state of imagination, but what matters in the present argument is that "it never dies" into life; in other words, exit from it is not possible.

[32] Gleckner, *Blake and Spenser* p.33.

different viewpoints. That the point of view makes all the difference can be discerned from the different impressions Thel and Har and Heva are made to make: Thel is a fragile, pure, innocent spirit, while Har and Heva are ridiculous and pathetic. If, as I have been arguing, in *The Songs of Innocence* Blake tries to avoid memory, he does allude to the presence of Mnemosyne in *Tiriel*, in the book depicting the future fate of Thel, who herself is quite evidently in the state of Innocence. That is to say, in the *Songs* Blake creates a form in which the imagination claims to do without memory, but as soon as he makes us take up a different point of vantage and gives us a broader view of the pastoral world of echoing Innocence, he re-admits memory into the state of the imagination his versions of the pastoral describe. On this score, we could obviously conclude that Blake is giving a satire of pastoralism and through that also of a certain kind of imagination which he, largely due to its connection to memory, finds wanting. I do not want to pretend that the satiric dimension of Blake's pastoralism should be disregarded, but it is quite a different point I want to conclude with. I think that on the basis of observing Blake's strategies of excluding memory, we can also begin to grasp the nature of his oeuvre – in other words, we can grasp how Blake's work is formed through observing his struggle to exile Mnemosyne from the work of imagination.

As we have seen, in creating his state of Innocence, instead of writing traditional pastoral, Blake has his piper write echoes – this on the one hand is an avoidance of the authority of memory, and on the other it is outlining the central features of this state via its imaginative potential. In this sense, avoiding memory itself has a role in shaping the poems: the specific altering of the figure Blake activates here accounts, as I have tried to show in some of its details, for much that made these poems take their specific shape. However, if the fate of the Muse here is to be refigured into Echo, we are still witnessing the vicious circle of mythological statements (and rejecting the *Muse* is such a statement), where metaphors stand behind one another and disallow the poet's exit from the realm ruled by Mnemosyne. Thel's incapacity of leaving the vale of Har is itself an indication of the difficulty, and the re-admission of memory through the figure of Mnetha in *Tiriel* shows us that though the Muses may have been exiled from the *Songs*, Mnemosyne has not been exiled from the form of imagination these texts employ. As in our discussion of the figure of memory, here too, we may ask if there is any getting around these metaphors, and here too, we find that the metaphors do not vanish, but are only refigured: in this particular case we have found the figure of memory being refigured into the figure of echo. Furthermore, this very refiguring plays an active part in how the presence of the metaphors effects and shapes the texts. But then, Blake seems to be well aware of this (which we can discern

from his manipulation of generic peculiarities). He seems to be implying that far more needs to be done to avoid memory, which he indicates by presenting the pastoral world from different viewpoints. He is, I think, aware that memory and imagination are so fundamentally bound up that to undo this tie, he must in a sense undo poetry, or, to tone down the provocation in this statement, to undo our ways of understanding poetry. The aim of which, ultimately, may well be to achieve a way out of the vicious circle of interpreting metaphorical statements through other metaphors. Should this be achieved, not only would poetry be liberated from the realm of Mnemosyne, but our understanding of poetry may also have to be cut loose from the realm of literature. That Blake's aspirations may in fact go this far can be grasped in his attempt to *write visions* and in his demand that we read visions.

AFTERTHOUGHTS: BLAKE'S FORM OF POETRY BEYOND MEMORY

As we notice that understanding Blake depends to a great degree on understanding the shifting of viewpoints, we may remember that in contrasting the Daughters of Memory and the Daughters of Inspiration, Blake seems to have been asking precisely for a specific *way of seeing* for the right kind of poetic imagination – in other words, we can easily connect Blake's technique of viewpoints to a demand for an emphatically visual understanding of poetry. Furthermore, the visual element seems smoothly consonant with some of the reasons for Blake's rejection of memory. Memory is to be exiled from the imagination because it binds the mind to time by enhancing seeing in sequence and because it binds it to generalisation by enhancing thinking in abstractions. Sequence, and what seems its necessary concomitant, abstraction, may be more comfortably evaded by images than by texts, since the literary is necessarily temporal, while the pictorial is spatial. The pictorial, theoretically, presents to the mind all elements of its subject simultaneously, while language cannot but work in sequence; and we can also argue that images (again strictly theoretically) achieve a higher degree of immediacy of perception than words, which cannot but contain an element of abstraction due to the process of signification. Consequently, it seems likely that Blake's combination of text and image is a necessary part of his endeavours for excluding memory from the imagination, for presenting an atemporal Vision.

The counterpart here of the visual imagination in literary technique is Blake's manipulation of points of view. We have seen that one specific point of view will never give us the full sense of what Blake is saying, nor are we asked to *progress* from one viewpoint to the next. Innocence is not just one *stage* of the imagination, out of which

one can progress to higher stages. This is precisely what writing echoes implies: echoes cannot generate other kinds of sounds, only repeat the same. Likewise, writing echoes cannot develop into another kind of poetry. This is precisely what echoing reveals in connection to the state of Innocence: because Innocence is echoing with its own sounds, it can only be echoed by its dwellers. The piper will keep being inspired to write the same song, the only one which he seems capable of writing, Old John will keep hearing the echoes of the joy of the children and stay a child in imagination, Thel will forever flee the voice of sorrow which echoes her own terror at what lies beyond Innocence, and Har and Heva will never see themselves as Blake makes us see them. But Blake makes us see them as regressed Innocents only through the conjunction of several works, and of several points of view. Only by seeing simultaneously all the viewpoints Blake has to offer can we grasp all he meant to say in individual works. Surely, there is nothing very surprising in the observation that new light will be thrown on a poem by other poems of the poet. In the case of Blake's work, however, our very misunderstandings of a poem which can result from disregarding other poems is an essential part of any one of Blake's poems. In its radical form, this will mean that none of Blake's particular texts will yield to understanding without considering the *whole* of Blake's poetry; or, the misunderstanding that derives from not considering the whole oeuvre is itself part of what each poem has to tell us – but then again, we will only understand our misunderstandings through observing the whole work. Without holding in mind all the viewpoints simultaneously, our interpretations will act out the fate of Thel, just as a limited understanding of, in our case, *The Songs of Innocence* will yield nothing but sentimentality. If our interpretation only echoes Innocence, we will remain entrapped in a limited form of imagination.[33]

This is very probably one of the features of Blake's poetry that makes it so difficult to understand: in a sense, we have to read all his poetry to be able to see into

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[33] Robert Gleckner's important essay, "Point of View and Context in Blake's Songs" (first published in *The Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, LXI, 11, November 1957, and reprinted in Northrop Frye, ed., *Blake. A Collection of Critical Essays* pp. 8-14) opens by giving a critique of Joseph Wicksteed's reading of "My Pretty Rose Tree" as guilty of just the kind of fallacy I am describing. Among other instances of the consequences of such readings we could mention Gillham's avoidance of noting or interpreting the ambiguities of the poems, in *Blake's Contrary States* (Cambridge: CUP, 1966), which is the result of seeing Innocence as simply 'good' and Experience as simply 'bad.' Of course I am not implying that excellent critics dabble in sentimentality when reading from restricted viewpoints, but one does find a good deal of sometimes tedious moralising when such criticism attempts to make these simple poems seem important in themselves.

any one piece, and to *see* whatever it is that Blake wants us to see, we should, because we can but *read* his poetry, read it all at once, as it were, simultaneously. But then, this is probably the very reason why Blake writes the way he does, using constantly shifting viewpoints, giving us not a sequence of poems, but showing us the vast panorama of a single work. It is from the same perspective that it becomes very significant that Blake was not only a poet but also an artist, and the fact that he also produced designs is an essential part of the way he wrote. What I am driving at with these points is my impression that Blake is asking the reader to see his poetry as if it were a single image, thus attempting to break down the inherent temporality of the literary text and the abstraction inherent in words. Blake's books to a certain extent testify to this, since what Blake produced were in the majority illuminated books: not merely words on paper, but exquisite art-objects to be treated, *seen* and read, *as* objects. For instance, in one version, the *Songs of Experience* is etched on the other side of the plates of the *Songs of Innocence*, the result of which is that when we see or read one side, we cannot see the other, but in fact we hold both in our hands, we have both states *at once* before us.[34] The idea I want to inject here is that this is of importance in Blake's work: his book is also an object with spatial dimensions, which if we 'flip through' in sequence will lose some of its dimensions.

But Vision seems to mean even more than the presentation of the world as one image. If Blake presents his poetry as a vast picture, it is furthermore to be seen as a four-dimensional image, the fourth dimension being the simultaneous Vision of the three distinguishable dimensions of images – only thus will Vision indeed belong to the imagination and not only to the eye. The three dimensional image, if we like, is what we see *with* the eye, but imagination looks "thru [the eye] & not with it" (E566). Correspondingly, Blake's whole mythology (if we wish to give it that name) is itself "Fourfold," built up as it is of Ulro, Generation, Beulah and Eden, where fourfold vision belongs only to Eden, and so does what only qualifies as fully human for Blake: "The Human is Fourfold" (E97). Innocence cannot be the final form of imagination: it may pretend to have done away with memory, but it is still only part of the whole picture.[35] Because to Blake memory binds the mind to time, sequence and abstraction, it is relegated to Ulro.

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[34] See Peter Ackroyd, *Blake* (London: Quality Paperbacks Direct, 1995), pp.121, 141. Ackroyd argues (pp. 141-42) that due to the "technical process" of the production of the book, it "becomes resistant to conventional interpretation (...)."

[35] See Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, p.233: "Beulah is a place of perilous equipoise, being as it is the region of the imagination which falls short of the disciplined unity of art. Eden is 'human'; Beulah is 'sexual,' the region

That Blake's rejection of memory is an important part of his rejection of a certain kind of imagination and poetry, and a part of his endeavour to write Visions, is made explicit by Blake and is a well-established point in Blake scholarship. What I hope to have shown, on the one hand, is that if memory is not merely regarded as a mental process but as a metaphor for the imagination, the exclusion of the metaphor has inevitable consequences, the interpretation of which is likely to aid our interpretation of the poems. The point of these perhaps somewhat rash afterthoughts is that it is also likely that Blake's whole poetic oeuvre takes its specific shape as a result of his radicalism in exiling Mnemosyne from the realm of poetry. A body of poetry that is asked to be seen as a huge image seems to be Blake's final form of a poetry that can do without memory. Through the serious interest and work of a number of poets and critics, Blake's work is to a certain extent redeemed from obscurity, but it remains rather inaccessible and impenetrable for the general reader or even for the non-specialist critic. The reason for this is not necessarily the peculiarity of Blake's ideas, but rather the peculiarity of the artistic form he chose to express his ideas in. Yet form, of course, cannot be separated from, but is dependent on and formative of the ideas. The fact that among these ideas is the conviction that "Imagination has nothing to do with Memory" (E666) determines to a large extent the form of Blake's poetry – what I have been implying is that this form is, as it were, on the verge of being something other than poetry. The strength of the figurative kinship between memory and imagination, and of the metaphor expressing this (which I have here called the figure of memory) seems to be such, that their annihilation demands something short of the annihilation of poetry as a temporal art.

This does not mean that I would not regard Blake's poetry as poetry – to say this would be to say that there exists some preconceived notion of poetry as separate from actually existing poems. On the contrary, what I am suggesting is that Blake's work is pushing poetry beyond the limits his predecessors' works have ascribed to it, and that he is compelled to do this in his urge to divorce imagination from memory. Mnemosyne and her Daughters may be expelled from the realm of poetry, but the price of that seems to be that the very nature of poetry itself will have to go through a radical transformation. The nature of Blake's work, just as much as its obscurity and its grandeur, all have much to do with the relentlessness with which he pursued this transformation.

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of passive pleasure, a Freudian land of dreams in which all images are erotic." To which we could add that Beulah is all the more Freudian as its erotic dreams are always suppressed and unfulfilled, as the poetry of Innocence is determined by Echo's longing.
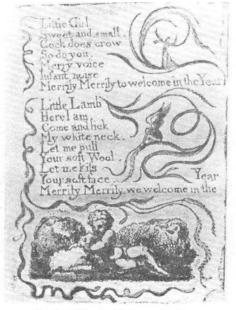
Blake: Frontispiece to
Songs of Innocence,
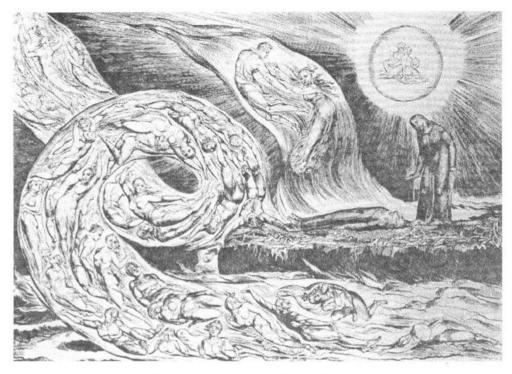illustrating "Introduction"
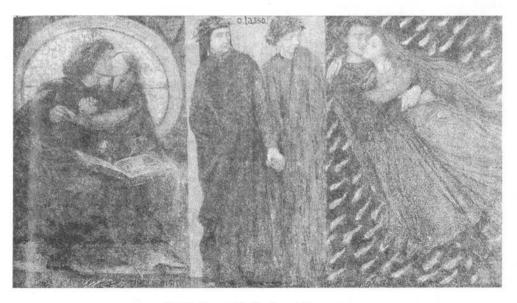

Blake: "The Echoing Green"

Blake: "Spring," first plate

Blake: "Spring," second plate

Blake: *The Whirlwind of Lovers. Divine Comedy*, Plate 10.

D. G. Rossetti: *Paolo and Francesca*

Márta Mácsok

Dante Revisited

The Vision of Paolo and Francesca in Blake's and D. G. Rossetti's Interpretation

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's interest in and enthusiasm for William Blake's poetry and art can be seen as one of the most important stimuli behind the history of the critical assumptions of the second half of the nineteenth century. Blake' clarity of form and mystic idealism exercised a profound influence on Dante Gabriel Rossetti's plastic imagination whose enthusiastic interest in Blake was one of the crucial motifs that shaped the aesthetic norms of "Rossettiism" (to be distinguished from Pre-Raphaelitism proper: from 1857 to 1882), and the emergence, at the end of the century, of Aestheticism. And it is also through the Pre-Raphaelite experiment that a continuity from Blake to the Symbolist Movement can be established.

It was in 1847, the year of the ascendancy of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, that D. G. Rossetti bought Blake's *Notebook*, "a varied collection of his writings, interspersed with drawings and sketches"[1] which was in his possession till his death in 1882, and came to be known as *The Rossetti MS.*[2] In his brother's, William Michael Rossetti's view, "His ownership of his truly precious volume [...] conduced to the Pre-

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[1] G. Keynes, *Blake Studies. Essays on his Life and Work.* (2nd. ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 8.

[2] He writes the following about the circumstances of the purchase which I quote with Bentley's added notes: "I purchased this original MS of [Samuel Palmer's brother William] Palmer, an attendant in the Antique Gallery at the British Museum, on the 30th April, 1847. Palmer knew Blake personally, and it was from the artist's wife that he had the present MS which he sold me for 10 S. [and for which Dante's brother William supplied the cash]." G. E. Bentley, ed., *William Blake. The Critical Heritage* (London & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975.), p.243.

Raphaelite movement [...] and its contents] were balsam to Rossetti's soul, and grist to his mill. The volume was moreover the origin of all his after-concern in Blake literature."[3] The role of the MS proved to be instrumental in the nineteenth century history of Blake's legacy. For his biography of Blake, *Life of William Blake, 'Pictor Ignotus'* (1855-1863, published in 1863), Alexander Gilchrist collected all the data from Blake's admirers and from direct witnesses of his life, among them "a kind of syndicate of the Pre-Raphaelite Brothers."[4] D.G. Rossetti not only lent the MS to Gilchrist but he also selected Blake's lyrics for the second volume of Gilchrist's biography, which was the first critical statement on Blake that made his name as a poet known to a wider audience.

D.G. Rossetti's reading of Blake's work as a poet and artist is an area that needs further research. His poem "William Blake" is in the view of R. N. Essick "one of the more explicit and distinguished responses by the Pre-Raphaelites to their most important British precursor as a poet/artist."[5]

> This is the place. Even here the dauntless soul,
>   The unflinching hand, wrought, on; till in that nook,
>   As on that very bed, his life partook
> New birth, and passed. Yon river's dusky shoal,
> Whereto the close-built coiling lanes unroll,
>   Faced his work-window, whence his eyes would stare,
>   Thought-wandering, unto nought that met them there,
> But to the unfettered irreversible goal.
> This cupboard, Holy of Holies, held the cloud
>   Of his soul writ and limned; this other one,
> His true wife's charge, full oft to their abode
>   Yielded for daily bread the martyr's stone,
>   Ere yet their food might be that Bread alone,
> The words now home-speech of the mouth of God.[6]

The poem with its emphasis on a "dauntless soul" and "unflinching hand" defines

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[3] See W. M. Rossetti himself in *Some Reminiscences of William Michael Rossetti.* Quoted by Bentley p. 243

[4] Bentley, p. 11.

[5] Robert N. Essick, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Frederic Shields, and the Spirit of William Blake" *Victorian Poetry* 1986 Summer V. 24. (2) p. 163.

[6] "William Blake (To Frederick Shields, on his sketch of Blake's work-room and death-room, 3 Fountain Court, Strand)" D. G. Rossetti, *The Poetical Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti.* (London: Ellis & Elvey, 1903), p. 338.

Blake as a devout soul, completely absorbed in his visionary world, completely cut off from the reality of his time. Essick also calls attention to the fact that "there is the substitution of the life for the works: the 'dauntless soul', not the productions of that soul, provides both motivation and subject."[7] Moreover, the poem's religious terminology (Holy of Holies, Bread, mouth of God) seems to suggest that in Rossetti's view for Blake, just as for himself, art is an expression of a quasi-religious experience.

In Rossetti's allegorical tale *Hand and Soul* what the apparition (which is usually taken to symbolise the artist's soul) says to Chiaro in this allegorical tale seems to be very close to Blake's own concept of art:

> Chiaro, servant of God, take now thine Art unto thee, and paint me thus, as I am, to know me: weak, as I am, and in the weeds of this time; only with eyes which seek out labour, and with a faith, not learned, yet jealous of prayer. Do this; so shall thy soul stand before thee always, and perplex thee no more.[8]

Blake also classifies spiritual perception/imagination as the only way to true art. "Knowledge of Ideal Beauty is Not to be Acquired. It is Born with us ... Passion & Expression is Beauty itself ... Inspiration & Vision... will always Remain my Element, my Eternal Dwelling place."[9]

For Rossetti it must have been a revelation when he became familiar with Blake's works in the British Museum as early as 1845. Blake's style is a hybrid style as W.J.T. Mitchell defines it.[10] The flat plane, the more primitive perspective than that of the Classical age, are indicative of the Gothic influence, while human figures – usually symbolising some spiritual quality or condition – are very often classical. This Romantic Classicism could very easily have inspired Rossetti to create a new style. Blake's influence, in the form of a direct transfer of motifs in Rossetti's paintings has been pointed out by many critics[11].

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[7] Essick p. 170. Rossetti's preference for his forefathers' life to their work is a characteristically Victorian approach, which can be noticed in his devotion to Dante's *Vita Nuova*.

[8] D. G. Rossetti, *Poems & Translations 1850-1870. Together with the Prose Story 'Hand and Soul'* (London: Oxford University Press Humphrey Milford, 1926), p. 168.

[9] See Blake's 1808 text "Annotations to Sir Joshua Reynold's *Discourses*" in W. Blake, *The Complete Writings of William Blake* ed. G. Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 459., 466., 477.

[10] W. J. T. Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art. A Study of the Illuminated Poetry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 35-36.

[11] In analysing Rossetti's *Hist! said Kate the Queen* (1851) Hilton (p. 97) notes that "the most satisfactory part of the picture is the line of attendants behind the maid servants who comb out the Queen's hair. These

In the following analysis of Blake's and Rossetti's recreation of Dante's vision of Paolo and Francesca, however, it is not the continuity between the two artists I would like to focus on, but the essential difference of their conceptions of human and divine reality which determines their own very specific interpretation and rendering of the concept of love central to the philosophy of Dante as well as Blake and Rossetti. It might be most fruitful to employ W. J. T. Mitchell's distinctions in the definition of Blake's uniqueness, who suggests that Blake's concept of *ut pictura poesis*, or the sister arts is different from that of his predecessors and contemporaries. Firstly, Mitchell points at the difference between visual translation and visionary transformation; secondly, he shows what great a distance there is between pictorialist-descriptive poetry (verbal painting) and visionary prophecy; thirdly, he shows the distance between narrative, allegorical and purely visionary (symbolical) approaches in illustration. He states that Blake's work should be distinguished from the simple and direct methods of traditional illustration. Blake does not give a translation of the text in his illustration, neither is he pictorial: "he always avoids luring sirens of description."[12] His work is not narrative-like, neither is it allegorical. His poetry and painting are independent component parts of the whole invisible text (the complex whole), whose imagery has been derived from sacred literature where "the scene is indistinguishable from the narrator's consciousness."[13] Blake strives to unify the separate meanings: that of the poem and that of the picture. The contemplation of the state of the fallen world (and word) leads often enough to infertile nostalgia; in Blake's analysis, however, the Fall is the result of erroneous perception and the fallen world is to be described in dramatic

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figures, derived surely from Blake, exhibit Rossetti's nice sense of rhythm, of artistic interval, when composing on a flat plane rather than in depth." The patterning as an atmospheric device and flat plane is also a significant element in *Paolo and Francesca* (1855) especially in the third panel. Another aspect reminiscent of Blake's world can be seen in *La Donna della Fiamma* (1870), where a grotesque mediaeval figure appears in a flame on the lady's palm and creates a surreal montage. "The winged figure of Love within the flame is possibly adopted from the fiery spirits and angels of William Blake ... [who was] an obvious source for sprites," writes David Rodgers, *Rossetti* (London: Phaidon Press, 1996), p. 104. The montage technique is used by Rossetti as in the haunting *Beata Beatrix* (1864-70) or the odd *Dantis Amor* (1860). In *The Blessed Damozel* (1875-80), beside the heavy symbolism, Rossetti employs a wide range of devices thus producing an extremely crowded space (separate boxes of pictorial space, the symmetrically arranged angels, and the patterns of embracing lovers). The idea of separation expressed in boxes and the embracing lovers in Heaven, particularly, are reminiscent of Blake's illustration to Dante's story of Paolo and Francesca for us.

[12] Mitchell, p. 21.

[13] Mitchell, p. 21.

terms where the tension is fed by the recognition of division, in the light of which the perceiver is cut off from the invisible, transcendent reality, a reality which is separated from him as a reality outside or beyond him. Blake sees the world in its paradisical unity of "ideas-reality," which can be reached through artistic activity. Art based on the mimetic theory of Plato or on Lockean empiricism is the greatest error in Blake's view.[14] And, indeed, this seems to be one of the main differences between Blake and the Pre-Raphaelites: the latter in their allegorical representations give an enhanced importance to the realism of historical and natural details. As far as the human body, nature and historical accessories are concerned, they employed models for drawing human face and body, painted naturalistic images of the countryside on the spot staying close to the original scene; and used costume books in order to stay faithful to the given historical age.[15]

The Dante illustrations were equally significant in Blake's and Rossetti's careers. It was in 1824, when he was 67 and still unknown to the wider public, that Blake received his last major commission through John Linnell to make illustrations to the *Divina Commedia*. *The Circle of the Lustful* (watercolour and engraving), or *The Whirlwind of Lovers From Dante's Inferno Canto V* (Paolo and Francesca) provide a kind of summary of his ideas on human life. The fact that he was commissioned for this task implies that his earlier works must have been interpreted by J. Linnell as "something similar to Dante."[16] He was weak and ill, working in bed when Samuel Palmer went to see him;[17] but still quarrelling with and correcting the traditional Christian jurisdiction. "Every thing in Dante's Comedia shews That for Tyrannical Purposes he has made

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[14] Mitchell, p. 4.

[15] Hilton, p. 17.

[16] To characterise his absorbing interest in Dante we may note he studied three different translations of Dante's *Commedia* during his life: Henry Boyd's translation of the *Inferno* (published in 1785), Henry Cary's translation (published in 1805-6 and in 1814) and an original in Italian (published in 1564). See Keynes p. 150 and Bentley pp 146, 166. However, "his illustrations were made mainly under the guidance of Cary's work," states Tinkler-Villani (*Visions of Dante in English Poetry. Translations of the Commedia from Jonathan Richardson to William Blake.* Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989, p. 244). It is quite probable that Blake was also familiar with the earliest English translation, that of Jonathan Richardson's made to the Ugolino incident (*Inferno* III) published in 1719. M. Klonsky (*Blake's Dante. The Complete Illustrations to the Divine Comedy*, London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1980, p. 30) writes that "none other than Sir Joshua Reynolds sent a painting of Ugolino in the tower to the annual Royal Academy Exhibition, where the twenty-year-old Blake no doubt saw it." Blake was surrounded by friends/rivals who were also affected by Dante, such as Flaxman and Fuseli, who knew Italian well and stayed in Italy for long periods, unlike the poet.

[17] Bentley, p. 145.

This World the Foundation of All & the Goddess Nature Memory is his Inspirer & not Imagination the Holy Ghost," he wrote on one unfinished watercolour.[18] Present criticism still often uses this comparison, since he always dealt "with the atmospheric potentialities of Dante's vision of Hell,"[19] not only when he painted his watercolours for Dante. He used traditional mediaeval emblems to express his own internal conflicts. Similarly to Dante himself, he applied the method of "inward-looking memory drawing."[20] The description of outer history goes hand in hand with the inner history of his own 'psycho-biography'.[21]

As for Rossetti, his Dante experience was a life-long obsession from 1849 on, that stemmed from his family background and heritage. Rossetti identified himself with Dante, and although he also made some illustrations to the *Divina Commedia*, he preferred the overtly autobiographical *Vita Nuova* to the dramatic *Commedia*. While Rossetti entered Dante's world as a historical-real-practical world, the soil of personal nostalgia – he never visited, though he forever longed to visit, Italy –, Blake entered the *Commedia* as a spiritual treasure house which had its own iconographical ornaments sanctioned by mediaeval theological traditions. "An admiration for the Italians becomes a measure of the role of sublimity and imagination in English poetry," states Tinkler-Villani,[22] and that is especially true in relation to the Dantesque influence on Blake and Rossetti.

The circles, or associative chains, as structure, are important in the original story written by Dante, which can also be seen in Paolo and Francesca's love story. Paolo and his brother's wife, Francesca fell in love with each other as a consequence of reading (and interpreting) a famous chivalric romance about Lancelotto's love for Genoveva. The lyrical hero, Dante, faints and falls as a corpse because he has been struck by pain, associating himself with the lovers (interpreting Paolo and Francesca's story).

> Mentre che l'uno spirto questo disse,
> l'altro piangëa; sí che di pietade

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[18] Quoted in D. Bindman, ed. *William Blake. His Art and Times*. (London: Thames & Hudson, 1982), p. 44.

[19] Bindman, ed., *William Blake. His Art and Times* p. 43.

[20] K. Clark, *Blake and Visionary Art*. (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1973), p. 21.

[21] M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism. Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1971), p. 46.

[22] Tinkler-Villani, p. 296.

> io venni men cosí com'io morisse.
> E caddi come corpo morto cade.[23]

Dante discovers his own fate in the fate of the lovers and similarly to Paolo and Francesca, interprets a story which is emblematic of his own life

> Di quel che udire e che parlar vi piace,
> noi udiremo e parleremo a voi,
> mentre che'l vento, come fa, ci tace.[24]

Interpretation is the definitive framework of the *Commedia*. For a guide Dante chooses Virgil, an *anima naturaliter christiana*, whose great popularity in the Middle Ages was due mainly to his *Messianic Eclogue* (the fourth) which has been regarded as the prophecy of the birth of Christ, in this sense he was thought to be able to see "present, past and future." Dante himself, however, though a cosmic traveller, still lives in a state of constant interpretation, the past, during his journey through Hell. Explaining what he considers a basically hermeneutic relationship between the character and the author of a work of fiction, Paul de Man writes that it "is (...) governed (...) solely by an act of understanding ..., [and] when another is chosen as a model of literary identity, as in the case of certain literary influences, the relationship takes on the form of an encounter (as between Dante and Virgil) and a recognition (*anagnorisis*) of the other as a temporal precursor."[25] The poet Dante's text will be the story of passion and resurrection only in the scope of the whole of the three parts: Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso, or rather the past, the present and the future. Carnal sinners are sentenced to constant separation, so Paolo and Francesca have been deprived of the hope of liberation, and will stay in a static eternity, suffering forever.

Blake's picture , on the other hand, shows a dynamic moment. There are three sources of energy. First of all, the sun is radiating light in the distance in the right corner. This is the most abstract and spiritual emblem of radiating power, as "the sun is

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[23] Dante Alighieri, *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata.* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1975) p. 24, *Inferno* V.139-142. "And all the while one spirit uttered this, / The other one did weep so, that, for pity, / I swooned away as if I had been dying, / And fell, even as a dead body falls." Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, transl. H. W. Longfellow (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1867).

[24] Dante, *Inferno* V.94-96. In Longfellow's translation: "Of what it pleases thee to hear and speak, / That will we hear, and we will speak to you, / While silent is the wind, as it is now."

[25] Paul de Man, *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism. The Gauss Seminar and Other Papers* ed. Burt, Newmark, Warminsky. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 21-22.

the symbol of the imagination... associated with the Divine Vision and the Divine Family" in Blake's system.[26] In his poem to Thomas Butts Los himself appears to him when the sun rises. Imagination is creative vision which transcends time.

> Then Los appear'd in all his power:
> In the Sun he appear'd, descending before
> My face in fierce flames; in my double sight
> 'Twas outward a Sun: inward Los in his might.
> (...)Los fiam'd in my path, & the Sun was hot
> With the bows of my Mind & the Arrows of Thought –[27]

Another form of energy is indicated by the whirlwind which breaks in at the foreground of the picture, as a river, under a thorny bank, and leaves the picture as a wind, after taking a whole swirl in the far corner. This is a concrete physical power. The central movement is a projection, coming out of the body of the "mental traveller," Dante. He is clothed in red. This is an imagined supernatural vision: a flame encloses Paolo and Francesca. They, as an emanation, leave Dante's body as the soul leaves the body at the moment of death. The plane of light is separated from the stream and from those who are being torn apart, other men and women. There is one standing figure at the lying figure's head who can be identified with Virgil. He is another aspect of the same human figure, but he is clothed in blue. Red and blue are the dominant colours in the watercolour. While red dominates in the bottom-left triangle where Classical bodies are being tossed, and a yellowish bloody river flows, blue characterises the upper-right corner where the bright sun is placed in a dark patch and the elongated Gothic bodies of Paolo and Francesca (painted in bluish-red) emanate from the protagonist's body. Some black and yellow give a change in both parts in front of a dark blue background. Every human figure has its own other self. Dante complements Virgil, Francesca belongs to Paolo, and every male figure has a female opposite, though only those in the sun are unified in a harmonious embrace, kissing each other, enjoying each other's presence. The others are separated or threatened with separation. Virgil is the intellectual witness, the only one in the state to recognise clearly the horror of the scene, with his back to the sun. Dante has lost consciousness, he is at the boundary of life and death in the state of a dream-vision, while the men and women are in constant

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[26] S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary. The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake* (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1965), p. 390.

[27] Blake, p. 818.

motion, striving to find each other. They are engaged in physical strife, trying to reach each other by physical strength. Probably, the picture can be seen as the description of physical (the lovers), emotional (Paolo and Francesca), intellectual (Virgil) and imaginative (the pair in the sun) faculties, most painfully separated from each other.

The lovers seem to be unified towards the upper part,[28] though some of them fall and lose their companion. Where the whirlwind is broken, Dante's body seems to be touched by one of the unfortunate, so he has a link to the main whirlwind beside the smaller one, where Paolo and Francesca are tossed and float helplessly. They soar *upwards* (heavenward), in the opposite direction to the "male figure, shown in a *reversed* cruciform position."[29] Only the sun indicates security and permanence. While Paolo and Francesca represent Dante's own inner division, or Dante's imagination, the pair in the sun projects the vision of a more general consciousness, "Imagination, the Holy Ghost." It has the separateness of the future where the pairs are headed, and also the past where harmony had been. It is emblematic of "innocence" and the original unity of Adam and Eve in Paradise, and also of harmony regained in Eternity, the condition of reintegration, that can be attained after the sphere of the present, represented by the two travellers. The viewer sees the Past, the Present and the Future together which suggests that the Past and the Future are equally present, and should be seen in every moment of our personal life.[30]

In his compassion Dante identifies himself with the tormented lovers. On the one hand, Dante's inner world is an internalised outer hell, that is, he is capable of offering us a survey of the history of mankind. On the other hand, the narrative is an externalised inner hell where Paolo and Francesca are tormented. Thus this particular episode, very much in the same way as the whole *Commedia*, can be read as Dante's own psycho-biography. The story of Paolo and Francesca is as much an outer (time-and-space specific) experience as a frame to express a generic, though personal psychic event.

In the Paolo and Francesca episode Dante is concerned with passion that is forbidden by traditional moral law, and the punishment meted out to the transgressors will never be lifted, while Blake interprets the story as emblematic of the fallen world that seeks redemption which is sure to come. He introduces the power of art, "holy imagination," that redeems and gives new life, and opens the future of conversion to a

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[28] Bindman, ed., *William Blake. His Art and Times* p. 180.

[29] Klonsky, p. 139.

[30] Correct perception can bring redemption at any moment. It triggers the state of the redeemed Albion where all the Zoas are "delighting in their brotherhood" (Klonsky p. 26).

true religion: Dante is seen in his picture as fallen into division as if he had been the sexless Albion of primeval unity. Dante's fallen state is reflected in the position of Paolo and Francesca, who correspond in my interpretation to Adam and Eve, the sexual contraries. The series of division in Blake's *Paolo and Francesca* can be seen as the story of man thrown into matter, who seeks a higher paradise of organised innocence. This is the theological design, that a true Christian follows in his journey in life from matter to spirit through the help of true art, in Blake's opinion. This is why the sun emblem is the goal of the movement of the return, and not only the "episode of Paolo and Francesca, represented in a kind of sun," as Bindman writes.[31] In his interpretation, the emblem of the initial sinful act, the sun, irradiates the whole picture.[32] Virgil is a viewer at first remove from Dante, Blake, the artist, is positioned at the second remove, thus he is able to correct the error of Dante's view of human history.[33]

In *The Circle of the Lustful* Blake seems to emphasise his own theory of imagination. In it the visual associations, practically speaking, destroy its ties with the original text and they create a view of the human condition which calls Dante's world view radically into question. In Dante the lovers are doomed to eternal punishment, whereas Blake definitely acquits them, interpreting their sin of adultery as if it was not a deliberate choice of theirs, and the fallen world can be corrected after undergoing experience. Blake ardently seeks Christ, which manifests itself in his illustration: the faculties of mercy and love dominate over tyrannical impersonal judgement. The power of imagination goes hand in hand with the remission of sins in his world.

> did he [Jesus Christ]... turn away the law from the woman taken in adultery?
> ... I tell you, no virtue can exist without breaking (these) ten commandments.
> Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse, not from rules,

wrote Blake in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* at the beginning of his career.[34] He did not believe in sin later either. Jesus as the Forgiveness of sins, perhaps, is the only motif that does not change its meaning during his career.

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[31] Bindman, ed., *William Blake. His Art and Times* p. 180.

[32] D. Bindman, ed. *William Blake. The Complete Graphic Works of William Blake.* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978), p. 22.

[33] However, Blake's attitude to Dante had been changing during his fourty-year career (this is the main subject of Tinkler-Villani's book), so it is a kind of oversimplification to pinpoint Blake's disagreement with Dante only. She distinguishes between Blake's experience during his writing *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-1793), making his portrait of Dante (1801-1802), and the illustrations to the *Comedy* (1824-1827).

[34] Blake, p. 158

He [Jesus] laid His hand on Moses' Law:
The Ancient Heavens, in Silent Awe
Writh with Curses from Pole to Pole,
All away began to roll (...)
To be Good only, is to be

A God [Devil *in pencil*] or else a Pharisee. (...)

Hide not from my Sight thy Sin,
That forgiveness thou maist win.(...)[35]

Thy Sins are all forgiven thee.[36]

Jesus is sympathy and co-suffering which equals imagination according to *The Everlasting Gospel*, his very last poetic statement.

Rossetti has painted his figures of *Paolo and Francesca da Rimini* (1855) in a different pose from that of the Blake picture. The lovers are holding each other, which is only one tiny aspect of the conception that Blake indicated in the sun emblem. Rossetti's illustration reminds the viewer of Renaissance boxes and the decorative details of mediaeval illuminated codices. The nostalgically mediaeval, and, at the same time, religious form, the triptych, compels the viewer to be ready to worship as the triptych formation, and invokes immediately an image of an icon on an altar.

Rossetti's couple in the first panel are sitting on a bench in a crowded historical interior. The colourful codex and the Rosette provide a characteristic accessory to create a mediaeval atmosphere. The viewer has a suspicion, however, that it is only a fake mediaeval scene in the interpreting mind of late posterity. Paolo and Francesca have individualised faces, painted after models. The painting is extremely bright, unlike Blake's watercolour. Rossetti's colours (the mixture of brown and red, blue and yellow, green and yellow, black and yellow, etc.) are "intense but not pure, because it is not altogether seen in the *luce intellettual, piena d'amore.*"[37] The whole scene recalls some painfully beautiful memory, set in front of a window, made to substitute the "real" sun, presented in Blake's picture, transmitting positive and redemptive energy. Here it separates this claustrophobic space from everything which is behind it: ordinary people and normal life. In the third panel the pair stay close, never to leave each other. They

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[35] Blake, p. 754.

[36] Blake, p. 758.

[37] N. Gray, *Rossetti, Dante and Ourselves*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), p. 26.

cling to each other, and press their faces together in gentle affection. With closed eyes they are carried along in the whirlwind or watery current, compelled to surrender to outside physical forces completely. Their enforced surrender, however, does not suggest separation, on the contrary, they will stay together forever in an eternal desperate carnal embrace; here their relationship, compared to the first panel, seems to be more permanent. They are among beautifully arranged rows of flames or fish swimming in unity, flying and floating and filling the empty space completely to make it as confined as is possible. The middle panel shows two male figures with wreaths on their heads in a moving pose. Virgil and Dante are struck with awe, seeing the lovers, and are turning their heads in the direction of the sorrowful, melancholy pair. The passive witnesses are more disciplined than those in Dante's and Blake's works, moreover, the main characters are not they but the lovers, Paolo and Francesca. It is a typical Rossetti painting, N. Gray claims, as many elements (the setting in a shut-in-room with a window where there is no space to stand up, the employment of a chorus of emotionally detached figures, and the tense atmosphere) are known from his many other paintings. The three panels – in the order they are in – stand for temporal and causative relationships. The first panel is the cause in the past, the middle panel shows the viewer-interpreter in the present, and the third panel is the consequence: the state from which there is no release, consequently it is the eternal future.

Beside the brilliant colouring it is the rhythm of the composition which is the most charming pictorial means in Rossetti's lyrical painting. As it was mentioned before, his mastery of exploiting his genuine sense of rhythm in painting is exhibited particularly when he composes on a flat plane as in the case of painting the story of Paolo and Francesca. The patterning, (fish/flames), and the altar-form (with the idea of separation in boxes) produce a surrealistic montage. The montage brings out and emphasises the intensity of the original narrative, which has been called into life as a symbol of emotional absorption (that of the lovers, that of Virgil and Dante, and that of the painter himself), according to Rossetti's own artistic will.

Rossetti illustrates the episode by translating the text into visual experience but his picture can hardly be classified as a vision in Blakean sense. In spite of their similar concepts of art and the same source, Rossetti's illustration has no relation with Blake's. Rossetti, in all probability, made his illustration to the story of Paolo and Francesca independently from the Blake illustration. Considering the work as frame or interpretation,[38] the attachment behind the picture can be said to be twofold; on the

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[38] See P. Schwenger, "Blake's Boxes, Coleridge's Circles, and the Frame of Romantic Vision" *Studies in Romanticism*, 35 (1996), p. 114.

one hand, it shows Rossetti's attraction to the Florentine master, on the other hand, his attraction to the model, Elisabeth Siddal. Thus it seems to be an inspiration that helps him to define himself as a modern Dante:

> it has often seemed to me that all work, to be truly worthy, should be wrought out of the age itself, as well as out of the soul of the producer, which must needs be a soul of the age

he writes in *Saint Agnes of Intercession* in 1848.[39]

Nevertheless, in the story of Paolo and Francesca, Rossetti, the modern Dante, interprets love differently from the way the Florentine master interpreted it. Spiritual love merges into carnal love in the concept of love in Rossetti's interpretation.[40] For Dante, the mediaeval poet, however, carnal love is the aspect of the Past, which is inevitable Death and Hell; though this consequence cannot be accepted by Dante, the protagonist. (This clash between Dante the theologian and Dante the poet is the challenge Blake seems to respond to by resolving it through his own emphases.) Spiritual love is the aspect of Future Redemption which is Eternal Life in Heaven to Alighieri Dante. (For Blake sex "is an ascent into an ideal, which opens the way into Eternity."[41]) It is carnal love, the state of the Past only (without its growing into Future), which he embellished nostalgically in the presentation of the love between Paolo and Francesca. From it there is no way out; there is no Redemption which would bring Happiness. Rossetti identifies himself with Dante, the protagonist, not with Dante, the poet, and he cannot accept the gruesome fate to which Paolo and Francesca have been sentenced. The consequence of his co-suffering with the lovers is eternal melancholy. Rossetti's enthusiasm for early Italian, mediaeval art, the Florentine Renaissance, expresses a basically Platonic view of reality His emphasis on the momentariness of human life is expressed in his most beloved poetic form, the sonnet,

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[39] Quoted by Gray p. 24.

[40] Art for Rossetti is a mixture of sacred and profane elements. Rossetti's most characteristic picture, *The Annunciation* (1849) has Blake-like symbolic dimensions, and it plays the text and design against one another by adding the profane-sexual overtone, the reference to rape. It introduces a Victorian bedroom as a pictorial space. Though the picture is very powerful, the scope of the narrative stays within the scope of an everyday event. Mary is not dressed in decorated clothes, on the contrary, she is in a white underwear. The figure of the angel recalls a handsome lover rather than a proper apparition, so there is an element of sexual threat in his appearance. Rossetti reduces the sacredness of the biblical meaning by means of actualisation.

[41] Damon, pp. 367-368.

the "moment's monument, – /Memorial from the Soul's eternity. / To one dead deathless hour."[42] Rossetti's *Paolo and Francesca* is a realistically observed authentic moment in the life of the soul of the artist. It is a personal document: human love immortalised by art. Claustrophobic space may express the fear of the intense pain of loss as well as the fear of the cruelty and derision of a callous, artless world. Fulfilment is not within the reach of modern man or woman: universal sorrow and loss rule in the human world, which, however, can be transmuted into Beauty. But the "platonic ideal" is impossible to apprehend in the Present, and probably it will not be disclosed in the Future either.

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[42] Rossetti, *The Poetical Works* p. 176.

Andrea Timár

On "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" has been subject to several interpretations since it first appeared. The endless swirl of polemics, stemming chiefly from the "mystery" of the last lines, began with T. S. Eliot's infamous statement ("this line strikes me as a serious blemish on a beautiful poem"[1]) and proceeded with the consecutive commentaries of several critics devoted to the New Criticism[2] or the French "explication de texte."[3] Finally, Helen Vendler[4] published a collection of essays on the Odes which was the first to consider the poem as being itself a possible interpretation of an aesthetic experience.[5]

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[1] T. S. Eliot, "Dante" in G. S. Fraser, ed., *Keats: Odes* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 128.

[2] Such as Cleanth Brooks and Kenneth Burke: Cleanth Brooks, "Keats' Sylvan Historian" in *The Well-Wrought Urn* (Brace: Dennis Dobson and Hardcourt, 1944); Kenneth Burke, "Symbolic Action in a Poem by Keats" in G. S. Fraser.

[3] Leo Spitzer, "Ode on a Grecian Urn, or Content vs. Metagrammar" in *Essays on English and American Literature* (Princeton: N. J., 1962).

[4] Helen Vendler, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" in *The Odes of John Keats* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983).

[5] Helen Vendler interprets the *Ode* as consecutive propositions of three hypotheses about aesthetic experience. The first is historical or mythological aiming at other people (first stanza), while the second is allegorical, archetypal and ideal aiming at our human aspirations (second and third stanza). Both of them are rejected in the fourth stanza where the urn "is most truly described as a self-contained, anonymous world, complete in itself, which asks from us an empathic identification supremely free both of factual inquiry and of self interest," although it contains no answer to the major questions of origin and end. All through the poem, however, the main question arises from the "dilemma of the subject matter and the medium, of *men* and *marble*," that is to say from the coexistence of "the sensory participation in the represented scene and the intellectual awareness of the medium." (This latter one always disturbs the

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This paper is meant to be a response to the challenges mentioned above and by the combination of strict close-reading with a hermeneutic approach will hopefully offer some new insights into the Ode.

SPECTATOR AND ARTIST: THE TWOFOLD SITUATION OF THE SPEAKER

Accepting that this poem by Keats is "a possible interpretation of an aesthetic experience" requires an account of the initial situation of the speaker who, by being spectator and artist at the same time, combines two apparently contradictory intentions: interpretation, which is a penetration inside a work of art, and creation, which is the expression of something "from inside." It will be argued that these two activities interchange in the poem, and how the intent of interpretation turns necessarily into creation.

If we consider Leo Spitzer's argument that the Ode, by being The Ode *on* – and not *to* – a Grecian Urn implies a commentary,[6] we may assert that the initial situation of the speaker is that of a spectator. But the effect of being a "commentary," which suggests a certain distance between the speaker and his subject, immediately disappears when the speaker addresses and anthropomorphises the urn. Thus, while the title expresses a "pre-poetic" state in which the speaker intends to write on an imaginary artefact (in the third person singular), the first line, with the appearance of the urn called into being, indicates a more intimate relationship with the object (*thou*). This personification seems to be the first step of both the process of the interpretation, which ultimately aims – without ever reaching it – at a self-identification with the object (that it becomes *I*)[7] and the poetic intention of expression, which requires that the object be a part of the subject (*I* again). We must, however, differentiate the "concrete" object that the speaker pretends to see from the questions (not rhetorical but real

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sensory participation.) The final statement of the urn is then "the paradoxical union of stimuli to sensation and thought alike." But we must realise "that it makes an announcement from the special perspective of its own being [...] from its own eternity at once so liberating and so limited." It is finally a "self-elucidating speech," since the urn "is only a *silent form* when the wrong kinds of truth are asked of it." The urn "speaks the only language that Keats can invent which he believes adequate to an eternal being [...] the bare prepositional form and the diction of Platonic abstraction."

[6] Spitzer p. 84.

[7] "There is in principle no radical separation between the work of art and the person who experiences it." See Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful" in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 28.

questions) accompanied by the vivid visions that this object inspires him to articulate. From that difference we can distinguish poetry from perception in one context and, in another one, poetry from sculpture and "active" interpretation from "passive" visual experience.[8] What do we know about the urn itself? Almost nothing. It is a *shape*, the juxtaposition of human but not humane empty forms, a static *brede* made of *marble*.[9] What makes it a work of art is "the *invocation* of a potentially whole and holy order of things" and "the experience of the beautiful."[10] The consideration that invocation requires perception and experience requires interpretation (in addition to the fact that even the existence of the urn results from the speaker's imagination) means at the same time that the urn would remain a dead shape without the vivid scenes of the world "behind" it, without the visions of the poet, that is to say, without poetry.

In *Phaedrus* Plato suggests that "it is by virtue of the beautiful that we are able to acquire a lasting remembrance of the true world."[11] With regard to Plato's influence being implicit in the poem, we may ask how the speaker – wearing the mask of an interpreter – intends to grasp the true world (the *truth*), the transcendence of the work of art – already evoked by the word *urn* connoting both art and death.

> The completed form never exists as a concrete aspect of the work. (...) It is constituted in the mind of the interpreter as the work discloses itself in response to his questioning. But this dialogue between work and interpreter is endless. The hermeneutic understanding is always, by its very nature, lagging behind: to understand something is to realise that one has always known it, but, at the same time, to face the mystery of his hidden knowledge.[12]

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[8] "This is the paradox of interpretation, that the subject matter is the same and each interpretation different" See R. E. Palmer, "Gadamer's Dialectical Hermeneutics" in *Hermeneutics* (Northwestern University Press, 1969), p. 211.

[9] Cf. Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful* p. 26: "Kant has a remarkable doctrine. He defended the view that in painting, form is the vehicle of beauty. Colour, on the other hand, is supposed to be simply a stimulus, a matter of sensuous affection that remains subjective and thus nothing to do with its genuine artistic or aesthetic formation."

[10] Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful* (italics mine) p. 32.

[11] Gadamer's terming, in *The Relevance of the Beautiful* p. 15.

[12] Paul de Man, "Form and Intent in the American New Criticism" in *Blindness and Insight* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 32.

However strange it may seem, the Ode, by being "in the words of Théophile Gautier 'une transposition d'art,'"[13] an attempt to express a visual work of art through the medium of language or in this case through a sequence of interrogations, shows a surprising similarity with the "dialectical hermeneutics" of Gadamer described in *Truth and Method*.[14] If we face the fact that Keats, in a letter written to Benjamin Baily in 1817 (two years before the composition of the *Ode*), had already declared:

> I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination. – What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth – whether it existed before or not –,[15]

we will not try to overanalyse the "meaning" of the urn's utterance[16] (it seems like a romantic aphorism with a self-evident meaning, or – with reference to Paul de Man's assumption – the realisation of something that the speaker has always known and, at the same time, the acknowledgement of the mystery of his hidden knowledge), but rather explain why this statement is the only possible ending of the poem both syntactically and semantically. First of all, accepting Gadamer's view "that the work of art [both the imaginary urn and the poem itself] speaks to us as a work and not as a bearer of a message,"[17] we can surmise that the "essence" of both the urn and the poem cannot be found in the last lines but in the process of questioning, in the speaker's struggle, inspired by the imaginary urn, for its understanding. Thus the aim is not necessarily the grasping of the transcendent world of the urn, but the process of the struggle itself, which, besides being valuable in itself will, however, reach transcendency – not by attaining its initial goal: the complete self-identification with the object – but by becoming itself a work of art: a poem. Before going into the details of this struggle led by the poet-interpreter, I would like to amplify the problem of the

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[13] Spitzer p. 72.

[14] The task of hermeneutics is "to bring the text out of the alienation in which it finds himself back into the living present of dialogue, whose primordial fulfilment is question and answer." Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, quoted by Palmer p. 200.

[15] M Buxton, ed., *The Letters of John Keats* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 67.

[16] As did Burke who, by asserting that the statement of the urn has the function to solve the original contradiction between science and art, neglected the difference between reality and truth and did not take into consideration either Plato's philosophy or the fact that the close relation between beauty and truth was almost a common place in the 19th century. (Probably that is why T. S. Eliot considered it "a serious blemish on a beautiful poem.")

[17]Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful* p. 33.

relationship between the urn and the speaker with a brief reflection on the "Apollonian" and "Dionysian" elements of the text.

DREAM AND ECSTASY

As several critics[18] have pointed out alluding to *The Birth of Tragedy* by Nietzsche, one can find Dionysian and Apollonian elements in the ode. Disagreeing with those who tried to prove that the first three stanzas are the objectivation of Dionysiac art while the fourth stanza describes a typically Apollonian scene, I would suggest that the alternation of the Apollonian and Dionysiac elements does not result from the succession of the scenes but from the fact that the "subjective" fantasies of the speaker are framed by the "objective" static shape of the urn.[19]

Apart from the attributes quoted below, Nietzsche characterises Apollonian art by closeness, immobility, rigidity and moderation, and compares Apollonian consciousness to a thin veil hiding the Dionysiac world.[20] It is almost obvious then, that it is the Attic Shape that corresponds to the Apollonian and not the scene described in the fourth stanza as Spitzer and Bowra assumed. The fact that those parts of the first three stanzas which describe ecstatic, wild scenes accompanied by music and never ending desire are Dionysiac is beyond doubt. But in order to prove that the fourth stanza belongs also to the Dionysiac realm, we will see first what Nietzsche says

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[18] M. Bowra "Ode on a Grecian Urn" in *The Romantic Imagination* (Oxford University Press, 1961), and Spitzer among others.

[19] Patrick Bridgwater, *Nietzsche in Anglosaxony* (Leicester University Press, 1972), p. 23: "contrasting Homer, 'the aged dreamer sunk in himself, the type of the Apollonian naive artist' with Archilochus, 'the subjectively willing and desiring man [the Dionysiac genius]' Nietzsche remarks that 'here the objective artist is confronted by the first subjective artist.'" Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, transl. Shaun Whiteside (London: Penguin Books, 1993), pp. 16–17: "Apollo, the deity of all plastic forces [...], the deity of light, also holds sway over the beautiful illusion of the inner fantasy world. [...] But the dream image [...] needs that restraining boundary, that freedom from wilder impulses, that sagacious calm of the sculptor god. [...] [Apollo is] the glorious divine image of the principium individuationis, from whose gestures and looks all the delight, wisdom and beauty of 'illusion' speak to us." [The Dionysiac:] „the blissful ecstasy which, prompted by the fragmentation of the principium individuationis, rises up from man's innermost core, indeed from nature. [...] Under the influence of the narcotic potion [Nietzsche uses the analogy of intoxication] hymned by all primitive men and peoples, or in the powerful approach of the spring, joyfully penetrating the whole of the nature, those Dionysiac urges are awakened, and as they grow more intense, subjectivity becomes a complete forgetting of the self."

[20] Nietzsche, pp. 17–27.

about the Dionysiac art and then analyse – now only from this approach – the scene in question.

> Those Dionysiac urges are awakened, and as they grow more intense, subjectivity becomes a complete forgetting of the self. [...] Not only is the bond between man and man sealed by the Dionysiac magic: alienated, hostile or subjugated nature, too, celebrates her reconciliation with her lost son, man. [...] Singing and dancing, man expresses himself as a member of higher community: he has forgotten how to walk and talk, and is about to fly dancing into the heavens. His gesture express enchantment. [...] In the Dionysiac dithyramb, man's symbolic faculties are roused to their supreme intensity: a feeling never before experienced is struggling for expression – the destruction of the veil of Maya ...[21]

"The imagery of the pious sacrifice [...] suggests a bond of communication between the levels." – asserts Burke.[22]

Although I would rather say that the leap (in the Kierkegaardian sense of the word) to transcendency remains a mere attempt, a desire (the whole scene takes place on the ground, the "heifer" is just "lowing *at* the skies," the mystery of the "priest" is unrevealed), it is true that the "whole population takes part in the ritual"[23] and the scene emphasises not individual but communal life. The "altar" is "green," and the "little town," wherever it is, is related to nature. Instead of the Apollonian unity and individuality we find the plurality of "skies," the community of the "folk" and the undetermined scenery. The scene is naturalistic ("heifer lowing") instead of being *art*ificial and even has a baroquish atmosphere evoked by the "silken flanks with garlands drest" and the oxymoron: "peaceful citadel." Only the frame, the "little town" suggests the harmony of a gentle world. In addition to all these, speech is excluded from this scene as well as from the others (only animal lowing can be heard here) and "silken flanks" can even refer to the "lower sense" of touch.

The possibility of making a distinction between the urn itself (together with the pictures that it depicts) representing the Apollonian part and the vivid visions of the narrator representing the Dionysian part also means that the beholding and desiring subject must be regarded separately from the visual object. On the other hand, placing the problem in the context of Heidegger, we may even say, that the ode is the

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[21] Nietzsche, pp. 17, 18, 21.

[22] Burke, p. 115.

[23] Brooks, p. 131.

representation *par excellence* of the "aesthetic tension" between "earth" (represented by the urn as a pure object) and "world" (represented by the speaker).[24]

To make a brief summary of all that has been said, we can conclude that the poem seems to be the expression of a process of interpretation and so raises the problem of the subject-object relationship. Furthermore, the fact that the object is a visual artefact whereas the subject necessarily uses the medium of language, adds a new dimension to the initial problem.

"THIS OBSCURE OBJECT OF DESIRE"

Concentrating on the speaker's interpretation of the urn (and regardless of its representation as a pure object, an "*Attic shape*"), a conspicuous parallelism will be seen between the anthropomorphised work of art (the first three lines), the subject of the scenes animated by the speaker's imagination, the subject matter of the poem (as it was defined above) and the reader's approach to the poetic text, which comes down to their sharing the theme of struggle for an unreachable goal.

1. The first three lines represent the urn as the "*unravished* bride of quietness," the "*foster*-child of silence and slow time," and a "*sylvan* historian." "Unravished" and "bride" invoke innocence and purity as well as the still unsatisfied desire of "quietness," "foster-child" reflects the ambiguity of her nature being different from silence and slow time, and "sylvan" connoting the natural, the unconscious, the mysterious and the unknown seems to be in contrast with "historian." Thus, despite the ostensible harmony, the initial lines contain an inherent tension which derives from her being "not entirely the same as…" and, as a result, are the mirror image of the tension between the subject and the object. (Anyway, only a functional – not artistic – object could be merely silent, quiet or the witness of history.)

2. The represented forms of the scenes show attitudes of pursuit and flight (of desire accompanied necessarily by the above mentioned tension), of music-making, and of sacrifice aiming at – or desiring – the initiation to transcedency.

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[24] The building up of "earth" and the exhibition of "world" are the two basic tendencies of a work of art. The *aesthetic tension* is described in terms of the intrisinc tension between "earth", as the creative ground of things, and "world" [...]. The work of art, as a happening in which truth comes to unconcealment, represents a capturing of this creative tension in a form. Thus it brings into the realm of being as a whole and holds open to man the inner struggle between earth and world. [...] "Beauty is a way that truth as unconcealment happens." M. Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, 1935, quoted by Palmer, p. 159.

3. The poem itself represents the speaker's struggle for the complete understanding and the expression of a work of art which is, moreover, personified as female *(bride)*. Since this understanding is as impossible as the possession of the maidens or the leap to transcendency, we can surmise that the pictures on the urn are not just typical Greek scenes representing typically ideal states of being (in the Platonic sense of the word), but they are also the symbols of the interpretation itself.

4. However, while we, the readers of the poem try to approach a poetic text with the help of everyday language, the speaker uses the medium of poetic language to approach a visual work of art. This "poetic intention" raises both the question whether the expression of a visual, timeless work of art (timeless in its abstract and concrete sense) is possible by the "temporal art" of language and whether the distance between spectacle and spectator can ever be destroyed by language. But we must not forget that there is a difference between the language of poetry and that of prose.[25] While discursive prose is referential, rational, linear and reflects the concept of time by its very nature (each verb has a temporal aspect), poetic language can be closer to visual and musical arts. In the following, we will see through the close reading of the poem how the speaker approaches the visual and the musical, and why the "poetic" text ends with a "cold" philosophical sentence (both in the moral and the grammatical sense of the word). Thus, from now on, we will concentrate on the question of poetic language and on its mediatory function between the conscious mind and a visual artefact.

> ...romantic thought and romantic poetry seem to come so close to giving in completely to the nostalgia for the object that it becomes difficult to distinguish between object and image, between imagination and perception, between an expressive or constitutive and a mimetic or literal language. [...]
> ...critics who speak of a 'happy relationship' between matter and consciousness fail to realise that the very fact that the relationship has to be

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[25] Cf. Paul de Man, "Lyric and Modernity" in *Blindness and Insight* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 168: "In eighteenth century speculations about the origins of language, the assertion that the archaic language is that of poetry, the contemporary or modern language that of prose is a commonplace. Vico, Rousseau, and Herder, to mention only the most famous names, all assert the priority of poetry over prose, often with a value-emphasis that seems to interpret the loss of spontaneity as a decline [...]. Be this as it may, it remains that regardless of value judgements, the definition of poetry as the first language gives it an archaic, ancient quality that is the opposite of modern, whereas the deliberate, cold and rational character of discursive prose, which can only imitate or represent the original impulse if it does not ignore it altogether, would be the true language of modernity. The same assumption appears during the eighteenth century, with 'music' substituting for 'poetry' and opposed to language or literature as an equivalent of prose."

established within the medium of language indicates that it does not exist in actuality.[26]

TIME, MUSIC AND STRUCTURE

Accepting that timelessness is one of the most dominant features of both the world that the urn invokes and of visual art itself, we will examine how the poetic language approaches this timelessness and how the structure of the poem reveals at the same time the temporal nature of both the process of interpretation and the poetic discourse. We will see also, that the alternation of timelessness and temporality, and the sudden changes of tone correspond to that "game" of engagement-disengagement which is so characteristic of the critical attitude.[27]

Despite the inherent tension, which anticipates not only the theme of desire, but also the opposition between mobility-immobility ("quietness"), audible-inaudible("silence"), time-timelessness ("slow time"), the first three lines of the ode invoke harmony and represent a contrast to mortality. Since time is implicitly present in the succession of "bride," "child" and "historian" (connoting old age) which, by meeting in the urn (connoting death) imply the suppression of human life-time.

In the next lines, by a sudden change of tone, the quietness turns into struggle (invoking both the possibility of death and conception, so both the end and the beginning of life), ecstasy, violence and madness, the "bride" into "maidens loth," the silence into music, and, on the syntactical and morphological level, the singular turns into plural and the positive description into perplexed questions. Although immobility is replaced by movements, the absence of verbs (the temporal aspect of language) remains a remarkable feature of the propositions.

The second stanza, carrying on the theme of music, starts with the sudden interruption of the philosophical mind disturbing the stream of the overwhelming visions, that never permits the definitive surrender of the subject to the object. The next three lines anticipate "dost tease us out of thought" by asking the pipes to "play on" and therefore resuming the broken exaltation. The questions followed by a statement change into exclamations and the excitement is rendered even more perceptible by the language structures which render the swirl of the propositions comparable to the incantation of initiation ceremonies (anticipating the second scene).

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[26] Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 7.

[27] Helen Venedler (*The Odes of John Keats* p. 126) uses the expression "engagement -disengagment" in a slightly different sense than I do here.

The vocabulary is very simple, but through the repetition of central words, sounds and syntactic patterns accompanied by an always intensifying rhythm, the description reaches an almost ecstatic level. Thus, the theme of music (*the* non-referentiality[28] where the high pitched sound of the pipe is in harmonious accordance with the low pitched sound of the timbrels) is accompanied by the musicality of the language, which stands in opposition with referential everyday language ("parching tongue"), based on the concepts of time, space and oppositions. It is not surprising then, that human speech is excluded from the ideal world and is replaced by music or by animal lowing. The only verb alluding to speech is negated ("nor ever bid") and the non-uttered word is a loan-word ("adieu"). After examining how poetry approaches the non-referentiality of transcendency, let us see what the means are by which it invokes timelessness.

As verbs reflect the temporal aspect of language, verblessness, which is not only a characteristic of the first stanza but of the following stanzas as well, can be a means to bring the language closer to the timeless nature of the urn. In the majority of cases verbs are replaced by present participles emphasising the never-beginning and never-ending nature of the actions. Even if a verb appears in the description of the scenes, it is either a negated modal verb – stressing on the one hand the *non*-referential nature of the "ideal" word (in the second stanza) as opposed to "reality" where verbs (the concept of time) do have sense, and on the other the impossibility ("cannot," "canst not," "never can" "nor ever can" etc.) of all that is possible in the temporal world –, or it describes a state instead of an action or a positive – not negated – experience ("are," "is"). (For time being the quotient of movement and space, if one of them – in this case movement – is missing, time becomes undefinable.) The three exceptions to the rule are as follows: 1. "*play on*" (it does not require any comment) 2. "*Pipe* to the spirit ditties of no tone" (it can be explained by the facts that the word pipe is repeated four times in three stanzas, that the only verb form in which it appears is this imperative, that it always designates perpetuity – once made explicit by "for ever" – and that it is almost an onomatopoeia increasing the musical effect of the description – music being *the* non-referential and *the* ideal art –); 3. "*lead'st*" (it can well be due to the context giving to it some special connotations, such as initiation or elevation to

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[28] To solve the paradox that sculpture is a referential art but the ideal that language tries to approach is non-referential, we must take again into consideration that the object is not beautiful in itself but becomes beautiful in the eyes of the beholder, because it has the capacity *to invoke* the beautiful. This is what Bowra (p. 141) calls the "indefinable 'other.'" It means that although a visual artefact can well be referential, the urn evokes a world beyond all references. Instead of imitating or depicting a real referent, it is as schematic as an icon made to represent not "reality" but "truth."

transcendency). Thus the only verb standing in opposition with the previous ones is "leaves," which is neither modal, nor negated and invokes the past as well as the concept of movement.

The sudden reminiscence of reality (last lines of the 3rd stanza) at the end of the first scene representing an eternal "before the orgy" state where the predominant senses are sight and hearing (not requiring an immediate relationship with the object) shows man "after the orgy" with the sense of taste and an immediate pain in his head. As a result, the prevailing verblessness with its suspension at the end of the scene reflect the contrast between the object (timeless) and the beholding subject (temporal).

Regarding the atemporal aspect of visionary language resulting from the absence of verbs, we can thus conclude that the description of the scenes seems to be in contrast with the rest of the poem. But the rest, however, may well be as non-referential as the visions intend to be, since each verb is used in the future tense. It is the future tense, by the way, that makes each proposition at the same time universally and eternally true (as opposed to actually real) and non-referential. The last stanza of the poem expresses this nostalgia for timelessness the most acutely, by stressing the temporal nature of human life. Each word of the line "When old age shall this generation waste" stands in opposition with the visions and the urn itself.

However, we will see later that despite verblessness and musicality which permit the invocation of the ideal world, the speaker is not able to detach himself from reality, as language cannot be non-referential.

In the second scene (4th stanza), the previous description is altered by questions, the speaker approaches the urn again and, by carrying on verblessness and by giving proof of the impossibility to choose between opposite things (the scenery is either a mountain or a river or a seashore – the earthly extremes of the vertical axe), emphasises the contrast between reality and the scene depicted on the urn. (The details and the "meaning" of this interrogative description have been already analysed.) But the visions are unexpectedly disturbed by the sudden intervention of the conscious mind (and of the future tense).

Thus, through a kind of demystification, the speaker (and the reader) realises that there is no way back to the past (the "little town" is suddenly taken for real and not for imaginary), it remains silent for ever. The renunciation of further questions also means a capitulation to mystery. The fifth stanza reflects this distance, as if the speaker had been teased out not of thoughts but of the ecstatic state which reflected the fallacy

that the spectator could ever become one with the object.[29] The climax of this identification was reached in fact at the very moment when the imaginary was taken for real, but, by a sudden transition, it led immediately to its extreme opposite: the definitive detachment of the subject from the object.

The eternal present of the scenes turns into actual present and, as in an "eternal recurrence," the speaker addresses the urn again. This time, however, he does not anthropomorphise it into bride, child or historian: the urn is simply (as it was in that pre-poetic state) an Attic shape with "brede of marble men." Although the speaker resumes the initial orgiastic scene, it seems, since his point of view is in the actual present and he considers his visions as the past, that the scene has somewhat changed its character. Apart from being completely inert without the vivid visions of the speaker (besides the already mentioned "brede / Of marble...," the sublime "happy boughs" became realistic "forest branches"), the *"trodden"* weed" and the word *"overwrought"* invoke a development in time as well which is in contrast with the original timelessness. These lines reflect then that even if the work of art is eternal, the process of interpretation is necessarily related to the concept of time. As for the urn itself, it seems that by the end of the poem it has regained its definitive closeness and plasticity.

As a result, the last lines hold a paradox on the contextual level.[30] Whereas they are preceded by a conscious state of mind – the subject is detached from the object –, which is similar to the pre-poetic state of the title (but only like two points above each other on a spiral) and add to the effect of circularity corresponding to the shape of the urn, the urn itself suddenly speaks, takes the "right to speak" from the speaker, and therefore (by going beyond the simple personification which required a beholding subject) becomes similar to the autonomous subject. Thus, instead of remaining a personified object being part of the speaker's imagination, it obtains the status of a real person. Although this paradox could be easily solved if we considered it as the end of a process of interpretation, when the interpreter finally grasps the "message" of the object, it will be argued that the solution, if there is any, is not as simple as that.

Before going into any further analysis of the last lines we can conclude from the structure of the ode, implying the above mentioned game of engagement-disengagement, that the speaker, while trying to destroy temporality through the poetic

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[29] Nietzsche, p. 18 about the Dionysiac magic: "Man is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art: the artistic power of the whole of nature reveals itself to the supreme gratification of the primal Oneness amidst the paroxysms of intoxication."

[30] For the other paradoxes either in the whole poem or only in these lines, see Brooks.

language, remains aware of the impossibility of destroying the temporal nature of either the process of interpretation or the poetic discourse.

> "*WHO CANST THUS EXPRESS*
> *A FLOWERY TALE MORE SWEETLY THAN OUR RHYME*"

To examine the final statement, we should first give an account of another, maybe unintentional means of expressing non-referentiality, and then consider how the poem reflects – intentionally – the referential nature of language, and how "dialectical hermeneutics" tries to approach the essence of the work of art.

The above quoted proposition reveals (besides its self-evident "meaning") an interesting feature of the vocabulary of the ode, which is the recurrence of the word "sweet." The frequent use of this word may seem strange, as in spite of the fact that it refers to the lower sense of taste, it designates a quality that by the comparison becomes *the* supreme quality, necessarily "truth." Since it reappears in the second stanza in connection with music, we can inquire what could inspire this choice. The reader can hardly answer the question unless the word alludes to another text. As it well-known, Keats' diction is full of Shakespearean reminiscences; an antecedent of this use of "sweet" may probably be found in Sonnet 54:

> O how much more doth beauty beauteous seem
> By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!

Accepting Helen Vendler's assumption that "Sweetness and beauty are two of Shakespeare's constituting categories of value, standing respectively for inward virtue and outward show,"[31] we may propose that "sweet" in the Ode has that Shakespearean connotation. If we accept that intertextuality increases the effect of "irreality," the above observation will not seem a mere *acte gratuit*.

As for the grammatical features of the proposition, in vain does it seem to be a positive statement (about the urn), it reflects the incapability (of the speaker) to express what these tales are actually like. He cannot do anything but compare it to the "rhymes" (sculpture versus poetry) and stress the superiority of the urn by alluding to poetry which this work of art is *not*.

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[31] Helen Vendler, *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 98.

Gradation and negation, being the predominant features of the language of the ode, reflect then the difficulty to express what the urn (the symbol of transcendent art) actually *is*, without referring to the human world. This problem rises in the second and the third stanzas as well, which describe the "ideal" word by negating the "real" one, as if the previous one was inexpressible by language. The fact that the visions of the scenes do not contain a single statement only interrogations and verbless or negated exclamations (according to Aristotle[32] the verbless structures cannot be called statement), seems to support the idea that nothing can be said positively about the world of the urn.

If we add to all that has been said the distinction made by Heidegger in *The Origin of the Work of Art* between the characteristics of a "thing" and the "thing" itself, which assumes that the essence of this latter is not identifiable from all its various characteristics, we can conclude – for in the stream of questions each interrogative is either "what" or "who" (instead of "what is it like," "why" or "where") –, that the ode represents a desperate struggle to grasp the "essence" of the urn through a description, which is an attempt that necessarily ends in failure.

It seems then, that the final philosophical statement does not stand for a kind of illumination rising from the aesthetic experience, but is a knowledge(!), that one can have on earth without being able to make the final leap to transcendency. It is the message of the urn – and a message can be articulated, whereas the essence seems to be inexpressible. (If we accepted that this statement represents the essence, we should also accept the superiority of abstract philosophical language over poetry and the visual arts.)

However, we must not forget that this statement is not made by the speaker but by the urn and that it closes a poem in which the speaker himself has not made any statement. If we assume that the urn (now separated from the beholder) is the transcendent art itself, we do not expect it to speak the poetic language of the gazer which intended to be a medium of transcendency, but the only language which can express the nature of the transcendency itself, the only general truth expressible by words. The poet-interpreter, never being identical with his object cannot make a statement, but the urn, being a subject identical with its object, can. The urn speaks the abstract (neither perceptible – silent –, nor referential) language of its own eternity that cannot be compared to poetry. It dwells in "another dimension." Thus the speaking of the "silent" urn doesn't deny the value of the process of interpretation (by suggesting

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[32] Arisztotelész, *Hermeneutika* (Debrecen: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1994), p. 16.

that the interpreter couldn't catch the essence), but rather represents ultimate poetry, where the object of the speaker becomes an autonomous subject.

At the same time, however, we all know that the silent shape is rendered expressive and vivid only by the speaker's imagination, which permits the dead form to become a "flowery tale," a poem. Hence, in spite of the fact that the speaker is not able to reach the ultimate goal of the interpretation, the complete self-identification with the object, he can express this struggle with the object and can also create a new work of art, which is not the mere interpretation of an already existing one. As a result, the object of interpretation turns out to be a source of inspiration, and the only means by which one can grasp the transcendency of art turns out to be creation.

Judit Nényei

The Dancer as *Femme Fatale*

in Arthur Symons, W. B. Yeats and James Joyce

Arthur Symons describes the dancer as "the intellectual as well as sensuous appeal of a living symbol [...] *her* gesture, all pure symbol."[1] It is worth considering why it is so obvious that the dancer must be female. The origin of the dancer, as essentially female, does not come from Symons: it was Mallarmé who first described the dancer as "une *femme* qui danse."[2] Although both sexes were equally represented in ballet when it had become fashionable during the eighteenth century, gradually fewer and fewer men took part in it. Ballet had developed as an extremely refined, graceful art, and the robust, muscular male body did not suggest this ethereal beauty and refinement. Ballet offered a double chance to the imagination of the audience: an escape from reality into this artificial world of light, seemingly easy and effortless movements, where verbal communication ceases and gestures acquire communicative value; as Symons wrote: "I go to see a ballet in order to get as far as possible from the intolerable reality of the world around me."[3] Furthermore, the ballet dancer appeared, for many, as an unreachable, mysterious, self-sufficient being, inhuman, yet somehow the realisation of the desire of ordinary people, who were sitting in the audience. While dancing, she seemed to express an enigmatic knowledge of the supernatural world, to which she, while the dance lasted, appeared to belong; an extraordinary aura surrounded her. The popularity of many ballerinas can be explained by the cathartic sensations they awoke in

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[1] Arthur Symons, *Studies in Seven Arts* (London: Martin Secker, 1906), p. 246.

[2] Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crayonné au Théâtre" in *Oeuvres Complétes*(Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1945), p. 304, quoted by Sylvia C. Ellis, *The Plays of W. B. Yeats: Yeats and the Dancer* (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 6.

[3] *Sketch*, 7 August 1895, p. 14.

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the members of the audience: after the performance the admirers sought the secret of this enigma, but it only revealed itself during the dance. Either the proud self-sufficiency, or the suggested lack of passion of the dancer, offered a challenge to conquer and/or awake passion in the apparently "ice and diamond" ballerinas.

Apart from ballet, there was a plethora of dancers who introduced different principles in dancing. "Free" dancers, interpretative dancers, skirt dancers, Oriental (authentic or 'imitative') dancers flooded the theatre stages, vaudevilles and music halls of Europe. Arthur Symons dedicated several poems to them, and these poems indicate the variety of the performers. The exotic dancers, for instance, could always find an audience: their popularity was ensured by the expectant atmosphere of romanticism and decadence that prevailed the era. Symons found inspiration in Javanese,[4] Indian and Armenian dancers, and as Yeats recalled, Loïe Fuller's[5] Japanese dancers but mistook them for Chinese. Thus it was not really the authentic nationality of the dancer that mattered but her exotic and exciting performance, and even more the subjective emotions, thoughts and desires they evoked in the poet. A characteristic poem in Symons's *œuvre*: "To a Gitana Dancing" (1899) stresses the elimination of time while the dance lasts, the spell that the dancer casts upon her audience, and the dream-like state they experience during her performance:

> And the maze you tread is as old as the world is old,
> Therefore you hold me, body and soul, in your hold,
> And time, as you dance, is not, and the world is as nought.
> You dance, and I know the desire of all flesh, and the pain
> Of all longing of body for body; you beckon, repel,
> Entreat, and entice, and bewilder, and build up the spell,
> Link by link, with deliberate steps, of a flower-soft chain.
>
> You pause: I awake; have I dreamt? was it longer ago
> Than a dream that I saw you smile? for you turn, you turn,
> As a startled beast in the toils: it is you that entreat,
> Desperate, hating the coils that have fastened your feet,
> Longing has taken hold even on you,
> You, the witch of desire; and you pause, and anew
> Your stillness moves, and you pause, and your hands move.
> Time, as you dance, is as nought, and the moments seem

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[4] Arthur Symons, "Javanese Dancers" quoted by Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1957), p. 70.

[5] Loïe Fuller, *Fifteen Years of a Dancer's Life* (New York: Dance Horizons, 1913).

Swift as eternity; time is at end, for you close eyes and lips and hands in
sudden repose;
You smile: was it all no longer ago than a dream?[6]

Yeats wrote his *Rosa Alchemica* (1897),[7] which exhibits similar features to this
poem and which I shall discuss later in this essay, almost at the same time. Symons's
"The Armenian Dancer" (1906) also demonstrates the influence the dancers had over
their audience, and at the same time serves as an interesting example for such
expressions and ideas of describing the dancer's movements, that could be encountered
in the plays and poems of Yeats and some of the early works of Joyce. Certain passages
of this short poem might illustrate my argument:

> O secret and sharp sting
> That ends and makes delight
> Come, my limbs call thee, smite
> To music every string
> Of my limbs quivering.
>
> I dance, and as I dance
> Desires as fires burn white
> To fan the flame delight;
> What vague desires advance
> With covered countenance?
>
> The sense within me turns
> In labyrinths as of light,
> Not dying into delight;
> As a flame quickening burns,
> Speed in my body yearns.
>
> I stop, a quivering
> Wraps me and folds me tight;
> I shudder, and touch delight,
> The secret and sharp sting,
> Suddenly, a grave thing.[8]

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[6] Arthur Symons, *Images of Good and Evil* (London: Heinemann, 1899), pp. 107-9.

[7] W. B. Yeats, *The Secret Rose* (London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1987).

[8] A. Symons, *The Fool of the World and Other Poems* (London: Heinemann, 1906), pp. 79-80.

I do not intend to discuss the poetic values of these verses here, but there are important features in them that characterise Symons's dance-poems, and introduce the dances depicted by Yeats and Joyce. Bodily desire, covered countenance (for the dancers as well as the desires of the poet did not show their face), quickening speed of music and dance, a shudder that represents the sexual act, a sudden stop at the end and lurking, indirect references to death prefigure Yeats's *The King of the Great Clock Tower* or *A Full Moon in March* (1935) written more than thirty years later, just like the verse fragments about dancing witches that Joyce dedicated to this theme roughly about the same time Symons wrote the above poems.

The dancer's power over human fate and the lurking passion behind the surface of her ethereal face were favourite subjects of poets, painters and dramatists, apart from Yeats and Joyce. The account of the death of St. John the Baptist appears in the Gospels of Mark, 6:14-29, and Matthew, 14:1-12. Salome, the dancer, appears in these narratives as an innocent tool in her wicked mother's hands. Her fatal role, however, causes the death of the prophet, and that is why she has become inseparably connected with immoral, sensuous beauty. Her dance not only pleased but provoked Herod, the incestuous adulterer, so much so, that he promised to fulfil whatever she wished. Salome and her mother, Herodias, were sometimes confused or identified in literary works. Thus, she is made responsible for the murder not only 'aesthetically,' through her dance, but also morally.

According to Sylvia C. Ellis,[9] the long line of artists who wrote about the Salome legend in the nineteenth century was opened by Heinrich Heine. His *Atta Troll* (1841) mentions Herodias, the mother, who, in Heine's version, was in love with the prophet, whose refusal provoked her hatred. In the poem she is one of the huntresses after the escaped dancing bear. Heine presents Herodias (and not Salome!) kissing the severed head of her victim, and Salome merely as her tool. Yeats and Joyce read *Atta Troll*, and its influence can be found in their writings: Yeats mentions it in his notes, when he compares Oscar Wilde's *Salome* with his own *A Full Moon in March*, and Joyce refers to it in the *Notesheets* of *Ulysses*. Mallarmé and Flaubert also wrote versions of the story. Mallarmé's "Hérodiade,"[10] in which Hérodiade is identified with Salome, was published in 1866, but the poet did not complete it to his own satisfaction until just before his death in 1898. He describes a cold, virginal beauty, Artifice itself, whose

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[9] Ellis pp.1-85.

[10] It was Arthur Symons, who translated Mallarmé's "Hérodiade" and published it in *The Savoy* in December, 1906.

feelings are awakened by the prophet's glance and only the death of John the Baptist can satisfy her for this "intrusion." When John's severed head is brought to her, she dances with it and kisses its lips, then places it on her thighs. The blood stains her skin. This is her second dance; the first, the "dance of the seven veils" was performed before Herod with the purpose of obtaining her victim's head. These details are important in reference to Yeats's plays, who borrowed elements from Mallarmé, for example, the bloodstains on the Queen's skin and dress.

1877 saw the publication of Flaubert's "Hérodias." His heroine is an irresponsible, naive child. She is completely unaware of her powers as a dancer. She suggests a contrast with Mallarmé's Hérodiade. Yet either cold and virginal, or childish, these dancers are transformed during their dance. The icy, queenly idol warms up; her cruelty being satisfied by blood, her nascent and oppressed sexuality reveals itself. The childlike girl appears as a sensuous woman. Both seem to be unaware of the change the dance has brought into their lives. Flaubert describes the dance of his Hérodias in minute detail, and emphasises its eroticism, contrasting her innocence and ignorance.

Oscar Wilde's play *Salome* (1893) and Arthur Symons's poem "The Dance of the Daughters of Herodias" (1897)[11] also deserve our attention. Wilde's Salome follows the example of Mallarmé's heroine: her rejected love finds revenge and satisfaction only in the death of the offender. Salome, however, is neither cold nor childlike: she is full of passion and desire even when she is not dancing. There is no instruction from her wicked mother, she is fully conscious of the effects of her dance and responsible for its consequences. Her demand for the head of her victim terrifies the king, her perversity in kissing and dancing with the trophy disgusts him. Consequently, Herod orders his soldiers to crush her to death with their shields. In Yeats's play, *A King of the Great Clock Tower*, the King of Time also makes an attempt to kill the Queen and strike at the head, but the dancing Queen seems to be protected by a mysterious aura, which stops him.

Symons's poem[12] returns to the innocent girl in Flaubert's "Hérodias." Salome is described as a young and beautiful tree, awakened to dance by the wind. She and the

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[11] It is a pity that Ellis ignores those poems by Symons which I include here, that is, "To a Gitana Dancing" and "The Armenian Dancer," because they are just as important as "The Dance of the Daughters of Herodias," since they also describe powerful Salome-figures, although without declaring them so.

[12] "Here is Salome. She is a young tree / Swaying in the wind, her arms are slender branches, / And the heavy summer leafage of her hair / Stirs as if rustling in a silent wind; / Her narrow feet are rooted in the ground, / But when the dim wind passes over her, / Rustlingly she awakens, as if life / Thrilled in her body to its finger tips. ... / They dance, the daughters of Herodias, / With their eternal, white, unfaltering feet, / And always, when they dance, for their delight, / Always a man's head falls because of them. / Yet they

other "daughters of Herodias" dance only for their own delight. They are not the scheming, obsessed avengers of Mallarmé or Wilde; but "when they dance, ... Always a man's head falls because of them." They are "the eternal enemy" – the enemy of men, *femmes fatales*. In one of Joyce's epiphanies, which I will discuss briefly in the second half of this essay, the dancing, whirling youth resembles these unselfconscious dancers. In my opinion, Joyce was aware of the resemblance, so he was at pains to point out that in the epiphany it was "not the dance of the daughters of Herodias" and it was "male."

In my view, Symons's poem suggests an antagonistic conflict in the feminine nature, which characterises the attitude of many artists towards the figure of the dancer. In this poem Salome is multiplied and eternalised; she has become the symbol of the fatal woman, who is hardly aware of the consequences of her powers as a dancer and a woman. She is only conscious of two things: dancing for her own delight and desiring the love of men. The previous interpretations of the figure of Salome presented her, in one way or another, as a whore: an irresponsible, immature, childish character, or a cold, selfish, unsatisfied person, who is obsessed by revenge, or a passionate woman, who is governed entirely by her love and hatred. Symons presents a different Salome. She does not dance because she wants to achieve her purposes, or because she was instructed to do so, or in her passionate love, or to celebrate her victory and possession of her victim's head; it is her own delight that inspires her into dance - "she dances for her own delight," as Symons writes about Jane Avril, the famous dancer in his poem "La Melinite: Moulin Rouge."[13] This is the most dangerous kind among the dancers, as compared to literary predecessors, who always had a reason more or less logical to the human (that is, male) mind. The self-sufficiency of Symons's Salome has achieved a high degree when it kills men. The fatal effects of her dance anticipate the dance of the Hawk-Woman in Yeats's play *At the Hawk's Well* (1916), which mesmerises Cuchulain – it is the *dance* that forces him to follow her, a dance of seduction. The Hawk's magical glance, which dooms the hero to kill his own son in *On Baile's Strand* (1904), is only a consequence of the enticing dance, that first takes hold of him.

If we consider Yeats's poems and prose works that could have been influenced by Symons's "The Dance of the Daughters of Herodias," we can find many examples, three of which I will discuss here. In 1899 *The Wind Among the Reeds* was published. It contains, among other poems, "The Hosting of the Sidhe." I suggest that the following

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desire not death, they would not slay / Body or soul, no, not to do them pleasure: / They desire love and the desire of men; / And they are the eternal enemy." in Arthur Symons, *Poems* (London: Martin Secker, 1924), vol. 2, p. 36.

[13] Symons, *Poems*, Vol. 1, p. 190-1.

lines indicate a correspondence between Symons's poem, Yeats's play mentioned above, and the biblical figure, Salome: "And if any gaze on our rushing band, / We come between him and the deed of his hand." Herod saw Salome dancing and, as a consequence, he was forced to fulfil her wish and behead John the Baptist. Cuchulain saw the Guardian of the Well dancing, and had to leave the well of immortality without tasting its water, with the curse of her glance on him. A man's head falls, whenever a daughter of Herodias is seen dancing. As Yeats's comments on this poem show, the Sidhe, apart from being an evil faery, is

> also Gaelic for wind, and certainly the Sidhe have much to do with the wind. They journey in whirling winds, the winds that were called the dance of the daughters of Herodias in the Middle Ages, Herodias doubtless taking the place of some old goddess. When the country people see the leaves whirling on the road they bless themselves, because they believe the Sidhe to be passing by. [...] [T]he great among them, for they have great and simple, go much upon horseback. If anyone becomes too much interested in them, and sees them over much, he loses all interest in ordinary things.[14]

The associations of the daughters of Herodias with the Sidhe and their dance with the whirlwind derive from Jacob Grimm's *Teutonic Mythology*.[15] Grimm picks up the thread of the Salome legend where the above plays and poems drop it. He describes how, when Salome attempts to kiss the lips of the severed head of the Precursor, they begin to blow, and their wind whirls her into space. Therefore the whirlwind is associated with the "gyrating dancing of Herodias." The Celtic tradition holds the Sidhe responsible for the stirring of the whirlwind.

In "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" the image of the dancing daughters of Herodias returns. Section VI of the poem appears to be a direct continuation of Symons's poem as well as of "The Hosting of the Sidhe":

> Violence upon the roads: violence of horses;
> Some few have handsome riders, are garlanded
> On delicate sensitive ear or tossing mane
> But wearied running round and round in their courses
> All break and vanish, and evil gathers head:

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[14] *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W. B. Yeats*, eds. Peter Allt & Russel K. Alspach (New York: Macmillan, 1957), p. 800.

[15] Jacob Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1882), Vol. 4, p. 285.

Herodias' daughters have returned again,
A sudden blast of dusty wind and after
Thunder of feet, tumult of images,
Their purpose in the labyrinth of the wind;
And should some crazy hand touch a daughter
All turn with amorous cries, or angry cries,
According to the wind, for all are blind.[16]

The approaching threat of troubles in Ireland is presented in this powerful metaphor of the whirlwind. The synecdoche, "crazy hand" that dares "touch a daughter," refers to the enchanted men, who see the Sidhe dancing. Their fate is predicted in the "amorous," or "angry cries": the daughters of Herodias desire the love of men, yet these men are to part with their heads. The new element is the blindness of the daughters. In my opinion, it suggests a twofold meaning: the blinding "sudden blast of dusty wind," which covers their eyes as well as the eyes of humans who look at them (reminding the reader of the veiled dancer or her covered countenance of Mallarmé's "Hérodiade" or Symons's "The Armenian Dancer"), and the whirl of the dance, which goes "round and round" without letting anybody or anything disturb its course. The interference of the "crazy hand" attempts to break it: it is inevitable that the dancers turn on the intruder, either to satisfy their desire or to punish his insolence.

The impression Yeats gives us in his commentary on Salome in *A Vision* is different from the previous interpretations:

When I think of the moment before revelation I think of Salome ... dancing before Herod and receiving the Prophet's head in her *indifferent* hands, and wonder if what seems to us decadence was not in reality the exaltation of the muscular flesh and of civilisation perfectly achieved.[17]

In this context Salome appears the closest to a priestess, who takes part in a ritualistic dance, prepares the sacrifice, and thus achieves what Yeats calls "revelation," the union of the primary and the antithetical, physical and spiritual, Phase Fifteen, the Phase of the Dancer. She is indifferent: she does not want the death of St. John the Baptist for personal reasons, only takes it as a necessary and inevitable event which would promote a higher goal.

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[16] N. A. Jeffares, ed., *Yeats's Poems* (London, Macmillan, 1989), p. 317

[17] W. B. Yeats, *A Vision* (London: Macmillan, 1925; 1937), Version 'A' p. 273, 'B' p. 185, emphasis mine.

The dancer as *femme fatale* appears in a different setting from Salome's myth in *Rosa Alchemica* (1897), but with a similar vocation. Michael Robartes, initiating his friend, Owen Aherne, the narrator, to the rites of his mysterious sect, leads him into a hall, where there are men and women "dancing slowly in crimson robes." The narrator, weary of the dance, sinks into a half-dream, in which he sees the petals of the great rose on the ceiling "falling... and shaping into the likeness of living beings," which begin to dance. "*... a mysterious wave of passion, that seemed like the soul of the dance moving within our souls, took hold of me and I was ... swept into the midst*" (my emphasis). His dance-partner, suddenly appearing in front of him, is a beautiful "immortal august woman", one of the former petals of the rose. She fills him "with a great horror that I danced with one who was more or less than human, and *who was drinking up my soul... and I fell and darkness passed over me*" (my emphasis). The transcendental force that sweeps him into the middle of the dance is like the whirlwind in the previously mentioned poems, while the loss of the narrator's soul signifies spiritual decapitation, and the ritualistic dance that precedes it recalls the above passage about Salome preparing the revelation, the Unity of Being, as Yeats would have called it twenty years later - the secret of *Rosa Alchemica*.

Two of Yeats's dance-plays, generally known among the critics as his 'Salome-plays,' are versions on the same theme. *The King of the Great Clock Tower* and *A Full Moon in March* (1935) present an almost identical plot: a Swineherd/Stroller arrives to woo the Queen, he is beheaded, the Queen dances before his head, kisses its lips, and the head starts singing. The second play is a rewritten version of the first; Yeats realised that there was one character too many, and left the King out. In every respect the latter play is more perfect and concise: it underlines the contrast between the two main characters and in the Queen's turbulent emotions. Nevertheless, the first play renders the Queen's dance more central, and the whole play shows more affinity with it, whereas in the second version the dance is the catalyst of the union between the Queen and the Swineherd, a means and not a goal in the structure of the play. *The King of the Great Clock Tower*[18] starts and ends with the Attendants' talk about dancers and dancing. Although these references are a bit artificial, and the second play offers better solutions, artificiality is not irrelevant here: the distant Queen, "Dumb as an image made of wood or metal, / A screen between the living and the dead" and the bold, "sacred" Stroller are symbolic and unearthly. The other play emphasises sexual attraction and spiritual hatred, which have no such significance in the first.

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[18] Yeats dedicated this play to Ninette de Valois, the famous ballet dancer, who danced the Queen.

For Yeats there was a practical reason for the King's presence in the first play: Ninette de Valois, who danced in the Queen's role in the first play, was not trained as an actress and could not speak lines, therefore the Queen had to remain silent and it was necessary to create another character. In the second play the Queen is replaced by a dancer as she is about to dance. Yeats, being familiar with the renditions of the theme, especially Mallarmé's "Hérodiade," realising, however, that his presentation of the Queen's dance is very close to that of Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, pointed out in his *Notes on A Full Moon in March*:

> The dance with the severed head suggests the central idea in Wilde's Salome. Wilde took it from Heine [*Atta Troll*], who has somewhere described Salome in Hell throwing into the air the head of John the Baptist. Heine may have found it in some Jewish religious legend, for it is part of the old ritual of the year: the mother goddess and the slain god. In the first edition of *The Secret Rose* there is a story based on some old Gaelic legend. A man swears to sing a woman's praise: his head is cut off and the head sings. In attempting to put this story into a dance play I found that I had gone close to Salome's dance in Wilde's play. But in his play the dance is before the head is cut off.[19]

In my opinion, the main difference Yeats refers to in the last sentence of the above quotation is that the dance occurs as an *acknowledgement* and *return* of the Swineherd/Stroller's love. The roles are changed: the wooer (Wilde's Salome) becomes the wooed (Yeats's Queen). Although Yeats does not mention Mallarmé in this quotation, he knew the French poet's "Hérodiade" through Symons's translation, as he refers to it in his essay "The Tragic Generation" in 1910. In that version the princess performs two dances: one before Herod, which is the dance of the seducer in seven veils; the other dance takes place after the prophet's head has been brought to her, and closely resembles the Queen's dance in Yeats's play. The new element is the Stroller's prophecy, which predicts that his severed head will sing and the Queen will dance before it. The Queen's kiss and dance are the reward for the man who sings his love and passion for her best. In *The King of the Great Clock Tower* the Stroller arrives without any previous notice or call from the silent, impassive Queen – Yeats's other Queen makes a competition for her wooers. In the first play it is the rightful anger and jealousy of the King that leads to the Stroller's death, in the second the Queen, in a moment of caprice, orders the Swineherd's decapitation – it is not his passion she

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[19] *The Variorum Edition of the Plays of W. B. Yeats*, eds. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (London: Macmillan, 1966), p.1311.

punishes and rejects but his insolence and foul appearance. Both plays are set at a special moment of the year. The Swineherd arrives to woo and aims to wed the Queen at the full moon in March. The Stroller comes on New Year's Eve and the silent Queen dances and kisses his severed head at the stroke of midnight when the old year dies and the new one starts. Symbolically, it refers to the death of her love for the King and the appearance of his successor in her feelings and passion. Yeats suggests that this new relationship is stronger than the old because the Queen sings after the Stroller is taken to be executed, although she did not utter a word to the King for a whole year. The Queen is offered a choice: she can save the Stroller if she speaks. As she does not open her mouth *then*, it becomes obvious that the Stroller must die so that the prophecy could be fulfilled. In both plays the Queen appears first as an almost bodiless, cruel, cold, inhuman being. Her suitor's words, on the contrary, reveal a coarse, sensuous, self-sufficient man; it is only his extreme confidence in his own prophecy that distinguishes him. The undertones of sexual attraction in the play are poised against the spiritual hatred the Queen proclaims and the scorn the Swineherd hides in his wooing. In Yeats's special theory of subjective and objective men, the Queen is the emblem of subjectivity; she rejects any attempt to break her solitude, yet she challenges all men to save her from the rigid control over herself. The Swineherd is her male counterpart, matching her in subjectivity, solitude and independence. His wooing is unlike the traditional pattern of courtly love left to us by minstrels and chivalrous poetry. The spiritual hatred embedded in sexual love that Yeats, after William Blake, described in many poems (for example, "Crazy Jane Looks at the Dancers"), and particularly in *A Full Moon in March*, is based on the identical disposition of the lovers. They cannot complement each other: their similarity of nature is acknowledged but not tolerated. At the same time they represent opposite social positions and values – in the two Attendants' introductory song the "crown of gold" and "dung of swine" are reconciled by the power of love. After the Swineherd's head is taken, the change in their roles culminates in the Queen's dance. The head sings of Jill who murdered Jack and hung his heart on the sky; the song is an absurd but precise summary of the play. The Queen, who caused her wooer's death, dances with his severed head – in a sense accepts him to be her 'lover.' The ritualistic sacrifice appears in the Head's song and it parallels the plot of the play; the song, the artefact, can be created only by sacrificing the artist. Her awakened sexuality acknowledges the truth of his prophecy; the Head sings of the world of the dead, who, though lacking flesh and blood, are more alive than the living. In her cradle-song the Queen tries to compensate the head for her cruelty or caprice and also to refuse her responsibility in his death. Regarding herself as

the cause of his death, however, cannot be avoided and her reaction to the charge of murder is a laughter which is crazy perhaps, but it merely echoes the Head's. She places the trophy on the throne and dances before it, "alluring and refusing," then "in adoration." The control has disappeared from her nature, she is full of passion. She kisses the dead lips of the Head and cradles it on her breast. Her gestures suggest sexual as well as maternal love, perhaps indirectly referring to the Swineherd's story about a drop of blood impregnating a woman (the Queen's blood-stained costume also indicates that) and her unity with the Swineherd in love – they are not separate beings any longer, but one body and one spirit. She dances with the head in her hand quicker and quicker to drum-taps, and as the dance approaches its climax, she kisses the head. She stops dancing but her body shivers as she stands to very rapid drum-taps. Then the sounds cease and she sinks down with the head. The dancer, being now complete, collapses *into* herself. This way of ending the dance Yeats develops to perfection in his last play, *The Death of Cuchulain*.

In *The King of the Great Clock Tower* the head sings about the famous, tragic heroes of Ireland, who ride again "Out of Ben Bulben and Knockarea" (l. 169) and haunt the world. They return from the grave, because, as the song explains, their world lacks "Their desecration and the lover's night." In both plays the Queen kisses the lips of the severed head. It symbolises the union between the living woman and the spirit of the dead man and occurs as a conclusion of the dance. Spirit and body are united in this kiss and thus Unity of Being is achieved, and eternally maintained – the King of Time is unable to strike at them, as he attempts to do in *The King of the Great Clock Tower* and the Queen is released from her self-control, achieving her "desecration and the lover's night" at the full moon. The beheading – the sacrifice – has 'beneficial' consequences on both characters: the cold Queen becomes a living woman, and the Swineherd/Stroller's head becomes capable of singing.

Although *The King of the Great Clock Tower* is the earlier play which was practically rewritten later, it nevertheless concentrates more on the dance, while the second play renders passion, cruelty and love central. First of all, as Yeats's stage directions go: "When the stage curtain rises it shows an inner curtain whereon is perhaps a stencilled pattern of dancers." The two Attendants, who introduce the play, talk about dancing faeries, referring to this pattern:

SECOND ATTENDANT: They dance all day that dance in Tir-nan-oge.
FIRST ATTENDANT: There every lover is a happy rogue;
And should he speak, it is the speech of birds.
No thought has he, *and therefore has no words*,
No thought *because no clock*, no clock because
If I consider deeply, *lad and lass*,
Nerve touching nerve upon that happy ground,
Are bobbins where all time is bound and wound.

                    [my emphases]

What is the role of dancing faeries and all the Attendants' strange talk about "that happy ground"? Considering, that nobody in the play seems to know where the Queen has come from, secondly, that her silence is similar to that of the wordless lovers in the song quoted above, finally, as she dances for love at the end of the play, I assume that she is of the faery kind herself, unlike the other Queen, who is a proud virgin woman. In *A Full Moon in March* the Attendants are busy dividing the roles among themselves – there is no word about dancing till the Queen actually starts performing. Similarly, at the end of the play the song of the Head is about passion and murder, whereas the earlier play closes with the First Attendant remembering

> Castle Dargan's ruin all lit,
> Lovely ladies dancing in it.

and, as the other Attendant points out that they must have been dead, he confirms his vision:

> Yet all the lovely things that were
> Live, for I saw them dancing there.

As the Stroller claims to be a sacred man, a poet or a fool, whose transcendental connections are well-known, and the mute Queen is, as I suppose, an otherworldly creature, their mysterious union is not so much the reconciliation of antinomies as it is in the second play, but the meeting of kindred spirits, who are not bound by time, therefore the King cannot strike at them.

The Salome legend was also known to the young James Joyce. He was familiar with Heine's *Atta Troll*, and mentioned it in the *Notesheets* of *Ulysses*.[20] He claimed to know by heart everything that Flaubert had written, and he certainly read "Hérodias."[21] He was also familiar with Symons's poem, the title of which he quoted in one of his epiphanies, as well as with Wilde's *Salome*. Although Joyce could not have seen *Salome* as it was staged only in Paris in 1896 and in Germany in 1901, it was famous due to the scandals it caused. Joyce probably knew some other renditions of the theme, too; there were many more in the early nineties. He refers to it in one of the epiphanies recorded in 1902, shortly after the death of one of his brothers, Georgie. In this epiphany[22] Joyce relates a dream, in which he saw his dead brother dancing. Stanislaus Joyce also records the death and the epiphany in *My Brother's Keeper*.[23] The dead boy dances in an amphitheatre before the multitude. His dancing body whirls up to space and falls back again to the earth. I suggest that the dream combines the image of the young King David, who danced and played his lute before his people and thus went to Jerusalem after a victory, and Blake's vision of his dead brother clapping hands and rising up to Heaven; Joyce, who was educated by Jesuits, would have known the Bible very well, and Stanislaus Joyce notes that "His gods were Dante and Blake."[24] Joyce emphasises the unique dance of his brother: he dances without music, his movements are "slow and supple." He "seems to be a *whirling body*, a spider wheeling *amid space*, a star... *His dancing is not the dancing of harlots, the dance of the daughters of Herodias. It* goes up from the midst of the people, sudden and young and male, and falls again to earth in tremulous sobbing to die upon its triumph" (my emphasis). If we recall Grimm's account of how John the Baptist blew Salome into space where she had to whirl forever, we can see how carefully Joyce makes a difference between the two dances: such expressions as "whirling body," or "wheeling amid space" connect them, but the motif of Eros is missing from Georgie's dance; it is evident, that it is "not the dance of the daughters of Herodias." It is worth noting that the focus of attention moves from the boy to his dance: it acquires a life of its own, it is "sudden and young and male," it "sobs" and "dies": these details all describe Georgie, yet refer to the dance, as if the boy has

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[20] *Joyce's Ulysses Notesheets in the British Museum*, "Circe" 4. Ed. Philip F. Herring (Charlottesville: Virginia UP, 1972), p. 286.

[21] Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: OUP, 1959), p. 506.

[22] Robert Scholes and Richard M. Kain, *The Workshop of Stephen Dedalus. James Joyce and the Raw Materials for A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern UP, 1965), p. 33.

[23] Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper* (London: Faber & Faber, 1958), p. 136.

[24] Stanislaus Joyce, p. 53.

become identified with the dance himself. It is also important that the whirling, wheeling movement is emphasised. The association of the dancer with the whirlwind is present in the writings of both Yeats and Joyce. The wheeling, circling dance belongs to the complex of the gyrating progress of history, emerging as the Romantic image of the world (although it can be found in medieval paintings as well) and influencing later styles, such as Impressionism and Expressionism; enough to think of Shelley's poem "Ode to the West Wind" and Turner's many pictures depicting storms and whirlwinds, or Kokoschka's *Whirlwind* (1914).[25]

The motif of the severed head and the *femme fatale* dancer appear in *Ulysses*, too. In the *Notesheets*[26] of the *Circe* episode Joyce inserted a curious note which he later crossed out: "severed head speaks." Interestingly, there is a *female* severed head mentioned in the final text, which Bloom's alter ego, Henry Flower, caresses on his breast. On the same page (525) in another hallucination, Bloom's grandfather, Lipoti Virag, unscrews his own head and holds it under his arm. The head says "Quack!", indicating bird sounds, and "exeunts severally." I suggest that the latter word is not accidental: it refers to the motif of the severed head. It is likely that Joyce intended to mock the esoteric beliefs of Yeats and Æ (George Russell) about the soul taking the shape of a bird after death. But why is the head, which Henry holds, female? Furthermore, Henry Flower does not dance at all! In order to find the key to this enigma, we have to note that Henry Flower is Bloom himself, one imagined and idealised side of his personality, that takes shape in his hallucination. Furthermore, at first Bloom becomes a swine, then obtains female characteristics: Bella Cohen, the powerful whoremistress turns into a man, Bello, and changes Bloom into Ruby Cohen, "a charming subrette." The change of sex and sexual behaviour provides the basis for the severed head being female; it most probably indicates Bloom's head, as a metaphoric anticipation of his dehumanisation and loss of masculinity. The unacknowledged fear of emasculation by a woman, allegedly present in every man's subconscious according to Freudian psychologists, is brought to the surface in his hallucination and the dramatisation of the events (both real and imaginary) suggest that we are in fact witnessing an erotic day-dream[27] in which the scary and the desirable blend into one, as the masochistic features in Bloom's personality get disclosed. As

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[25] Péter Egri,. *Value and Form. Comparative Literature, Painting and Music.* (Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 1993), p. 166.

[26] *Joyce's Ulysses Notesheets* p. 313.

[27] In fact this day-dream is delayed by two chapters, as Bloom masturbated in the *Nausicaa* episode, but we have no information whether he was day-dreaming then or not.

Henry Flower, he loses his head and as Bloom, he loses his 'flower': his masculinity. Experiencing the (imagined) fate of a woman, which has awakened his curiosity so many times that day, gives him a strange kind of satisfaction. The man-tamer Bella-Bello proves to be fatal indeed, rather a *virago fatale*, than *femme*. Insofar as the whores and Bella, like "the daughters of Herodias," are all 'Salomes,' the motif of the seductive dance should not be missing, either. It occurs later, not in front of the severed head, although in the *Notesheets* there is a sentence that shows Joyce's probable intention to include the dance, before the motif of the severed head appears: "whores dance around LB [Leopold Bloom]." However, Joyce changed it in the final version: Bloom stands aside, and joins the dance only later to turn with Bella, while Stephen is the one who is danced around. After a series of the humiliating hallucinations he suffers as a female, Bloom breaks the spell and regains his original sex, casting off Bella's influence. They waltz together, united as a hermaphrodite: "Bloombella." This is not an erotic, exciting dance with veils: this is a sweaty, clumsy, drunken hopping around, a caricature of seduction. Nevertheless, it ends, in a sense, with the invocation of the spiritual world, but it is not the magical power of the whores' dance. Stephen separates himself from them and dances tripudium alone. He cries out: "Dance of death." This sentence already points forward, to the vision of Stephen's dead mother, but it also closes the dance-scene. Thus, we have the motifs of the severed head, the dance, and death, although in reversed order if compared to other renditions of the Salome legend.

Finally, *Finnegans Wake* is also a 'lucky dip' for the Salome legend. If we consider the whole book in general, the hints of incest in the relationship of H.C.E. and his daughter, Issy, mirror Herod's lust for his provocative stepdaughter. The fact that Joyce was not satisfied with only one Salome suggests that Joyce discovered and incorporated his daughter's developing mental illness in the *Wake*. He wanted two, corresponding to Issy and her "linkingclass" (looking-glass, after Lewis Carroll) sister. Lucia Joyce's schizophrenia developed roughly at the same time as Joyce started to write his drafts and sketches for the book. It may be noteworthy that she was in fact a trained dancer. She was fourteen when *Ulysses* was published, and the first signs of her split personality appeared in the early 20s, as Joyce's letters and notes show. The two "salaames"[28] are the manifestations of H.C.E.'s daughter(s) as well as the two girls whom he spied on in the park: indirectly, they caused his fall. In Book III, Chapter 3 they join the keening procession around the bulk of Yawn-Shaun (and within him H.C.E.), as well as the mourning dance that follows it, "tripping a trepas."[29] In the

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[28] James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber & Faber, 1939), 493.32
[29] James Joyce 499.

"Scribbledehobble" notebook Joyce inserted the word "tetracha" into this passage, a reference to Herod, tetrarch and Salome's stepfather, as well as Ezra Pound's "Our Tetrarchal Précieuse,"[30] – Joyce did not include this in the published version, but this does not mean that the dancer would not have strongly held his imagination: this final instance in fact shows just how deeply the motif here explored concerned the writers of the era.

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[30] David Hayman, *The "Wake" in Transit* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990), pp. 62, 88, 89, 90. Hayman claims that Joyce's Isolde is based on Jules Laforgue's "Salome," the translation of which by Ezra Pound was also known to him.

Philip Tew

Contextualizing B. S. Johnson (1933-73)

The British Novel's Forgotten Voice of Protest

B. S. Johnson (1933-73) demands clear introduction; his work requires the preamble of summary and chronological placement because twenty-five years after his suicide he has slipped so comprehensively from public and academic view. Nevertheless, he remains potentially an intriguing and important writer of the postwar period, certainly notable as one of Britain's few truly working class twentieth century novelists and as such his narratives continue to reflect a life experience rarely narrativized and interiorized from direct experience. Given his almost complete obscurity in Britain today, despite his continued publication in the U.S. and Germany, it is forgotten that during his lifetime Johnson became a celebrated, much-debated, and controversial figure taken seriously as more than just a self-publicist (of which some accused him) or an overtly self-conscious experimentalist (to which others reduced his *ouevre*).

His polemical statements about literature and the art of fiction were significant. Such reflections and his writing are informed not only by his various creative talents which included that of poet, novelist, filmmaker and dramatist, but furthermore by his classical and literary education leading to a degree as a mature student (an unusual status at this point in the late 1950s) at Kings College, London. His neglect is almost a national disgrace.

Johnson produced an early joint collection of short stories with Zulfikar Ghose *Statement against Corpses*[1] and he was included in *Penguin Modern Stories 7*[2] which features Anthony Burgess, Susan Hill and Yehuda Amichai. He published seven

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[1] B. S. Johnson and Zulfikar Ghose, *Statement against Corpses* (London: Constable, 1964).

[2] *Penguin Modern Stories 7* (London: Penguin, 1971), with A. Burgess, S. Hill and Y. Amichai.

relatively slim novels over approximately a ten year period: *Travelling People*; *Albert Angelo*; *Trawl*; *The Unfortunates*; *House Mother Normal*; *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry*; and the posthumously published *See the Old Lady Decently* prepared possibly from m/s and papers which followed the influential semi-theoretical prose collection *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs?*[3] Taken together with a few archival traces, one can reconstruct a figure of thoughtful and intriguing creative theorising especially since he bases much of his work on or around dissecting and narrativizing his own direct experiences of everyday life, which itself was a current theme within sociological and philosophical thought of the period.

The first novel *Travelling People* charts a post-degree Summer working in a country club for Henry Henry, its protagonist a barely disguised portrait of Johnson as mature student contemplating his future on graduation. *Albert Angelo* focuses on Johnson's own experiences as a supply teacher and through Albert as protagonist Johnson contextualizes his own such work in north London schools as both exterior and interior setting. He proceeds to drop the fictional pose two-thirds through this narrative and famously declares his presence that allows him to theorise about the nature of telling stuff (things, events, relations) as narrative with: "–fuck all this lying look what im trying to write about is writing not all this stuff about architecture…," (*AA*, p. 167). Having exposed this self-conscious, self-referentiality in his writing, he continues in *Trawl* and *The Unfortunates* to detail and thematize his own experiences as directly as possible mirroring many elements of the diary or autobiographical form (which he also played with in several sections of *Travelling People*). In *Trawl*, aboard a fishing boat in the Barents Sea, the protagonist who is understood to be Johnson reviews his life's hurt, betrayal and failure, confronting the failings of past relationships and anticipates a new relationship: "…this is the best thing she has done for me,

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[3] B. S. Johnson, *Travelling People* (London: Panther, 1967; London: Constable, 1963). Henceforth abbreviated *TP*; B. S. Johnson, *Albert Angelo* (New York: New Directions, 1987; London: Constable, 1964). Henceforth abbreviated *AA*; B. S. Johnson, *Trawl* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1966; London: Panther, 1968). Henceforth abbreviated *TR*; B. S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates* (London: Panther Books, with Secker & Warburg, 1969). Henceforth abbreviated *TU*; B. S. Johnson, *House Mother Normal* (London: Trigram Press, 1971; London: Collins, 1971; London: Quartet Books, 1973; Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1984; New York: New Directions, 1987); B. S. Johnson, *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry* (London: Collins, 1973; New York: Viking, 1973; London: Penguin, 1984). Henceforth abbreviated *CMODE*; B. S. Johnson, *See the Old Lady Decently* (London: Hutchinson, 1975; New York: Viking Press, 1975 – first volume of an intended trilogy entitled *Matrix*). Henceforth abbreviated *STOLD*; B. S. Johnson, *Aren't You Rather Young to Be Writing Your Memoirs?* (London: Hutchinson, 1973). Henceforth abbreviated *AY*.

Ginnie, that I am more natural now, whatever nature is, but I know what I mean, and for any of the earlier ones, others, I would not have felt this, she releases me, Ginnie," (*TR*, p. 169).

Johnson maps, co-ordinates and charts his experience onto his narrative which allows a voyage of self-discovery. These thoughts of placement relate to Virginia Kimpton (later Johnson) who in fact as well as narrative (as in *See the Old Lady Decently*) became his wife. Present, past and reflection intermingle around a pervasive seasickness induced by the voyage, a general unease which relates tangentially to Johnson's frustrations at and responses to the human condition. Johnson related the form and intention of the following novel *The Unfortunates* to that of the two previous works when he explains that the

> ...three autobiographical novels, *Albert Angelo*, *Trawl* and *The Unfortunates* forced their way in, demanded to be written out of sheer personal need, psychotherapy if you like, though I call it exorcism. I wrote those three books to get them out of my head.[4]

In another formal and stylistic shift, he moves from the confessional prose into an autobiographically-based framing by characterisation in two laconic and bleak narratives which owe much to the comic book and cartoon forms of reduction, simplification and exaggeration. A comic desperation reshapes the devices, characterisations and settings of these two subsequent novels, *House Mother Normal* and *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry*. He comments that these two paired works were planned while writing his first novel from September 1959: "During that time I had ideas for two more novels which became *House Mother Normal* and *Christie Malry*."[5] His later experiences in Wales on a writing fellowship influence the setting of the first and his own life as a younger man working as a clerk provide situation and setting for the second. The social matrix of intersecting relations and voices are paramount and are referential to lived experience. Finally, an amalgam of Johnson combining overview, invention of detail around documentation of his deceased mother's life and his own appearance into the text make up or frame the final novel *See the Old Lady Decently* (1975). Here the writing process threatens to stutter into incoherence with lacunae, lack of proper nouns and yet manages to sustain itself. Interestingly he charts the placement

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[4] Alan Burns & Charles Sugnet, eds., *The Imagination on Trial: British and American Writers Discuss Their Working Methods* (London and New York: Allison and Busby, 1981) p. 85.

[5] Alan Burns, "B. S. Johnson: Interview" in Burns & Sugnet p. 85.

of colonial attitudinising and empowerment while narrativizing sections which refuse proper nouns or naming. Thereby he displays language's capacity to convey its relations by its implicit reference to sets of generalised reference and co-ordination which are inscribed on the world without need for further repetition.

Amalgamated into his view of the lifeworld constituted by and narrativized through the experiential were Johnson's responses to ideas permeating the intellectual milieu of the late 1950s and early 1960s. His influence was not contemporaneous British fiction. Johnson comments "In England writers rarely help each other; it's a great pity. I don't discuss the novel with other novelists because I have strong notions about what the novel should be doing. Most novelists disagree with me and I'm not in the business of converting them to my point of view."[6] One exception was friend, confidante and older novelist Rayner Heppenstall who recollects Johnson's first novel's indebtedness to *Tristram Shandy*, and records Virginia Johnson's good French and her former time in Paris, and, Bryan's attendance of a lecture by Nathalie Sarraute (to whom Johnson refers to initiate the introduction to the Hungarian edition of *The Unfortunates*) in the Charing Cross Road in the early 1960s.[7] Elsewhere Hepenstall explains both his own meeting with and influence upon Robbe-Grillet as well as the latter's visit with Sarraute to England in February 1961.[8] Here we can recognise and establish a link with, and the influence of, post-war French thought upon Johnson since these experiences and people suggest themselves as conduits, acting as inspiration for Johnson's forms of narrative which can be examined more closely.

Johnson adapts the classroom and schoolyard ephemera of Michel Butor *Degrés* (1960) for *Albert Angelo*; he includes in his work Nathalie Sarraute's understanding that

> We all know this world, in which a sinister game of blindman's buff is in constant progress, in which people always advance in the wrong direction...[9]

[6] Burns, "B. S. Johnson: Interview" p. 93.

[7] Jonathan Goodman, ed., *The Master Eccentric: The Journals of Rayner Heppenstall 1969–81* (London and New York: Allison and Busby, 1986) pp. 67–68, 120.

[8] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Intellectual Part* (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1963) pp. 198–199, 209–210.

[9] Nathalie Sarraute, *The Age of Suspicion*, transl. Maria Jolas (New York: Georges Braziller 1963) p. 44; *L'Ère du soupçon* (Paris: Gallimard, 1956).

and develops the motif and substance of the isolated voyager from both Michel Butor[10] and Alain Robbe-Grillet.[11] Certainly like many of the internally focussed works of the French new wave, Johnson's narratives engage the internal investigation of the mundane and personal, searching for the interconnectedness in the random elements of a life, for within its randomness lies what Merleau-Ponty explains is

> ...a double relationship that an integral philosophy admits of between individuals and historical totality. It acts on us; we are in it at a certain place and in a certain position; we respond to it. Our experience everywhere overflows our standpoint. We are in it, but it is completely in us. We are in it, but it is completely in us. These two relationships are concretely united in life.[12]

Some commentators conjecture that Johnson failed in his enterprise and his suicide was an admission of failure to reconcile this double relationship, but certainly for him an attempt at explicit honesty was important in itself.[13] He said of his collected prose *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs?* written over a period of fourteen years:

> ...neither can I really see either progression or retrogression. The order is that which seemed least bad late on one particular May evening; perhaps I shall regret it as soon as I see it fixed
>
> (*AY*, p. 30).

The process re-emphasises the nature of a truth which resists fixity. Johnson perceived that narrative enabled one to look beyond oneself toward an apparent objectivity which itself might well be contaminated by the constructs or the desires and necessities of others. Such is apparent in the informing metaphor holding together the strands of his third novel, *Trawl*.

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[10] Michel Butor, *Second Thoughts*, transl. Jean Stewart (London: Faber and Faber, 1958); *La modification* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1957).

[11] Alain Robbe-Grillet, *The Voyeur*, transl. Richard Howard (London: John Calder 1959).

[12] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic*, transl. Joseph Bien (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973) p. 43; *Les Aventures de la dialectique* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1955).

[13] See Giles Gordon, *Aren't We Due a Royalty Statement? A Stern Account of Literary, Publishing and Theatrical Folk* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993) p. 160; Philip Pacey, "I on Behalf of Us: B. S. Johnson, 1933–1973" *Stand* 15 (2) (1974) p. 25; Eva Figes, "B. S. Johnson" in *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 5 (2); (1985) p. 71.

The derivation of such ideas and responses help partially place what Bernard Bergonzi notes:

> Johnson seems to have been prompted both by a demand for total moral honesty, seeing novel-writing as a means of reproducing experience as faithfully as possible, and by a strangely positivistic dislike of imagination.[14]

Johnson's suspicion might not appear such a curious credo for a writer who regarded imagination as a tool of a class system and its dogmatic forms (of which the traditional novel is one) to derive from pre-determined, predefined interactiveness. Johnson was a fundamentalist in regarding the intercommunicative individual as a focus for investigation of creativity and life, of the intersection or relations between the two, since self-searching might reveal some glimpse of the totality, as if beneath his assumptions is a spiritual dimension, almost an element of gnostic vision or the nirvana of truly communicated dialectical perception. Johnson says:

> I can only hope there are some few people like me who will see what I am doing, and understand what I am saying, and use it for their own devious purposes.
>
> (*AY*, p. 29)

In his collection of prose published shortly before his death, *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs?*, he pondered over the status of writing and the lifeworld, effectively declaring that the two had to be referential, but the relationship could not be simplistic if communicative writing were to be effective and not distort that relationality of narrative to life. In what amounted to his literary or creative manifesto, Johnson circumspectly delineates his concerns, pencils in the relationship between fact and fiction; if life and narrative were to interconnect, the writer must recognise that

> Life does not tell stories. Life is chaotic, fluid, random; it leaves myriads of ends untied, untidily. Writers can extract a story from life only by strict, close selection, and this means falsification. Telling stories really is telling lies… I am not interested in telling lies in my own novels.
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> (*AY*, p. 14)

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[14] Bernard Bergonzi, *The Situation of the Novel* (London: MacMillan, 1970) p. 208.

Nevertheless, fixity was far from Johnson's perception of the state of life or fiction or of the novel. Truth itself never achieves stasis; its perameters are of complex rather than contracted relations. Truthfulness possesses a quintessentially elusive quality, as Johnson argued strongly:

> Whether or not it can be demonstrated that all is chaos, certainly all is change: the very process of life itself is growth and decay at an enormous variety of rates. Change is a condition of life. Rather than deplore this, or hunt the chimaerae of stability or reversal, one should perhaps embrace change as all there is. Or might be. For change is never for the better or for the worse; change simply is.
>
> <div align="right">(AY, p. 17)</div>

Whatever Johnson's apparent obsession with form, his reflection of truth engages the ideational function, the experience of processes, objects, persons, abstractions, qualities, states, relations of the world around and inside. He synthesises the experiential and the logical within which he emphasises the role of observer in the function of language. Language is the core of understanding and his literal honesty but it serves to signify beyond the grammatical. Expression and language cannot erase the admittedly amorphous relation between narrative and life; creativity is not confined as a mere heterocosm. Johnson declared in a telling comparison simply that: "Joyce is the Einstein of the novel" (*AY*, p. 12). Einstein argued for intuitive leaps of understanding for scientific advance and in terms of Johnson's comparison, Joyce is used to indicate a complex relationality of fiction, a mapping of life experience onto the adaptable and mobile features of language as communicative device. For Johnson Joyce expands the perameters of a realm where: "Faced with the enormity of life, all I can do is to present a paradigm of truth to reality as I see it: and there's the difficulty..." (*AA*, p. 170). In the context of Johnson's praise of Joyce and its meaning in terms of understanding how Johnson views the possibilities of the novel, we might usefully recall that Einstein insisted on intuitive, sympathetic understanding where there exists an interplay between experience and "...methodological uncertainty."[15]

Dislocation and chaotic impulses operate on most levels for Johnson, both as writer and as individual.

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[15] Ann Banfield, *Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction* (Boston and London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982) p. 4.

> Touched by deep personal tragedy, Bryan carried an enormous quantity of sadness within him. Life had betrayed him, and he was constantly on guard against fresh betrayals...[16]

Zulfikar Ghose reminisces about the appalling burden social class imposed upon Johnson, his vitriolic abuse at apparent representatives of what he perceived as unjustified class privilege, and: "...the very high praise he had received for his first two novels had endorsed his own conviction that he was absolutely right..."[17] Arrogance, aggression, class perceptions and his own self-doubt interrelate to create a perceptual matrix of the narrative field that Johnson offers to create a perceptual frame for himself both as a man and an artist. What overrides any implicit negativity is the compunction, albeit often self-destructively, to proffer candour and soul-searching in a quixotic excursion toward a conceptualisation, however limited, of truth and therefore honesty. His own account may be differently centred, but it co-exists with critical and contemporaneous accounts of his project in writing and shares many co-ordinating features. In many ways Johnson was a paradigm of 1960s culture and a product of his own very specific past. Reading his work and the commentary surrounding it is like re-creating some of the tensions that produced the particular British social nuances of the period. Johnson's very nature both physical and psychic was imbued with a muscular working class London identity and perceptions which militate against every other feature of his existence whose roots were in bourgeois enculturation: his university education, his work, the friends, girlfriend/wife and his philosophical understandings. Of these tensions Johnson creates his writing where he declares his sense of intersubjective presence or placement among other people which is enhanced by the retrieval for the processual quality of writing:

> All that has helped me to understand perhaps just one thing in my research to trace the causes of my isolation: I now realise the point at which I became aware of class distinction, of differences between people which were nothing to do with age or size, aware in fact of the class war, which is not an out-dated concept, as those of the upper classes who are not completely dim would con everyone else into believing it is. The class war is being fought as viciously and destructively of human spirit as it has ever been in England: I was born on my

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[16] Zulfikar Ghose, "Bryan" in *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 5 (2); (1985) p. 24.
[17] Ghose pp. 25–26.

side, and I cannot and will not desert: I became an enlisted man consciously but not voluntarily at the age of about seven.

(TR, p. 53)

We can observe something of Johnson's frustrations if we consider that recently fellow writer and acquaintance, Giles Gordon reflects patronisingly that

> Bryan Johnson was a working-class lad who had the singular fortune to marry a beautiful middle-class girl, Virginia Kimpton, who had knees that I lusted after. He was extremely aggressive, and quarrelled readily, unnecessarily with those who wished him well as much as with those who couldn't have given a hoot. His working-class chip could hardly have been more blatant.[18]

Johnson is mediated by marriage and condemned for his social positioning. A better if unwilling paradigm for underlying class tensions would be hard to imagine; the contrast of class voice with Johnson's conveys much.

Johnson's own experience is the subtext and text of all his prose. Friend and fellow-writer Philip Pacey confirms that "Henry Henry is a thinly disguised Johnson."[19] In the novel he reflects a world where political possibilities seem tangibly close, where "integrity" and "responsibility" (TP, p. 179) form part of the moral imperative for youth, where social neglect and change are palpable issues. He seeks what Gordon labelled his: "…subjective objective."[20] In simple terms, Johnson writes only of what has and does occur in the lifeworld and not in the realm of imagination. For him everything else is conjecture. His concept of truthfulness operates at the level of precise and often random detail in so far as they exemplify the process of social being since as Johnson declares: "Life is chaos, writing is a way of ordering the chaos."[21] This idea of truthfulness functions also at the level of framework and interaction, where detail is pared down to reflect the idea of a superstructure operating at a social level which diminishes individual significance within the social matrix of an exploitative system as with Christie Malry's girlfriend.

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[18] Gordon pp. 150–151.

[19] Pacey, "I on Behalf of Us: B. S. Johnson, 1933–1973" p. 20.

[20] Gordon p. 159.

[21] Burns, "B. S. Johnson: Interview" p. 92.

> The Shrike was not by nature a butcher's assistant, Christie realised only too well: it was society that forced her to be so, or to be always something similar. She was a pearl in her own right, and it was a reflection on society that it could find only inappropriate use for that wit, that nacreous quality that were just two of the things that endeared her to him.
>
> (*CMODE*, p. 138)

Hence this overview provides the comic, dismissive presence of Christie Malry in Johnson's attack on the work ethic and alienation in *Christie Malry's Own Double-Entry*.

Johnson resists the implications of modernism which results in a distortion of reality since its basis of subjectivity and capital are illusory and therefore integrated in a basic mendacity of its epistemological presence which applies to fiction as much as anything else unless resisted. A. S. Byatt misunderstands this (perhaps wilfully) when she accused Johnson of maligning the nineteenth-century novel which he attacked by evoking its exhaustion, anachronistic qualities and perversity.[22] Later criticism serves incidentally to pinpoint the cause of Johnson's discontent, for what Byatt further ignores is Johnson's irritation at other contemporary novelists' obsession with and continuation of such outmoded techniques and approaches:

> What exponents of "traditional realism" ignored, when they turned to classical mimetic theory for support, was that the instinct to imitate is complemented, in the *Poetics*, by an equally strong impulse toward ordering (7:2 and 4). Aesthetic imitation involves the completed and harmonized integration of parts into an organic whole (8:4), even if such parts should involve the irrational (24:10) or the impossible (25:5). Mimesis is never limited to a naive copying at the level of product alone.[23]

Hence, realism's mimetic intentions were therefore flawed in their theoretical conception of what constitutes any act of mimesis, wedded too firmly to surface detail and a lack of concern regarding the organic connection with the material world and any experiential cohesion. From Johnson's viewpoint, at its best this tradition sought to look and feel approximately right and appear topographically as the world does to the

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[22] A. S. Byatt, "People in Paper Houses: Attitudes to 'Realism' and 'Experiment' in English Postwar Fiction" in Bradbury, Malcolm, and David Palmer, eds., *The Contemporary English Novel: Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 18* (London: Arnold, 1979) pp. 19–20.

[23] Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: the metafictional paradox* (New York and London: Methuen, 1984) p. 41.

conscious observer and by so doing accepts the confinement of social narratives written upon the world such as class, value and the alienation implicit in capital. Related to Johnson's work and critical concepts these notions make apparent that his criticism of complacent literature, of the *modern* neo-Dickensian novel lies in a critique of its over-simplifications, its capacity and tendency to copy and construct *lies from apparent surface features* and not in a refusal by Johnson to believe in the possibility of aesthetic reflection in narrative. Johnson comments wryly:

> I can only assume that just as there seem to be so many writers imitating the act of being nineteenth-century novelists, so there must be large numbers imitating the act of being nineteenth-century readers, too
>
> *(AY, p. 13),*

which serves to emphasise the necessary and continuing change in material and social conditions to which the aesthetic must adapt. In *Travelling People* Johnson has his alter-ego, Henry Henry note ironically in his diary (itself a typical element of eighteenth-century novels) that: "Nothing seems to happen as it should happen, as it does in novels..." (*TP*, p. 138).

For Johnson no form of novel or narrative can be pre-established if it is to reflect the processes or recognitions constituting the perceptual mass of the lifeworld and its chaotic dimensions. He explains of his notes that "Essentially they are pictures,"[24] and that "Accidents, like the order in which the bits got thrown into the folder, often dictate juxtapositions which weren't there by design;"[25] hence each novel is in itself an example or opportunity of reflection that serves as an ongoing engagement and development of both substance and material derived from perceptual existence. This novel is the stuff of life set in amongst all other lived experiences. This communicative act combines together sets of relations that underpin experience rather than being or regarding itself as separable from life which is why he writes from what he can know of himself in the world. Clearly this is processual and subject to change. Johnson explains "*Travelling People* gave me an identity in 1962 but not in 1972."[26] Hence, although he is intensely personal, risking the accusations of solipsism and of merely chronicling the domestic and the mundane, at another level he fragments the familiar constraints of social understanding by declaring that the ordinary and the

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[24] Burns, "B. S. Johnson: Interview" p. 86.

[25] Burns, "B. S. Johnson: Interview" p. 87.

[26] Burns, "B. S. Johnson: Interview" p. 89.

everyday if dissolved and re-thematized are the seat of a deeply significant and philosophical analysis. He reflects in *Albert Angelo* that

> Faced with the enormous detail, size, of this complexity, of life, there is a great temptation for a writer to impose his own pattern, an arbitrary pattern which must falsify, cannot do anything other than falsify; or he invents, which is pure lying.

> (*AA*, p. 170)

Consciously Johnson uses the novel to explore and talk about the lifeworld. Everywhere in his depiction of individuals Johnson attempts to synthesise the theoretical with praxis by "...trying to see everything freshly, trying to realise in practice his theoretically absolute freedom of will, freedom from the passed" (*AA*, p. 134).

Philip Pacey summarises a central tenet of his friend's opinion of narrative: "Bryan's distrust of imagination becomes clear: it is to him mere fancy, the lure of fiction, of escape."[27] Johnson articulates in this resistance a movement toward absorbing into the novel a perceptual difficulty within the nature of the fictional imagination and process, one central to Sartre's understanding of the influences working upon the artist which parallel those of inter-communication itself:

> Because he returns to the source of silent and solitary experience on which culture and the exchange of ideas have been built in order to know it, the artist launches his work just as a man once launched the first word, not knowing whether it will be anything more than a shout, whether it can detach itself from the flow of individual life in which it originates and give the independent existence of an identifiable meaning either to the future of that same individual life or to the monads coexisting with it or to the open community of future monads.[28]

As a foundational subtext, the informing core of Johnson's consciousness is the dialectical possibilities of a concept of truth derived from reconfiguring perceptual and critical functions. The novel can allow us an access by reviewing the elements of

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[27] Pacey, "I on Behalf of Us: B. S. Johnson, 1933–1973" p. 210.

[28] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, transl. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964) p. 19; (Paris, 1948), but this translation based on 3rd edition (1961).

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the world via co-ordinates which resist social determination and centering. Therefore the expression of such a concept acts as a litmus test of personal integrity for the writer/narrator himself. The personal is political. The personal is public. Personal consciousness (and morality) is the informing key on reality. In sifting through experience and the placement of consciousness Johnson's protagonists seek to challenge their own inner as well as outer contradictions. Johnson demanded when reflecting on the process of novel writing: "But why should novelists be expected to avoid paradox any more than philosophers?" (*AY*, p. 18). To seek to avoid such paradox would be to falsify. Paradox is a multiple formation resisting contracted rationality and limitation of the dialectic to opposites. Johnson's novelistic expansion of contradiction in itself suggests the limitations of antithetical thought (a limitation of which Merleau-Ponty accused Sartre[29]) especially given the chaos and uncertainty of the world that he reflects in every perceptually linguistic moment.

> On the pretext that every rational or linguistic operation condenses a certain thickness of existence and is obscure for itself, one concludes that nothing can be said with certainty. On the pretext that human acts lose all their meaning when detached from their context and broken down into their component parts ... one concludes that all conduct is senseless. It is easy to strip language and actions of all meaning and to make them seem absurd, if only one looks at them from far enough away... But that other miracle, the fact that, in an absurd world, language and behaviour do have meaning for those who speak and act, remains to be understood.[30]

Johnson's was

> ...a desire to codify experience, to come to terms with things that have happened to me, and to try to tell the truth (to discover what is the truth) about them.

(*AY*, p. 18)

Hence, even in what some might label his naiveté, we perceive that Johnson writes with philosophical conviction and fervour. Johnson retained some fear of, or resistance to, the chaos and meaninglessness that his search might reveal, according to Philip Pacey

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[29] See Robert Denoon Cumming, *Phenomenology and Deconstruction: Volume I. The Dream is Over* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[30] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense* p. 39.

who recalls that: "I argued that creativity is the human search for meaning, impelled by a sense that meaning must be, by meaning itself calling to be revealed."[31]

So according to Pacey, Johnson was trapped in a conviction that no new revelations remained and he remained dissatisfied with what Pacey describes as his "...transforming experience into art, and so defining himself."[32] Nevertheless, I suggest that one should confront or contextualize the anger and despair that haunt Johnson's words. Fellow novelist Eva Figes evokes the shared response and commonality of what confronted them when she recalls an informal grouping of writers that included herself, Ann Quin, Alan Burns and B. S. Johnson. She recalls:

> ...we shared a common credo, a common approach to writing. All of us were bored to death with mainstream "realist" fiction at a time when, in England, it seemed the only acceptable sort. We were concerned with language, with breaking up conventional narrative, with "making it new" in our different ways. We all used fragmentation as a starting point, and then took off in different directions. Bryan concentrated on a kind of literal honesty, on the author as central character, and on the format of the book itself ... It is a measure of English conservatism and insularity when one remembers that this was the prevailing atmosphere in the literary establishment at a time when, abroad, writers like Beckett, Robbe-Grillet, Grass, and Borges were doing their best work. Their existence was acknowledged of course, but the attention they received was often grudging, respect without liking.[33]

In a literary fashion he was literally searching for truth; Johnson was a figure trawling his own contradictions.

Johnson's fictional consciousness is replete with contrasts and conflicts, between the educated world and the mundane worldliness of the most profane or philistine of circumstances, as with the world of lorryloads of gluebound dead dogs which jumpstarts *Travelling People* on a note of the bizarre which dissolves into the awfulness of a reality where he hitch-hikes in a truck serving the industrial process with dead dogs boiled down to provide glue. The reader is reminded that context and referentiality are presuppositions for our understanding of the lifeworld, for without this the language degenerates into the play of the absurd deprived of its co-ordinates. Apparent contradictions and the bizarre reconfirm an adhesive nature, things coalesce

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[31] Pacey, "I on Behalf of Us: B. S. Johnson, 1933–1973" p. 22.

[32] Pacey, "I on Behalf of Us: B. S. Johnson, 1933–1973" p. 25.

[33] Figes pp. 70–71.

like the dead canines. For all Johnson's admiration of Beckett he rejects the ultimate trajectory or logic of the absurd placed in a more and more displaced interiority.

Clearly, Johnson's narratives include an acute perception of the aesthetic drive, the nature of narrative and the activity and relationship of writer and readers. He foregrounds the fact of his own writing as central to his prose and any understanding of what the reader might presuppose:

> All that time, and the only exact words of his I remember are some of those spoken in the Malet Street coffee bar on that one occasion: "Life is a series of clichés, each more banal than the last."
> I certainly do not feel up to inventing dialogue for your sake, going into *oratio recta* and all that would mean. These reconstructed things can never be managed exactly right, anyway. I suppose I could curry a dialogue in which Robin and I argued the rights and wrongs of his *Conflictual Situation*, but it would only be me arguing with myself: which would be even more absurd than trying to write of someone else's life.
>
> *(AY*, p. 138–139)

Johnson addresses his reader and invites the reader to share and to question the situational relevance of feeling and emotion and judgement, to perceive the difficulties of the role of the writer as difficulties we all share in relating to our own experience of material reality. He identifies this act of recording and fictionalising with both the notion of memory's imperfection, but also with a concrete occasion in a specific location in a context he recalls and claims as autobiographical and actual. Johnson appears to mirror the understanding that: "We shall find in ourselves and nowhere else, the unity and true meaning of phenomenology."[34] Like Merleau-Ponty he perceives that: "The very experience of transcendent things is possible only provided that their project is borne, and discovered, within myself."[35] Implication and complex sets of reference to the social are perhaps Johnson's strongest and most consistent devices, but their location is as part of a social truth which proved problematic for his subsequent evaluation in a period of plurality and barely disguised relativism. Bernard Bergonzi foreshadows the grounds of the later dismissal or decline of Johnson's reputation:

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[34] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1962) p. viii.
[35] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* p. 369.

The idea that fiction is lying, and in other respects undesirable, has been propagated by another English novelist, B.S. Johnson, whose considerable talents seem to me unnecessarily limited by his doctrinaire attitudes. For an English writer Johnson is remarkably conscious and theoretical in his ideas about what he wants to do.[36]

Johnson's dialectical method and perspective mirror Merleau-Ponty's assertion that

...the relations among men are not the sum of personal acts or personal roles, but pass through things, the anonymous roles, the common situations, and the institutions where men have projected so much of themselves that their fate is now played out outside them.[37]

This explains the curiously objective stance in Johnson's prose which absorbs even the most emotive and anguished in a matter-of-fact style and implied consciousness. Johnson insists on another underlying, if muted perspective.

Outside writing I'm a very political animal. My novels have generally been written from a political stance but the politics have been very much in the background.[38]

One of the collection's editors, Charles Sugnet responds that

... it's hard to believe the B. S. Johnson who wrote passionately about class warfare, and insisted he would never desert his side in it, could be content to write only for himself.[39]

Certainly in his analysis, Johnson seeks to absorb Sarraute's notion that surface is valueless, which necessitates an examination of the fragments and fragmentation of the universe.[40] Johnson's prose at surface level is modest, hesitant, localised and particular until one discovers that his choices of approach are all purposive and signifying. He

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[36] Bergonzi p. 204.

[37] Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic* p. 32.

[38] Burns, "B. S. Johnson: Interview" p. 88.

[39] Charles Sugnet, "Introduction" in Burns & Sugnet pp. 9–10.

[40] Sarraute pp. 12, 16–17.

commences from his existentially inspired philosophical and dialectical concern about the nature and interconnectedness of detail; how life constructs or unravels itself as in his mind in *Trawl* remembering jazz musician King Joe Oliver's life:

> And all the others, the way they did it, totally involved in all that was going on … the treatment of sex and love as enormously important, so rightly for me, as I wanted to be so involved in everything, in all of it, who was a bank clerk at the time and engaged to the bourgeois Dorothy.
>
> (*TR*, p. 164)

Constitution and transcendent possibilities represented by the jazz world stand as separable elements, but he recalls that he "Went round the London jazz clubs, then, in search of this life, disappointed, of course..." (*TR*, p. 165). Johnson seeks his version of Sarraute's "...ultimate deep where lie truth, the real universe, our most authentic impression..."[41] He starts from what he described as "...a theme (the conflict between illusion and reality) in a particular example ... a mass of subject matter, observed, amalgamated and invented..."[42] Johnson's existential concern about why we are here leads him inexorably to thematize how being is constituted and how it is distorted by each and every cultural perception. Johnson refuses presuppositions about big metaphysical problems such as the coherence of individuality which faces the unknown and the strange. He ruffles, sifts, disturbs and distrusts the fabric of here and questions the nature of embodiment as fundamentally given and resting within a bourgeois framework of modernity. Johnson confounds both these apparent stabilities of the subject in their specificity and their ability to express some abstract existential interrogation of the space-time continuum. The possibility of an interrogation of the appropriateness and detail of the underlying social praxis of the subject is central for Johnson; this initiates a deepening of the intersubjective nature of its constitutive dialectical relationship. He seeks an understanding which might explain why his possibilities are constrained in their socio-historical as well as metaphysical contexts, much like those of Christie Malry whose mother *dialecticizes* (her word):

> 'It seems that enough accidents happen for it to be a hope or even an expectation for most of us, the day of reckoning. But we shall die untidily,

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[41] Sarraute p. 12.

[42] B. S. Johnson, "Anti or Ultra?" *Books and Bookmen* (8); (8th May 1963) p. 25.

> when we did not properly expect it, in a mess, most things unresolved, unreckoned, reflecting that it is all chaos.'
>
> (*CMODE*, p. 30)

Once more Johnson hints at his pervasive methodology and perceptual insight. His world view is less parody of expectation and more socio-political analysis: "If you want to get near the truth then its silly to start fictionalising, because you immediately make one step away from the truth and this may lead on to others..."[43] For Johnson *everything is embedded* and *material*, even his own act of writing; consequently everything is interrogated since present understanding is the illusion and an entropic resistance fragments and disrupts our praxis. In these resistances Johnson glimpses an underlying de-structuring of identity and its familiar contexts, revealing truths which are neither mythic or alien, but subsumed and oddly familiar as disruptions which Foucault outlines in *The Order of Things* (1966):

> ... there is a worse kind of disorder than that of the *incongruous*, the linking together of things that are inappropriate; I mean the disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry, of the *heteroclite*; and, that word should be taken in its most literal, etymological sense: in such a state, things are "laid," "placed," "arranged" in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a *common locus* beneath them all.[44]

The nature of these disruptions infer Johnson's radicalising vision of "The continuous process of recognising that what is possible is not achievable" (*AY*, p. 79), but also his singularity in terms of historical literary contextuality within the lifeworld, without which the novel amounts to the production and product of "... a babel of

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[43] B. S. Johnson, unpublished transcript of taped interview between B. S. Johnson and Christopher Ricks most of which was used for radio broadcast 11th August 1964; Tp. "Interviewed by Christopher Ricks on his New Novel, Albert Angelo" *New Comment* (Caversham: BBC Written Archive, dated 31st July 1964) p. 2.

[44] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London and New York: Tavistock/Routledge 1989) p. xvii–xviii; (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1966).

incomprehensibility: realists and experimentalists, cynics and idealists, obscurantists and populists, men and women, young and unyoung, poor and poorer ..."[45]

Johnson dialecticizes a disengagement from presupposed constructs and contracted narratives of modernity of which the traditional novel is merely one. Johnson inserts an authorial dialogue with his protagonist in *Christie Malry's Own Double-Entry* who confronts his creator with the fact that

> 'The writing of a long novel is in itself an anachronistic act: it was relevant only to a society and a set of social conditions which no longer exist.'
> 'I'm glad you understand so readily,' I said, relieved.
> 'The novel should now try simply to be Funny, Brutalist, and Short,' Christie epigrammatised.
> 'I could hardly have expressed it better myself,' I said ...
>
> (*CMODE*, p. 165)

Nevertheless, Johnson's consciousness develops Sartre's partial recognition in *The Problem of Method* that ideology and the lived personal project derives from engaged and concrete experience:

> To make comprehension *explicit* does not by any means lead us to discover abstract notions, the combination of which could put the comprehension back into conceptual Knowledge; rather it reproduces the dialectical movement which starts from simply existing givens and is raised to signifying activity. This comprehension, which is not distinguished from *praxis*, is at once both immediate existence (since it is produced as the movement of action) and the foundation of an indirect knowing of existence (since it comprehends the ex-istence of the other).[46]

Beckett retreats from this alterity of material presence into divisions and pathologies of plurality in an unstable epistemology of language. It is interesting that for all his admiration of Beckett's work Johnson centres his own quite differently. Of *The Unnameable* Johnson commented: "What you are left with is less pleasing to me

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[45] B. S. Johnson, *London Consequences*, a novel by 26 novelists with unattributed chapters, B. S. Johnson and Margaret Drabble, eds.; first and last chapters written jointly by the two editors (London: Greater London Arts Association, 1972) p. 15.

[46] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method* transl. and introduction by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Vintage Books, 1963) pp. 170–171; "Question de Méthode," prefatory essay in *Critique de la raison dialectique*, Volume I (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1960).

than Beckett's earlier novels. I regret intensely that one of the things he has jettisoned is his humour..."[47] Let us therefore reconsider what the two writers do similarly and differently. Johnson asks why history and society are formulated through a subjective desire which confounds us; so, for both writers the question of variation of identity is both dynamic and crucial. Interpretation of Beckett suggests that: "...the ultimate language of the Self is silence, and in silence the *Trilogy* ends."[48] As Johnson concludes: "I admire Beckett very much, while I don't imitate him in any sense. I look upon him as a great example of what can be done. I think personally he is in a cul-de-sac..."[49] For Johnson there is history as he demonstrates in his reflection in his final novel *See the Old Lady Decently* on the pre-Celtic past and what it may signify:

> Soon we may be closer: for post-civilization is upon us, startling us with the speed of its advance, the apogee is passed, soon everything will be cimmerian as five thousand years ago seems to us now.
>
> *(STOLD, p. 106)*

Nevertheless, Johnson chronicles the specificity of contingency where potentially: "The dialectic was going to appear in concrete facts."[50] He recalls of Tony in *The Unfortunates*:

> ... he had a great mind for such historical trivia, is the right word, no, nor is detail, trivia to me perhaps, to him important, or worth talking about, if that is important, which I doubt, to me ...
>
> *(TU* "First," p. 3)

Tony's preference allied to the specificity of objective forms prevails as the underlying principle of the narrative, and substance is all that can reconfirm even partial understanding of intersignification and meaning in the impermanence of being:

> This worn handrail, familiar to the touch, polished brass knobs every few feet, the wooden treads, in small squares, worn, wooden, wood wears more quickly than most things, like him, like me, at something like the same rate, perhaps, how can I know? The permanent way, ha!
>
> *(TU* "Last," p. 1)

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[47] Johnson, unpublished transcript of taped interview between B. S. Johnson and Christopher Ricks p. 8.
[48] Richard N. Coe, *Beckett* (London and Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1964) p. 79.
[49] Johnson, unpublished transcript of taped interview between B. S. Johnson and Christopher Ricks p. 7.
[50] Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic* p. 7.

One decision by the narrator in *Albert Angelo* is played out before us:

> I think I shall visit my parents every Saturday as a rule, as a habit. Occasionally Sundays: instead, though, not as well. But usually Saturdays, as a rule, as a habit almost. Yes.
>
> <div align="right">(TP, p. 17)</div>

In tone, its repetition and focalisation all draw on Beckett:

> I resolved to go and see my mother. I needed, before I could resolve to go and see that woman, reasons of an urgent nature, and with such reasons, since I did not know what to do, or where to go, it was child's play for me, the play of an only child...[51]

Nevertheless, one can perceive large differences between the writers, despite the obvious parallels. Johnson continues to specify location and personal historic referentiality for the ensuing visit which expresses the prior intentionality:

> They live at Hammersmith, my parents. I walk down the hill from Percy Circus, along Kings Cross Road, into Pentonville Road, towards Kings Cross. The station has two squat stock-brick arches, their yellow uncommonly unblackened: Cubitt, the youngest, Lewis.
>
> <div align="right">(AA, p. 20)</div>

Beckett is concerned more with the creation of interrogations of subjectivity, but in particular how it is both expressed through and determined by language, a logocentricism which Johnson avoids:

> And once again I am, I will not say alone, no, that's not like me, but, how shall I say, I don't know, restored to myself, no, I never left myself, free, yes, I don't know what that means, but it's the word I mean to use, free to do what, to do nothing, to know, but what, the laws of the mind perhaps, of my mind, that for example water rises in proportion as it drowns you and that you

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[51] Samuel Beckett, *The Trilogy: Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (London: Picador, 1979; London: Calder, 1959) p. 16.

would do better, at least no worse, to obliterate texts than to blacken margins, to fill in the holes of words till all is blank and flat and the whole ghastly business looks like what it is, senseless, speechless, issueless misery ... To restore silence is the role of objects.[52]

Language is evasive in itself and operates to signify, intervene in and control man's self and mutual apprehension. As will become clear I regard Johnson as perceiving a crisis of the notion of the subject in its material and expressive condition or configuration. Language is secondary to his critique. Selfhood of this kind is a locus and agent of crisis. Johnson develops from a Beckettian base, utilising a range of other discourses and perspectives. Johnson's contingency is experiential and not an abstraction which separates him from both Sartre and Beckett.[53] Beckett's world is bleak and unpeopled by his inward eye; as such he represents a fear that philosophy and understanding are unable to sustain the intelligibility of their own content. Johnson's world is one rendered by and full of people and it is through their presence and manipulation that patterns of interpretation and social discourse reassert themselves, not necessarily through the nature of language but by its familiarity and reassurance. In the manner of phenomenological perception (from Husserl onward) Johnson prioritises present experiences as perhaps the only viable validating principle.[54] In his sense of the lifeworld autonomous difference is erased by specific manipulations through elements like "...branded products and factory stock..." (*AY*, p. 56) and:

It has come to the point where there is no such thing as a local speciality in the exclusive sense: for everything is available everywhere, flown in that morning from anywhere, with the dew and the bacteria and the insects still on it.

(*AY*, p. 62)

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[52] Beckett, p. 14.

[53] Sartre's separation of a philosophic and abstracted claim from experienced personal engagement is dealt with in Robert Denoon Cumming, *Phenomenology and Deconstruction: Volume II. Method and Imagination*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992) pp. 159–161.

[54] See Cumming, *Phenomenology and Deconstruction: Volume I. The Dream is Over* pp. 29, 31–32.

Johnson reflects a reality where

> ... the tendency towards totalization and 'integration' (in the social system as a whole – in other words the state) prevents us from seeing how disjointed everything is becoming.[55]

Johnson's periodization may retain a significance in extruding strands of historical development which explain the origin and formulations of his critical thought:

> In the 1950s, a renewed development of modern processes took place, and there is much evidence of a definite phase-shift somewhere around the year 1960. Many of the social and cultural forms that had been crystallised as modern then started to be seriously questioned and eroded by the continuing modernization process itself ...
>
> ... [Any] claim that we have passed from the modern epoch into a new condition of 'post-modernity' underestimates the continuities between high modernity and the current phase of development. Our times have seen a radicalization and intensification of modernization rather than its dissolution.[56]

Fornäs's statement summarises well the outline context and resulting philosophical shifts at the crux of which I position Johnson in terms of method, narrative reflection, form, and critical significance. Johnson reflects the minutiae of the perceptual in such a manner:

> On my way home I pass late shops, the assistants looking weary, bored, mutinous. I do not know how they can work in such places, again, I cannot understand how people do such jobs. I could not do them. Even the thought of others doing them makes me feel unwell.
>
> (*AY*, p. 122)

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[55] Henri Lefebvre, *Introduction to Modernity: Twelve Preludes September 1959–May 1961*, transl. John Moore (London and New York: Verso, 1995) p. 121; *Introduction à la modernité* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1962).

[56] Johan Fornäs, *Cultural Theory and Late Modernity* (London: Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1995) pp. 34–35.

For Johnson as for Ricoeur "…discourse is not another person but a project, that is, the outline of a new being-in-the-world."[57]

The opening of *Trawl* which articulates subjective presence and the fear of solipsistic isolation prefigures a movement toward absorption of others into a unifying project of self-understanding. The mood of *Trawl* is hesitant and reflective, the accumulation of detail in conflict with the inner moroseness of the traveller, with a flatness derived from both his sickness and his sense of personal defeat. The two forces contend as he matches the progress of life, through the war and evacuation to his *rites of passage*, the voice growing in certainty from the fragmentariness of its commencement:

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I    •  •  always   with   I   •  •  one    starts  from   •    •
one  and  I  share  the  same  character  •  •  are   one   •
•  •  •  •  one  always  starts  with  I  •  •  one   •    •
•  •  •  alone  •  •  •  •  •  •  •  sole  •  •  •  •
•  •  •  •  •  •  single  •  •  •  •  •  •  •  •  •  •  •
•  •  •  •  I
```

(*TR*, p. 7)

The use of such very idiosyncratic ellipsis points midline to indicate breaks in consciousness or the abandonment of reflection and narrative continue through the novel. They are its chief technical ploy or innovation (although its use remains entirely reminiscent of Céline's ellipsis points in *Rigadoon* as well as Nathalie Sarrraute's perpetuation of this effect). A similar pattern of form which reflects and moves from the solipsistic structures Johnson's novels where overall he posits a recognition parallel to Ricoeur's observation:

> … that there are other subjects present before me and that they are capable of entering into a reciprocal relation of subject to subject and not simply into the dissymetrical relation of subject to object …[58]

Clearly Johnson perceives in fiction that which can be expressed theoretically as "…the problem of reconciling the apparently autonomous logic of social processes with the

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[57] Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1991) p. 149; *Du texte a l'action: Essais d'hermeneutique, II* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1986).

[58] Ricoeur p. 235.

equally inescapable fact that society is the outcome of human interactions,"[59] where he senses separation and isolation amid the cultural landscape of conglomerated urban density all of which signifies that

> Surely what is new and genuinely 'modern' is the contradiction between individual loneliness and the bringing-together of crowds or masses in gigantic cities, in massive business companies ...[60]

Johnson is a hybrid, amalgamating a factuality with a concern for a philosophical and materialist version of realism, which is quite separate from the literary school of realism of Anglo-American literary theory. To suffuse his narrative with such philosophical realism Johnson does not select merely, but illuminates the truthfulness of bundles of complex relations that interrogate topographical verisimilitude. He comments:

> With each of my novels there has always been a certain point when what has been until then just a mass of subject-matter, the material of living, of my life, comes to have a shape, a form that I recognise as a novel. This crucial interaction between the material and myself has always been reduced to a single point in time: obviously a very exciting moment for me ...
>
> (*AY*, pp. 23–24)

His work was radical in its refusal to accept the standards of British fiction which were dominant during his lifetime. The test of the literary or other merits of perception might be said to lie for Johnson in the ability or otherwise to define elements of substantiating truths themselves or perhaps definitions of the very elusiveness of any particular truth. He is quoted as insisting that "All writing is autobiographical, because he believes that one should tell the truth and that the only true knowledge is oneself,"[61] which of course does nor mean that Johnson's appeal is to a self solipsistically or subjectively constrained in its potential form. *House Mother Normal* is structured to demonstrate both a technical and expressive problem which expands the realm and territorial possibilities of the self:

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[59] Dews, p. 14.

[60] Lefebvre p. 189.

[61] David Depledge, "Author with a Bold Device: Interview with David Depledge" *Books and Bookmen* 9 (13th June 1968) p. 13.

> Due to the various deformities and deficiencies of the inmates, these events would seem to be progressively "abnormal" to the reader. At the end, there would be a viewpoint of the House Mother, an apparently 'normal' person, and the events themselves would then be seen to be so bizarre that everything that had come before would seem "normal" by comparison. The idea was to say something about the things we call "normal" and "abnormal" and the technical difficulty was to make the same thing interesting nine times over since that was the number of times the events would have to be described.
>
> (*AY*, pp. 26–27)

Johnson does not anywhere explain why he chose exactly nine accounts; the communitarian multiplicity of accounts is essential. Each such narrative segment serves to confirm the same substantiating material framework and basis, however distorted the perceptual and communicative abilities of any one geriatric (or of the House Mother due to insanity). Material and temporal processes underscore each of these exemplars of the reflective and referential frameworks however flawed. The self-referential values of a linguistic system which excludes other systems would have certainly been rejected by him as curiously monistic. To say something, however apparently complex, for its own sake (a statement only has ultimate self-sustaining relevance within that system) would appear to have been anathema for Johnson, since for him this conflation of life, thought and expression was no linguistic game since he believed the critic should "… think a little further, and what I am really doing is challenging the reader to prove his own existence as palpably as I am proving mine by the act of writing" (*AY*, p. 28). Johnson in effect extends Robbe-Grillet's notion in 'From Realism to Reality' that "The discovery of reality can only continue its advance if people are willing to abandon outworn forms."[62] Formal experimentation serves to function as an ongoing perceptual recognition of the nature of things, for reality and consequently truth lie at the heart of the enterprise which moves toward a perception of the concrete and material and the effects of Johnson's style and themes will be enumerated in the ensuing chapters. On one level Johnson holds to what is described by Gerald Vision as a correspondence theory of truth, which is "… the view that truth-bearers are true by virtue of their relation to a situation in a mind-independent world …"[63] The world exists. Writing exists. The two have some connection and are interdependent. Hence the process as progression of material understanding Johnson

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[62] Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Snapshots and Towards A New Novel*, transl. Barbara Wright (London: Calder and Boyars, 1965) p. 154; *Pour un nouveau roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962).

[63] Gerald Vision, *Modern Anti-Realism and Manufactured Truth* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988) p. 11.

alludes to in his essay collection's title piece "Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs?": "I write this down so you may know in time the circumstances of my first visit, which in turn led to my second visit" (*AY*, p. 36). This interface of event and account may be one aspect of the complex intersections of truth (an absent or x-factor constituting uncertainty does not eliminate potential coherence); certainly Johnson insists the nature of truth is no easy matter. In *The Unfortunates* Johnson admits this interdependence and its form may be problematic, but is extrapolated from the particular as well as the general, for without the balance of these two perspectives any cognition is deceiving:

> The difficulty is to understand without generalization, to see each piece of received truth, or generalization, as true only if it is true for me, solipsism again, I come back to it again, and for no other reason.
> In general, generalization is to lie, to tell lies.
>
> (*TU* "Last")

Truth and lies in their dialectical formulations and significations constitute the particularising matrix of history and hence they must be a focus for significant interpretation of Johnson's work, and, such historical "… links and cross-references …" (*AY*, p. 30) determine his artistic and philosophical endeavour. The material centrality of truth concepts helps to explain the tortuous nature of his artistic career where he might appear to retreat from his own creativity and the impulses of the fictive form into a morass of the observable and yet dissolving features of the material world. Subjective truth must include otherness; the reflector of his consciousness is the potentially intersubjective presence which proves troubling in alterity's apparent objective form; Johnson chronicles things, actions, events and surroundings as if circling the interrogative presence of these apparently impenetrable subject selves. As Merleau-Ponty thematizes:

> It is thus that one surmounts or, rather, sublimates the experience of the Other. We easily escape from transcendence as long as we are dealing only with things: the transcendence of other people is more resistant. If another person exists, if he too is a consciousness, then I must consent to be for him only a finite object, determinate, *visible* at a certain place in the world. If he is a consciousness, I must cease to be a consciousness. But how am I then to

forget that intimate attestation of my existence, that contact of self with self, which is more certain than any external evidence and which is the prior condition for everything else? And so we try to subdue the disquieting existence of others.[64]

Each novel allowed B. S. Johnson to explore elements of the interrelationship of both consciousness and externality where in the British context "... the incomprehension and weight of prejudice which faces anyone trying to do anything new in writing is enormous, sometimes disquieting, occasionally laughable ..." (*AY*, p. 31). For the Hungarian speaker drawn to Johnson's work perhaps the most representative and adventurous is available translated into their own language. As Johnson explained, writing in 1972 for an essay prefacing *Szerencsétlenek* entitled "Előszó a magyar kiadáshoz":

> Biztosan tudom, hogy ebbe a regénybe többet adtam magamból, mint bármi másba, amit azelőtt vagy azóta írtam.[65]

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[64] Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense* p. 29.

[65] B. S. Johnson, *Szerencsétlenek*, transl. István Bart (Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, 1973) unpaginated. – "I know for certain that I have invested more of myself in this novel than into anything else that I have written before or I have written since."

Tamás Bényei

Tropics:

Figure and Narrative in William Golding's Sea Trilogy

"For my Conversation, it is like the Sun's"[1]

That Golding's excellent sea trilogy (*Rites of Passage* [1980], *Close Quarters* [1987], and *Fire Down Below* [1989]) is also about language will not surprise anyone who is familiar with it. The narrator Talbot himself, when he gives a one-sentence summary of his narrative, calls it an "account of Edmund Talbot's journey to the ends of the earth and his attempt to learn Tarpaulin."[2] That is, whatever "meaning" we finally choose to impose on the narrative of the voyage, it will have to reckon with what the narrator's remark suggests: his experiences, ordeals, and insights (obviously the source of any possible "meaning" of the story) cannot be separated from his linguistic enterprise.

The trilogy's deep interest in language is reflected in a number of ways: the text is concerned with various verbal or non-verbal systems of representation (theatre, painting, poetry, nautical language), with the ability of language to represent the world, with moments of extreme linguistic strain when the narrator is faced with phenomena that defy verbal rendering, with language as the means and litmus of social existence. Golding's text, however, is not just yet another clever and self-conscious postmodern critique of referentiality; what the trilogy explores is our inevitable implication rather

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[1] Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici* (London: Dent, 1959) p. 81

[2] William Golding, *Fire Down Below* (London: Faber, 1990) p. 310. The volumes of the trilogy will hereafter be referred to parenthetically as *ROP* (*Rites of Passage*, London: Faber, 1982), *CQ* (*Close Quarters*, London: Faber, 1988), and *FDB* (*Fire Down Below*).

than imprisonment in language: the text turns with an anthropological interest towards the issue of what it means to exist in/by/through language, to the ways we are using and are being used by language. I have written elsewhere[3] about some crucial aspects of all this in more detail, primarily about the consequences of the use of Tarpaulin words in the text, about the blurred boundaries between language and metalanguage, and about the workings of the slippages between and within metalinguistic terms ("translation," "metaphor," "passage," "transport" etc. are all caught up in a metaphorical chain where their figurative use is a "translation" – that is, a metaphor – of metalinguistic meanings into the non-verbal realm). In what follows I shall explore some of the implications of this "linguistic" universe concerning the trilogy's imagery, figurativity and narrative logic.

GONE HOME

For Talbot, who rather fancies himself as a wit, the absolute control of the verbal medium is an essential constituent of his cosmic sense of superiority; language is "so habitual as to be unnoticeable" (*FDB* 89), or rather, the fact that he notices it, playing and punning with it as he pleases, is a mark of his supremacy. Talbot's extreme verbal self-consciousness is not a sign of doubt or estrangement, but a symptom of excessive self-confidence, an excess or overflow of a mastery confident that there is nothing it cannot do with/to language, a sign of an awareness of the stellar distance separating him from all the other inhabitants of the ship. It is only natural that his primary aim in the course of the voyage is to learn Tarpaulin, "to become wholly master of the sea affair" (*ROP* 6). Talbot is aware that his unassailable authority might suffer unless he becomes *master* (another word for captain) of the ship, a world basically unknown to him. He is also aware that his becoming master of the sea affair can only be attained by the acquisition of the language of the seamen (Tarpaulin). In a sense, he is the enlightened coloniser who knows that proficiency in the language of the natives will clinch his supremacy once and for all.

He duly begins to use his naval dictionary and "conquer" the ship as a verbal universe, believing that the learning of Tarpaulin will simply mean an extension of his vocabulary into a so far unexplored area, and displays his growing proficiency in passages of a veritable intoxication with the technicalities of Tarpaulin. Yet, instead of

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[3] "'You will forgive the figure': Language, Metaphor and Translation in William Golding's *Rites of Passage*," *British and American Studies* (Timisoara) 2 (1998) pp. 94-102.

bringing him the desired mastery, learning the language presents him with a linguistic experience of a very different kind. It is obvious from the very first moment that Talbot's boarding the ship entails a change (a "sea change") in his experience of language. Something "happens" to language aboard the nameless ship; the change is a moment of wrenching, a fissure. Language somehow becomes perceptible, *getting in the way*, revealed as an "object" between ourselves and the world, ourselves and the others. Talbot's puns are not understood, his foreign words, Greek quotations and mythological allusions are so many insults, his fanciful figures are the dead-ends of communication rather than its embellishments (see, for instance, *ROP* 22, 36, 142; *FDB* 88); words reveal an unexpected and, what is even more important, uncontrollable capacity for ambiguity and polysemy (that is how he unwittingly insults Miss Granham - *ROP* 48-9); frequently he finds himself unable to understand the seamen's language, and not because it is full of abstruse technicalities, but because of the undefinable, yet all-pervasive *alienness* of the language (the best example is probably the carpenter's enigmatic anecdote, *ROP* 79-80 and, in general, Talbot's vaguely humiliating linguistic adventures or tribulations in the underworld of the ship); more and more conversations tend to become "metalinguistic," turning on the shades of meaning of a certain word or expression, addressing issues of verbal representation or communication (*CQ* 170-81), or in various other ways (for instance, Talbot is offered riddles by Summers [*ROP* 135] and Tommy Taylor [*CQ* 278]); certain phrases lose their "meaning" and become like physical objects, exchanged among the inhabitants of the ship like currency ("rendering like an old boot," "we are odd like that"[4]). Language is wrenched from its

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[4] Kevin McCarron, in *The Coincidence of Opposites: William Golding's Later Fiction* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995, p. 77), claims that the second phrase plays an important role in the narrative; it is a phrase that comes from Talbot, and the fact that it gains currency among the seamen suggests that Talbot, coming to the end of his initiation ritual, is finally integrated into the world of the ship. The neat interpretation of the trilogy as a three-stage initiation is, I think, contradicted by the text; Talbot is not, cannot be integrated into the world of the ship, not only on account of his personal peccadilloes, but also because the universe of the ship is a world of radical non-integration. Incidentally, the phrase ("I'm odd like that") is not Talbot's: it is one of the idiosyncrasies of the Dickensian purser Mr Jones, used by him in two of his conversations with Talbot (*CQ* 166, *CQ* 260), who then quotes it ironically at Mr Jones to teach the purser a lesson (*CQ* 275); the phrase is adopted by he crew as a "catch phrase" (277), but there is no evidence that Talbot is the source of this "metalinguistic" usage. In fact, inasmuch as Mr Jones is seen as the *source* of the ship's linguistic traffic and commerce, the point is probably exactly that the phrase has no identifiable origin, it is always already circulating (always already a quote). Mr Jones, the *purser* is the invisible origin or still centre of *circulation* in the world of the ship, and the phrase that originates with him is inevitably a verbal unit, a circulating coin whose value (meaning) is totally effaced: its value is its participation in the circulation of

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position of transparent medium and controllable "playground" and has to be reckoned with as an unpredictable presence or agent. At sea, language seems to come into its own as an object, vessel, medium of passages (translations) between us and the world, an object (like the ship) whose function is to transport, translate, carry over from one place to another. To live in the ship is to live in translation, in passage, in the passage or translation that language is.

The paradigmatic figure among the seamen who seems to embody the essential experience of being at sea is the halfwitted "ancient midshipman" (*CQ* 157), Davies, a shadowy figure who no longer speaks at all. His only contribution to conversation is the circular, interminable song he sometimes chants: "It was the beginning and the end of his song. It was the endless end, over and over again" (*CQ* 160). This is a song that does not mean anything, language finally reduced to the level of noise, of sound. It also illustrates Davies's narrative situation, as is explained by Mr Askew the gunner: "He's the real bottom of he barrel, isn't he? I suppose he might have rose to be a lieutenant if he'd had luck or a shove up the bum from an admiral. But it don't matter to him now, does it? Not what he was or might have become. He's had it all and gone home, sir. He don't hear us, isn't here" (*CQ* 160). Davies's position is beyond the possibility of all narrative outcomes; he is constantly at sea, constantly in movement, yet the movement is totally devoid of any narrative potential. Askew's central phrase ("gone home"), as he explains to Talbot, is a metaphor:

> He's gone home, like I said. The likes of me, well we're as hard as the ship's bitts never having known what it is to have parents and all that gear. But Martin [Davies], you see, he could remember his parents so he has in a manner of speaking a home to go home to, I don't really mean go home but when he's like this it's the same really.
>
> (*CQ* 161)

Davies is the embodiment of the essential homelessness that the voyage is; homelessness is a condition that is invariably a deprivation, experienced only by those who have had something that can be called a home; Askew has always inhabited, made his home in this homelessness that being at sea turns out to be, but Talbot, like Davies,

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signs. If Mr Jones, the *usurer* who is feared by all is considered to be the centre of the linguistic universe of the trilogy, his language, the language *originating* with him, is language as total (one could say unalloyed) *usure*. For a discussion of the metaphorical relationships between linguistic and monetary circulation, usage and usure, see Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy" in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982) p. 209-18.

experiences it as a deprivation, a radically new condition of existence. His moment of homelessness (or the moment when the voyage is revealed as homelessness) comes after Wheeler's suicide, the act that renders his (and Colley's) hutch temporarily inhabitable: "It now came to me that I was homeless! What still puzzles me is that I felt this strange 'homelessness' more than anything else and had some difficulty in restraining my tears" (*CQ* 264). We have seen that this homelessness is defined in the novel as a largely linguistic predicament, a state of wrenching and alienation, a condition in which language, instead of making the world safely habitable, becomes "unhomely," "uncanny." J. Hillis Miller finds an inevitable general analogy between being at sea and linguistic homelessness:

> The state of homeless drifting [in a novel's topography] would correspond to an uprooted condition of language. In such a condition, the reference of each word is only another word, the meaning of that word yet another word, and so on. Language moves from word to word in a perpetual drifting, never being pinned down to anything outside language.[5]

Miller's analogy is appropriate inasmuch as the narrative indirectness (or lack of direction) reflects a linguistic indirection (but, at least in Golding's novel, without the oppressive sense of linguistic claustrophobia); it would seem that, narratively, homelessness means the impossibility of *arrival*. When the narrative loses the sense of heading towards an arrival, the chain of meaning working on the microlevels of the text is also likely to suffer from the same indirection. Also, in Golding's novel, there is another, pervasive sense of verbal indirection: the metaphor of translation presides over the text (the addressee of the first part of the journal, the linguistic authority reigning over the world, is Talbot's godfather, the famous translator); words and sentences are misunderstood, messages misdirected, the entire "structure of address"[6] is affected and deflected. Colley's text, for instance, is originally a letter addressed to his sister, but he dies before he could decide whether to send it or not (he himself has doubts about the propriety of doing so); the manuscript is snatched from the dead man's hutch by Talbot who reads it (becoming the text's first unintended addressee). He makes the Marlovean decision of not offending the sensibility of a woman with the

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[5] J. Hillis Miller, *Topographies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995) p. 11

[6] Stephen Connor, *The English Novel in History 1950-1995* (London: Routledge, 1996) p. 158. Connor's excellent reading of *Rites of Passage* is centred around instances of the "unreliable semantic passage of meaning" (p. 156) and the constant threat of "deflected destination" (p. 157).

contents of the text and pastes it into his own journal that is also a letter. Colley's letter, thus, ends up as part of a missive to someone he had never met. Besides, the godfather is dead by the time the journal could reach him, so Talbot finds himself in the interesting position of facilitating the passage of a text from one dead person to another. The letter's "home" is not its destination, *arrival*, but its deflection, its moment or process of passage, that is, Talbot's text itself.

This linguistic homelessness involves another sense of "indirection" or rather indirectness: the sea is the place where the passage from signifier to signified is not a direct line. Naming is not direct, literal, but improper, indirect, figurative. We shall see the reasons for this in the figurative logic of the trilogy, but the text offers a narrative metaphor as well: when Summers instructs Talbot about the "advised course for a ship between one point and another" (*CQ* 173), he tells him that ships normally do not "take the direct route" (174). Nor do words and names: the linguistic world of the trilogy is a world of figures (metaphors, translations, carry-overs), a world where the border between the literal and the figurative is dissolved in a general sense of indirectness and indirection. The sea is a place where, for instance, and this is another symptom of the general "mobility" of language, dead metaphors are unexpectedly resuscitated – as Talbot realises in a memorable metalinguistic passage that once again connects the movement of the ship and the movement of meaning. Early in *Close Quarters*, the ship is lamed by an accident: it is "taken aback" by a sudden change in the direction of the wind. Talbot, familiar only with the figurative (that is, for him, literal) meaning of the phrase, is fascinated by the linguistic implications of the occurrence:

> What a language is ours, how diverse, how direct in indirection, how completely, and, as it were, unconsciously metaphorical! I was reminded of my years of turning English verse into Latin or Greek and the necessity of finding some plain statement which would convey the sense of what the English poet had wrapped in the brilliant obscuration of figures!
>
> (*CQ* 25)

The passage is organised around three dichotomies: that of dead and alive, direct and indirect, illumination and occlusion (the latter two oppositions rhetorically subverted in oxymorons). Talbot realises that an expression which he has been using automatically as literal, direct, is in fact a metaphorical (catachretical) borrowing from, of all things, Tarpaulin. Talbot discovers a dead metaphor in his own language by coming across the same phrase as a literal expression (the earlier form of "taken aback," thus, is not a live metaphor but a literal expression). Discovering a "dead

metaphor," or identifying an innocuous phrase as a dead (already powerless) metaphor thus paradoxically but automatically entails the resuscitating of the phrase, or rather the returning of it to the moment of/before its "death"; the phrase can now be seen as dead, something that is not possible in the case of non-metaphorical, direct, proper linguistic units. It is the metaphor of death that introduces the possibility of a, perhaps past, life for a piece of language, and, consequently, of the personification of language: the diagnosis of (metaphorical) death is the, as it were, posthumous bestowal of (metaphorical) life. It is via a metaphor ("dead") that the possibility of personifying (certain bits of) language is born (identifying a metaphor as dead implies that it had once been alive, that is, it has gone through the process of dying which is the prerogative of living things), and this creates the possibility for the extension of the death-life figurativity which dominates the passage: metaphor (carrying-over), because of its implication in the figurative logic of death and life, puts Talbot in mind of translation (carrying-over), from a live to a dead language. Dead languages are defined as languages of directness ("plain statements"), languages devoid of the possibility, not of metaphoricity, but of this experience of resuscitation. "Now here was metaphor come across at its origin" (25). What he is talking about, then, is not just the rebirth but the birth (origin) of metaphors – and this is what is really denied to dead languages. Dead languages lack their "seas" and "Tarpaulins," places, or times, as it were, before the forking of the literal and the figurative, the proper and the metaphorical. The sea (Tarpaulin) is not really the place where dead metaphors are still alive, but the place where words still contain the potentiality of being transformed into metaphors. Tarpaulin, then, is not an earlier state of language, a lost semantic and referential utopia of unequivocalness,[7] but a place where language reveals a "secret life" largely

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[7] McCarron suggests that Tarpaulin is, even if not a "language of unequivocal relationships," with no scope for ambiguity and duplicity, "considerably less amenable to ambiguity than any other form of discourse within the novels" (p. 83). It is obvious, however, that Tarpaulin is itself rich in dead metaphors and catachreses ("shoe," "heel," "petticoats" etc.), and that the seamen's language is full of figurative expressions (e.g. Tommy Taylor [ROP 39], Mr Askew [ROP 79], Mr Gibbs [ROP 81]). Tarpaulin cannot feature as a referential utopia that is "stripped of all symbolic ambiguity because it has to serve a specific practical end" (Jacques Berthoud, "Introduction" to *The Nigger of 'Narcissus'*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. xxiv), as a "technical language" that is "an instrument wrought into perfection by ages of experience." (Joseph Conrad, *The Mirror of the Sea* and *A Personal Record*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 13. Calling language an "instrument" could be the first step in a Heideggerian reading of the process whereby language becomes an annoyingly noticeable, alien, uncanny "thing" during the voyage.) Tarpaulin is, rather, an ultimately subversive marine *supplement* of mainland English, a "foreign language" that, however, is revealed to always have been inside "plain" English, as its constantly resurfacing condition.

independent of its users. This discovery is an essential part of Talbot's linguistic "homelessness," which is, after all, not entirely oppressive and claustrophobic, but has much in it of the necessary "achieved" homelessness of an existentialist self-discovery.

In *Rites of Passage*, Talbot attempts to overcome his sense of homelessness by inserting between himself and the alien world of the ship Falconer's marine dictionary – not realising that thereby the sense of homelessness is not diminished but increased, that the essential sense of homelessness is the contagious presence of the logic of dictionaries: words have to be explained by other words that in turn require an explanation, and so on until all the words are caught up in the chain that blurs the distinction between language and metalanguage. Doctor Johnson was very much aware of the lexicographer's plight: "And such is the fate of hapless lexicography, that not only darkness, but light, impedes and distresses it."[8]

> I saw that one enquiry only gave occasion to another, that book referred to book, that to search was not always to find, and to find was not always to be informed; and thus to pursue perfection, was, like the first inhabitants of Arcadia, to chase the sun, which, when they had reached the hill where he seemed to rest, was still beheld at the same distance from.[9]

Doctor Johnson's parable of the lexicographer is curiously like Hillis Miller's story of man in search of meaning in a drifting world, let alone narratives of the transcendental signified and the endlessly floating or slipping signifier. Besides all this, its central metaphor ("chasing the sun") offers a picturesque parable of the figurative structure that dominates Golding's trilogy: the cluster of figures involving the luminaries of the narrated world. One could say that the world of a narrative is 'established" when the stable centre, the light-giving still point of the world is "named," when the source of the light that will illuminate the world is positioned. It is this scene that I shall read now – a scene that is, incidentally, marked by the silent presence of the ancient midshipman, the figure of homelessness.

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[8] Samuel Johnson, "Preface to the English Dictionary," *Prose and Poetry*, ed. Mona Wilson (London: Rupert hart-Davis, 1950) p. 310.

[9] Samuel Johnson, p.317

SHOOTING THE SUN

When, early in the first volume, Edmund Talbot is taken on a tour of the ship that is his abode during the voyage to the antipodes, he jestingly asks his guide, midshipman Willis, to give an account of his knowledge. Fired by what seems to be naïve pride, Willis enumerates all his nautical skills, adding that he also knows how "to shoot the sun" (*ROP* 35). As is his habit, Talbot begins to twist and turn the sentences of his rather simple interlocutor, not forgetting to involve and revitalise Willis' unconsciously used metaphorical phrase: "But what is the composition of the powder that enables you to shoot the sun and should you not be careful lest you damage the source of light and put the day out?" (35). What Talbot does here is a simple literalisation of a figurative expression; he knows what the expression means, thus this rhetorical flourish – as is so often the case in the first volume – is a way of asserting his (verbal) authority by involving a nautical technical term in his self-conscious punning. When Willis tells him that shooting the sun, that is, taking an observation (establishing the position of the ship with a sextant) is an activity that is repeated by several officers on each occasion, Talbot elaborates his conceit: "I see. You do not merely shoot the sun. You subject him to a British Broadside! I shall watch with interest and perhaps take a hand in shooting the sun too as we roll round him" (36).[10] The end of the above sentence triggers off the second stage of involving the sun in a play of metaphors: "You could not do that, sir – answers Willis. – We wait here for the sun to climb up the sky and we measure the angle when it is greatest and take the time too" (36). In his reply, Talbot invokes the authority of Galileo, Copernicus, and Kepler, claiming that the sun's trajectory is only an apparent movement, but the young midshipman sticks to his version: "Sir, I do not know how the sun may behave among those gentleman ashore but I know that he climbs up the sky in the Royal Navy" (37).

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[10] One of the participants of the ritual is midshipman Davies, who, however, cannot read his sextant – he is unable to shoot the sun. After the ceremony, Talbot sees him descend into the underworld of the ship, "going away with a slow and broken motion for all the world like a stage apparition returning to the tomb" (*ROP* 39). The metaphorical link that connects Davies to the sun and to death at the same time is strengthened in a later remark: "in bright sunlight [Davies] looks more decayed than ever" (*ROP* 104). This metaphorical linkage is one of those instances of semantic residue or excess (Wheeler's case will be discussed in some detail later) that constitute an irreducible block for any systematic interpretation of the trilogy.

The episode is a typical example of Talbot's verbal behaviour (he also baffles Willis by quoting some ancient Greek and by one of those fanciful metaphors that invariably prove to be stumbling blocks in his conversations with the seamen - 34, 36): his self-conscious punning and figuring is one of the ways of asserting his absolute superiority over his interlocutors by demonstrating his erudition and wit. On the other hand, something more is at stake in this conversation; the scene with Willis is important in establishing the world ("world") of the trilogy. Why is the sun introduced in this way? What *is* the sun in this episode – and in the narrated world? These questions are all the more important since *Rites of Passage* is, as it were, presided over by the sun: Colley's final humiliation that leads to his eventual death takes place "under our vertical sun" (*ROP* 105), Colley's journal is full of references to the awfulness and majesty of the sun, and Talbot's closing remark definitively locates the narrated world under the aegis of the two luminaries: "With lack of sleep and too much understanding I grow a little crazy, I think, like all men at sea who live too close to each other and too close thereby to all that is monstrous under the sun and moon" (*ROP* 278).

The first noteworthy thing in this context is that the sun is introduced into the world of the novel as the "sun," that is, as a word rather than its referent: "sun" is a central word, not only because it names the central object of what was then the universe, but also because it may be viewed as a kind of referential utopia, as a master-word, the exemplary stable place in language, a place that is devoid of ambiguity and unequivocalness, "whose referent has the originality of always being original, at least in the representation we give of it. There is only one sun in this system. The proper name, here, is the nonmetaphorical prime mover of metaphor, the father of all figures. Everything turns around it, everything turns toward it."[11] It is interesting, therefore, to see (although seeing is perhaps not the right word here) what happens to the "sun" in a novelistic world that is so emphatically "under" it, exposed to its (or "his") rays. First of all, this piece of perfect literalness and univocity that the "sun" is begins by being entangled in a metaphor – what is more, a metaphor that threatens this stable source of light, Logos and meaning with extinction. The sun makes its first appearance only to be shot – and this is a striking metaphor; although Willis claims that even landlubbers know what the expression means, he means landlubbers of the early 19th century: if the metaphor appeared to be dead for Talbot, it is, I think, very much alive for us. The sun is not really part of the metaphor (the metaphorical word is "to shoot" which means "to take aim at something with an instrument"), but it is entangled in it: if it (he) can be metaphorically shot, than it (he) becomes part of a metaphorical chain involving

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[11] Derrida, p. 243.

objects and creatures that can be shot (a bottle, a bird – like the albatross –, or a human being). The sun thus finds itself in an analogical relation with a number of other items; that is, it cannot evade the fate of all such terms, that of being caught up in a metaphorical relation, where "everything begins to function no longer as a sun, but as a star." The name of the sun "is no longer the proper name of a unique thing which metaphor would *overtake*,"[12] but an at least partly "improper" (figurative) name already caught up in the play of metaphor.

The introduction of the sun, then, establishes the world of the novel as an emphatically verbal, linguistic universe where even the central object of this world is a word, and then, by involving this word in a metaphor before it could appear as a proper name, institutes this universe as a world of unstable, metaphorical chains and slippings. The second metaphor that involves the sun ("the sun climbs") goes one step further: it is not just that the metaphor (error) is not recognised as such by Willis, but also that its semantic aspect recalls Aristotle's arguments (and Talbot remains a staunch Aristotelian up to the middle of the second volume, and probably throughout) about the "impropriety" of the name of the sun.

> He who has stated that it is a property of the sun to be "the brightest star that moves above the earth" has employed in the property something of a kind which is comprehensible only by sensation, namely "moving above the earth"; and so the property of the sun would not have been correctly assigned, for it will not be manifest, when the sun sets, whether it is still moving above the earth, because sensation then fails us.[13]

"Literal naming – claims J. Hillis Miller – is possible only of things which are open to the senses, phenomenologically perceptible, especially available to eyesight"[14]: and the sun cannot fulfil this criterion for two reasons: first, we cannot see its celestial movement in its entirety, therefore part of the name we give it will be based on conjecture and not on perception; and second, because we cannot, strictly speaking, look at the sun. Even though it provides the possibility of seeing, by looking at it one would see nothing or be blinded.[15] "The sun is not one of those things we encounter, see, and know 'under the sun.' The 'sun' can therefore only be named in figure, veiled or misted in metaphor, covered by a word or words which serve as a protection against

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[12] Derrida, p. 243.

[13] Quoted in J. Hillis Miller, *The Linguistic Moment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) p. 420

[14] Miller, *Tropes, Parables, Performatives* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990) p. 217

[15] See Miller, *Tropes, Parables, Performatives* p. 217.

the danger of blinding ... Any name for the 'sun' is a kind of blank space in the syntax."[16] The first metaphor, thus, implies that the 'sun,' instead of standing supremely apart from the essential figurativity of language, is inevitably caught up in its metaphorical processes, whereas the second goes much further and identifies the 'sun' as the paradigmatic case of a name that is always already metaphorical: if the sun is the basis of the world in the sense that it makes possible vision, knowledge and truth, this basis is already the exemplary case of figurativity, verbal "impropriety." The 'sun', then, is a strange word, pulled apart by the fact that it is exemplary in two opposing senses:

> The trajectory of the sun, its rising and setting, its alternate visibility and invisibility, has been since before Aristotle a paradigm, perhaps the most basic paradigm, both for truth, *aletheia* in its veiling and unveiling, and for metaphor in its covert dependence on catachresis, the figurative naming of that which has no literal name.[17]

Golding's trilogy is, among other things, a novel about tropes – about the tropological, figurative nature of the way we make sense of the world. It is the sun that makes this world visible, and the sun itself is made invisible by the text; the sun, *this sun,* defines the visibility of the metaphors in the narrated world, in two senses: if all metaphors (and tropes) are heliotropes (as Derrida and Miller think they are),[18] this means two things: the founding metaphor of the world is the sun-metaphor (metaphor of the sun), "the turning movement of the sun,"[19] which is a meta-trope, likening the passage of meaning implied in a metaphorical transfer to the turning of the sun, and every metaphor (passage, translation) of the novelistic world is somehow illuminated, inseminated by the sun, and turns toward the sun (heliotropes) like the "climbing plants" (*ROP*, p. 159) in Captain Anderson's private paradise. The sun, this tutelary and originary source of light in the novel, disseminates its light in a world which, in order to be visible, has to be metaphorical. "Shooting the sun" means, in the context of the trilogy, "making the sun invisible," "returning the sun to its original invisibility," acknowledging the originary invisibility (and therefore figurativity) of the source of light and truth: "each time there is sun, metaphor has begun."[20]

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[16] Miller, *Tropes, Parables, Performatives,* p. 217.

[17] Miller, *The Linguistic Moment,* p. 141.

[18] See Derrida, p. 251 and Miller, *The Linguistic Moment,* p. 142.

[19] Derrida, p. 251.

[20] Derrida, p. 251.

The episode that features the two heliotropic metaphors goes on to describe the actual ceremony of "shooting the sun" when it has "climbed" to its greatest height. As can be expected, Talbot is granted a memorable insight, enlightenment, illumination in the light of the invisible sun: watching the solemn proceedings and the awestruck spectators (the "common" emigrants who live in the fore part of the ship, who, unlike clever Talbot, do not understand what is going on), he sees "such concepts as 'duty,' 'privilege,' 'authority' in a new light. They moved out of books, out of the schoolroom and university into the broader scenes of daily life" (*ROP* 38). His insight (revelation) is twofold, and doubly figurative, as it should indeed be in the light of this sun. On the one hand, he sees the common sailors and passengers as characters in a personification allegory, but in an oblique way: the abstract categories ("duty," "privilege" and "authority") belong to him not to them; they are *his* duty, and it is insights like this one that grant him the "privilege" and "authority" over them. On the other hand, and this is a different figurative reading of the same scene, this is the first event that is called "rite" (37) by him – the ritual of shooting, instead of, say, propitiating, the sun. The rite is performed by the officers and watched by the simple folks as if they were attending "a religious service" (38). "You might be inclined to think as I did that the glittering instruments were their Mumbo Jumbo. Indeed, Mr Davies's ignorance and Mr Taylor's defective instrument were feet of clay; but I felt they might have a justifiable faith in some of the older officers!" (38). This scene of solar revelation is paradigmatic for another reason. It could be argued that Talbot is trying to occupy or usurp here what he considers to be the position of the sun: he is watching the ceremony as well as the spectators, himself wrapped in the sublime outside-ness of his immobility. He is the source of light (e.g. knowledge about the source of light) and reveals the truth of the world narrated by him, always standing apart, trying to keep a distance that is solar in its absoluteness. This is how he behaves in connection with Colley's ordeal, careful not to be caught up in the dangerous, infectious metaphorical slippings of that story. His first encounter with Colley is a little parable of his later (verbal) attitude: poor seasick Colley stumbles into Talbot and "befouls" his oilskins, but "a heave, shudder and convenient spout of mixed rain and sea *cleaned him off me*" (*ROP* 16; italics mine).

The fact that he is inextricably involved in, to some extent even responsible for what happens to the clergyman is indicated, among other things, by the rhetorical developments in *Close Quarters* where Talbot is caught up in the metaphorical slippages of the world, *becoming* Colley in many ways (this is an example of how the moral issues raised by the novel are inextricably involved in the verbal and metalinguistic processes).

Perhaps it is not too fanciful to suggest that Talbot the narrator starts out as king Sol, the sun that is a proper name for a motionless source of light — that is, Talbot ignores the narrative, linguistic, social and moral consequences of the Copernican turn he himself invokes; besides, by entangling the 'sun' in a metaphorical play before it could become a proper name, Talbot actually undermines his own narrative position, because he continues to use language as if it were under the tutelage of sun as the exemplary proper name; if he is a sun (that is, perhaps, why he is so eager to participate in shooting his rival), he is the 'sun' that he himself involves in the slippery world "below," even if he remains blissfully unaware of this. We could probably suggest that Talbot ends as a lunar storyteller, aware that telling a story is not the revelation of truth but the transmutation of the world. All this, of course, cannot be "true" properly speaking, partly because of the way truth (the light of truth) is conceived of in the narrated world, and partly because this conception implies an altogether too neat narrative of development.

The sun plays a central role in Robert Colley's narrative as well, and its (his) configuration illustrates the differences between their (Talbot's and Colley's, that is) tropes and use of language generally. Colley's first mention of the sun – in the course of his jubilant description of the "oceanic paradise" – is also a figure: "The sunlight is warm and like a natural benediction" (*ROP* 187). The metaphor implied here identifies the sun as the one who grants the benediction of light, the source and giver of light, and this idea is elaborated in a later passage: "the sun lays such a lively hand on us! We must beware of him lest he strike us down! I am conscious even as I sit here at my *desk* of a warmness about my cheeks that has been occasioned by his rays!" (189). This is an elaborate figure, too, but very different from Talbot's: the personified sun appears as an agent (representative both in a political and a semiotic sense) of divine power (love and wrath), an actor in the spiritual ordeal into which Colley has imaginatively transformed the voyage. The semiotic relationship that Colley is concerned with is not the one between the sun and 'sun,' but that between the sun "itself" and whatever it "stands for." The sun is no longer a metaphor but a symbol (in the Romantic sense of the term),[21] partaking of what it represents. Even when he refers to the sun allegorically

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[21] Their respective uses of the 'sun' could be seen as part of a more general opposition: much has been made of the differences between Talbot's and Colley's diction by a number of critics who have identified Talbot as an Augustan and Colley as a Romantic (see J. H. Stape, " 'Fiction in the Wild, Modern Manner': Metanarrative Gesture in William Golding's *To the End of the Earth* Trilogy," *Twentieth Century Literature* 38.2, Summer 1992, p. 213; Connor p. 154; Marita Nadal, "William Golding's *Rites of Passage*: A World in Transition," in Susana Onega, ed., *Telling Stories: Narrativizing History, Historicizing Literature* [Amsterdam –

("king Sol had exerted his full sway" - 225), the celestial orb remains a symbolic representative (part) of the disseminated divine presence. Colley's world is a signifying universe, where everything is a potential figure of God's grandeur or mercy; everything has a spiritual significance, which, however, being by definition unnameable, can only be reached through figurative language. This is not a self-conscious use of figures, but one that is charged with and enforced by an existential and epistemological stake. For Talbot, figures are not catachretic: they do not illuminate new, otherwise unreachable aspects of existence, but simply provide different, fanciful and ingenious ways of saying or naming things that actually have a proper name; for Colley, figures are an extension of language into regions that would otherwise remain unaddressable. There is one more difference: Colley simply cannot afford to relegate (degrade, "sink") the sun to a figurative level in the way Talbot does. One does not even have to look at the sun to suffer: it is enough to face the sun, and to *give it a face* (the meaning of prosopopeia) to be *defaced* by it, as Colley realises when he examines his "sun-scorched skin" (*ROP* 225) in the mirror.

The sacrificial ritual, in the course of which Colley is degraded by being once again *defaced* (his face is smeared with ordure and urine - 237) takes place under the aegis of the sun and the moon.

> Our huge ship was motionless and her sails still hung down. On her right hand the red sun was setting and on her left the full moon was rising, the one directly across from the other. The two vast luminaries seemed to stare at each other and each to modify the other's light. ... Here plainly to be seen were the very scales of GOD.
>
> (*ROP* 233)

Colley's symbolic sacrificial death (the defacing ritual) is preceded by this apocalyptic moment of stillness and cosmic equilibrium, but the actual event takes place when the scales have already tilted, "the double light faded and we were wrought of ivory and ebony by the moon" (*ROP* 233). This striking and beautiful figure might suggest a change in the configuration of the narrated world, the moment when the sun begins to surrender its supremacy to the secondary luminary; there is indeed such a change, but in *Rites of Passage*, the sun reasserts its supremacy in the episode of Colley's

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Atlanta, Rodopi, 1995], pp. 89-96. It should be noted that Nadal borrows most of her insights from Philip Redpath, *William Golding: A Structural Reading of His Fiction* [London: Vision Press – Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1986].)

total self-degradation (as we have seen, the closing sentence places the narrated world under the double authority of the sun and the moon).

LUMINARIES

The sun and the moon create the conditions of visibility, which in turn establish the figurative setup of the ship's world, the figurative, tropological (helio- or lunotropic) processes whereby meaning is sought, created and generally speaking illuminated. Truth (the kind of truth that can be revealed under this particular sun) is revealed under, in the light of, the sun and the moon, and the trilogy seems to have a particular rhythm whereby one or the other of these sources of light (that is, metaphorical authority) presides over this or that stretch of the voyage. I would call *Rites of Passage* a decidedly solar text with just one episode, the crucial one of the sacrifice dominated by the moon; in the rest of the trilogy, however, visibility as such becomes problematic. The sun is largely absent from *Close Quarters*, apart from two brief metaphorical appearances as the 'sun': there is the little "private sun" (*CQ* 114) shining on Talbot and Miss Chumley, and the 'sun' appearing in Lieutenant Benét's fanciful simile: the future, he says, belongs to poetry and poetry properly belongs to women, who, when they finally understand this, "will rise in splendour like the sun!" (*CQ* 206). In the absence of the sun, the second volume is dominated by the difficulties of visibility, especially by mist (and by signal flares [49-50] and lanterns, artificial substitutes for the 'natural' sources of light),[22] Talbot feels strange "in our universe which the mist reduced to no more than a portion of our ship" (*CQ* 29); the two ships are "wrapped now in a humid mist

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[22] The source of light that, in a sense, defines or illuminates the world of the two becalmed ships is the metaphorical lightning that strikes Talbot and his world when Miss Chumley appears on the scene. "The lightning that struck the top of the mizzenmast ran down, and melted the conductor into white hot drops. The mast split and flinders shot every way into the mist. The deckhead burst open and the electrical fluid destroyed me. It surrounded the girl who stood before me with a white line of light" (*CQ* 87). The light here is like the sun, in that it reveals the world (the "white line of light" provides a condition of absolute visibility as regards Marion) and destroys whoever is exposed to it (by surrounding the girl it makes her another sun, impossible to look at without the risk of being blinded and destroyed). The "white hot drops" evoke the story of Danae, further confusing the "direction" of the lightning: it enters Talbot, feminising him, and is also directed at Marion, who, however, being a rival luminary, is not destroyed but made more powerful, more visible by this absorbed light. The light of the lightning is also like the moon in that it is a substance that transmutes whatever is immersed in it, in that it is a light that is fire and liquid at the same time.

that seemed to invade my intellect as much as it drifted across our decks" (*CQ* 74; see also 122). Like the sun, the moon makes two, equally metaphorical, appearances. It is first mentioned by Benét, this thoroughly lunar figure, in a fanciful simile, when he likens the hogging and sagging of the ship's wood to the waxing and waning of he moon ("I have sometimes had the fancy that the moon is a ship with all her timbers a-creak, hogging, sagging, rolling, pitching" - *CQ* 181), and reappears in Talbot's poetic effort as he tries to emulate the inspired poetic madness of *Romeo and Juliet* ("Brighter than moonlight, wandering maid" - *CQ* 215). The moon is also present in a diffused, general way, as madness, the *lunacy* that gradually overcomes all the inhabitants of the ship (Talbot is delirious for most of the novel, and when he recovers, Mr Smiles suggests that everybody else is mad [191]; the ship is pervaded by a communal hysteria, an "idiotic decline into phantasy" [220] and a "hysterical, mad hilarity" [271]): and a ship of fools or lunatics is naturally presided over by the moon.

By the time of *Fire Down Below*, the moon seems to have established its (her) sway over the ship: apart from a brief glimpse of the setting sun (*FDB* 122-3), visibility is provided by its reflected light: Talbot's nightly vigils with Summers, for instance, take place on the "moon-drenched" desk (*FDB* 60, see also 52, 128, 157, 229). One would be tempted to say that the reign of the moon reflects (it cannot but reflect) a change in the verbal universe of the trilogy, and in a way this is probably a justifiable surmise. The masculine sun, no matter how deceptive, is still a gravitational centre that makes all other words and tropes heliotropes — and this is true even if the centre undermines the very world that it illuminates. The sun, when looked at, blinds and damages (as it defaces Colley); when, however, it is the invisible source of the light by which the world is examined, it reveals the objects of the world. The moon is not a central celestial body: if it figuratively dominates a world, that particular world is an unstable, wandering half-world that is always on the move.[23] Moonlight does not physically damage: it is a light that does not imply the concept of fire (in the concluding volume, the fire is not up there, but "down below"). A world illuminated by the moon is not a world that is revealed; moonlight does not tear away the mist that hinders visibility, it is itself a light that is also a mist, a veil, an almost tangible substance. "Before me the pool of the waist was full of light to be waded through. I went out, and as I turned to go up the ladders the waxing moon blazed in my face" (*FDB* 83); "this moonlight — one could bathe in it — swim in it" (*FDB* 88; see also 94). Moonlight does not reveal but transform: in the context of the linguistic universe of the trilogy, it does not administer

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[23] It is also, like moonlit Patusan in *Lord Jim*, a reflected, second-hand, even ghostly world, its revelations born in and illuminated by a borrowed light.

or assist the metaphorical work of language, but *performs* it – as is obvious from Colley's sentence quoted above: "the double light faded and we were *wrought* of ivory and ebony by the moon" (*ROP* 233; my italics). If sunlight reveals a face, moonlight does what we do: it *gives another face* (Deverel and Cumbershum are wearing another face, that is, masks, during the ritual; during the night watch, Summers "wore a *mask of moonlight* as I suppose I did" – *FDB* 90 [my italics]), transforms faces: "You know, however long I live I shall remember the middle watch" – Talbot says to Summers in a sentimental mood –. "I shall think of it as a kind of – island – out of this world – made of moonlight – a time for confidences when men can say to a – transmuted face what they would never bring out in the daytime" (*FDB* 94). The moon is the metaphor-maker, the translator, and her supremacy seems to be so strong that, since the position of the ship cannot be taken now with reference to the sun (the chronometers are not working properly), Benét's method that is somehow connected to "lunar distance" (*FDB* 24) is being considered. The ascendancy of the moon (one should, but could not say that the sun is totally eclipsed by it) is confirmed when its power of transformation has affected even the originary source of light: "a faint haze reduced the sun to a white roundel much like the full moon" (*FDB* 106).

In *Fire Down Below*, visibility as such seems to be affected and injured. It is not just that moonlight transforms instead of revealing, but also that the source of light itself seems to disappear; there is no point (stable or moving) that has the privilege of illuminating the others, of providing the light by which everything else is then made visible. One such, apparently sourceless light is the indescribable, "unearthly storm light" (*FDB* 138, 175) which seems to rise from the darkness of the storm, subverting the very opposition between light and its opposite in terms of the possibilities of visibility: "I had a shadow. But this was not the absence or diminution of light, it was the absence of mist, of rain, of spray" (*FDB* 133), that is, the obstacles of visibility seem to usurp the role of light and cast a shadow by their absence. Another typical passage describes Talbot's dream in which he finds himself in "a place lit by a savage light" (*FDB* 62) of which the only thing that can be said with any certainty is that it is not still ("it leapt and sank, again and again" - *FDB* 62). The luminary confusion is indicated by the fact that Talbot mistakes the gleam (ominous internal light) of the iceberg for daylight; the typical "luminary" of this part of the narrative (perhaps of the entire narrative) is the ice: "the ice glimmered little more than the sails in some strange light which, now the moon had set, seemed to have no source which was identifiable" (*FDB* 231).

The sun, however, does not totally disappear from *Fire Down Below*; it, or something like it makes a spectacular metaphysical comeback when the Platonic conception of the world is propagated by Mr Prettiman, in a scene that is crucial in that it also represents or embodies a possible conclusion for Talbot's life narrative.

The introduction of the Platonic theme is preceded by a conversation about the art of "celestial navigation" (*FDB* 88), a theme that is introduced by the ceremony of shooting the sun and is much on Talbot's mind throughout the trilogy, especially in the closing volume where Summers's and Benét's clashing methods divide the ship's inhabitants into factions. In the present context, celestial navigation is important as yet another kind of referential system involving the sun and the moon. In an earlier scene, Talbot remarks the strangeness of our turning the sky into a set of signs: "How awesome to think that we actually use all that up there – make use of the stars and refer to the sun as habitually as to a signpost!" (*FDB* 90). What disturbs the otherwise unreligious and frivolous Talbot is a sense of profanisation of the celestial bodies by degrading them to the level of empty signs that refer to nothing beyond themselves: the sun, when "used" in taking observations, ceases to mean anything; in fact, by becoming a sign or a cipher it effaces itself: in a truly semiotic fashion, it becomes a signifier that does not signify anything apart from its position in the chain or constellation of signifiers. Its entry into the ceremony of observation is not a trace of the sacred, a secularised ritual of the adoration of the sun, but an erasure of the sun. For Summers, the daily rituals have not effaced or abolished the transcendental representativeness of the sun ("No man can contemplate it without being put in mind of his Maker" – 90); for him, as for Colley, the sun is a symbolic (or indexical) sign that refers to its creator. He even quotes the Psalms, and the conversation about the celestial sources of light once again leads inevitably to issues of language and truth: upon hearing the line from the psalms, Talbot calls it a piece of poetry and goes on to ask: "Yet why should putting something into poetry make it truer than if it was in figures?" (90). He juxtaposes poetry (poetic figures) with mathematical figures, ambiguous language with the paradigmatic realm of proper names, absolute unequivocalness, and, since by "talking about" the sublime poetry partakes of its mysteriousness and sublimity, decides that truth (the power to reveal) properly belongs to "improper," that is, figurative language (he assures Miss Chumley already in *Close Quarters* that he has changed sides and is now "an advocate of impropriety" – *CQ* 103).

The conversation with Mr Prettiman that eventually leads to the Platonic theme is concerned with the same juxtaposition; from the discussion of the techniques of celestial navigation, Prettiman and Talbot shift to an exchange of Shakespearean

lines ("This majestical roof, fretted with golden fire – " [*Hamlet*]; "the floor of heaven is thick inlaid with patens of bright gold" [*The Merchant of Venice*]) "so as to" – as Mrs Prettiman remarks – "get the universe on a proper literary footing" (*FDB* 218). The words are interestingly chosen: the two lines, traditional metaphors of the nocturnal sky, avoid naming directly not only the sky itself but also the sources of light; that is, they are improper namings of the sources of light that reveal the objects of the world. Yet, this literary (figurative, improper) footing is called "proper" by Mrs Prettiman: metaphors are more proper than proper names or mathematical figures in the sense that the universe, as Talbot claims, "is more truly revealed by poetry than prose!" (218). Once again, the discussion of the luminaries and of the languages we have of naming them ends up addressing the issue of truth as revelation. The proper (true) names of the sources of light are metaphors: the world that is illuminated by their light is a world illuminated, revealed by figures; metaphors create and name the celestial bodies in the light of which it is possible to distinguish between proper and improper, literal and figurative.

It is at this point (when the circle is once again short-circuited, when the nature of truth as revelation is defined by reference to the luminaries as metaphors) that Prettiman brings up his Platonic conception of the world:

> Oh, look, boy, look! Can the whole be less than good? If it cannot – why, then good is what it must be! Can you not see the gesture, the evidence, the plain statement there, the music – as they used to say, the cry, the absolute! To live in conformity with that, each man to take it to him and open himself to it – I tell you, Edmund, there is not a poor depraved criminal in the land toward which we are moving who could not, by lifting his head, gaze straight into the fire of that love, that χαρις of which we spoke!"
>
> (*FDB* 218-8)

At this point, the whole text (and the narrated world) arrives at its very limit, and it is not an accident that this passage, although without naming it, is "about" the central luminary of the world. In Prettiman's sentences, the text imagines the possibility of transcending itself, of getting outside itself. Supposing that that the centre of the world is the sun and that the centre of language is 'sun,' we have seen the kind of centre the sun is and the kind of world that is illuminated by it. The sun is a centre of the world as a metaphor, and thus, instead of providing an example of stable, literal naming in the light of which all the other names of the world could then be judged as to their truthfulness as revelative power, it casts forth truth in this thoroughly linguistic

world as trope, figure. Proper naming is simply not possible in this world — partly because every word of this language is also potentially part of a metalanguage (the names of the luminaries are no exception: 'sun' names — figuratively — figure, and 'moonlight' performs figuration). The possibility of looking at the sun would entail a radical reorganising of the whole universe: it would amount to the possibility of naming the sun, of establishing a proper name around which the whole world could be restructured and solidified; on the other hand, the sun that Prettiman thinks one can gaze into is not the sun as such but the Sun of Plato's parable, a metaphorical Sun that represents "the Form of the Good in whose light the truth is seen; it reveals the world, hitherto invisible, and is also a source of life."[24] If the text wants to transcend the limits of its textuality (the impossibility of proper naming, inevitable figurativity), it is bound to textualise the "world," to turn it into a place of figures.

For Prettiman, the impossibility of looking at the sun is not due to its extreme brightness but to the presence of all those things (human figures, metaphors, names) that obstruct our vision: human constructions are like a mist that veils the sun, and the emptiness of the Antipodes will provide him with a place "with nothing between our eyes and the Absolute, our ears and that music" (*FDB* 218); this is indicated by the fact that when he actually tells the story of looking at the Absolute, he talks about "moving by cool night through the deserts of this new land" (218). The act of facing the Absolute, the inhuman that has not yet been touched by human naming, however, is possible only through becoming "inhuman." The fire of the sky (the Absolute, the Form of the Good) can only be seen by itself, that is, fire. The participants of Prettiman's expedition must be transformed into fire, "a fire down below here — sparks of the Absolute" (218). The world of this narrative conclusion, the world where seeing and naming the sun is possible, is a world where light is as diffused as in the nameless ship in the closing volume; this, however, as Talbot's dream attests, is a positive diffusion, a suffusion rather than a diffusion, where the people, as well as any other point of the world, are sources of light in their own right: the "faces" of the dream-characters are "glowing," and the whole world is saturated by what Talbot remembers as "honey light" (*FDB* 312). This possibility, the narrative equivalent of which is the Prettimans's expedition *out of the world* of the novel, cannot be the conclusion of Talbot's journal, simply because it is a narrative that cannot be told in this world, in this language: it is the intimation of a world not "under" the sun but "in the sun." It is a narrative possibility that is always implied in each word, each metaphor as a possible outside, a beyond, but one that cannot be lived and then told. In this

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[24] Iris Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) p. 4

structural sense, it is like death — at least as death is figured in the trilogy. It *insists* in Talbot's text as an absence, recurring in the place frequently reserved in narratives for the non-narratable residue or detritus that the text produces (not unlike the "undergrowth of weed" that develops in the course of the journey): in Talbot's dreams. It has to remain on that level, for if it were to become an actual narrative, the entire linguistic universe would disintegrate; "because if it was [more than a dream], then I have to start all over again in a universe quite unlike the one which is my sanity and security" (*FDB* 312).

This solar narrative outcome, then, is outside the world and the linguistic universe of the trilogy. It is there as the intimation of a limit (or transgressing) in every word of the text, but cannot be taken as a narrative route. In fact, the concluding note of the actual journal (the account of the dream reads like an appendix, a text that could not find its proper place in the narrative) is that of the need to protect oneself from the sun. The objective of the voyage turns out to have been Miss Chumley, who, as opposed to bronzed Edmund Talbot, has successfully preserved her essential whiteness (almost an epic epithet; we have seen that her first appearance is an appearance "as" white light, as a figure defined by a "white line of light" – *CQ* 87)) — as chastity and as (and perhaps the two are after all not very different) evidence of not having been exposed to the rays of the sun. As befits a European lady, she, the polar opposite of the Prettimans, lives in the tropics with "something" between herself and the sun — and by stating this, one has involved even her seemingly innocuous *parasol* into the metaphorical play of the text. When they are finally reunited in India under the tropical (heliotropical) sun, she forgets herself for a moment to such an extent that, leaving behind her protective parasol, "she took no heed of the sun" (*FDB* 311), becoming thereby, as it were, something new under the sun. The phrase, however, is perhaps more resonant: taking no heed of the sun (in the sense of "ignoring the sun") is what she has been doing so far and there is no doubt she will continue to do so. Just like voyage-bronzed Talbot whose face will probably soon resume its customary colour under a more temperate climate. One could perhaps say that Miss Chumley, instead of being a moon-goddess, is a rival sun, a surrogate sun, not unlike Belinda in *The Rape of the Lock*;[25] if the story of the novel is, like the project of the hapless lexicographer, a

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[25] Belinda is immediately announced as a rival sun ("Sol through white curtains shot a tim'rous ray, / And oped those eyes that must eclipse the day" l. 13-14); the opening of Canto II further elaborates the similarity between the sun and "the rival of his beams" (II. 3): "Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike, / And, like the sun, they shine on all alike" (II. 13-14). The connection is confirmed by what seems to be (but is not necessarily) Miss Chumley's poetic effort, a text that becomes legible only by accident, marks on

chasing of the sun, the winning of Marion is the winning of a mock-sun that, unlike the "real" sun, is available, that can be looked at. Talbot, instead of choosing the Prettimans' alternative and continuing to chase the sun (Sun), the light that is by definition unreachable, settles for a substitute mock-sun, someone who "takes no heed of the sun."

The "story" of the trilogy in terms of its figuring of light, visibility and language would thus go as follows: the sun dominates *Rites of Passage*, even if its (his) light is not the light of truth but that which turns everything into a (helio)trope; in *Close Quarters*, mist veils the world most of the time, but the presence of the moon is already felt in the lunacy that creeps over the ship; the moon comes into its own in *Fire Down Below*, transforming the world of the novel into a metaphorical universe where even the (deceptive) centre is missing — this is indicated by the fact that by the end, the source of light becomes unidentifiable, thus a linguistic universe ensues where no point (name, world) is more privileged (proper) than any other. Perhaps the world of the novel has been like this throughout, only now it is revealed for what it inevitably must be. This is what is suggested by the fact that the ship remains nameless — the ship is the nameless name of the world where proper names are impossible.[26] There is a growing sense (knowledge) of instability, a loss of the original source of light and a centre-less dissemination of light: the voyage (passage) takes Talbot from a solar world through a suspended world of mist into a lunar world and beyond, into a world where the oppositions between light and darkness, literal and figurative, name and metaphor, are

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the back of Marion's letter that Talbot can only read with the help of a mirror. The lines, in a reversal of Pope's simile, tell of a young woman: "When gentlemen appeared she straight begun / To turn her face as sunflowers to the sun" (*CQ* 212). Talbot effusively, and exaggeratedly, claims that "Pope himself could have done no better than these gently satiric lines" (*CQ* 212), even though the relationship between the poetic fragment and Marion is not at all clear: she is the source of this piece of language in the book, it is, however, not clear whether she is its copier, author, or/and heroine. If the latter is the case, the Popean lines function like a warning concerning Miss Chumley's usurpation of the position of the sun, exposing her as an absorber and not a source of light.

[26] Some critics (McCarron p. 97, Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor, *William Golding* [London: Faber, 1989], p. 271) claim to have identified the name of the ship which they believe is called *Britannia*. The *Britannia* theory, however, to use an appropriate metaphor, does not hold water, for several reasons. First, we know that the girl who is born in the ship is named after the ship and Britannia would be a very unlikely name. Also, one does not really see how *Britannia* could have been transformed into an obscenity by the sailors (see *ROP* 34). And finally, tagging a name onto the ship would go against the logic of the narrated world. The ship has a "monstrous *figurehead*" (*ROP* 34) instead of a proper name, the emblem of the name instead of the name.

progressively eroded. The solar alternative returns in a Platonic version but only as a finally non-narrative and non-narratable alternative, something which cannot come to pass, but continues to insist, in a temporality that has to be figured as present: Talbot does not know where it comes from, but, as the very last sentence of the trilogy (with a curious little echo of the concluding sentence of *Mrs Dalloway*) claims, "there it is" (*FDB* 313).

This is probably a fair narrative account of what happens in the trilogy, at least as regards the handling or trajectory of the luminaries; something, however, is wrong with it. It is somehow too neat in its attempt to arrange the narrated world into a story, a narrative pattern – and, as we shall see, the trilogy seems to resist such schemes. Also, even this story of growing dissemination, of the gradual loss of the proper, of the erosion of metaphysical oppositions, is (has to be) narrated by me as a narrative of accumulating knowledge (the narrative becomes that of the interpreter's growing wisdom concerning the narrated world); no matter how my narrative is obsessed with the problematisation in the trilogy of concepts like knowledge, light, truth, revelation, it purports to shed light on the story precisely in the way in which this is not possible within the world of the narrative. The conditions of visibility prevailing in the narrated world do not allow the creation of such stories.

The trilogy is full of things (characters, events, figurative clusters) that seem to defy attempts to arrange its world as, for instance, a continuous, segmentable narrative of growing insight and illumination. Regarding the luminaries, a single detail will suffice to illustrate what I mean. One of the most ambiguous characters in the trilogy is Talbot's servant, Wheeler, who disappears from the ship after Colley's death, only to return on board after the *Alcyone* appears. After his unlikely return, Wheeler becomes a ghost, a figure of death, haunting Talbot and his cabin (the hutch where Colley died) until he blows his brains out (defacing Talbot) in it. Before his "first death," Wheeler is an ordinary ship's servant, trusty supplier of paregoric, oilskins, and gossip. There is, however, a reserve of ambiguity about him – a reserve that urges us to see something "more" in him without clarifying what this surplus meaning is. This residue or surplus is located in a metaphorical halo or aura that appears consistently whenever he is present – and, as it happens, this metaphorical residue has to do with light and luminaries.

Wheeler, surprisingly, is introduced as "a sunny fellow" (*ROP* 4); in the metaphorical universe of the trilogy, this is a heavily charged adjective, one that positions Wheeler as possessing some special link with the central source of light. The sentence that follows this identification provides an explanation of the adjective in a

striking image: "He smiled at me then as if the deck, close over our heads, had opened and let in some light" (4). This image, quite unlike Talbot's usual rhetorical flourishes (partly because it reflects some genuine observation of somebody else, and because it is inspired by a crisis of naming), suggests that Wheeler is "sunny" not in the sense of 'cheerful' but inasmuch as he is a 'sun-man,' a person "like" the sun, who is able to emanate light. Two sentences later, Wheeler "dowsed the light of his countenance" (*ROP* 5).[27] Two things need to be noted here. First, that the light, the sun-ness of Wheeler is consistently associated with his *face*, and second, that by being identified as a (rather unlikely) sun-character, a giver of light, Wheeler becomes entangled in the metaphorical chain of luminaries that dominates so much of the trilogy: this entails that he is by definition (or by analogy, which is the same thing under this particular sun) a metaphorical, figurative character, one that cannot be faced, looked at, properly named. It is this intriguing excess of meaning attached to him that makes of him a privileged participant of the narrated world – privileged in the sense that such excess of meaning always opens the door for symbolic interpretation or mythological reading (mythological is very often the *name* we give to the semantic residue or excess gathered by a particular character or place). Wheeler has duly been identified with Mephistopheles (on the basis of his "willingness to obtain for a gentleman anything in the wide, wide world" - *ROP* 265),[28] although identifications like this simply provide the excess of meaning with a proper name; the interpretative "advantage" of the mythological name is that, despite is properness or propriety, it manages to preserve something of the excess and "obscurity" or ambiguity of the character. Wheeler is also a "bringer of light" (even though, not allowed to bring a lamp, he offers candles to Talbot, thereby becoming a source or provenance of light - *ROP* 17), but, then, following this up would once again be no more than inventing a proper name for his ambiguity.

Wheeler's 'sun-ness' or luminosity is an element that seems to disturb the vertical structure of the world: one would be inclined to see the key to his mysteriousness in his continuing association with the ship's underworld, yet the figurative cluster generated by Wheeler's semantic excess or residue consistently links him to the sun and the 'sun.' His ambiguity is a 'darkness,' and what seems to be happening is that this hermeneutic darkness is embodied in his "light": his light is the name of the way he occludes rather than illuminates his world. The repeated references

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[27] Talbot continues to be intrigued by this light, "that same peculiar light, which is not quite a smile but rather an involuntary expansiveness" (*ROP* 9).

[28] Don Crompton, *The View from the Spire*, p. 150

to his association with light increase rather than dispel the obscurity that surrounds him: Wheeler, who, as a character metaphorically related to the sun, is supposed to shed light on the world around him, himself remains invisible. Talbot finally finds a name for the excess embodied in "his lighted face": "his *lighted* face – I can find no other description for his expression of understanding all the ways and woes of the world – gave him an air of positive saintliness" (*ROP* 176), "an expression of holy understanding" (177). His names ("saintly," "holy"), however, have no consequence, no sense of being properly naming proper names; what they do is endow Wheeler with a certain (sun-like) authority over the narrated world without identifying or clarifying the nature of this authority or knowledge (a knowledge that is surely *more* than the sum total of all the rumours and gossip going around the ship, although the fact that he is someone who passes smoothly between different regions of the ship, like Hermes, and that his authority does seem to be related to this function of being a messenger and interpreter, once again like Hermes, suggests that this authority is at least partly linguistic). The lighted face and the unspecified authority over the world involve Wheeler in the metaphorical chain of luminaries discussed above, and the excess of meaning that makes him so "mysterious" actually serves to transform him into something *less* than a proper character: when he disappears, he is "gone like a dream" (*ROP* 265). Wheeler is a blank, the appearances of his name in the narrative are what J. Hillis Miller would probably call "surds"[29]: places where the vertical structure of the world is subverted or injured – and places that also disturb the horizontal, narrative patterns of the trilogy. He is a narrative impossibility, a loop in the story line, a character *who can say that he has died*, and a character who, by his implication in the opposing metaphorical chains as well as in several key episodes, seems to contaminate whoever has contact with him. His "saintliness" and the fact that he disappears after Colley's death links him to the clergyman, and through his suicide in the hutch that used to belong to Colley but is now inhabited by Talbot, he becomes the embodiment of that unidentified and unidentifiable link that exists between Colley and Talbot – more of this later.

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[29] Wheeler is also a subversive element in terms of the relationship between language and metalanguage – in two ways: he is referred to by Talbot as a "walking Falconer" (*ROP* 14) or "living Falconer" (*ROP* 62), that is, as someone with the authority to reveal the objects of the world by naming them, and he is the chief supplier of paregoric which, as Valentine Cunningham has noticed, is also a metalinguistic term, meaning "smooth(ing) talk" (see Valentine Cunningham, *In the Reading Gaol: Postmodernity, Texts, and History* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1994], pp.193-4).

Wheeler's participation in the metaphorical world of luminaries does not "explain" him; nor does it shed any light on the trajectory of the celestial bodies (therefore on the nature of light, seeing and truth) in the trilogy. He is an irreducible element that complicates the neat pattern of solar and lunar narrative (although, if he is the sun in some sense, the destruction of his "shining baldness" and "lighted face" at the end of the second volume is perhaps "appropriate"), a peripheral character who, by his implication in what seems to be the tutelary figurative system presiding over the world of the trilogy, becomes central to whatever interpretative scheme we choose to impose on the narrative.

THE ART OF SINKING

One of the most striking features of the (linguistic) universe of the sea trilogy is its handling of tropes. Most of the dominant tropes (that is, names of tropes) of the text partake of the sylleptic quality of its language in that they are both literal and figurative: as literal names, they refer to figurative processes and passages (that is, they are metalinguistic), and as figurative terms (tropes), they refer to the non-verbal(?) realm of the story and the characters. The most typical examples are, of course, "metaphor" and "translation" itself; caught up in the chain of analogy that connects them to each other and to other (originally not metalinguistic or rhetorical) terms such as "passage" and "transport," they transform the diegetic world of the trilogy into a rhetorical universe, without depriving it of "human interest," that is, of the relevance and stake of moral and social issues – since what happens is not just the rhetoricisation of the narrated world but also the mobilisation of rhetorical technical terms in the opposite direction. The result is what we could call the prevalence of *narrative tropes*. One example will suffice here.

Bathos is the rhetorical term that names an (unintentional) anticlimax, a kind of *falling short* of the intended effect at the moment of what should be the point of the highest emotional tension. The term is used "appropriately" in *Close Quarters* when Talbot endeavours to describe the strange world of the two becalmed ships, wrapped in mist in the middle of the ocean, fastened together for a day, and he finds that he simply cannot convey the sense of what that little universe was like: "What bathos! I have tried to say what I mean and cannot" (*CQ* 75). Another reference to bathos occurs in Talbot's comment on the corporate poetic effort of the seamen with which they entertain the passangers on the night of carnival. "He wound to a peroration which was concerned neither with loyalty nor duty but *food!* Was there ever anything at all like the

art of sinking?" (*CQ* 115). This self-conscious reference to the text in which Pope introduced the concept of bathos is somewhat ambiguous, for it is not entirely clear whether Talbot considers the bathos intentional or the result of the artists's ineptitude. Nevertheless, in these instances, the term retains its rhetorical (that is, literal) frame of reference. All this, however, occurs when the term has already been introduced in much more ambiguous circumstances. The word is first used when Talbot sums up Colley's fate:

> Now the poor man's drama is done and he stands there, how many miles down, on his cannonballs, alone, as Mr Coleridge says, all, all alone. It seems a different sort of *bathos* (your lordship, as Colley might say, will note the amusing 'paranomasia') to return to the small change of day to day with no drama in it.
>
> (*ROP* 264)

Even if we disregard the fact that the word "paranomasia" is a quotation from Colley's text, there is a complicated process of slippage going on here, of which Talbot is only partly in control, simply because a number of other paranomastic terms are being mobilised. The word that is paranomastic here, *bathos*, is a purely rhetorical (metalinguistic) term that refers to a downward movement, a sinking – but exclusively within language. The literal meaning of the word is the name of a figure. Talbot, however, uses it to denote three different processes: the physical sinking of Colley's corpse (to do this, the rhetorical term has to be used metaphorically, its meaning carried over into a different realm), the moral/spiritual fall of Colley (this usage translates the narrative movement into a rhetorical category, and also implies the metaphorical use of the rhetorical term, for the process described is definitely *not* rhetorical), and the bathetic resumption of ordinary existence after the spiritual drama and excitement of Colley's story; this use is still based upon the metaphorical use of bathos, since another, later, narrative development is named by a rhetorical trope. It is interesting that the second and third senses of the paranomastic term contradict each other: if the fall of Colley can be seen as bathetic, it was a comic and degrading kind of fall (earlier, when the clergyman is still alive, Talbot calls it a farce and not a tragedy, because, as he says, "the man appears now a sort of Punchinello. His fall is in social terms. Death does not come into it … [h]e has committed no crime, broken no law" – *ROP* 104). The third sense of the paranomastic expression, however, implies that the spiritual drama was something elevated and noble, compared to which everyday life is *low*. Since Talbot's previous sentence does not contain any stylistic or emotional

anticlimax, the rhetorical expression is used in three different senses, none of which is a literal (that is, metalinguistic) sense. The rhetorical term has remained a trope but one that refers to narrative instead of purely verbal movements. What is at stake here ultimately has to do with the troping of death. The paranomasia of *bathos* involves the event of death in the metaphorical chain that connects passage, translation, transport and a group of vertical (downward and upward) movements: sinking, fall, descent, transportation, translation. The contradictory senses of bathos imply a contradiction in what precedes the narrative bathos: if Colley's death itself is bathetic, it is defined as a downward translation, a sinking. If Colley's death is an event (trope) in relation to which everyday existence is seen as something low, then the death is an upward translation.

Three things need to be noted here. The first is that the involvement of *bathos* in the slippages of *translation, metaphor* etc. entails that a number of other, originally non-rhetorical terms (*sinking, fall, descent*) are also caught up in the chain, therefore they can all be read as paranomastic narrative tropes (the fall of Prettiman [*FDB* 59, 69]; Talbot's "uncommon knack of falling about" [*FDB* 69]; Talbot's "killing" of Prettiman that is experienced by him "like falling into the darkness of a measureless pit" [*FDB* 148]; and, of course, Colley's fall [*ROP* 104, 278]; Talbot's descents into the nether world of the ship – one in each volume – are all instances of *katabasis*, that is, a descent into the underworld [*CQ* 156, 164]).

The second implication of this figurative-narrative logic is that the involvement of these terms implies a slippage between horizontal or neutral passages and vertical ones, introducing a narrative ambiguity by rhetorical means. This slippage comes to pass in two senses. In one case, rhetorical terms and rhetoricised words of movement might work as local narrative tropes, thereby performing a crucial function: by translating the horizontal contiguity of action and causality into a possibility of vertical movement, they create narrative levels and thus offer the possibility of a spatial reading – be it in terms of a hierarchy of narrative levels or of "symbolicity," which always implies the vertical organisation of ontological levels, the logic of surfaces and depths. The other sense in which this slippage is significant has to do with the fact that the entire journey is a passage, a translation, a carrying over; therefore any term that is involved in the metaphorical slippages might be considered as a self-reflexive narrative trope that paranomastically "names" the passage from Britain to the antipodes as a rhetorical operation (translation, transportation, fall, descent, etc.): "a voyage from the top of the world to the bottom" (*CQ* 4).

The third implication is that these narrative tropes (tropes of horizontal and/or vertical movements) seem to cluster around places where the *event of death* has to be named. In some cases, such paranomastic terms of (rhetorical and narrative) movement "name" a local narrative event, the voyage as a whole, and a rhetorical operation, as well as participating in the trilogy's effort to somehow "deal with" the final passage, the event of death.

To talk of *sinking* in a ship is never wholly innocent: even a straightforward rhetorical term is charged with a figurative connotation, becomes dangerously paranomastic or sylleptic, where the figurative sense is inevitably narrative. *Close Quarters* is full of such ambiguous references to sinking (194, 196, 237, 259, 261, 278). Some of these uses are explicitly metaphorical, some only by virtue of being involved in the play of slippages and passages, but they all proleptically imply "the final sinking, the end of everything" (*FDB* 244). The central episode in this respect is a conversation that brings together all the elements mentioned above. It is a conversation overshadowed by the constant threat of sinking, and initiated by the marine artist Brocklebank. Brocklebank's "great question" concerns what we may call the *art of sinking*: "How does a ship sink when it is not seen or recorded?" (*CQ* 240). Interestingly, the paranomasia involved in the verb is transferred onto the interrogatory word "how." For what Brocklebank means is not a problem of representation: "No, sir. It is a question not of paint but of conduct" (241). That is: how does one die? What happens when one takes the final passage? This is, I believe, the final stake of all the play of slippages and passages, of the confusion of literal and figurative, tropological and narrative, linguistic and metalinguistic levels, of the ambiguous, tropological light of the novel's luminaries. After Colley's death, the text becomes thoroughly sylleptic: on the one hand, the narrative account of the story (the voyage) that continues, relating the things that take place, but, on the other hand, also a persistent attempt to *come to terms* (rhetorical, figurative or technical terms) with the residue of Colley's passage: the account of the passage is also, secretly, trying to become the account of the other passage, trying to make it narratable, to make it into an event. "The dead – writes Lyotard – are not dead so long as the living have not recorded their death in narratives. Death is a matter for archives. One is dead when one is narrated and no longer anything but narrated."[30]

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[30] Quoted in Geoffrey Bennington, *Lyotard: Writing the Event*, p. 112

FACES

Colley's death is the major event of the trilogy, an event in the sense that is given to the word by Lyotard: something is an event "insofar as it refuses to be absorbed into the order of a classical narrative, brought to book in a narrative account."[31] The event disrupts rather than solidifies narrative coherence; it cannot be integrated, narratively arranged, it is not a node or knot of the narrative surface but an absence, a gap, an endless interruption that is also an irruption (Colley's death *is* in fact an interruption, an interruption of a conversation that is largely concerned with the pictorial representation of death). J. Hillis Miller writes:

> Death is never experienced as an event. What can be seen is the change of the other from live body to dead body, corpse, inanimate matter. We call that change death, but what we want to experience and be able to name is the transition from life to death. We want to follow someone from one realm to the other, but be able to come back and tell the story of this journey.[32]

Colley's death is the archetypal event as ongoing disruption and irruption, or, to quote Miller who says the opposite but means the same, the "immemorial non-event" (Miller, *Ariadne* 249). The conversation in the course of which Brocklebank raises the great question of the art of sinking ends with the painter's absurd attempt to interview the resurrected Wheeler about the experience of the passage of dying (*CQ* 242). Wheeler, however, has no story, no words. Death, even the death that he has survived, is "radically resistant to the order of representation."[33]

One could probably argue that the aftermath of Colley's death is the attempt to name, to represent this death as a narratable, integrable event. Colley himself is aware of the therapeutic value of narrativisation: he is able to make a narrative out of the sacrificial ritual that involves his first humiliation (defacement): "I see without any disguise *what happened*. There is much health in that phrase *what happened*. To clear away the, as it were, undergrowth of my own feelings, my terror, my disgust, my indignation, clears a path by which I have come to exercise a proper judgement" (*ROP* 239-40). The first humiliation can still be turned into a story, but after the second humiliation, Colley

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[31] Lyotard, qtd. in Bennington, p. 109.

[32] Miller, *Ariadne's Thread* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) p. 249-50

[33] S. Critchley, *Very Little … Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 26

` has run out of words. From this point, the narrative carries with itself his death, trying to name it ("low fever" and "dying of shame" are two of the metaphors); his death becomes the gap, the residue, the excess that disturbs and confuses the narrative line, it is an undergrowth, a "marine growth" (*CQ* 14) like the weed that attaches itself to the ship during the voyage. It is this death that makes the trilogy refuse neat narrative patterns of interpretation: Colley's death is an event that does not *come to pass*, an event that does not become past, and all the disturbing narrative loops (Wheeler's survival of his death by drowning) and gaps are in a way the residue of this death. Michel Tournier's Robinson suggests that to survive is to die; in the trilogy, Colley's death is his survival; every death and every irrational event is a repetition of his death, an irruption of his absence. The narrative of the journey is also a text of *mourning*, of the attempt to integrate, to represent this fissure.

> Representations of death are misrepresentations, or rather representations of an absence. The paradox at the heart of the representation of death is best conveyed by the figure of *prosopopeia*, ... a form which implies the failure of presence, a face which withdraws behind the form which presents it.[34]

Prosopopeia, "the ascribing of a name, a face, and a voice to the absent, the inanimate, or the dead," is called by Hillis Miller "the trope of mourning."[35] In Golding's trilogy, prosopopeia is certainly the trope of mourning James Colley. The name of the trope etymologically means the giving of a face, and Talbot has the double task of giving a face (a representable face) to Colley's death, and to perform something like a work of repentance: the undoing of his own defacement of Colley. In *Rites of Passage*, Talbot uses Colley's appearance, and especially his face, as a kind of training ground where he can display his rhetorical skills (his art of sinking as defacing) to best advantage. Colley has no face, but a "casual assemblage of features" (*ROP* 42), a "curious assemblage of features" (*ROP* 72); the "disorder of his face" (42) is the occasion for some of Talbot's most spectacular rhetorical flourishes: "Nature has pitched – no, the verb is too active. Well then, on some corner of Time's beach, or on the muddy rim of one of her more insignificant rivulets, there have been washed together casually and indifferently a

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[34] Critchley, p. 26.

[35] Miller, *Versions of Pygmalion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990) p. 4. See also Miller, *Ariadne's Thread*, p. 251, James Paxson, *The Poetics of Personification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 26-7, 52, and Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 75-6.

number of features that Nature had tossed away as of no use to any of her creations" (*ROP* 66-7). When not verbally destroying Colley's face, Talbot allegorises him (*ROP* 106) or simply "reject[s] him as a human being" (*ROP* 122).

These are all rhetorical strategies of degradation, defacement, dehumanisation – the very opposite of what is involved in prosopopeia. The fundamental rhetorical energies of the trilogy are those of prosopopeia, involved in the impossible project of *giving back* James Colley's face. The survival of Colley, as I have suggested, is his death: by dying, he (or his absence) becomes the subversive, disruptive, unrepresentable element in the narrative, the unnameable origin of all the unnameable elements of the world, the thing to which a face must be given. Personification and prosopopeia, therefore, are in the trilogy always existentially charged; they are places where language *as* the language that addresses death is condensed.

This is what accounts for the double nature of Colley's presence (insistence) in the two final volumes. On the one hand, he survives (or insists) in later parts of the narrative as *language*, more precisely, as a kind of verbal behaviour and style; even more precisely, as the name of a kind of language that would be able to describe what Talbot cannot describe (all these elements are metaphorical repetitions of his death, the origin of unnameability: Colley is the only one who could describe, tell his final passage). Whenever Talbot comes up against something that he feels is beyond his verbal resources, he evokes Colley: "Colley's pen" becomes a shorthand for the presence of that which cannot be described (see *CQ* 69, 133, 156). One could say that the unrepresentable automatically raises Colley's ghost, or that, in order to describe the unrepresentable, Talbot would have to *become* Colley, that is, dead: more precisely, someone who died Colley's death. Successful prosopopeia, that is the ability to give a face to the inhuman, the inanimate, would require Colley's pen, his figurative energies. In fact, it is Colley who realises that the sea voyage is a condition of essential homelessness in the sense of being cast into a region that is radically inhuman: "Here we are, suspended between the land below the waters and the sky like a nut on a branch or a leaf on a pond! I cannot convey to you, my dear sister, my sense of horror, or shall I say, my sense of our being living souls in this place where surely, I thought, no man ought to be!" (*ROP* 192-3; Talbot is troubled by the *repetition* of this idea in the later volumes, see for instance *FDB* 180, or *FDB* 134, where he calls the raging sea "a place which surely was not for men"). On the other hand, it is also Colley who first personifies, or at least animates the sea in a memorable image which, however, does not make the sea more human or less formidable: the surface of the sea was "as if the water were not only the home and haunt of all sea creatures but the skin of a living

thing, a creature even vaster than Leviathan" (ROP 219). It is interesting to compare Colley's prosopopeias, inspired by a sense of sublimity, with Talbot's clever personifications in *Rites of Passage* (e. g. 19-20) which entirely lack the stake the figure has in Colley's language; Colley's prosopopeias are attempts to name the unnameable, whereas for the Talbot of the first novel, the unnameable simply does not exist. Colley's death is the birth of the unnameable in Talbot's language, and it is no wonder that every occurrence of the unnameable becomes the potential repetition or metaphor of this death, which is itself invisible, unrepresentable.

The radically inhuman force to which most of the prosopopeic energies of the trilogy are devoted is of course the sea (see Summers's strangely scientific definition and account of the habit of "earlier peoples, savage peoples and poets" to credit the sea with thoughts and feelings [CQ 170] or Talbot's attempts at the sublime through the prosopopeia of the sea [e. g. FDB 136, 232]). The ultimate test case of the personification of the sea in the trilogy is Byron's famous invocation at the end of Canto 4 of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Lady Somerset, an admirer of Byron, even quotes the famous line ("Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean—roll!" - CQ 98); the effect, however, is somewhat diminished by the fact that the same invocation is earlier referred to rather condescendingly by a sceptical Talbot who at this point is still Pope's champion: "The present weather is sharply defining our horizon for us in a dense blue which obeys Lord Byron's famous injunction and continues to roll on endlessly – such is the power of verse!" (CQ 5) What seems to be a wry and cynical comment is actually a reference to a text that illustrates the paradox of prosopopeia, of ascribing a face to the absolutely alien. Byron's stanzas define the sea as the realm that is absolutely and irreducibly alien, defying human intrusion, a place where the human disappears without a trace: if it has any "meaning" for the human intruders, it is death:

> The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
> A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
> When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
> He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
> Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd, and unknown.
>
> (CLXXIX)

On the other hand, this force or element that is absolutely alien and inhuman is addressed throughout the text, even though the words say that the thing they are addressing cannot be addressed at all. Also, prosopopeic figures ("Time writes no wrinkle on thy azure brow" - CLXXXII) abound in the text that implicitly calls any

personification of the sea a kind of narcissistic nonsense where the words will only fall back upon the speaker. This paradox is overcome and sublated by another paradoxical move: the invocatory stanzas are preceded by a rhetorical manoeuvre whereby the speaker leaves behind the human sphere and becomes part of that which he is about to address: in order to communicate with the inhuman (to have "interviews" with it - CLXXVIII), he has to shed his humanity, "To mingle with the Universe, and feel / What I can ne'er express, yet can not all conceal" (CLXXVIII). Childe Harold's invocation, then, is alluded to not only because it is part of the playful juxtaposition of the Augustan and the Romantic in the trilogy, but also because it is a clear example of the basic paradox of prosopopeia, identified by James Paxson as its chiasmic structure:[36] the giving of a face to the dead or the inhuman entails that the speaker become deprived of his/her face, defaced, faceless, inhuman or dead (this is, incidentally, the logic behind the rhetoric of Prettiman's utopia of gazing at the sun). In the figurative economy of Golding's trilogy, prosopopeia, the attempt to name the unnameable, is also always the raising of Reverend Colley, a gesture of mourning. Addressing the sea is also addressing (the death of) Colley.[37]

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[36] Paxson, p. 52.

[37] As I have tried to suggest several times (in relation to the defacing of Colley during the ritual and his rhetorical defacing in Talbot's journal; Wheeler's "lighted face"; Summers's "transmuted face" during the night watch, etc.), *face* is one of the most highly charged words throughout the trilogy. Already in *Rites of Passage*, Brocklebank (a painter specializing in naval death and portraiture) is worried about the special difficulties that will be presented by a black face in the antipodes (60); Talbot refers to his godfather's advice, according to which he has to learn "to read faces" (*ROP* 61). One of the crucial scenes of *Fire Down Below* can be read as another parable about the paradox of prosopopeia: the spectacle of the iceberg is obviously the encounter with the absolutely alien, the unnameable (its counterpart is a narrative blank or lacuna, involving some sort of unspecified intimacy with Celia Brocklebank - *FDB* 247): the iceberg is the faceless force of nature, totally indifferent to human presence, yet, it has to be given a face if it is to be referred to (the account of the unnarratable episode is full of prosopopeias: 241, 242, 243); what is more, the central moment of the episode (a kind of limit moment) is the ascription of figures and faces to the wall of ice ("I saw a mélange of visions in the ice which swept past me – figures trapped in the ice, my father among them" [*FDB* 244]; the ultimate position of this episode is suggested by the fact that this is the only reference to Talbot's father throughout the entire trilogy: the father – symbolic rather than physical – appears as the *face* of the absolutely, ultimately alien, but the reference is not a recovery or restitution of some paternal, and the accompanying narrative/symbolic authority over alienness and homelessness. The implication is the opposite: through this reference, the so far absent father becomes is involved in the logic of faces, and connected to whatever the iceberg is seen to "mean" in the narrative.

Narratively (this is the other aspect of his survival), Colley survives as *repetition*, the force that creates loops in the straight story line of the voyage; in the trilogy, repetition is potentially the repetition of death. The narrative trope for repetition as the possibility of death, for return as absence, is of course a ghost (the French for ghost is 'revenant,' 'the one who returns'); Colley seems to have gone "underground" and continually haunts the ship. Talbot feels him behind the madness that creeps over the ship ("I could not but feel that the ghost of Colley was roaming the ship" - *CQ* 274-5; "perhaps it was the unappeased 'larva' of Colley creeping about the ship like a filthy smell which was the 'motus' of our idiotic decline into phantasy!" - *CQ* 220). Colley (or the death of Colley, or Colley as death) as repetiton also haunts the ship by contaminating other characters who thus become Colley. Wheeler returns after his death to haunt Talbot and his (Colley's) hutch as a ghost (*CQ* 53, 68), both alive and dead, a character who can say: "I drowned, sir" (*CQ* 53) and who can be mortally afraid of drowning *again* (*CQ* 233). Talbot also becomes Colley by repeating the clergyman's "fall" in *Close Quarters* (making a public display of himself in a delirious state, occupying Colley's hutch which is a mirror image of his own, even coming to resemble him). By the end of the voyage, or rather, after the end of the voyage, Talbot even refers to himself as a ghost: "I wondered round, therefore, a revisiting ghost" (*FDB* 274). The contaminating power of Colley's death is so great that at one point the ship itself becomes a ghost, in a sentence evocative of Colley's image that I have quoted twice: "The ship was a ghost, a spirit of silver and ivory" (*FDB* 83).

These aspects of Colley's survival or insistence, as well as the figurative cluster related to it, come together in one of the central episodes of the trilogy, the vision of the monstrous face in *Close Quarters*. The ship's progress (the narrative movement) is disturbed in several ways after Colley's death: on the one hand, it is uneven, lopsided, arhythmical (as a result of the negligence of Lieutenant Deverel when the ship was taken aback), and, on the other, it is too slow, partly because the ship was partially dismasted, and partly because of the undergrowth of weed that began to accumulate at the time of Colley's sacrifice, when the ship was becalmed; in a sense, the weed is the narrative trope of all the undergrowth (repetitions, disturbing episodes, dreams, doldrums, etc.) that impedes fast narrative movement. Lieutenant Benét suggests a rather unorthodox method of getting rid of some of this undergrowth and making narrative progress faster: he suggests that the underside of the ship should be cleaned with the dragrope, a practice that is normally used only in the case of ships that are in berth. In metaphorical terms, this means an attempt to get rid of the story's undergrowth without stopping. The risk of the procedure is that the weed might be

attached to the hulk with such force that (partly because the wood of the ship is rotten), by removing it, parts of the ship might be broken off and the ship might take too much water (the figurative implications are obvious). Something like this happens here: there is a groaning noise from below, a confusion aboard, and something rises out of the sea beside the ship:

> I have seen all this and much else which was to come in nightmare, not once but several times, and shall do so again. In nightmare the shape is bigger and rises wholly awesome and dreadful. My dreaming spirit fears as my waking spirit fears that one night the thing will emerge, bringing with it a load of weed that only half conceals a face. I do not know what face and do not care to dally longer with the thought. But then, that morning in the wind, the salt air, the rocking, heaving ship, I saw with waking eyes down by the crazily unstable waterline something like the crown of a head pushing up through the weed. Someone screamed by my shoulder, a horrible, male scream. The thing rose, a waggonload of weed festooned round and over it. It was a head or a fist or the forearm of something vast as Leviathan.

(*CQ* 257)

The event is a rising: a "shape," a "thing" rises from below. The "thing" has, must have a "meaning," must be addressed, made part of the text, and therefore be given a face. The thing, however, is already a "face." It can be seen as the face of the sea as a destructive depth, a hungry mouth or a stomach, an underworld waiting for its victims (the reference to Leviathan would seem to support this view, since it is an echo of Colley's image of the sea). On the other hand, it can also be the face of the ship, because the bits of the vessel that have probably been broken off are also part of the face. It is a composite face, made of the flotsam of the sea, bits of the ship, and the weed that grows at the line where the two meet.[38] It is an uncanny face, rising as the repetition of something that is familiar: it has been suggested that the face is Colley's ghost.[39] Saying that the face is not Colley's ghost is not, strictly speaking, true. However, Colley's ghost is much more than the face just as the face is not exhausted by being identified as Colley's ghost. It *is* a repetition of Colley's death inasmuch as it is an event that cannot be integrated, inasmuch as every giving of a face is a raising of Colley.

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[38] Even the invocatory stanzas of *Childe Harold* are evoked: "Dark-heaving:—boundless, endless, and sublime— / The image of Eternity—the throne / Of the Invisible; even from out thy slime / The monsters of the deep are made" (CLXXXIII).

[39] McCarron, p. 116.

This justifiable identification, however, betrays the basic narrative and figurative paradox of the episode: the thing is a repetition of Colley, of Colley's death, that is, the repetition of the very thing that awaits naming, narrativising, the allocation of meaning. A repetition of the central defacement of the text, a repetition of the "event" that erupts into the narrative as something totally disruptive, non-narratable, unintegratable. The repetition of the defacement, however, is a face. In an impossible reversal, the faceless appears as a face. An enormous amount of verbal energy is spent throughout the text in the effort to give a face to the faceless, and when finally a face is generated out of the story, it is monstrous, it cannot be looked at – because it is a face as facelessness. The face of the thing is itself a figure (a secondary figure, that is, an allegory) of prosopopeia, of the giving of a face to something that is radically faceless (one possible name for it is "a world of blind force and material" - *CQ* 259). It tells in an allegorical story the infinite regress, and therefore the hidden narrative, implied in and generated by the logic of prosopopeia: if something faceless, nameless is given a face/name, the essential face- /namelessness is not eliminated but simply displaced onto a face that therefore becomes the face as defacement. The process is potentially endless, and generates a narrative that unsuccessfully endeavours to name that which is deferred by the figure of giving a face. The result of the giving of a face is that the face (name) that is given will partake of the facelessness or defacement that it vainly attempts to accommodate: language, instead of being an accommodation (home), will, in the trope of prosopopeia, be itself nameless and faceless, a condition of homelessness.

The event of the face is almost immediately followed by another event, that of the destruction of the face. The two events, which are repetitions of each other, and of Colley's death, are connected by two references to Colley (the connections are created by the narrating Talbot and not Talbot the character). As he is returning to his hutch, Talbot remembers that it used to belong to Colley (261); the experience of the face also puts him in mind of Colley's *bathos*: "That grim baulk of waterlogged timber [the face, that is] was still, I suppose, sinking towards the ooze where Colley stood on his cannon balls when I approached my hutch" (261-2). He sees that Wheeler (Colley's substitute, repetition, death) is standing in the hutch.

> His eyes were shut, his expression peaceful. He raised towards his lips a gold
> or brass goblet. Then his head exploded *after or with or before*, for all I know, a

flash of light. Then everything disappeared as a wave of acrid smoke burst out of the louvre. My left eye was, or had been, struck and filled with a wet substance.

(*CQ* 262; italics mine)

Colley's death was an indescribable, lonely passage, a narrative blank that produced an undergrowth of narrative loops and repetition as haunting, dreams, or encounters with the unnameable. This repetition of his death is not a narrative blank, but a non-event, a confusion of tense and succession ("his head exploded after or with or before"). It is the end of prosopopeia, the explosion of a face, a defacement that is total and irreparable. It is also an event that implicates, infects Talbot ("befouling" him, as Colley did on the occasion of their first encounter) once and for all with death, making of him a repetition of Wheeler and of Colley. It is an event that connects prosopopeia with light and seeing: Talbot's face is smeared with Wheeler's face and brain (as Colley's face was smeared by the seamen); he is blinded by that which cannot be looked at directly, the central absence of light (anti-sun, black hole) of this world, towards which, after all, prosopopeic figures seem to be striving and turning (being necro- rather than heliotropes); his eyes are full of Wheeler's death in a moment of ultimate metonymy, and he, instead of giving a face to the faceless, becomes a figure contaminated, smeared, covered, defaced by death: "There is death in my hands. I kill people without knowing it" (*FDB* 154). He is redeemed only in *Fire Down Below* when his third "murder" turns out to be the "resurrection" of Mr Prettiman. This repetition as prosopopeia, as both the giving of a face and the destruction of a face, as a haunting and an endlessly repeated attempt to name death, is the undergrowth that develops upon (below) the story, an undergrowth that slows down the narrative movement and makes it lopsided, uneven, jerking, that creates narrative loops and lacunae and renders the narrative uninterpretable as a neat Bildung, that produces the excess or residue connected to certain places, characters and events, that produces the paradoxes of the figurative logic of the trilogy, that creates a confusion of the figurative and the literal, the referential and the metalinguistic. The removal of this undergrowth, however, is impossible, simply because the undergrowth, which seems to be an unnecessary burden on an otherwise straightforward and fast-moving narrative, turns out to be the very condition of the possibility of narrative; that which seems to be generated by the (standing still of the) story is in fact the source and condition of the story. The origin of Talbot's narrative is the untellable event of Colley's death, an event that can never be told, only repeated, that is, "figured" in the endless process of prosopopeia: it can only

affect the text, insist in it as an undergrowth, an excess, a residue (called by interpretation a "depth"), the removal would bring about the premature end ("sinking") of the story.

The trilogy is a sea story: the god of this world is Neptune. He presides over the sacrificial ritual that involves the defacement of Colley; this is Neptune as a masked man, as an allegory of the process of prosopopeia: in order to address, to be able to relate to, the inhuman, unpredictable power of the sea, man gives it a face, a name (Neptune); the giving of the face, however, only displaces the facelessness, alienness onto the face/name, involving it in the alienness. Man, in addressing the alien, the faceless, deprives himself of his own face, defacing himself (donning, for instance, the mask of Neptune that is a face as defacement), and, as another faceless entity, partakes of its absolute facelessness. Colley is sacrificed for Neptune's sake, by people wearing a facelessness as their mask; his death is to a great extent the result of the ceremony performed to gain the benevolence of the sea-god. Colley therefore and thereafter belongs to him and to the sea. And the sea returns, takes revenge for Talbot's dehumanisation of the parson (with a very bad pun, one could say that the dominant figure of the trilogy is "deparsonification"), that other defacement (blinding) of his son: the relationship is confirmed when, in the moment of his final humiliation, Colley is referred to as "a pigmy Polyphemus" (*ROP* 116). Talbot is also blinded by a sea-death, and he is allowed to *arrive* only after he has *faced* Neptune as the sea, as death, and as Colley. Talbot is thus Ulysses in the sense that his voyage is a constant fight against Poseidon, and also in the sense that his voyage is not something that could ever be over; the end of his sea-voyage is not an *arrival*.

István Nagy

The Modern Fairy of an Urban Folktale

An introduction to Caryl Churchill's *The Skriker*

Strange creatures populate Caryl Churchill's one-act play *The Skriker*, interfering with the lives of two young sisters Josie and Lily. The suspicious gang, which comes from the Underworld, is lead by a shapeshifter fairy, the Skriker, of whom it is very difficult to say anything certain at first, except that she appears to the sisters in various forms, she desperately seeks love, and that she is capable of doing the most unusual things. Sometimes she is old, sometimes she is young, sometimes she is a man. She is good and she is bad. She is mysterious.

The name of the fairy provides the first puzzle. The word 'skriker' can be found neither in the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English nor in the Collins Concise Dictionary, it must be therefore nearly as exotic to an average English speaker as, say, tamagochi. However, the large Oxford English Dictionary reveals the secret, claiming that there exists a verb 'to skrike' which means 'to utter a shrill harsh cry; to screak.'[1] The Skriker then is the one who screaks, a 'screaker.' Still according to the Oxford English Dictionary, unlike some other members of the company from the Underworld, such as the Kelpie, which is a water-spirit or demon in Lowland Scottish folklore, or the Bogle, which is a phantom or spectre of the night causing fright, the skriker is *not* a traditional figure of British folklore, it is rather Churchill's own artistic invention. The name, though its meaning has now been found, is still subject to interpretations. When Josie, accompanied by the Skriker, visits the Underworld, the stage instruction reads as follows: "Blackout. A horrible shriek like a siren that goes up

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[1] *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Second Edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, Vol. XV) p. 628.

to a very high sound and holds it."[2] It is not clear to whom or to what the shriek can be attributed. It can be the Skriker who shrieks, but also the shriek can simply accompany their descent. One way or another the shriek is part of the effects which go with the descent into the Underworld – and with the ascent from it too, since the same shriek is heard when Josie returns to the material world. Leaving our world and diving into the Underworld is surely not a pleasant experience; even if it is not Josie who shrieks, the horrible sound is there, it is heard, and expresses elemental pain, despair and terror. The same qualities can easily be attributed not only to the descent and ascent, but to the Skriker herself. Shrieking in her case means stalking her victims, Josie and Lily, until they give up and succumb to the temptation of that other world of sham represented by the fairy.

The very first scene of the play is an extremely long monologue spoken by the Skriker, which at first sight resembles a senseless pile of words put together haphazardly. All the same, after a while the words miraculously begin to form a meaning, however obscure and impalpable, and when the Skriker finishes her speech one has the inexplicable feeling of what Polonius would say "though this be madness, yet there is method in't."[3] The method might be concealed deliberately, yet a great deal of the meaning can be detected and explained.

Churchill's play is a fairly traditional one in the sense that the initial speech of the Skriker retains the function of a prologue. A good prologue creates the atmosphere of the oncoming play, puts the spectator or the reader in a mood in which they are able to tune into the plot and the lives of the characters to be presented. It often refers to the events to come, sometimes it turns to the audience with some request or another. Similarly, the Skriker's monologue is able to create the strange, half-rational, half-irrational aura of the scenes to come:

> Heard her boast beast a roast beef eater, daughter could spin span spick and spun the lowest form of wheat straw into gold, raw into roar, golden lion and lyonesse under the sea, dungeonesse under the castle for bad mad sad adders and takers away. Never marry a king size well beloved. Chop chip pan chap finger chirrup chirrup cheer up off with you're making no headway. Weeps seeps deeps her pretty puffy cream cake hole in the heart operation. Sees a

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[2] Caryl Churchill, *The Skriker* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1994) p. 28.References to this edition will henceforth be made in the text.

[3] Shakespeare, *Hamlet: Prince of Denmark* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959) Act II. Scene II. 205-206.

little blackjack thingalingo with a long long tale awinding. May day, she cries, may pole axed me to help her ...

(p. 1)

The unhindered flow of the words addresses the readers' subconscious rather than their conscious, rational mind; one feels, by means of a mysterious sixth sense, rather than knows the exact meaning of what the Skriker is speaking about. By the end of the speech, therefore, we have seemingly unstructured clusters of information about a young girl who is in trouble now, ("may day, she cries," p. 1), about an unnamed baby ("put my hand to the baby," p. 2; "But if the baby has no name better nick a name, better Old Nick than no name," p. 2), and even about a bloody event that might have taken place ("mother a murder," p. 3, "My mother she killed me...," p. 5).

Besides the function of creating a strong sense of atmosphere, the above extracts retain another role from the traditional prologue: they also refer to the main points of the action. "May day, she cries," says the Skriker and she presumably speaks about Josie, who, having murdered her baby, is in a mental hospital at the beginning of the play. Josie does not actually use the well-known radio signal of planes and ships in danger, but she is clearly in danger due not only to her murderous act but to the disquieting presence of the Skriker as well. The baby without a name is Josie's daughter who had been killed before she could be baptised. Without being christened the soul of this baby is the property of the Devil, whose informal name is Old Nick.

There are numerous other places within the prologue which, though less evidently than the ones above, foreshadow certain parts of the play. Lily helps the Skriker and is rewarded with one pound coins falling out of her mouth (p. 11; the reference to this part in the 'prologue': "out of her mouthtrap, out came my secreted garden flower," p. 1); both Josie and Lily visit the Underworld of the Skriker, which, for a short while, seems to be a shelter for refugees who have fled from the whirling world of reality (p. 28 and 51; in the prologue: "seek a sleep slope slap of the dark to shelter skelter away, a wail a whirl a world away," p. 1–2); a certain hag – one of the miraculous creatures in the Underworld – is chopped up while Josie is there (p. 29; "Chopped up the hag," p. 2); Josie is warned in the Underworld not to eat anything if she ever wants to return to the real world (p. 30; "Never eat a fruit," p. 3); holding a candle is part of the mysterious ceremony during which Lily is preparing to succumb to the Skriker's supernatural power at the end of the play (p. 51; "Hold this candle the scandal I said," p. 4).

The initial monologue of the fairy has also a significant role of characterising the Skriker herself in at least two ways. In the first place the way it is rendered is very

much like a speech of a shaman in trance which only the initiates can understand. The shaman, who is connected with transcendental forces, brings his tribesmen a message from the world beyond, and the Skriker's uncontrolled string of free associations based on puns, alliterations, homophones and rhymes has a similar effect. The uneasy feeling that we do not understand it, yet it might have a coherent meaning, gives the speech an air of other-worldliness and suggests that its speaker is not of our familiar material world.

In terms of literary precedent the Skriker's monologue has a close relationship with Molly Bloom's famous flow of thoughts in Chapter 18 of *Ulysses* by James Joyce. There Molly-Penelope is thinking about her sexual affairs, her relationship to her husband, about her entire life before falling asleep. The style of Chapter 18 is often referred to as 'stream of consciousness' for apparently its only organising element is the character's state of mind. The Skriker's speech, however, is slightly different. It is not the character's state of mind that has the unifying role but something even more profound than that. The speech contains several references to persons, objects, concepts and literary pieces which are more or less significant parts of the Western, and especially of the English speaking world. They are sometimes fairly explicit, sometimes distorted, or even carefully concealed, yet a lot of them can be detected. One of these references has already been mentioned, it is the "nickname" of the Devil, Old Nick. There is another, extremely complex reference to the Devil in the following sequence:

> Out of her pinkle lippety loppety, out of her mouthtrap, out came my secreted garden flower of my youth and beauty and the beast is six six six o'clock in the morning becomes electric stormy petrel bomb."
>
> (p. 1)

The biblical allusion to the Book of Revelation[4] is woven into a net of other allusions: the "secreted garden," Eden, is inseparably connected to an allusion to a figure of speech "the flower of my youth," which again is partly a constructive element of the cliché that follows "youth and beauty." "Beauty" is put together with "beast" and thus forms a reference to the legend of the beauty and the beast. Among the wide variety of cultural allusions there are further biblical ones, for example the one to the story of the fall in the Book of Genesis (cp. 2,15-3,24 and "eat the one forbidden fruit," p. 3), or the one to the seven angels and their trumpets in the Book of Revelation (8,6). Another

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[4] *Book of Revelations* 13,18 "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number *is* Six hundred threescore *and* six."

layer of allusions is the one made to literary pieces: "everything gone with the window cleaner" (p. 3) includes the title of Margaret Mitchell's famous best-seller, *Gone With the Wind*, another well-known title is concealed in "wail whale moby dictated the outcome into the garden maudlin" (p. 3), Herman Melville's *Moby Dick or the White Whale*. The sequence "what can the matternhorn piping down the valley" (p. 5) hides a part of a line from William Blake's *Introduction* to the *Songs of Innocence*,[5] and "roast cats alive alive oh dear…" (p. 5) brings into mind an Irish folksong, "Dublin's Fair City," in which a Molly Malone cries, "cockles and mussels alive alive oh…" Yet another layer is that of familiar clichés, sayings, idioms: in "crackerjack of all trading places" (p. 3) one can recognise the English saying "jack of all trades, master of none," "Serve her right as raining cats and dogshit" (p. 4) is a peculiar version of the idiom "it rains cats and dogs," while the cat o' nine tails ("strike her blind alley cat o' nine tails," p. 4), the jacket potato ("no family life jacket potato," p. 4) and the apple pie ("Blood run cold comfort me with apple pie," p. 5) are as much part of the English speaking culture as anything mentioned before.

Such a delicate net of cultural references suggests that the Skriker is not an ordinary person, not even an ordinary fairy. She has pre-eminently the English, in a wider sense, the whole of Western culture in her unconscious, and now she lets it pour out, lets it come to the surface. The clearly recognisable references are but the tip of the iceberg, what is below in the depth is everything made, every word uttered or written, every legend conceived, the sum of all human beings dead or alive. Probably the closest relative of such profundity is Carl Gustav Jung's concept of the collective unconscious which contains in each individual an obscure and secret corner of archetypes, ancient memories and fears. If the idea of such a relationship holds water, the style of the Skriker's speech can be characterised by the term "stream of the collective unconscious" and is organised in a surrealistic way by the ocean of the common cultural memories of mankind.

I have already mentioned that the Skriker is a shapeshifter fairy, or when we meet her in the first scene, "a shapeshifter and death portent, ancient and damaged" (p. 1). The contrast between this damaged figure and the one "full of energy" (p. 51) in the last scene is conspicuous. The road from the beginning to the end, the hard journey of the Skriker in the material world is not that of development, but that of a quest rather. It is not really a road either but a continuous struggle for something of which love is only one aspect. In order to be able to approach the meaning of the Skriker's

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5 "Piping down the valleys wild, /Piping songs of pleasant glee, / On a cloud I saw a child, (…)." William Blake, *Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972) p. 111.

transformation from an ancient death portent into an energetic fairy we should now examine the intermediary steps, the various forms the Skriker takes during the play.

When she is described as ancient and damaged the Skriker is in the Underworld. From here she sets off and appears again in the next scene as a fifty-year-old patient in the mental hospital where Josie is being treated. "She looks about fifty but she's I don't know maybe five hundred a million, I don't know how old these things are" (p. 9), says Josie to her sister, Lily. She also tells Lily that she was impressed by the Skriker's magic, but now she thinks there is something wrong with her. Lily does not ask much about this mysterious figure; she knows before the reader or the spectator does what sort of "thing" Josie refers to, though she questions whether the Skriker is a real magician or just pretends to be one. Such things happen in a mental hospital. But Josie tries to pass on to her sister what originally belonged to her, the strange vision of a strange person: "I thought maybe she could go home with you" (p. 9). This seems to start all Lily's problems. The Skriker feels that Josie does not love her, that is why she appears with a reproachful remark, "I heard that... You don't like me." Josie explains: "I'm thinking what you'd enjoy and you'd like her better than me. She's stronger, she's more fun. I'm ill and I think you're ill and I don't think – "(p. 9).

The Skriker makes a last effort to persuade Josie to "keep" her, but soon realises that she has lost the case. In the next scene she takes the form of a derelict woman shouting in the street and begins to stalk Lily. First Lily gives her some money, but later when she cannot resist the woman's violent approach, she hugs her. Do well and have well: as Lily speaks one pound coins fall out of her mouth – the fairy's first miracle. The scene is repeated in almost the same way when Josie, discharged from hospital, meets the Skriker. The derelict woman asks for the price of a cup of tea only, but Josie says no. Her reward is toads coming out of her mouth when she speaks.

At a bar of a hotel Lily meets a slightly drunk American woman of about forty, who is again the Skriker. The conversation starts quite innocently. The American woman, as if being from another world, asks about the way television works. In return she offers Lily her knowledge of how to fly, how to make poisons, and how to tell if her loved one is faithful. Lily being a simple and uneducated young girl is of course unable to explain in technical terms how a television functions, though she does her best. But it is not important at all, the Skriker only wants to make friends, she wants to get close to Lily, as she finally admits: "You now have one friend in London. And I have one friend in London. Ok? Not ok?" (p. 16). When she sees that Lily recognises her she thinks the time has arrived to confess everything:

Lily, I'll level with you, ok? You ready for this? I am an ancient fairy, I'm hundreds of years old as you people would work it out, I have been around through all the stuff you would call history, that's cavaliers and roundheads, Henry the eighth, 1066 and before that, back when the Saxons feasted, the Danes invaded, the Celts hunted, you know any of this stuff? Alfred and the cakes, Arthur and the table, long before that, long before England was an idea, a country of snow and wolves where trees sang and birds talked and people knew we mattered…

(p. 16)

Now the spectator learns that the Skriker is an ancient fairy, and not only that. She belongs to the land and people of England whether they be English, Saxons, Danes or Celts. And she is from a time when people still believed in the reality of fairies, when supernatural beings were as much part of everyday life as in Shakespeare's *A Midsummernight's Dream*. Although the fairy-world of Titania's and Oberon's has vanished the Skriker, rather anachronistically, demands a role in modern life. Not seeing the anachronism and its consequences at once Lily tends to accept the fairy's friendship and her explanation of being here "I'm here to do good. I'm good" (p. 17). When, however, the Skriker offers Lily her help, Lily has an obscure feeling that something might be wrong about a good fairy doing good things and backs out. The first temptation was unsuccessful.

Later on Lily and Josie, now discharged from hospital, are sitting on a sofa. Lily feels ill, she is cold. Josie's explanation of this is that the Skriker must be somewhere around them ("she's cold"), but Lily will not accept an explanation of this kind. Yet it is her who feels the fairy in the sofa: "I can see her. Josie, see her, you must." And Josie replies, "She's for you now. You took her money" (p. 21).

Josie is now calm; she has managed to pass on the fairy to her sister with all the troubles and uneasiness. When the Skriker suddenly springs out of the sofa as a winged pink fairy Lily thinks she is dreaming and has a nightmare. "Don't you want a wish, Lily" (p. 22), the Skriker asks. Lily, perhaps to test whether she is really dreaming or not, wishes for flowers. And the miracle happens, flowers fall from above. The Skriker is happy, she has managed to persuade Lily to have a wish and now she feels warmer. She knows she has just taken the first step towards getting hold of Lily's soul. Lily is still undetermined: "And if it's not a dream it's even better" (p. 22). She does not really know what to do with all this.

The following scene is one of the key scenes of the play. The Skriker appears in the form of a small child. Lily shows her how to play cat's cradle. Again it proves to

be a bad strategy for this willingness to play shows a clear sign of Lily's intention of "making friends." The Skriker grows bold and now claims not only to be friends, not only to be loved but to be the sister of Lily's baby to be born.

> LILY: You can't really be its sister.
> SKRIKER.: I can, I can be, please let me. I want a baby, I want a baby
> brother or a baby sister.
> LILY: You'll have to ask your mum to have a baby.
> SKRIKER.: I haven't got a mum. Please let me be a sister. Say yes. Say yes.
> Please say yes.
> LILY: Yes all right.
> SKRIKER: I'll be its sister and you can be my mum.
> LILY: Who do you live with?
> SKRIKER: Please say yes. Pretend.
>
> (p. 24)

The mother-daughter-game is ended when Josie turns up and recognises the Skriker in the small child. From this point on the fairy becomes even more violent and aggressive than before. Josie tries to keep her away from her sister, in vain. The Skriker expresses her demand for a part of Lily's life and love when she starts hitting Lily's belly. First, the young woman takes it for the child's desperate need of attention and kisses her but when she starts pulling her hair Lily hits the fairy-child. We have seen this type of scene before; in the American woman offering her help to Lily, who first tends to accept it but finally rejects it, then in the pink winged fairy trying to persuade her to have a wish. Lily is under siege. She is again and again attacked and insulted by a mysterious being who apparently does not want anything particular except to be loved. It is this latest scene, however, which raises doubt as to whether the Skriker's intentions are all that innocent. Hitting Lily's pregnant belly – an attempt to kill the foetus? – expresses the fairy's strong wish to be the only one in her life. The thematically similar scenes I have just mentioned are not simply mirror images of each other; every scene repeats the theme of the previous one at a higher emotional and expressive level. What is suggested in the first two is condensed in the third, the ambiguous relationship of Lily and the Skriker. Lily is not strong enough to reject the promises she is offered and she is not careless or blind enough to accept them without question. On one hand the possibility of having someone who fulfils all her wishes pleases her, on the other hand, however, she is still too frightened to embrace a sup natural power, the function of which she is not yet fully clear about.

While Lily is hesitating her sister is ready to join the supernatural company of the fairies. What induces Josie to change her mind after having passed the Skriker on to Lily is her weakness, her inability to face her own fate without assistance.

> LILY: Josie, remember what it felt like / before, don't do it.
> JOSIE: But when you've lost her you want her back. Because you see what she can do and you've lost your chance and it could be the only chance ever/in my life to –
>
> (p. 28)

It is her hope that the miraculous Skriker will somehow make her life bearable that Josie has in mind here. Unfortunately enough Lily interrupts her sister before she could explain what she actually expects from the Skriker so one can only guess. Josie's journey into the Underworld, which follows, is a possible answer.

The Underworld "springs into existence" only when the Skriker and Josie arrive, without them it would not exist. And the way it exists is also worth mentioning. Churchill's stage instruction in which she describes the Underworld is telling:

> It looks wonderful except that it is all glamour and here and there it's not working – some of the food is twigs, leaves, beetles, some of the clothes are rags, some of the beautiful people have a claw hand or hideous face. But the first impression is of a palace. SKRIKER is a fairy queen, dressed grandiosely, with lapses.
>
> (p. 29)

Everything is sham including the Skriker herself, who appears to be a fairy queen beautifully dressed, but she confesses to Lily, as the American woman shortly before, that she is "one of many, not a major spirit but a spirit" (p. 16), what is more, her wonderful transformation from an ancient and damaged death portent into a fairy full of energy has not yet happened. When at the end of the play Lily takes the same journey the Skriker as a narrator tells us how she behaved when they arrived:

> Lily appeared like a ghastly, made their hair stand on endless night, their blood run fast. 'Am I in fairylanded?' she wondered. 'No, said the old crony, this is the real world' whirl whir wh wh what is this?
>
> (p. 51)

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This is the real world, we are informed. In the "real world" there is a feast as Josie can see, everyone is singing and dancing, it does really seem beautiful. At least until Josie is warned by a human inhabitant, a girl, who was in search of her love and "got lost in an orchard," not to eat anything, for it is "twigs and beetle and a dead body" (p. 30). The divine prohibition in Paradise against eating the fruit of the forbidden tree is grotesquely distorted here. Adam and Eve were kept away from the tree of knowledge in order that they can stay in Paradise, Josie, on the other hand, is expected to eat something, anything, in order that the supernatural forces can make her stay in the make-believe Eden. As the prohibition did not work in the case of the first pair, it does not work with Josie, either. The true nature of the unreal Eden is soon revealed, the glamorous feast is followed by silence and gloom and Josie finds herself to be a slave. The Skriker appears to her as a monster this time. Yet, when Josie manages to leave her slavery and returns to the material world she feels that "everything's flat here like a video" (p. 38) as opposed to what she experienced there, among the fairies.

The Underworld-scene is all the more important because it sheds light on the character of the Skriker, too. Josie feels that long years pass while she is in the custody of the fairyland, so does the girl who warns her not to eat anything. However, on her return she finds everything just as she has left it. Lily is surprised to learn that her sister thinks she was away for a long time. "I never stopped seeing you" (p. 35), she says, because for her nothing really happened. If Josie is there with Lily all the time yet Josie still thinks she spent a whole life with the fairies it is only possible if Josie's sinister journey was only an imaginary one, everything took place in her mind. If so, the Underworld, the fairies and goblins and spirits and demons including the Skriker have sprung out of Josie's disturbed mind and are real only as long as Josie wants to believe that they are real. She is afraid of eating in the fairyland because she believes the girl, and she comes back because she wants to come back. It would be a mistake, however, to say that the world of the Skriker does not exist or it is unreal. It does exist and it *is* real, it exists in a disturbed mind and it has a psychic reality. What is remarkable, however, is Josie's (and Lily's) ability or power to have control of the time when this reality comes into existence.

After Josie's adventure the Skriker leaves the sisters alone for a while, although she is constantly following them from a distance. Josie's feeling that something is watching them is not without basis. When the Skriker turns up again, this time as a man of thirty, she/he explains it to Lily:

SKRIKER: You meant me to follow you or I wouldn't have done it.
LILY: I never saw you.
SKRIKER: Unconsciously meant. Or in your stars. Some deep...
LILY: Oh like that.

(p. 41)

During the apparently peaceful time without the disturbing presence of the Skriker Lily has her child. She lives with Josie and suffers from her sister's strange ideas. Once Josie claims that Lily's baby is a changeling, the real one having been kidnapped by the fairies. The only way to get her back is to put this one on a shovel and put in on a fire. Lily wishes Josie was not mad. So she recovers her senses for a few minutes but it is even worse than before. What the Skriker says is perfectly true: Lily unconsciously wants the fairies to come back to make her miserable life better. She wants the fairyland. She wants to escape from her reality.

The Skriker now being a man "woos" Lily trying to exploit her need either of a fairyland or of a man. He knows that Lily needs consolation. First, he is ready to bring into the picture some of the factors that make modern man feel uneasy. He is eager to point out the consoling role of nature which was available to people in earlier times but not to the people of today. Nowadays nobody can take comfort from nature either because of the unpredictable effects of global warming ("Spring will return and nothing will grow") or of other unusual meteorological phenomena. Then he mentions the show-business-like Gulf war ("I like the kind of war we're having lately. I like snuff movies," p. 44) only to offer himself as the only way out of the dark world of depression. A cunning, but probably far too transparent strategy. Lily says no. The Skriker, in a way quite unusual of him, becomes irritated. Lily feels pity for him. He makes an attempt to benefit from it turning his anger towards himself, then showing a touch of self-pity, a display of characteristically male behaviour:

I'm useless, I get something beautiful and I ruin it. Everything I touch falls apart... I worship you. I'm so ashamed. I feel sick. Help me. Forgive me. Could you ever love me?

(p. 45)

The pathetic theatrical performance is interrupted by Josie, who attacks the great hypocrite with a knife injuring him on the arm. But the injury, as so many things with the fairies, is only a sham. The Skriker cannot be hurt or killed with a knife. Her power – to retain the feminine pronoun which denotes the original sex of the otherwise sexless character – lies not in the physical world, so a material weapon can do no harm

to her existence; she simply takes off the bloodstained shirt and tie, under which she has clean ones.

The Skriker then appears as Mary, an old friend of Lily's. She seems to be in trouble, or at least she claims so: her boyfriend is going to kill her. She pleads with Lily to have mercy on her and to help. She seems to know a lot about Lily's childhood, the *waste ground,* the *corner with the nettles,* and a *wall* where they used to put messages. Lily, either because she is now suspicious or because she is tired of strange people coming to her and asking for help, resists. She will not help anyone. She does not care about anyone. The Skriker leaves, but, as she gives an account of the further events, Lily's soul is now disturbed and infected with a strange need:

> But she worried and sorried and lay far awake into the nightmare. Poor fury, she thought, pure feary, where are you now and then? And something drove her over and over and out of her mind how you go.
>
> (p. 49)

Finally Lily gives in and goes to find the Skriker in a hospital. However, before going on to discuss the final scene of the play, it might be useful to stop and attempt to answer a question: who or what is this assertive, miraculous character, who is the Skriker? She is certainly not a flesh and blood figure; her world, the Underworld, and her entire company which includes a Kelpie, a Bogle, a Brownie, a Black Dog and many others belong to an imaginary sphere rather than to the material world. What Josie feels to be a whole life actually happens in no time. Lily's charge, "These things only come because of you" (p. 46), because of Josie that is, is only part of the truth. It is Josie who first meets the fairyworld, though not in the hospital of the second scene, so she might appear to Lily to be the cause of everything. However, the fact that the Skriker is presented before the actual plot – and the way she is presented linguistically in the prologue – suggests that she, the Skriker, is something more ancient and profound than Lily could imagine, and Josie is but a medium of a higher, or deeper, power.

We last see Josie towards the end of the play with the Skriker, who is now a man again, "a shabby respectable man about forty."

> JOSIE: She didn't know anyone. She didn't have anywhere to stay the night. I slipped a wire loop over her head.
> SKRIKER *laughs.*
> So that'll do for a bit, yeh? You'll feel ok. There's an earthquake on the telly night. There's a motorway pileup in the fog.
> SKRIKER: You are a good girl, Josie

> JOSIE: There's dead children.
> SKRIKER: Tell me more about her.
> JOSIE: She had red hair. She had big feet. She liked biscuits. She woke up
> while I was doing it. But you didn't do the carcrash. You'd tell me. You're not
> strong enough to do an earthquake.

<div align="right">(p. 48)</div>

It is not clear enough who Josie is talking about. *She* could be her little daughter – then how is it possible that she liked biscuits and had big feet? – or she could be somebody else of whom we have not yet heard. Nevertheless, what Josie is talking about is a murder. This would not be a valuable piece of information since we already know that she has killed her baby. What is important, however, is that she seems to put the blame on the Skriker, who is not strong enough to make an earthquake, but, as Josie's words suggest, is strong enough to do a murder. It was not me, says she, who killed, but something in me encouraged by the Skriker. The monster, originally sleeping somewhere deep in Josie's soul, is thus personified, becomes a third person, and now being independent of her maker is able to haunt others, especially Lily.

The Skriker bears a frightening resemblance to another great tempter of history, Satan, or the devil, who visits the fasting Jesus in the wilderness:

> Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.[6]

The fairy visits the sisters in the urban wilderness and in exchange for love she offers them a wonderful world of glamour and the fulfilment of all their wishes. Still, there is the question where does the Skriker-tempter come from? Does she arise from the disturbed mind of the baby-killer Josie, a mental illness later affecting Lily, or is it the other way round: Josie kills her baby acting on the advice of a sinister force outside of her, which attacks Lily, too? Or are both Josie's mental illness and this external force just various aspects of one and the same *instinct* to escape from the horrors of this world and to hide away in an imaginary one, either arising "naturally" within, or generated from the outside? The Skriker might well be a symbol of naturally developed insanity or of one artificially achieved through chemicals, alcohol or in any other way; in either case she produces Paradise on Earth, a fairyland out of place – which is escapism in its most hideous sense. Any attempt at creating a beautiful and real world

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[6] *Matthew*, 4,8–9

out of the delusive material of phantasmagoria, at bringing back the allegedly good old times when people believed in the existence of a dreamland is abortive and anachronistic. Josie and Lily should face their fate, their surroundings, their lives, and neither of them is capable of that. Instead of trying hard to build up a future relying solely on the sober acknowledgement of their present they escape from the present thus killing the future. Josie's baby is dead. Lily's great great granddaughter is deformed.

The last scene shows how Lily, finally giving up all resistance, joins the company of the Skriker, who, being embraced, is rejuvenated at once. Lily hopes to be able to save the world without being harmed, but she is unable to save herself. She eats the forbidden fruit, and a morsel here means everything. This is a whirlpool of desires – once you taste the fruit you want more. And for Lily there is no way back – she is "tricked tracked wracked" (p. 52). Her spoilt future is half shown on stage, half told by the Skriker: her granddaughter and her deformed great great granddaughter appear only to pour their rage upon Lily. Lily's future is not a possible one of many, the Skriker's laconic account of the girl's fate – she "bit off more than she could choose. And she was dustbin" (p.52) – suggests that this is really what happens to her after she has chosen the fairy-world.

Throughout the play the figure of the Skriker appears to be an extremely assertive one. She is determined to force love and acceptance out of the sisters in any way, a goal she finally accomplishes. Her method varies from shape to shape she chooses to take. When she is a stranger – an American woman – all she wants from Lily is her attention. When she is a little girl she is after motherly care and love. In the form of a man she-he demands love and when she takes the form of Mary she asks for help. The concept of love on its own is a neutral one. The borderline between good and evil is dependent on *what* we love. The love the Skriker is so desperate to have seems to be the love of evil and destruction. This will probably be more conspicuous if we consider the role of the fairy's company. The course of the various dumb shows that entwines the whole play has a role similar to the subplot in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. When Gloster complains that

> These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us: though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects: love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in

cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond
cracked 'twixt son and father,[7]

he not only refers us to morsels of obsolete knowledge or superstition but generalises
the fate of King Lear and his daughters (and also his own fate and that of his sons)
showing that Lear's problems are not individual ones but are characteristic of a period
in time. The "subplot" of dumb shows in *The Skriker* has the same function. It
generalises the problem, it presents us a hideous picture of a world in which an almost
religious quest for artificial heavens is a global problem, not merely that of two young
sisters. The human characters in the dumbshows try to find somebody or something,
one of them with a telescope even, but when they find it they take the first step on the
road of corruption and decay. The telescope girl, who first watches the Green Lady and
the Bogle has a bandaged wrist after losing sight of them, the man who meets the
Green Lady ends up in a wheelchair, and the woman who flirts with the Kelpie is
dismembered in the end. Everybody who is weak enough to get in touch with a fairy
comes to grief. So do Josie and Lily. However, it would be far too easy and unjust to
blame all the miseries on the Skriker and her company. They may appear as beautiful,
kind and amiable beings to Josie and Lily but ultimately the choice is whether the
sisters should embrace or reject them. They fail to make the right choice and they fall.
Caryl Churchill is of the opinion that a playwright should only ask questions, she or he
should not answer them.[8] If the playwright's task is to ask questions rather than to
answer them, one of the possible questions posed in *The Skriker* may be: "Why should
the characters choose a fairyland instead of reality?" Or rather: "What is reality like if it
is better to escape even though this escape results in the physical and mental corruption
of the characters?" The answer to this question, however, is beyond the scope of this
essay – the question itself, I believe, is an important one to keep in mind when one
goes to the theatre to watch the Hungarian production of Churchill's play,[9] to which I
hope I have managed to provide an introduction.

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[7] Shakespeare, *King Lear* Act I, Scene 2 in: *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (London: Hamlyn, 1987) p. 864.

[8] Amelia Howe-Kritzer, *The Plays of Caryl Churchill: Theatre of Empowerment* (London: Macmillan-Houndsmills, 1991) p. 1.

[9] The play has in fact not been produced yet, but thanks to Kornél Hamvai's virtuoso translation (published in László Upor, ed. *Holdfény antológia – Öt mai angol dráma* [The Moonlight Anthology – Five Contemporary English Plays], Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, 1996), the possibilty for us to see the play in a Hungarian theatre is there.

János Kenyeres

Northrop Frye and Contemporary Literary Theory

Northrop Frye's literary theory has been through a lot of controversy since his first book, *Fearful Symmetry*, was published. He provoked completely different responses from various scholars and critical groups throughout his life and his works have continued to elicit various opinions since his death in 1991. On the other hand, Frye's theory did not launch a new critical "school," and without having dedicated followers, it appears that he is the great loner of Anglo-American literary theory, isolated from other critical currents and scholars. This "loner-theory" is often coupled with a view of Frye which claims that he is outdated and obsolete, or as Frank Lentricchia said more bluntly: after the mid-sixties Frye was "unceremoniously 'tossed on the dump' [...] with other useless relics."[1]

Nevertheless, this view of Frye is contradicted by the influence which he had on world-wide critical thought even in the last couple of decades.[2] Frye's presence is indicated by the very fact that since the mid-eighties to 1997 four volumes of essays and six monographs were dedicated entirely to his work. In 1991 Robert Denham claimed that the books, essays, dissertations and articles on Frye amounted to more than 1900 in all and that only between 1985 and 1991 more than 170 essays or parts of books were written about Frye.[3] These numbers suggest that Frye cannot be written off and his presence in literary criticism and theory is undeniable.

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[1] Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1980) p. 30.

[2] See Robert D. Denham, "Frye's International Presence" in Alvin A. Lee and Robert D. Denham, ed. *The Legacy of Northrop Frye* (Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press, 1994) pp. xvvi-xxxii.

[3] Robert Denham "Auguries of Influence" in Robert D. Denham and Thomas Willard, ed., *Visionary Poetics: Essays on Northrop Frye's Criticism* (New York San Francisco Bern Frankfurt am Main Paris London: Peter Lang, 1991) p. 80.

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However, rather then statistical statements, the real test of Frye's relevance can be made by setting his ideas against the latest currents of criticism. This test can be, in practice, supported by using the findings of Frye-criticism of the last few years, as well as the opinion of some important representatives of theoretical schools who see in Frye a theorist whose work is in dialogue with their own. This essay will examine a new pattern of Frye's connections in contemporary literary theory while setting out his place in the context of four important critical trends: myth criticism (into which Frye's oeuvre is usually classified), reader response criticism, deconstruction and cultural criticism.

It is interesting to see how those who have attempted to supersede Frye still cling to his work. Paul Hernadi in *Beyond Genre* attempts to transcend genre concepts but finds the *Anatomy of Criticism* indispensable to attain such "policentric conceptual framework."[4] Ihab Hassan seems to have distanced himself from Frye's *Anatomy* as early as 1963, but still continued to learn from Frye, as a personal letter reveals:

> [...] there is no doubt in my mind that the *Anatomy of Criticism* is the most important book in two decades; it is the kind of book that professors of literature of my generation must free themselves from and – as for me – kill. For its patron deity is Apollo. I hope I am not sounding too unruly; I was thoroughly touched by your response, and I continue to learn from everything you write.[5]

Julia Kristeva, in "The Importance of Frye," has stressed that although everything separates her from Frye (age, social and political experience, gender, different interest in language) she nevertheless underwent a "revelation" by reading Frye's major books, obtaining confirmation of what she proposed under the name "intertextuality." She learned from Frye that it "falls to the humanists and most particularly literary theory to defend" the Western tradition against the nihilism of our age.[6]

For Harold Bloom, Frye served as a father-figure. His personal letters to Frye from the 1960s, kept in the Victoria University Library archives, Toronto, leave no

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[4] Paul Hernadi, *Beyond Genre: New Directions in Literary Classification* (Ithaca; London : Cornell University Press, 1972) p. 145. See also p. viii.

[5] Ihab Hassan's letter to Frye dated September 9, 1963. [Victoria University Library, Toronto]

[6] See Julia Kristeva, "The Importance of Frye" in Lee and Denham pp. 335-337.

doubt about his filial attachment to Frye's works. In a letter, Bloom even suggested that he owed the core of his concept of the anxiety of influence to Frye.[7] Other letters by Bloom (held at the Victoria University Library, Toronto) also witness the powerful influence Frye had upon his thoughts. These hitherto unpublished letters will be important in terms of future research on Bloom, for they document aspects of the development of Bloom's thought under the guidance of Frye. Bloom's admiration, however, turned into anxiety in a few years. When Bloom published his *Map of Misreading*, he had become estranged from Frye, as if forced to proceed on the Oedipal path he made up for other authors. He accused Frye of being "the Proclus or Iamblichus of our day," implying that Frye's criticism followed the line of the two Gnostics who exercised the power of magic. He also accused Frye of having achieved a "Low Church version" of T.S. Eliot's "Anglo-Catholic myth."[8] By 1987, however,

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[7] In his letter, Bloom wrote: "I am studying what your other remark indicates, the deepening isolation of the maturity, particularly as one feels it in the later stages, as in *Paradise Regained + Samson*, in Wordsworth from 1805 on, in *Jerusalem*, as well as late Stevens and Yeats. The anxiety *in* the isolation (1 don't of course see anxiety as causing the isolation) seems to create an extraordinary kind of implicit, creative misinterpretation of the nearest precursor or ancestral poet – in Wordsworth's and Blake's Milton, Shelley's Wordsworth, Yeats's Blake and Shelley, and Stevens' the Romantic tradition in general. Poetic influence, as I have learned it from you, aspires to renew the archetype, to imitate it so fundamentally as to re-grow the roots of romance itself. Somehow that is crucial to the generosity you call the myth of concern. But, in the mature isolation of the poets who can move me most, the process seems to change, and Blake for one needs creatively to correct Job, Milton, Dante, Wordsworth. His anxiety I know is not just for himself; it is still part of a myth of concern, but I don't yet see how." (Letter to Frye, September 27, 1969 [Victoria University Library, Toronto])

[8] More precisely Bloom said the following: "Northrop Frye, who increasingly looks like the Proclus or Iamblichus of our day, has Platonized the dialectics of tradition, its relation to fresh creation, into what he calls the Myth of Concern, which turns out to be a Low Church version of T.S. Eliot's Anglo-Catholic myth of Tradition and Individual Talent. In Frye's reduction, the student discovers that he becomes something, and thus uncovers or demystifies himself, by first being persuaded that tradition is inclusive rather than exclusive, and so makes a place for him. The student is a cultural assimilator who *thinks* because he has *joined* a larger body of thought. Freedom, for Frye as for Eliot, is the change, however slight, that any genuine single consciousness brings about in the order of literature simply by joining the simultaneity of such order." See Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975) p. 30. It is interesting to note here that in *T.S. Eliot. An Introduction* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1963, Phoenix edition, 1981) Frye claimed that Eliot joined the Catholic Church. In a letter Eliot protested, saying that one does not join a church – see John Ayre, *Northrop Frye: A Biography* (Toronto: Random House, 1989) p. 291.

Bloom returned to Frye and claimed a central place for him in literary theory. In an interview he said:

> Now that I am mature, and willing to face my indebtedness, Northrop Frye does seem to me – for all of my complaints about his idealization and his authentic Platonism and his authentic Christianity – a kind of Miltonic figure. He is certainly the largest and most crucial literary critic in the English language since the divine Walter and the divine Oscar: he really is that good. I have tried to find an alternative father in Mr Burke, who is a charming fellow and a very powerful critic, but I don't come from Burke: I come out of Frye.[9]

Bloom's return to Frye in 1987 forecast, if metaphorically, a renewed interest in Frye by other theorists as well, and it suggested that the re-reading of Frye had to begin by adopting new perspectives. This new reading of Frye, as contrasted to the reading in the old box of myth criticism, is undoubtedly taking place.

MYTH CRITICISM AND OTHER CLASSIFICATIONS

Northrop Frye's method has been often considered as "archetypal criticism" or "myth criticism" ever since he published his essay on the archetypes of literature.[10] There is no denying that "myth criticism" is a standard term of modern critical theory, although it has never been explicitly defined as a uniform concept, and anyone interested in myth can be referred to as a myth critic. However, apart from the common interest in myth, it is not difficult to see that there are striking differences among those who are generally classified into this group, and these differences are at least as important as the

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[9] Imre Salusinszky, ed., *Criticism in Society: Interviews with Jacques Derrida, Northrop Frye, Harold Bloom, Geoffrey Hartman, Frank Kermode, Edward Said, Barbara Johnson, Frank Lentricchia and J. Hillis Miller* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987) p. 62. Bloom also expressed his admiration for Frye in the *Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York, San Diego, London: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1994), p. 191.

[10] This is an example of a less rigid formulation of the substance of Frye's theory: "Comprehensive as it seems to be, the theory of literature Northrop Frye develops in *Anatomy of Criticism* is apparently not intended to prescribe only one proper critical approach [...] But while there is a genuinely pluralistic element in Frye's thinking it is also clear that he regards archetypal criticism as prior in importance to any other method." Elmer Borklund, *Contemporary Literary Critics* (London: St. James Press, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977) p. 214. "The Archetypes of Literature" was first published in *Kenyon Review* 13 (Winter 1951) pp. 92-110.

common ground of interest in myth. Thus it seems that it is a very broad category to be applied with a truly distinctive feature.

There is a widespread misunderstanding in Frye's classification as a myth critic on the basis of his use of Jungian archetypes. It is possible, of course, to detect traces in Frye's literary theory which have parallels in psychological approaches to literature, but such parallels do not rest on his concept of archetypes. To Frye, archetypes were literary forms and were not connected to psychology. Frye did not need the Jungian theory of the collective unconscious, because for the literary critic archetypes existed in myths, i.e. an order of words. He often stressed that his archetypes were different from those of Jung, nevertheless he did not manage to disperse the Jungian veil from his theory. In the *Anatomy of Criticism*, for example, he claimed that the "emphasis on impersonal content has been developed by Jung and his school, where the communicability of archetypes is accounted for by a theory of a collective unconscious – an unnecessary hypothesis in literary criticism, so far as I can judge."[11]

This judgement may be challenged, as it was by Frederick Crews, who asserted that "even while he [Frye] has been developing an immanent and impersonal notion of creativity that seems to demand that very hypothesis."[12] Crews was right to the extent that Frye needed a hypothesis, but it was not the Jungian one. Frye did not seek the place of archetypes in the human psyche, in the structured world of the collective unconscious, but in the structured world of literature itself, therefore, his theory is "above" the Jungian world of the collective unconscious. Frye's own hypothesis claimed that literature forms a coherent unity and this hypothesis for Frye was not an assumption based upon another assumption.[13]

Moreover, Jung could not be the source of Frye's thought, since he first read Jung only in the late 1940s, when *Fearful Symmetry* had been completed.[14] Even then, as Thomas Willard has noted in "Archetypes of the Imagination," Frye "had to settle for incomplete and often inadequate translations."[15] If we seek the source of Frye's heuristic principle that all literature forms a coherent unity, then Blake is perhaps a better origin: Frye expanded Blake's proposition: "Every Poem must necessarily be a

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[11] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957)pp. 111-112.

[12] Frederick Crews, "Anaesthetic Criticism" in Frederick Crews, ed., *Psychoanalysis and Literary Process* (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Press, 1970), p. 9.

[13] See Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* pp. 16-17.

[14] Cf. Ayre pp. 216-217, and David Cayley, ed., *Northrop Frye in Conversation* (Toronto: Anansi, 1992) p. 77.

[15] Thomas Willard "Archetypes of the Imagination" in Lee and Denham p. 18.

perfect Unity" to incorporate all literature, a concept which became the cornerstone of his literary theory. Therefore, Frye's work is Jungian only in the sense that any other theory is Jungian if analysed from that perspective. But such an approach, if conducted with reasonable discrimination, must acknowledge that Frye did not submerge in the world of the unconscious, but investigated purely its "symptoms" in culture.

Frye did use psychological terms, like Freud's *condensation* and *displacement*, but always with a purely critical content. His application of the findings of Frazerian anthropology and Freudian psychology to literature in terms of a very strict framework of literary theory clearly distinguishes Frye from most theorists of archetypal criticism. Keeping this in mind, exclusively connecting Frye to Jung, on the other hand, is perhaps unjust to Freud, who as early as 1908 set up a theory explaining the psychological causes of creative writing and spoke of the "wishful fantasies of whole nations."[16] Jung himself developed his theory of the collective unconscious and the theory of the archetypes specifically from Freud's idea that there are some vestiges of ancient experiences in the unconscious.[17] As he later recalled, it was Freud's failure to interpret Jung's dreams that prompted him to reconsider Freud's theory.[18]

The use of archetypes as psychological categories by Maud Bodkin signals the gap between Frye and other theorists engaged in the study of myth. In *Archetypal Patterns of Poetry* Maud Bodkin used the Jungian concept of racial memory in determining her concept of archetypes, and at the same time acknowledged that historical factors had a role in the shaping of the particular archetypal variations. Basically, however, her concern was to explore the reader's response to the archetypal patterns rather than to create a theory of their connections within literature, and she

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[16] According to Freud, wish-fulfilment served as a model as well as a source for artistic products even in the case of works which take their material ready-made from myths or legends: "We are perfectly aware that very many imaginative writings are far removed from the model of naive day-dream; and yet I cannot suppress the suspicion that even the most extreme deviations from that model could be linked with it through an uninterrupted series of transitional cases. [...] The study of the constructions of folk psychology such as these is far from being complete, but it is extremely probable that myths, for instance, are distorted vestiges of the wishful fantasies of whole nations, the *secular dreams* of youthful humanity." See Freud, "Creative Writers and day-dreaming," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol IX., transl. and ed. James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1959) p. 152.

[17] See C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (London and Glasgow: Random House, 1967), p. 197.

[18] See Jung pp. 181-85.

anticipated with her gender oriented approach in 1934 a feminist standpoint rather than Frye's system of the archetypes of literature.[19]

In a similar way, Leslie Fiedler stands apart from Frye because of his psychosexual approach. In refuting the New Criticism, he attacked its treatment of literature as an aesthetic inquiry and instead proposed the study of universal myths. In his practical criticism, however, his interest was focused more on the psychological "homoerotic" reasons for the popularity of certain myths in modern American society, such as in "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey," and was concerned with specific cultural mythologies in America, such as in *Love and Death in the American Novel*.[20] Besides the Jungian collective memory, Fiedler also employed the Freudian personal unconscious, and thought that literature is born when an "Archetype" is affixed with an individuated "Signature," which incorporates historical and social dimensions, and therefore he expanded the scope of literature to extra-literary dimensions.[21]

A similar gap exists between the Jungian basis of Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, although it must be mentioned that the quest myth played a central role in Frye too. The psychological basis of Philip Wheelright's *The Burning Fountain*, with its central focus on the "sense of a beyond" serving as an instinctual motive for the creation of literature was also alien to Frye.[22]

Frye's pigeonholing as a myth critic is often accompanied by an opposing tendency to classify him as a structuralist.[23] There are some important parallels between

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[19] See for example Bodkin's contemplation about the presentation of images of man "related to the emotional life of a woman" in *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry: Psychological Studies of Imagination* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934) p. 299.

[20] Leslie Fiedler, "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey!" in *Partisan Review* 15 (1948) pp. 664-71 and *Love and Death in the American Novel* (New York: Criterion Books, 1960). Other important works discussing the sociological dimension of myth criticism are Constance Rourke's *American Humor*, Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land*, R.W.B. Lewes' *The American Adam*, Richard Chase's *The American Novel and its Tradition* and Daniel Hoffman's *Form and Fable in American Fiction* (as mentioned by Vincent B. Leitch in *American Literary Criticism: from the 30s to the 80s* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1988], p. 131).

[21] See Leslie Fiedler, "Archetype and Signature" in *The Collected Essays of Leslie Fiedler* (New York: Stein and Day, 1971) pp. 537-539.

[22] Philip Wheelright, *The Burning Fountain: a Study in the Language of Symbolism*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954)

[23] See, for instance, Terence Hawkes' classification in *Structuralism and Semiotics* (London: Methuen, 1971) p. 175; or Elizabeth Freund, *The Return of the Reader: Reader Response Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1987) pp. 72-73; or Lentricchia pp. 3-26.

Frye and Claude Lévi-Strauss in their predilection for categorisation and finding "units" which combine to make a wider sense of meaning, for example. However, without denying an element of truth in these classifications, they should be treated carefully. There are important differences between Frye's system as a whole and French structuralism, as will be touched upon later in connection with Paul Ricoeur's analysis of Frye. It is less problematic to say, therefore, that Frye's criticism disseminates into many critical directions and incorporates aspects of several critical currents in his work. This does not mean, of course, that Frye was an eccentric but that all classifications in literary theory blur important differences.

If Frye's criticism does not proceed exclusively along the line of any of the major contemporary critical trends, it means at the same time that it does show certain affinity to most of them. Classification of a whole oeuvre is always made from "faulty perspectives" because it is inherently a simplification on the one hand and exaggeration on the other.[24]

Éva Federmayer remarks that "Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) is more complex and more ingeniously synthetic than to be considered merely psychoanalytic; however, Freud is a great influence on shaping the concept of *dianoia* as *dream* or the conflict of desire and reality."[25] This statement contains an aspect which needs to be stressed; it sheds light on an important point without the faulty perspective of generalisation.

The following pages will examine aspects of Frye's work in the light of contemporary literary theory. This raises the question of Frye's place in the context of post-structuralism, reader-response criticism, and cultural criticism. It must be emphasised that this paper does not attempt to classify Frye into any of the critical currents mentioned above; it merely tries to demonstrate that Frye's theory is open to be analysed from different perspectives.

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[24] "Faulty perspectives" -- term borrowed from E.D. Hirsch, "Faulty Perspectives" in *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1978) pp. 36-49. The role model of such schematic analysis on Frye is Pauline Kogan's *Northrop Frye: The Highest Priest of Clerical Obscurantism* (Montreal: Progressive Books and Periodicals, 1969), which presents Frye in the context of the class struggle.

[25] Éva Federmayer, *Psychoanalysis and American Literary Criticism: Explorations in the Psyche and the Text by Norman Holland, Frederick Crews, Geoffrey Hartman and Harold Bloom* (Budapest: Eötvös Lóránd University, 1983) p. 11.

DECONSTRUCTION

The question of the centre that disappears with Derrida did not disappear all at once, it was the final station of philosophical thought concerned with questions about the existence of God. When Nietzsche declared the death of God, he deprived the universe of a definite centre, when Derrida declared the absence of the "transcendental signified," he shattered the idea of any frame of reference. He transformed the problem of the absence of a centre to every structure, most importantly to the absence of any definitive meaning in language, where the concept of centre, however, remained as a function that is never present, leaving only a trace to be endlessly chased around, to be perpetually "deconstructed."

Although in a letter to Ruth El Saffar Frye implied that Derrida hardly said anything that he had not already said better, this was only a half-truth.[26] In the *Anatomy*, discussing literary archetypes, he was already preoccupied with the idea of whether a centre must exist, but rejected the Derridean answer: "Criticism [...] recognizes the fact that there *is* a centre of the Order of words. Unless there is such a center, there is nothing to prevent the analogies supplied by convention and genre from being an endless series of free associations, perhaps suggestive, perhaps even tantalizing, but never creating a real structure."[27]

On the other hand, he also claimed that there is no "transcendental signified," or in his own words "there is nothing outside the text," but for him the text was the medium where the transcendental signified, the Logos, was imaginatively recreated by the reader.[28] This question is especially significant in his interpretation of the Bible, where the same principle holds true as of any other text, the centre of meaning being incarnated in the words, waiting to be redeemed.

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[26] In his letter of February 19, 1979, to Professor Ruth El Saffar, Frye claimed this: "As for my problems in reading Derrida and the rest, my primary motive in consulting them is a somewhat paranoid one of looking in them to see if they have said anything that I haven't said myself rather better. So far, I have found them of rather limited value: they write about literature but not from within literature, and their eyes always seem to be scanning the horizon in quest of more promising material. But I don't ignore the fact that people are profoundly influenced by the question of who is in the cultural news: people will quote things from Lacan, who is fashionable, and be unable to see that the same point might be in Jung who is not. And my own age makes me vulnerable: I know that many people are anxious to find me out of style, and I want to show them, not that I still feel young, but that I sympathize with their attitude." [Victoria University Library, Toronto]

[27] Frye, Anatomy of Criticism pp. 117-118.

[28] *Northrop Frye in Conversation* (Anansi, 1992) p. 29.

It may be said that Derridean thought simply devoured Frye's "structure" at once and discarded it as useless. The only response Frye could make was to show that he went beyond deconstruction and reached the level of construction. In a sense, Frye superseded Derrida and, as if participating in a quest myth, found the presence that Derrida had lost:

> The text is not the absence of a former presence but the place of the resurrection of the presence ... In this risen presence text and reader are equally involved. The reader is a whole of which the text is a part; the text is a whole of which the reader is a part – these contradictory movements keep moving into one another and back again. The Logos at the center, which is inside the reader and not hidden behind the text, continually changes place with the Logos at the circumference that encloses both.[29]

Modern criticism has been essentially made up of a series of combats between sets of metaphors possessed by the different participants of the critical field, each trying to contest different opinions by metaphoric expression. Much of the result, i.e. the effect of the argumentation upon the critical world, depends on the rhetoric of thought conveyed. Deconstruction itself is highly metaphorical and paradoxical, even if it affords philosophical ideas much rather than literary images in the form of metaphors and paradoxes. The meta-language of literary criticism approaches the metaphoric language of literature through a medium of metaphor itself, thus the whole process turns utterly paradoxical. Truth, if it exists at all, exists within this system of words, since the locus of examination is itself language. Therefore, despite their differences, the use of metaphor and paradox is one common ground between Frye and Derridean critics.

David Cayley has observed that "Frye and Derrida in a sense represent the two poles of a possible response to the modern crisis: the abandonment of Christianity and its imaginative reconstruction." Cayley claims that to Frye the Incarnational Word does exist which "gives Frye's thought a serene and lucent confidence."[30] It must be added that Frye's idea of God is more complicated in that it is also tied in with his concept of reality; to Frye, imaginative perception is always superior to simple sense perception.

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[29] Quoted by A.C. Hamilton, *Northrop Frye: Anatomy of His Criticism* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1990) pp. 218-219.

[30] Cayley p. 29.

Studies on Frye often search out the ways in which Frye can be put into relation with deconstruction. Paul Ricoeur, in "'Anatomy of Criticism' or the Order of Paradigms," has pointed out that despite their similarity, the system presented in the *Anatomy* is different from the idea of system employed by the French school of structuralism. Frye's system was the result of "productive imagination," it did not begin by putting aside chronological and narrative features, and was in line with Kant's transcendental logic.[31] Analysing the four senses in which symbol is used in the four respective essays of the *Anatomy*, Ricoeur points out that in the last symbolic phase the symbol is a monad, corresponding to anagogical meaning. "By a monad Frye means imaginative experience's capacity to attain totality in terms of some centre," Ricoeur continues, to which the lower symbolic phases are subordinated.[32] He claims that Frye's "reasonable" belief in the power of the centre is the cornerstone of his system, but raises the question of whether the *Anatomy* can absorb "phenomena of deviance, schism and the death of paradigms," which constitute the other side of the problem, for these also exist in literature.[33] Thus, Ricoeur leaves the question open.

As opposed to the view of Frye as a scholar dedicated to structures, Michael Dolzani thinks that Frye's constant juggling with the question of anatomy and satire indicates his sceptical attitude towards all structures, which came to light in the form of his "general relativization of value judgements."[34] This detachment from all systems is what connects him to post-structuralist thinkers. Dolzani counters the validity of the deconstructionist view about the absence of the presence, and indicates that the core of Frye's construction of Blake's conception of knowledge was that "nothing can be real that is not present to perception" and "If there is no presence, there is no present either." Therefore, in the final analysis Dolzani reveals that although Frye and the deconstructionists have things in common, this clearly separates Frye from their thought.[35]

It is also interesting to examine Frye's interpretation in terms of psychoanalytical forms of deconstruction. As Ross Woodman demonstrates in "Frye, Psychoanalysis and Deconstruction," the main distinction lies in their different working

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[31] Paul Ricoeur, "'Anatomy of Criticism' or the Order of Paradigms" in E. Cook, C. Hošek, J. Macpherson, P. Parker and J. Patrick, ed., *Centre and Labyrinth: Essays in Honour of Northrop Frye* (Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press, 1983) p. 2.

[32] Ricoeur p. 10.

[33] Ricoeur p. 13.

[34] Michael Dolzani, "Northrop Frye and Contemporary Criticism" in Cook, Hošek, et al. p. 61.

[35] See Dolzani p. 62.

hypothesis concerning the origins of literary language. For Frye, literary language originates in the Logos, or the Word, whereas for many deconstructionists (Derrida, Lacan, Kristeva and de Man) literary language takes its origin "not in spirit, but in flesh."[36] Frye's theory is thus father-oriented, patriarchal, and not biological, mother-oriented. For Frye, the literary text mirrors the unity of the Word, whereas for the deconstructionists it represents fracture and dismemberment, a sense of the breaking of the infant's pre-Oedipal bonding with the mother's body, as described in Kristeva's *Desire in Language*.[37] Frye's autobiographical remark that his lifelong effort was to make logocentric sense of the Bible as opposed to his mother's literalist reading represents the struggle of the Logos to transform the mother image. To Woodman, the battle within Frye was triggered between "the fathering of the word as the operations of Logos and the mothering of the word as relaxation and play," which, as must be mentioned, seems nonsense in the light of the fact that what Frye was struggling to achieve was a sense of liberation from the uniformity of literal meaning which did not allow too much play and relaxation to become activated.[38]

Woodman's essay, however, contains some even more dubious statements as well. It ends by claiming that deconstruction does not destroy Frye's logocentric system but "complicates its dynamic and, more importantly, releases it from the closure which otherwise as a system continues to threaten its ongoing life."[39] Moreover, Woodman quotes Frye as emphasising the importance of recognition rather than rejection in critical theory to show that Frye hailed deconstruction as "a contrary necessary to critical progression."[40] But Frye did not welcome deconstruction so cordially and, in the final analysis, he called for the exact opposite of deconstruction: coherence in critical thought which attains a level of incorporation and interpenetration rather than rejection and isolation.

In contrast to the bias of Woodman's essay, Eleanor Cook discovers something truly essential about the use of rhetorical figures in Frye and the deconstructionists. Examining the history of the conception of the riddle, she finds that while deconstruction deconstructs everything, the only thing it does not deconstruct is the riddle itself, which always remains unanswered. In opposition to this

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[36] Ross Woodman, "Frye, Psychoanalysis and Deconstruction" in Lee and Denham p. 316.

[37] Woodman p. 319.

[38] Woodman p. 322.

[39] Woodman p. 323.

[40] Frye has said that "criticism becomes more sensible when it realizes that it has nothing to do with rejection, only with recognition," quoted by Woodman p. 324.

stands the Pauline riddle of hope, which is end-directed and provides a definite vision. Whereas riddle in deconstruction is Oedipal and moves downward to darkness, the Pauline riddle of logocentrism moves towards light and revelation, it clarifies the obscure ("For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face").[41] The importance of Cook's distinction between the two main diverging aspects of the riddle in deconstruction and logocentrism cannot be overemphasised, nor can it be denied that the quest myth had a central place both in Frye's archetypal system and in his personal critical pursuit. St Paul was also the archetype for Frye that led him towards the concept of love, which exceeds philosophy in the same ways as anagogy exceeds meaning in a vision of truth.

READER-RESPONSE CRITICISM

Frye's connection with reader response criticism seems more evident than his points of attachment to deconstruction. Forms of reader-response criticism define the interpretative act as a process of communication which to some extent removes the distinction between text and reader, and thus incorporates the deconstructionist rejection of the subject-object binary opposition. Although defining the exact conception of a movement is hardly possible, it is generally accepted that Rezeptionsästhetik dates back to Hans Robert Jauss' inaugural lecture given in 1967. Jauss replaced literary biography for literary historiography and posited the perceiving consciousness at the centre of interest, paving the way for Wolfgang Iser, his colleague at the University of Constance (hence the "Constance School"), to further elaborate the role of the reader in the understanding of texts. In North America, forms of the corresponding "reader-response" criticism evolved for the most part independently from the German scholars (including also Karlheinz Stierle) until the 1980s, where it took on various forms of structuralist, rhetorical, ethical, subjectivist and psychoanalytic approaches in the work of Jonathan Culler, Stanley Fish, E.D. Hirsch, Jr., David Bleich and Norman Holland, respectively.[42]

Frye's romantic emphasis of recreation which he extended to the reader's construction of meaning in the text clearly shows similarities with the main principles

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[41] See Eleanor Cook, "The Function of Riddles at the Present Time" in Lee and Denham pp. 326-334. See also Eleanor Cook, "Riddles, Charms and Fiction" in Cook, Hošek, et al. pp. 227-244.

[42] See Elizabeth Schellenberg's distinctions in Irena R. Makaryk, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms* (Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press, 1993) pp. 170-174.

of reader-response criticism. His place in the Romantic tradition has been thoroughly examined in critical writings on him in the 1990s, but recent studies on Frye do not dedicate the same emphasis to Frye's work as a type of reader oriented system.[43] Exceptions exist, such as Tibor Fabiny's *The Lion and the Lamb*, which places "typology in the context of reader-response criticism," and thus Frye's typological thinking is also placed on that horizon.[44] A.C. Hamilton calls attention to the correlation between Frye and reader oriented approaches by quoting Frye: "the literary critic of 1980 finds himself in the midst of a bewildering array of problems which seem to focus mainly on the reader of the text," and explains that "such problems are not bewildering to him, because he has always emphasised the reader's response to literature."[45] Frye was indeed preoccupied with the problem of the reader and formulated his view in *Creation & Recreation*: "Every reader recreates what he reads: even if he is reading a letter from a personal friend he is still recreating it into his own personal orbit,"[46] however, he was disappointed by the sterility he found in literary theory:

> in the last few years, the old simple image at the heart of humane studies, of somebody reading a book, has become as complex as a Duchamp painting. The reader is a conventionalized poetic fiction; the act of reading is the art of reading something else; the history of literature records only pangs of misprized texts.[47]

When discussing Frye's connections to reader response theory, mention must be made of his sudden experiences of insight, which occurred to him several times during his life, and which greatly affected his critical thought. He experienced one of

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[43] Recent enquiries on Frye and Romanticism go beyond the well-known Blake-Frye nexus and explore other relations. See, for example, Imre Salusinszki's "Frye and Romanticism" in *Visionary Poetics* and Monika Lee, "Shelley's 'A Defence of Poetry' and Frye: A Theory of Synchronicity" in Lee and Denham pp. 190-200. In the same collection of essays, Helen Vendler, Joseph Adamson, Michael Fisher also engage in exploring different aspects of Frye's relation with Romanticism and Romantic authors.

[44] Tibor Fabiny, *The Lion and the Lamb: Figuralism and Fulfilment in the Bible, Art and Literature* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) p. xii.

[45] Hamilton 218.

[46] Northrop Frye, *Creation and Recreation* (Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press, 1980) p. 65.

[47] Northrop Frye, "Teaching the Humanities Today" in *Divisions on a Ground: Essays on Canadian Culture* (Toronto: Anansi, 1982) p. 94.

the first insights of this type as a graduate student, preparing for a seminar paper on Blake's *Milton*. As he later recalled:

> It was around three in the morning when suddenly the universe just broke open ... [It was] the feeling of an enormous number of things making sense that had been scattered and unrelated before. [...] *Fearful Symmetry*, for example, was started innumerable times, but the shape of the whole book dawned on me quite suddenly one night. And the same thing happened once when I was staying in the YMCA in Edmonton, where I was for very dubious reasons reading Spengler's *Decline of the West*, and I suddenly got a vision of coherence. That's the only way I can describe it. Things began to form patterns and make sense. [48]

In *The Double Vision* Frye even claimed that he spent "the better part of seventy-eight years writing out the implications of insights that have taken up considerably less than an hour of all those years."[49] In the light of this, it is understandable that Frye stood aloof from sterile theories about reader and text. His own theory was made out of personally experiencing, not merely conceptualising, literature. He was a "living" reader, as it were, not an "implied" one. He had to "participate" in literary texts before he could express his theory of literature. In *Words with Power*, Frye quotes Bertrand Russell who said that behind every large system there is a less complicated "crude" system that directs it.[50] Frye's core system, which lies buried in his metaphoric language, definitely derived from his experience of reading literature, which rendered the "large" system of his typological-intertextual criticism. His hypothesis of coherence in all literature, and in literary theory as a goal to be achieved, thus derived from his moments of revelation (at least as much as from reading Blake, which has been suggested above, although the two aspects may be inseparable).

Although in a sense Frye has an overarching reader-response universe, only his *response* has been investigated so far, and its origin as the *reader's* perspective has been neglected. It is the magnitude and the intricate network of the system constructed from his personal experience of encountering literature which explains that the Romantic

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[48] Cayley pp. 47-48.

[49] Northrop Frye, *The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion* (Toronto Buffalo London: University of Toronto Press, 1991) p. 55.

[50] Northrop Frye, *Words with Power: Being a Second Study of "The Bible and Literature"* (Penguin Books, 1990) p. 150., see also Cayley pp. 95-96.

concept of recreation in this context has been out of focus in Frye-criticism, and little attention has been paid to the fact that what loomed behind the system was the individual reader's subjective perception that preceded the knowledge of the scholar.

However, correlations with reader response may be set up on the level of Frye's theory as well. Apart from Frye's view of the reader in *Creation & Recreation* mentioned above, Jonathan Culler's notion of "literary competence," revealing the structure of literature, is a common ground of Frye and reader-response criticism, especially if Frye's work is interpreted as an attempt to establish the equivalent in literary theory of Saussure's concept of "la langue" and Chomsky's "competence," as Robert Denham has suggested.[51]

It is also possible to refer Frye to the less structure-centred and more individual oriented type of reader-response criticism of David Bleich on the ground that both Frye and Bleich started from the Romantic belief that what is real is largely the construction of human perception, even though Frye did not go as far as Bleich's views about the reader's psychological responses to the text.[52]

CULTURAL CRITICISM

Frye as a social critic is the theme of a number of analyses these days and the discussion here will largely draw on the findings of Frye-criticism on this issue. Jonathan Hart correctly claimed that "In no work is Frye a critic who turns from the world," although it must be added that social concern was not present in all of his works with equal weight.[53] Frederick Jameson, too, emphasised the cultural dimension of Frye's theory, which he believed distinguished Frye from myth criticism:

> The greatness of Frye, and the radical difference between his work and that of the great bulk of garden-variety myth criticism, lies in his willingness to raise the issue of community and to draw basic, essentially social, interpretative consequences from the nature of religion as collective representation.[54]

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[51] See Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975) p. 118 and Denham, "An Anatomy of Frye's Influence" in *Review of Canadian Studies* Vol. 14 (Spring 1984) p. 3.

[52] See David Bleich, *Subjective Criticism* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978).

[53] Jonathan Hart, *Northrop Frye: The Theoretical Imagination* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) p. 6.

[54] Frederick Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981) p. 69.

A thematic grouping of Frye's works can point out that *The Modern Century, The Critical Path, Spiritus Mundi, Northrop Frye on Culture and Literature, The Bush Garden, Divisions on a Ground* and the posthumous *Mythologizing Canada* take their primary subject matter from outside literature and their attention is concentrated on the broader aspect of culture. Criticism of Frye as a social or cultural thinker falls largely into two main sub-groups, it either discusses culture and politics in general or in the specific Canadian context.

Hayden White characterises Frye as "the greatest natural cultural historian of our time [...] a theorist of culture and renovator of humanistic studies" and points out that contemporary practitioners of cultural studies have not examined Frye from this perspective thoroughly enough.[55] According to Hayden White, Frye's historic view of culture and society was not a simple cyclical or linear concept, but comprised continuities and interanimations through which what is repeated and recollected from the past is redeemed and awakened to a new life. This requires the "idea of nonpurposive purposiveness, in order to be able to say that both literature and criticism, and finally culture itself displayed evidence of the kind of progressive closure with reality as that promised in the Book of Revelations."[56] This is an important part of Frye's typological thinking in *The Great Code* and *Words with Power*.

Eva Kushner looks into Frye's historic concept within the literary universe and challenges views which see Frye's system as ahistoric. In "Frye and the Historicity of Literature," Kushner shows how Frye's archetypal theory is full of movement and vibration, revealing a concept of historicity: "Frye's literary system manages to incorporate time without isolating any part of the system in a temporal ghetto."[57] Kushner refers to the distinction between "histoire littéraire" and "histoire de la littérature" and claims that Frye was engaged in the latter, that is in the unfolding of literature itself and not in the history of writers and institutions.

As regards Frye's specific writings on Canadian literature and society, Frye is seen today as an important contributor to Canadian cultural development. There is, however, a very important theoretical issue arising with respect to his writings on Canada. As Branko Gorjup notes, some critics call into question his protectionist attitude towards Canadian writing. There is a discrepancy

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[55] Hayden White, "Frye's Place in Contemporary Cultural Studies" in Lee and Denham pp. 30-31.

[56] Hayden White p. 34.

[57] Eva Kushner, "Frye and the Historicity of Literature" in Lee and Denham p. 296.

between Frye's 'international' criticism, with its predilection for abstraction, systematization and universalization – best represented by his *Anatomy of Criticism, The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* and *Words with Power* – and his 'domestic' criticism, espousing literature's mimetic and non-autonomous status – as collected in *The Bush Garden, Divisions on a Ground* and in the present volume [i.e. *Mythology in Canada*].[58]

Analysing Frye's "Canada and its Poetry" (1943), Eli Mandel observed that Frye was strangely preoccupied with the geographical and political aspects of literature much more than with the literary context of Canadian literature.[59] This environmental determinism appears in Frye's "Conclusion" to the *Literary History of Canada*. Therefore, the question arises whether Frye did not play favouritism with Canadian writing by detaching it from the "international" standard. According to Gorjup, there are at least two ways in which this patronising attitude can be explained. One is represented by McCarthy, who believes that Frye goes back to a tradition of nation-building, which started in the middle of the nineteenth century. In this view, the autonomy of literature is dismissed and is subordinated to the pragmatic goal of promoting national culture.

Another explanation is provided by Linda Hutcheon, from a postmodern perspective. Hutcheon rejects the "modern" totalising position "to synthesize disinterested aesthetic criticism with socially conscious humanistic criticism" and instead proposes to accept the tension as a typical postmodern stance and to see it as productive, displaying Frye's "both/and thinking, offering *both* a theory of archetypes and the autonomy of art *and* a theory of the 'rootedness' in social, political, economical and cultural terrain."[60]

It is interesting to see how criticism of Frye from the postmodern view of fragments uses his synthesising theory. Frye advocated an integrating attitude represented by "both/and" as opposed to "either/or," and this seems to suit a whole range of interpretations of his critical work. Frye's integrating concept of "both/and," together with the feature of his criticism that it represented a vision of literature and life rather than asserted his explicit opinion, gives rise to various kinds of approaches to his work. However, there were questions which Frye did not and could not synthesise: he said that it is not possible to have "a literal-descriptive dimension along with a spiritual

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[58] Northrop Frye, *Mythologizing Canada: Essays on the Canadian Literary Imagination*, ed. Branko Gorjup (Legas: New York, Ottawa, Toronto, 1997) pp. 9-10.

[59] See Eli Mandel "Northrop Frye and the Canadian Literary Tradition" in Cook, Hošek, et al. p. 289.

[60] Linda Hutcheon, "Frye Decoded" in Lee and Denham pp. 112-114.

[double] vision," because the passive vision would destroy the active one.[61] Hutcheon's analysis shows that Frye can be read from a postmodern point of view. Nevertheless, to resolve a contradiction by accepting the very principle of contradiction is not quite correct, since it only reverses the modality traditionally attached to unity and discrepancy. The underlying thought of Hutcheon's essay is that if Frye's ideas contain contradictions, discrepancies or "tensions," all the better from the postmodern perspective. Hutcheon asks: "What would feminist or gay, socialist or conservative, native or black or Asian writers make of Frye's distinction between the 'rhetorical' and the 'poetic' [...]"? The question sounds rather provocative, and its vision of a frame of casts would probably astonish Frye.

Nevertheless, although the departmentalisation of culture was not Frye's own theory and his literary criticism can be perhaps more reasonably analysed by adopting his heuristic principle of cohesion and unity, the possibility of the postmodern perspective (including the less radical kind provided in David Cook's, *Northrop Frye: A Vision of the New World*) should not be rejected for that reason. Frye's words about T.S. Eliot apply to Frye as well: "The greatness of his achievement will finally be understood, not in the context of the tradition he chose, but in the context of the tradition that chose him."[62] At present it seems that Frye's own work is chosen by various traditions, perhaps because of its powerful ability to enter into dialogue with diverse, often opposing, views of literature and culture.

Frye presented a humanised vision of the world, a spiritual universe and did not argue and assert but showed something which, once having been internalised by his readers, transforms them to recreate what he had tried to achieve. It cannot be claimed with certainty that Frye's critical work is a model on which critical thought will proceed in the future and that Frye will be the archetype of future literary theory, but in a sense, through his visionary theory, he has superseded language-boundness that modern theory is still stuck in. One thing can hardly be denied: Frye's work belongs to the eternal here and now of western culture.

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[61] Northrop Frye, *The Double Vision* p. 72.

[62] Northrop Frye, *T.S. Eliot: An Introduction* p. 99.

Beáta Sándor

The Boundaries of the Stage

Péter Nádas: *Burial*

Burial is perhaps Péter Nádas's most complex play: the difficulties critics face when they want to assign it to stylistic and generic categories, regarding its irony, self-reflexive structure and theme (as it is also a play about the possibilities of theatre), are reflected in their interpretative experiments that often gainsay one another.

This essay is intended to give an overview of Nádas's play based on the points of view that I find the most relevant: its relationship to the dramatic tradition and its own age; the questions it raises about honesty, the construction and the accessibility of the self; the self-reflexive character and structure of the play; the parts that reflect on the nature of the theatre; its connection to myths and rites; and finally, the way these latter are reflected in what the *Burial* tells us about society, the possibilities of communication, and the relationship of power structures and the sexes.

Burial is mostly about itself and the theatre. This essay examines how it reflects itself, and how it throws light upon the techniques and problems of interpretation, response, and assigning meaning.

I. *"IF AT LEAST THERE WERE SOME RULES, AND WE HAD TO FOLLOW THEM EXACTLY"*

The traditional medium of Nádas's stage is marked out by Jean Genet, Samuel Beckett, János Pilinszky, Ingmar Bergman's film stage, Chekhov's comedy theatre, the 17th century French Christian plays (inasmuch as the conflict of the drama is not in action but in diction, in language – *Burial* is partly about the possibilities of speaking about

something), and archaic rituals.[1] Some critics define its place as one "in the field of Hungarian absurd"[2]: it is the projection of states of the mind and emotions like fear and anxiety because of the impossibility of human relations. Another definition contradicts this probably oversimplifying point of view, and says that *Burial* "is not naturalist, not symbolist, not surrealist, not absurd, and not comical in the Dantean or Aristotelian sense of the word."[3] This series of negative definitions, if true in itself, seems to be too general. Such statements do not consider the methods by which, and the extent to which, the play still relies on the above mentioned traditions, nor how it at the same time confines its own limits.

Nádas's play does stand close to the absurd in that it reflects on a crisis – even if it is a crisis that is beyond the absurd. The theatre of the absurd aimed not to get out of the crisis that it conceived as basically human, but to live the crisis in its totality. Although with a paroxysm that is more sedate than that of the absurd, *Burial* also turns against itself many times, but it is beyond being anti-theatrical as well. Another characteristic that refers to the theatre of the absurd is that *Burial* also dissolves dramatic conflict, plot, dialogues and characters. As Beckett's plays were intended to be the end plays of theatre, *Burial* is also about the end of the theatre, or rather one kind of theatre and way of reception.

Burial's being beyond the absurd is also revealed in that it questions what the human is: it turns away from depicting the subject not because it has an abhorrence of its manifestations, but because it has to examine what the subject is, and whether it is possible to examine and talk about it in the language of drama. However, Nádas heavily relies on the tradition of the absurd in the way he mixes the tones of speech, the sounds of ironic jest and mystic drama.

In absurd plays, the characters are far removed from the traditional realistic theatre in Europe: they are emphatically aimless, or set aims that are known to be unreachable from the beginning. In absurd plays like in Beckett's *Godot*, the lack of plot expresses the monotony of time and the repetitions in human matters. This is also more self-conscious in *Burial*: here the actors' impossible (yet necessary) game-attempts are fitted into this pattern, and another level of monotonous repetitions is their reflection on these attempts.

Burial holds a mirror to itself, speaks about itself: it is a play in which two actors are on the stage, striving with the possibilities of speech and roles, and then,

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[1] Péter Balassa, "Opera és komédia" in *A másik színház* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1989) p. 171.

[2] Erzsébet Ézsaiás, *Mai magyar dráma* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1986) p. 221.

[3] L. Mész, *Színterek* (Budapest: Korona, 1995) p. 440.

after taking different roles upon themselves, they discuss why it is useless to play, although they do not have any other choice, because discussion is also part of the game. The mirror-game makes the spectators direct their attention to what is beyond what is said: the play in this respect follows the tradition marked out by Chekhov and Pinter. The two characters in the *Burial* talk to each other because if their language is common, their reality can also be common, and a common reality is just what they try to create. Their very first sentences are about defining their position. (ACTRESS: "Are you too in it?" ACTOR: "Are you in it, too?"[4]) They usually adhere to the significance of their common reality and the making of this reality. They suppose this when they talk to one another: this is what gives such a tension to a scene when one of them will not talk. Remaining silent, one disregards their connection, takes the feeling of reality away from the other. (It is especially emphasised by the blindfold scene, when the Actress does not answer the Actor's questions, and the Actor, while seeking and feeling for her, recognises that he is unable to switch off his thoughts, it is impossible not to think of anything for a long time, yet it is this situation in which he questions the existence of his own thinking being most strongly: "I am playing that I am doing this gesture, right now. I am playing that I am telling this sentence, right now. And is it not me if I say, if I do what others have imagined about me? This lie is what I play. And this is also a thought." (pp. 274-75). Language does not refer to the structure of relationship between to persons, but creates this relationship.[5]

This is why it is of such a basic significance for them to clarify their position, to explore the possibilities of speech. This is what makes the Actor long for ease, relief from the burden of the task when he says: "If at least there were some rules, and we had to follow them exactly." And then, while they are talking without paying attention to each other, the Actor draws the conclusion that they are free, while the Actress is talking about her nightmare, a situation in which one has the least liberty: she is standing on the stage or in a classroom and cannot utter a word. They both move away from freedom. The Actor wants boundaries, while the Actress tries to avoid speaking about it by describing her dream. They both find calmness in it, after a more exaltedly despairing part. The Actress reflects on their situation, somewhat resolving the feeling of emptiness which they have got to: "But now I have grown stiff in this." The Actor keeps luring himself: "This is why I've told we are free. And this is, after all, enough.

[4] Péter Nádas, *Temetés* in Péter Nádas, *Színtér* (Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 1982), pp. 200-201. References to this edition of the play will be henceforth indicated in the text. The translations of quotations from Hungarian texts are mine throughout.

[5] Quigley, *The Pinter Problem* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975) p. 135.

(...) We have nothing but we can do anything with it." This absurdly empty, senseless claim while looking for "the basic rule" takes the two of them to not doing anything again: they breathe, run circles, live. Knowing that after a search like this comes happiness and fear. The deeds of the absurd figure are accompanied by anxiety and existentialist experiences. Yet anxiety only exists in traces in *Burial*, ironically: the Actor talks about the possibilities of freedom at a time when this question is not raised in this way by the reader and literary works – Nádas's play is partly about depicting an absurd, ironic picture of the absurd character.

One aim of the absurd and post-absurd theatres of protest is "pure theatricality": creating model situations with schematically characterised protagonists, introducing general human gestures. *Burial* also uses this tradition and can be interpreted partly in this, as the figures of the Actor and the Actress are emphatically impersonal, even regarding their outlook, yet it also has links to reality: the characters of the ritual play live in an explicitly historical space, in the Hungary of the 1970s – they have a definite age and pre-history. Both aims (that of impersonality and personality) are present in *Burial*.

As for the spectator-interpreter, the play expects her to make a similar double movement. Not only *Burial* but also the audience is beyond the absurd. And not only the play but also the reader treats some questions, answers, or simply the possibility of raising some questions, with a certain amount of irony. Similarly, the play and the spectator move together when they face traditional and already rejected questions again and again , and then radically distance themselves from these. Nádas plays with two different codes of interpretation in *Burial*: the stage appears as the world, a space which cannot be continued, a phantasm world in which the spectator's desire for realism seems to be unnecessary and ridiculous – the very fact that striving to create the history of the two characters and to give a story to them, s/he believes the frameworks that have been offered. It is the basically realist, moralist, and word-bounded nature of the Western drama that Nádas criticises. He plays with this tradition knowing that he stands in it, just as the reader or spectator does. *Burial* is about a crisis: the crisis of the subject, its possibilities that have been seen as real in our culture, and about the crisis of talking about itself. The play fits into many different dramatic traditions, it can be related to many kinds of theatrical endeavours. But it differs from them in a basic factor of interpretation: the reader/spectator has to reflect on these traditions as parts of the past, and also raise the question as to what extent it is possible and worthwhile to approach it with the questions she has been used to, and to what extent it is possible to ask new questions. Nádas plays with a basic constituent of reception: the horizon of

expectation. As soon as the spectator finds the weakest position of resistance and adheres to the realistic tradition of the stage, creating pre-histories for the actors, or accepting the stories they offer, the "honest" scene turns out to be an experiment, a role play. Still, the spectator keeps returning to the former expectations, according to which the actors (as characters) stand as "real" subjects in front of her.

The interpreter of *Burial* also has to question the way we watch a play today: what possibilities writing and reception have after the illusionary theatre of naturalism and the abstract-alienated theatre, how the play merges these into itself and terminates them while reflecting on their lack, and not only on the lack of these forms, but also on that of preconditions that have stood beyond them, like the unity of the individual, the possibility of role playing, the existence of truth, love, freedom, self-determination or acceptance of being directed, volition, being ruled, the "elementary complicity,"[6] the making up of the rules: our transcendental concepts.

II. "THE PROBLEM MAY BE THAT I SEE. I CONSTANTLY SEE THAT WE ARE"

The Actor and the Actress, while playing their roles, sometimes insist on being "honest," or being honest in their roles. The Actress draws the conclusion that it could not be otherwise:

> ACTRESS: Do you think we should not involve ourselves?
> ACTOR: Why are you asking that?
> ACTRESS: Because you are resisting.
> ACTOR: You do it insidiously, and this hurts my moral sensitivity to a certain extent, but if it wasn't about me, I would say it was not without interest.
> ACTRESS: We've brought our own body here.
> ACTOR: It is trained.
> ACTRESS: We are still talking about ourselves, whatever we do against it.
> ACTOR: This has its boundaries, too.
> ACTRESS: There's no text now. And there's no scenery. Only this prison garb.
> ACTOR: This is what we have to play.
>
> (pp. 246-47)

The text turns on its back again here: the actors arrive at the notion that they have to play "honesty" – "as if it was not as if." But does not playing that one is not playing

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[6] Péter Nádas, "Vagyunk" in *Nézőtér* (Budapest: Magvető, 1983) p. 19.

suggest that there is nothing else but playing? That being constrained into roles is the only possible way of life?

A character of André Gide, Édouard says: "Psychological analysis lost all its interest for me when I realised that people live what they imagine to live. What follows from this is that they imagine to live what they really live ..."[7] Nádas begins to think of taking this for granted, and this does not spoil his interest in psychological analysis: but he has to work out such a psychology which contains the knowledge that the subject cannot reach itself with reason, as it has no existence that is independent of its experiences. The attempts of the actors go round this experience that has become self-evident, knowing also that if they speak, there is always some possibility for roles – they get to the point where it is language that acts and accomplishes, not their "selves." As soon as one of them seemingly begins to talk about her- or himself, or about her/his personified self, the spectator becomes absorbed by the stage situation. And then the actors ruthlessly remind her that they were playing (and they themselves are reminded by their prescribed texts): "We've been doing it fairly well. ... Actually, I'm also satisfied" (p.222). These points of access are probably the most ironic in the play, because their irony is multiple: not only the actors and their play is put into the mirror-position of reflection, but the spectator as well, who has just become absorbed in the view of the stage as it had been customary in earlier dramatic traditions, but these times she has to re-examine her interpretative *role*.

Nádas sets the actors and the interpreting spectator a huge task, and places much in their hands. It is only by deconstructing their own behaviour and relationships that they can get inside that game. Only thus is it possible to identify with the roles and the role-players and to break out of the game and the interpretative space created by the roles. And all this raises the question whether there is a continuous self that lives through these metamorphoses of experience and experiments.

According to a sentence of the Actor, the constant consciousness about one's role-playing is not good either: one who can only see himself from outside becomes paralysed. The Actor says this during one of their discussions after a game when they are thinking about (or play that they are thinking about) the way the emotions they perform affect them:

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[7] André Gide, *A pénzhamisítók / A pénzhamisítók naplója* [*Les Faux-Monnayeurs / Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1925, 1927)], transl. Pál Réz (Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, 1981), p. 77.

ACTOR: I feel you are stronger because you can still go on. This is why I loved you.
ACTRESS: It's simple. I'm not thinking of anything.
ACTOR: The problem may be that I see. I constantly see that we are.

(p. 267)

With this sentence Nádas asks about the self of his actors as he did of Richard Swartz: "Did you imagine there was something that had another side?" And he himself answered immediately, saying no. There is not anything but sides.[8] The reflection of the self on one of its roles can only be imagined as part of a role.

No wonder *Burial*, although it questions the belief in essentiality, easily lends itself to ways of interpretations that suppose transcendence. The interpretative horizon of the play is basically defined by the way the reader interprets the concepts of role-playing and truth. Those who regard role-playing attitudes as some kind of falsity in itself, and who believe that there is an essence before or behind cognition, that truth has an independent existence, are bound to see a kind of apocalyptic question in the play. The role in which somebody questions all of his/her roles because s/he cannot leave them unreflected, shows a desire for such a degree of consciousness that can really be called "tragically ethical." The same duality characterises the role of the author in the play. There are two characters in front of the spectator, who are not intended to take the shape of real characters, but they have voices and bodies, yet they only know about their own existence, they only exist when they are on the stage. They do not have the power not to be there. Their speech shows that they long for an embodiment that is outside language and beyond the author, but of course their speech is created by the author, the stage is the totality of their existence, the play is their reality. Péter Balassa's expression applies well to the theatre that is so much directed by the author: *Burial* is characterised by a "daring and forward pressing anachronism."[9]

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[8] Péter Nádas, Richard Swartz, *Párbeszéd* (Pécs: Jelenkor, 1992) p.62.

[9] Péter Balassa, "'... Hiába üres, nem táj ...' Nádas Péter: Nézőtér" in: *Észjárások és formák* (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1985), p.198.

III. "AND YOU STILL ACT AS IF THERE WAS AN AS IF"

Nádas gets to the boundaries of creating theatre and interpreting roles in *Burial*, and faces these boundaries – this reflexivity is what gives the irony of the play. But he cannot move beyond them. And in the last part, when the actors imagine a "beautiful performance," he steps out of self-reflection, and reflects on the genre of the drama parodistically:

> ACTRESS: Let's imagine.
> ACTOR: That's what we are doing.
> ACTRESS: Wild sensuality.
> ACTOR: A lot of superfluous movements.
> ACTRESS: Some humour. Not much.
> ACTOR: Political piquancy.
> ACTRESS: Dreams. By all means.
> ACTOR: Philosophy. A sense that is deeper than deep. Seriousness.
> ACTRESS: And a lot of cruelty. Filth, dishonour, dagger.
>
> (pp. 289-90)

The list expands even further. After this they get to where they do several times in the play: the declaration that "they can do anything," but they do not dare, and they do not dare or cannot get over this in their speech either.

Burial, with its speaking about the possibilities of drama and the theatre at least as much as about the clumsy attempts of the two created figures to separate what is "they themselves" in their acts and what is role-playing, with its being a metadramatic work, in which the writer has a very significant role even in his silence, shows and celebrates the creative imagination and mirrors an uncertainty not only about the validity of representation, but also that of "reality." [10]

The game thus shows that language and speech are not independent systems of describing things, but they actively create the world and the subject's knowledge of the world. Speaking about drama in a dramatic form aims at exploring and unveiling the relationship between the world of the fictive space and the world outside the fictive space. If as individuals we have "roles" rather than "selves," examining the characters

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[10] Cf. Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1988) p. 2.

of the drama can be a useful model about the construction of the subjects that exist in the world outside the drama. If we can gain our knowledge of the world through language and speech, then a play in which two characters can make a world only with their speech, is a useful model of the construction and constructedness of "reality." The first act of *Burial*'s actors is the construction of a rule. After they have both touched the coffins which they are in, and they have said this, the Actress and the Actor makes up two interrelated rules of the game: "We'll act as if we had not seen anything," the first says, and this is continued in a concrete rule: "We mustn't step off the stair. Let this be the first rule" (pp. 201-202). This exclusion, their deliberate unconsciousness is needed so that they can be able to step into the game. This is the point where the play becomes reflexive and self-reflexive: it reflects on the drama and the existence of the actors as well. When the Actress later says about the coffins, the space of the coffins that "it remained here," and the Actor affirms it with a "there," it becomes obvious that what restrains them (that they can only create reality if they are not all the time conscious of its constructed nature) will be present in the space and in their minds at the same time throughout the play.

Any text that calls the reader's attention to the process of its creation, because it disturbs her/his conventional expectations regarding meaning and the finality of the possibilities of meaning , also problematizes more or less explicitly the way certain narrative codes – which can be both "literary" and "social"– create seemingly "real" and imaginary worlds in accordance with certain ideologies, while regarding them as transparently "natural" and "eternal." What is the most conspicuous observing the structure of the drama in the cross-section of literary tradition is the way Nádas's *Burial* plays with Wittgenstein's idea that "we think we go round and round that nature of the thing while circumscribing the frame through which we look at the thing."[11] Nádas in this play approaches the "nature" of things obviously through speaking about the frame.

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[11] Quoted by Waugh p. 27-28.

IV. "THE RULE IS MYSELF AND YOURSELF, MY BODY AND YOUR BODY"

There is a part at the beginning of the play and the speech-attempts in which the Actor begins to imitate the Actress:

> ACTRESS: What are we going to play today?
> *silence*
> ACTOR: What are we going to play today?
> *long silence*
> ACTRESS: Why are you imitating me?
> ACTOR: Why are you imitating me?
> *very long silence*
> ACTRESS: You know what kind of habit imitating is.
> ACTOR: This is just what I'm thinking about.
> (pp. 203-204)

Imitation, becoming the other is an essential element of theatre and drama: it creates the space in which the personal and the common meet. The Actor and the Actress cannot but start by imitating each other: their first sentences that set their position also mirror each other, as they are in the same place. ("Are you too in it?" "Are you in it, too?" "A surprise." "A trap." "We'll act as if we had not seen anything." "We'll deceive ourselves." "Let's go from here." "Back." "We mustn't step off the stair. Let this be the first rule." "Let." "It remained here." "There." [pp. 201-202]) This point of differentiation is what begins the play in which both of them attempt to get to some kind of unity in different ways. The Actress's point of departure is that the coffins remained in the space of her play, and the Actor's is that it is possible to disregard the frame. It cannot be decided whether one is the position of the incapability of being absorbed and giving oneself and the other makes one able to play, or the contrary: the first is the only possible claim of honesty, and the other tends to lie. Because both of them are both. The two differently narcissistic persons try to create a unified world (or to create a world in which they can see themselves as unified) in different ways.

There are of course times when they play not against but together with each other. The text makes them switch the codes of different realities in a way that makes it almost impossible to notice the shifts between them. When they perform a scene of getting acquainted and one of them asks if it is good for them, and the other says she

hopes it is, it can be valid in both of their roles: it can be part of the situation game and reflection as well. This is the scene when the image of the emotion that fills the whole body comes up for the first time (the Actress later uses it when she declares and details her love): "I feel it so much that I almost blow up. One feels it in her breast, stomach, in her thighs. Everywhere" (p. 242). With its exaggeration, words that are becoming empty, the answer is stepping out of the game – they slowly finish the scene and discuss why "the whole thing is senseless, empty, bad" (p.244).

V. "THERE WAS A MOMENT WHEN I REALLY FELT SOMETHING"

The ritual play is sinister, ceremonial. Nádas's actors are also serious and ceremonial in their white funeral garbs. *Burial*'s ritual play, written for a worldly stage framed by the burial, the being beyond life, gives the possible reading of a rite that is usually the organised expression of the prescribed customs of a religious belief or a kind of social behaviour. The text of the play that reflects on itself and its possibilities, expands the meaning of rites in the latter sense: speech itself, like all kinds of relationships, every manifestation of the subject, and even the subject imagining itself to have an independent existence becomes a ritual in it. Victor Turner writes in his book about the process of the development of the ritual that "the individual has a significant role as a representative and maintaining force of the culture in ritualised and modern societies as well, after it understands it through a long and painful process." *Burial* as a play also strives "to understand itself," its own determinations and the possibilities of drama, and this also mirrors the actors' desire for self-knowledge. They have to represent a culture in which the individual cannot fully rule its acts, and it is not an entity that freely governs itself. While the Actress warns the Actor that he is not talking about his own memories ("None of your words are yours, you've learned every gesture. How could you have memories?" [p. 279]), he remembers October 1956, the sound of shots. "And in that silence we could hear the guns. And we were standing in that silence as if we had to decide about it, decide something that could be the most natural" (p. 280). And he utters this sentence while he is thinking about and is afraid of mixing something into his play that he should not, that is himself, his memory. The historical situation that is quoted, the situation of the Actor in the play, the position of the actor who plays the Actor, and that of the play thinking about its own traditions, and the position of the subject that wants to have an overview of life, all rhyme with each other: all of them are given, but it seems as if agents had to decide. The individual takes its position in history upon itself in this ritual, and talks about this burden.

Nádas's actors in *Burial* ritually experience their roles, themselves, and each other. They play for instance that the Actress imagines herself into the Actor's story, getting into it. They agree upon that

> ACTOR: One makes up a story so that he won't have to say something, and he is still there in it.
> ACTRESS: One says what one feels and still it seems as if she'd made it up.
> Yet everything is true.
>
> (pp. 286-87)

But when they say about a moment that it is real, it has already been built into the consciousness of the audience that all of their attempts are games. When they feel that they "could begin the performance" after a break, they get back to the initial imitation and silence:

> ACTRESS: I thought you knew it.
> ACTOR: I thought you knew it.
> *silence.*
>
> (p. 204)

There is a significant analogy between pre- and post-individual theatre: the self is not a stabile entity but a terminal locus of roles and relations in both of them. After the modernist theatre, the object of interest is not the individual character, but the grammatical or social system: not only the feeling that the individual radically depends on impersonal cultural systems, but also that the subject that is dependent in this way is constructed, created by speech, fluctuating.

VI. "WE'VE GOT USED TO IT THAT WE ALWAYS HAVE TO TALK SO THAT SOMETHING IS"

In sections I. and III. I have already talked about how *Burial* uses and thematizes the concept of the "frame": about the characteristic feature of self-reflective works that it is impossible in the end to tell the difference between what is "framed" and what is "unframed." These works show the problematic nature of the way narrative codes operate: they question the difference between "real" and the "imaginary." Although the link between literary and social narrative codes is not at all self-evidently direct, it can be said that if the conscious realisation of the operation of codes, showing how

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preconceptions influence the perception of the interpreter, have a basic function in a work of art, it is not easy to set up this boundary. When *Burial* shows how convention operates in literary works and interpretations, how it rules the plot and one's being absorbed in a situation, it also mirrors how the frame works in- and outside the space of the play. This is also at stake in the questions *Burial* raises about the shifts of the frame, rules and freedom.

Nádas's aim is partly to show reality, and partly to show the battle for the stylisation of reality and why the Actor and the Actress feel compelled to stylise reality. Since the characters are actors, the fight between what reality offers them and what they want to make of it, or what it is possible to make of it, can be the object of their play. But *Burial* shows this strife in the relationship of the stage and the spectator as well: the interpreter wants to make something of the play when s/he puts it into the frame of theatrical realism again and again, albeit an essential function of the ritual is to deconstruct theatrical realism. It shows that the forms of expression are signs, the meaning of which rely on conventions, systems, not on some inherent characteristics: conventions, however, are unreal and unstable.

"I'm playing that this gesture is done by me, at this moment. I'm playing that this sentence is said by me, at this moment. And is it not me if I say, if I do what others have imagined about me?" the Actor asks (pp.274-75). *Burial* renders the subject as a performance just as it does with what can be called reality. And not as a performance that shows the freedom of the subject – the ritual does not leave much space for liberty. I use the word "performance" in the sense Judith Butler gave to in her works analysing the concept of gender. Butler gave this name to the process during which the subject gains its identity through sexual socialisation. This concept of the performance-act can be derived from the theory of mimesis, and it sets two aspects of mimesis, reflection and imitation into play. Any approach that is not conscious of its ideological roots, tends to depict things in accordance with the reflection model. The definition of literature as something that reflects reality is the equivalent of Butler's claim that the relationship between sex and gender has also traditionally been depicted by the reflection model. However, this logic can be changed: Butler says that gender, like imitation in a theatrical performance, creates the effect of reality (and does not mirror reality).[12] The same is going on in *Burial* on Nádas's stage: it is comfortable readings that assume the existence of a "reality" that are made impossible by unveiling the parts of the performance as speech attempts. Nádas deconstructs the subject and its relations to reality the way Butler deconstructs gender. Nádas uses truth and reality, even the

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[12] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) p. 134-141.

historical reality of the Actor and the Actress in such a way that he does not only give evidence of the truth, a description of the time in which the subjects of the actor characters were formed, but also an experience that allows the change and transformation of our relationship with ourselves and our cultural/historical universe – our ways of knowledge.

According to Foucault, this kind of play with truth and fiction makes it possible for us to see clearly what links us to our modernity. The experience that makes it possible for us to differentiate between certain mechanisms (remembrance as creating truth and the formation of the subject) and to separate ourselves from them by seeing them in a completely different form, must be the same. "Starting from those experiences, it is necessary to give way to a transformation, a metamorphosis, that has elements that are not only subjective but also accessible for others: which means that this experience must to a certain extent be able to link to a collective practice and way of thinking.".[13]

Making the position and the conditionality of the subject conscious in the most collective form that is possible, in a ritual: that is what goes on in *Burial*. The ritual interprets the individual and the individual interprets the rite: Nádas's play performs the deconstructive reading of its own suppositions and possibilities. It talks about the way we read: the way the subject reads its own boundaries.

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[13] David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault. Towards a Gay Hagiography* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) p. 25.

Enikő Nagy

Moving Crystal Mountains

Edwin Morgan and George Szirtes
talk about translating Hungarian poetry

AN INTERVIEW WITH EDWIN MORGAN

Edwin Morgan, you are a celebrated poet and also one of the most popular British translators. You have translated several pieces of poetry from almost all parts of the world including Hungary. Among the Hungarian authors you translated are Attila József, Sándor Weöres, Sándor Petőfi, Miklós Radnóti and so many others. How did you first come across Hungarian poetry?

I think it all began almost accidentally. Although I have been interested in languages and translations a long time back, I hadn't really come across Hungarian poetry until the 1950's when I discovered a volume of Italian translations of Attila József. – I found them extremely good, and very interesting, not like any poetry I had seen before. I got very interested in József, especially in his poems about the city and about the industrial outskirts of a large city. I tried translating these poems from Italian into English. I sent them to magazines and got printed. I got so interested that I began to look at other Hungarian poets and made some more translations. This was about the 1960's and I sent them to various magazines. I somehow got into the *New Hungarian Quarterly* in Budapest and my name gradually got known there. I was invited in 1966 to Budapest to an international poetry conference called Poetry Days. Here I talked to various people and promised to do some more translations with help from people in Hungary. The man who especially got interested was Miklós Vajda. He encouraged me to do more

translations. These were published usually in magazines especially in the N.H.Q. A lot of them were published in a book of Miklós Vajda, *Modern Hungarian Poetry*.

I got to like Hungarian poetry and the language as well. I didn't just go by the rough translation sent to me. I always had the original text and I had grammars and dictionaries. I went through the text myself and I got to know the poems quite well and through that I got to know a bit of the language. Although I could not speak the language I got to recognise many words and knew what the grammar was like. I began to feel more comfortable and some bilingual people said I had an ear for it ...

In one of your interviews you mention that there are parallels between the history of Scotland and the history of Hungary. Do you think this similarity is reflected in the mentality and poetry of the two nations?

Maybe. I don't know. I'm not quite sure about national characteristics. But there must be something about a small country. We were both small countries. We have about 5 million people. You've had to struggle to keep your own identity. It's been taken by other nations... You had a hard history in that sense and still you have managed to preserve your identity as a nation, as a country. Scotland has come off worse because we gave up our independence to the English in 1707 and since then we don't quite know where we are. You are lucky in a sense that you have a very distinct language which you all speak. In Scotland we don't have that. We have Gaelic which is spoken by about 70 000 people, and we have English with various accents and also what we call Scots which would have become the national language probably if we hadn't had the union with England.

Should a poem be international or national in your opinion?

I'd like to think it could be both. The interesting thing about the Scottish writers and poets in recent times is that although they are very Scottish, they would like to see changes in the Scottish constitution, they are also very internationally minded. I think this is true for myself. I'm interested in other countries, in other languages, it makes me international in that sense.

Do you feel this bipolarity in Hungarian poets as well?

Your language is so difficult for other people to learn. It's isolated by itself, it doesn't link up with the other Indo-European languages. In a sense you have a big problem in

getting your writers, your works known elsewhere in the world. And obviously you have to rely on a translation, you have to keep international contacts to get your works translated into French, German, English, whatever. In that sense you have to be international. At the same time your language has survived in a most extraordinary way, and therefore you must feel very close to it, you must feel very fond of your language.

Many of your translations were published in Modern Hungarian Poetry *edited by Miklós Vajda. Did you choose those poems or was it Miklós Vajda who asked you to translate them?*

It was he who chose them. I think they were all poems which had been published in magazines before. He just collected them from magazines, mostly from the N.H.Q., and he put them into the anthology. So it was his choice of poems. Some have been published in Britain, the Sándor Weöres poems for example, but most of them were just in the N.H.Q.

This was the case with the actual translations. But was it also Vajda who chose the original poems to translate?

Originally yes, because apart from that very first choice of József when I first discovered József myself, I was often asked to translate this and that. Miklós Vajda or somebody else in the magazine would write to me and send me some poems: would you try to do this. Of course it's always better to do what you really like and admire yourself. When I discovered József and Weöres it was like that. But on the other hand I discovered people that I had not known before and I got to like them. Otto Orbán for example. I was asked to try some translations of his poems and I enjoyed doing that.

When you write or translate a poem do you have any audience or reader in mind?

I don't think I have any reader actually in mind. I just translate the poem as well as I can, keeping usually pretty close to the text and making it something that would read well in English, as if it was an English poem, and I'm not really thinking of an audience.

In one of your interviews you mention that a poem consists of two components, the pattern of meaning and the web of impressions. As you don't speak Hungarian don't you think that this later gets somehow lost in the rough translations?

It would if I didn't have the text in front of me. I always have the poem in front of me, so if I want I can read through the poem and get the sound of it. It's not perfect as a

method obviously, but I can get close to it I think with a lot of practice and gradually learning more and more words I can get quite near to all the sound effects and the tone of the poem. I can easily get to distinguish between one which is very direct, colloquial, and one which is using much more unusual language and is quite difficult to understand. These things I can certainly get into and gradually understand.

Before starting to translate a poem do you study its background?

I would look up everything that I didn't understand or ask some names, some places. I would always try to find out something if I could about the poet – his or her background and that was often quite a help. I have some books about Hungarian literature and the history of Hungarian literature.

Hungarian is said to be a unique language, totally isolated from the Indo-European languages. Do you think it causes big problems for a translator?

Well I'd like to think not. Hungarian is an agglutinating language, and it's obviously different from English. Sometimes some construction in a different language like Hungarian is so different in anything in English, that you realise you are lost, and you have to say: well I can't do that in English exactly, I have to get something which is roughly like that. It's very difficult in Arany for example, who uses strange compound words, and he's working in certain ways that you cannot get the same in English really. I was trying to get some indication of what the original was like in that sense. I would have compound words too which look strange in English. I just take the risk that people would understand that I'm doing something strange because he was doing something strange.

Have you ever had a failure?

It must have been the case. I'm sure with somebody like Weöres especially. Because he does extraordinary things with language. He uses special sound effects. Obviously the sound effects can't be taken across directly into English. You have to find something in English that sounds like that. You can be mistaken, you can feel some words in the other language have evocative quality which you may not have. I remember when I first came across *tenger*. I thought *tenger* was a wonderful word. I'm sure it's not to you. That kind of thing keeps happening. Your ear is caught by something in the other language. You may be overreading its sound quality.

But you have never given up translating a poem, have you?

I always try. I don't think I've very often had a complete failure, just a relative failure of not getting exactly what you would like to get.

Have you ever tried to write a better poem than the original was, to correct it in some ways?

No, no. There is temptation sometimes because you may be doing some poems that are not entirely good, or you are not sure it is as good as it's said to be. It's just tempting to correct, to change or to make better. But I don't think it's the translator's job. You should be as faithful as you can to the other poet. It may happen sometimes unconsciously, but it's not really what I'd like to do.

Do you feel the influence of the foreign poems on your own poetry?

I'm sure there must be something coming across, especially if you actually strongly like or admire the other poet. There must be something that gets into your mind and probably stays there and does effect your writing. One thing that I use which other poets using English don't do very much is to have a number of single words, one word sentences. Weöres has some lines where one, two, three words are completely separate. No grammar, no syntax joining them together. And that can be very striking. And maybe I would have tried to do something like this.

Very often it would be a question of parallel rather than something totally new. I like, for example , writing about the city. I've lived all my life in a city, in Glasgow and I like cities very much. That's what I liked about József's poetry as well. He was obviously a city man, a city poet. And maybe there are things I would take across subconsciously when I was writing about Glasgow.

Do you remember any poems which were for some reasons interesting for you as a translator?

Yes. *Monkeyland* by Sándor Weöres, for example. The title itself, *Majomország*. I couldn't say monkeycountry, that wouldn't even have had the same rhythm as the original. It was lucky in a way that our monkey and your majom are similar. So I was able to keep quite close to the original in that point of view.

I also remember monkeyswaddies. I just couldn't use soldiers. It wouldn't have been the same.

Monkeyland

Oh for far-off monkeyland,
ripe monkeybread on baobabs,
and the wind strums out monkeytunes
from monkeywindow monkeybars.

Monkeyheroes rise and fight
in monkeyfield and monkeysquare,
and monkeysanatoriums
have monkey patients crying there.

Monkeygirl monkeytaught
masters monkeyalphabet,
evil monkey pounds his thrawn
feet in monkeyprison yet.

Monkeymill is nearly made,
miles of monkeymayonnaise,
winningly unwinnable
winning monkeymind wins praise.

Monkeyking on monkeypole
harangues the crowd in monkeytongue,
monkeyheaven comes to some,
monkeyhell for those undone.

Macaque, gorilla, chimpanzee,
baboon, orangutan, each beast
reads his monkeynewssheet at
the end of each twilight repast.

With monkeysupper memories
the monkeyouthouse rumbles, hums,
monkeyswaddies start to march,
right turn, left turn, shoulder arms -

monkeymilitary fright
eflected in each monkeyface
with monkeygun in monkeyfist
the monkeys' world the world we face.

What are your future plans concerning your own poetry?

Well, I am writing a series of poems on the idea of virtual reality. Not just about the actual technical side of it, but using it as a kind of entry into a more imaginative world. The title at the moment is *Virtual and Other Realities*, and I've got about forty poems so far.

Thank you for the interview and I hope your new volume of poetry will be at least as well received as your previous ones.

Glasgow, February 1995

AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE SZIRTES

You were born in Hungary but in 1956 you emigrated to England as a child with your family. You were brought up and educated there, so you are primarily considered to be an English poet.

Yes, before I came back in 1984 I had already published three books of English poetry. And at the time of the first two books I wouldn't have thought of myself as anything else but an English poet.

When and why did you start to translate Hungarian poetry?

It started in 1984 on my first visit. I was given a small reception at the PEN club. I was met there by about ten people, seven of whom are still amongst my closest friends. I came to Hungary because I had been given a grant by the Arts Council of Great Britain to do so. It was a three week stay and towards the end of the last week Miklós Vajda commissioned me to translate some poems by Kosztolányi: *Hajnali részegség, Marcus Aurelius* and *Szeptemberi áhitat*.

Did you know Kosztolányi at that time?

I knew Kosztolányi's name of course. I remembered reading some poems by him when I was a child. Miki gave me some literal translations and I tried to find forms

appropriate to the poems. At about the same time I was asked to read a few translations of Madách with a view to giving an opinion on them. Within a few months I was asked to undertake the translation myself.

By now you have translated a lot of Hungarian poets. Especially modern poetry, but also earlier ones like Balassi, Zrínyi. First I would like to focus on the translations of the poets of Hungarian literary past. Were they special to you in any sense?

There are basic problems in translating all poetry, because poems are rooted in language and can not simply be transplanted word to word fashion. Twentieth century poets are easier to some degree because you feel you have something in common with them – most of my early translations were of twentieth century poetry. The translation of historical material presents extra difficulties. Understanding is not the major problem; it is the finding of an appropriate language. There are historical differences as well as cultural and linguistic ones. And you have to make decisions about how far you want to match the nature of that language. That's an important question, as a poem is that form of utterance which can't be paraphrased. Seventeenth century poets think like seventeenth century people: seventeenth century language gives full value to seventeenth century experience. Language isn't a cloak under which some other meaning resides. Language is the body. If you try to translate a seventeenth century poet crudely into contemporary language you will create great strains. Nevertheless, we live where we do, not then and not there. So my task – as I began discovering when I translated Madách – was to find a language that has done foot in the historical period and the other foot in the present.

When I read Balassi, for example, I sense a vague resemblance to John Donne, or possibly George Herbert. I am in fact trying to locate something that already exists within English literary language and tradition. My Csokonai has elements of English rococo poetry – touches of early Coleridge perhaps, using the language of literary sensibility, that sort of thing. Arany, surprisingly enough, carried an occasional suggestion of Yeats, as well as of a range of early nineteenth century poets, including Landor and Byron. There is something in the way he too speaks that indicates a possible place in English verse.

You are primarily a poet, but you translated Madách as well as Kosztolányi's Édes Anna. *Were you commissioned to do these, or what made you translate anything else than poetry?*

Yes, I was commissioned. Madách was commissioned by Corvina, *Édes Anna* by an English publisher. Many of my early translations were commissioned from within Hungary but in a way it's better if an English publisher asks you to do something. For obvious reasons: better distribution to a better target audience. And the book gets taken more seriously by the English press. *Édes Anna, Szindbád* and Krasznahorkai's *Az ellenállás melankóliája* were English commissions. Much of the poetry, on the other hand, was suggested by Hungarian sources, though that is not always the case. Zsuzsa Rakovszky's book, *New Life*, wasn't commissioned by anyone. I just did it and offered it to Oxford. They liked it very much and went ahead with it.

You translated Ágnes Nemes Nagy and Zsuzsa Rakovszky, both female authors. Does it make any difference to translate poets not of your gender?

Well, I don't think it should very much. It doesn't seem to have caused me any particular problems, though it's for other people to judge of the results. Perhaps there was something in Rakovszky's poetry which appealed to me very directly. Maybe our poetry has something in common. There are many male poets I could not translate because they are too different from me. Poetry is a sensuous art and you respond to it. And if it opens out possibilities in English why not make the effort? It took me quite a long time to translate the first four or five poems by her, but the rest took only about three weeks. It was very very fast. I felt the language was working all by itself. I was understanding it from the inside. I couldn't, of course, guarantee that the language was hers, but it seemed like powerful poetry in English. Its effect was sufficiently like the effect of her poems on me. In any case, I don't believe mine is the last word on her poems: others have translated individual pieces (though not a complete book) and I couldn't claim they were wrong. I don't actually believe in the concept of the "right" translation. Some work well, others don't. All add something, even the bad ones. Each translation is a new reading of the original poem.

You seem to develop personal relationship with most of the contemporary poets you translate. Does this fact change the way you read their poems?

I'm not aware of it. The poems are the people to me. You have to know the person in the poem, not the one out of it. I remember meeting Weöres, some of whose poems I had translated. This was near the end of his life. He was a tiny man, with a faint, gentle handshake and a weak smile. He hardly said anything, yet he was the composer of wonderful poems. All that was brilliant and energetic in his person had turned into

poems. It may happen of course that you get to meet someone in the flesh, like them and think it would be nice to translate a few poems by them as a personal gesture, and this may work. But if you want to do a good translation it is the words on the page you have to listen to most intensely. I have met many contemporary Hungarian poets but only sometimes has the meeting preceded the translation. As concerns Nemes Nagy, I just knew she was a great poet. I met her quite early in the course of my visits and had translated only one poem by her (in fact I think she translated a few of my poems first.) The poem I translated came about because I knew translations of her by the Irish poet, Hugh Maxton, in a book that had been published in Budapest and Dublin. They were lovely, very fine things, but when I read Nemes Nagy in Hungarian I thought she sounded different. Maxton created a mystical Nemes Nagy, which is part of the truth, but I detected a more classical poet in her. There was some flavour or sound he hadn't got and I felt justified in trying to supply it. I got to know her very well, until she died in fact, but we never discussed translation in great detail. She knew I admired her and wanted to translate her, but she didn't see any of my translations. It was like that with Rakovszky too – she didn't want to interfere when I was translating her. On the other hand I did talk with Orbán Ottó and Vas István when I was translating them. I got to know how Ottó's poems should sound. He was using a series of variations on classical meters I simply couldn't hear well enough until he read them to me. It's not a meter much used in England so it was important that I should hear it – not just individual feet or lines, but the whole organic sound.

Did he read the poems for you?

Yes, he read a little bit for me and explained what he was doing. I also remember going to István Vas and asking him to read his poems aloud to me. It was a matter of locating the nature of the voice, and that is all tied up with issues of rhythm and music as well as other things. Some poets who are very hard for me may be easier for somebody else.

Have you ever had a failure?

I can't always tell. Sometimes I can feel the success quite clearly, at other times I am unsure. When that happens the translation remains a shot in the dark – people may like it or question it. Obviously I aim to make translations that convince me, but occasionally the only guarantee I have is a sense of competence. I know I haven't fallen over in the dark but I don't know where precisely I am. I don't feel I have translated Csoóri particularly well but some people like the versions. It's the same with Marsall

László. George Gömöri, my fellow editor of the English language anthology of twentieth century Hungarian poetry, *The Colonnade of Teeth*, asked me to undertake a few poems by Marsall, but they weren't poems I could imagine writing myself so I still find the effect difficult to judge. I think it helps if you can imagine a wardrobe with a set of poetical clothes that might fit you. If the clothes fit you can translate the poem. This wasn't the case with either Csoóri or Marsall, but sometimes you surprise yourself: you discover clothes you had never seen and they fit. It takes some getting used to though.

Have the poems you really liked affected your own poetry?

Oh, yes. The rhythm of Orbán's poems is a case in point. I became quite interested in his meters and thought it would be good for me to try them in my own work.

Did you use it?

Certainly. I wrote about twenty poems in that fashion, though I did throw out sixteen of them in the end. Their effect has persisted in the longer term too. They have added variety to my own natural speech patterns. In Zsuzsa's poems it was the pace that influenced me. I wanted to be able to fly a little like her and was ready to do so. None of this is direct perhaps but it is important. And she could write wonderful passionate poems that made me bolder in introducing such passion first into the English translation, then into my own work. If a poem provides something you temperamentally need, eventually it will make its way into your own experience.

Yes, somewhere you said that a poem you translate should please you and at the same time teach you as well.

Yes, it should enlarge and broaden you. I have benefitted a great deal from those I have translated. Some have found their way into my own poems in ways that probably remain unrecognisable to those unacquainted with Hungarian poetry.

Have you ever adopted images as well?

No. For me, imagery is very personal – the most personal part of my poetry. Even more personal than the music. It may be because I was not born English and English music came to me more slowly. I am still learning its possibilities. Of course the imagery of poets you admire stays with you, but I think it changes its nature. Crazy things happen: a green body lying on the table becomes a red head in the window...

In an interview you say that a poem consists of sentences which give its meaning and a form or structure which are counterpoint.

Yes. This is how I personally feel form works. I am not a formalist in the sense that I believe closed form is intrinsically better, but I do like the feeling of some specific shape, one or other particular stanza form, perhaps a rhyme scheme, all of which provide a musical framework. The sentence unit moves against that. I agree with Robert Frost in this respect. Sentences are the basic material of poetry for me. But they are played out against patterns and structures.

This isn't true for everyone. Perhaps you need a mind inclined to narrative, such as I have. My poems talk against song, against a counterpoint of rhythm and rhyme. But I rarely bring the music into the foreground.

It must be very difficult to translate the music of the language. The meaning, or the message could be relatively easy to interpret...

Music is the hardest to translate. Music is specific, I believe, to the genius of the language. It is intrinsic, pre-linguistic. It corresponds to some ur-sense of the world. Weöres is difficult precisely because of his musicality. But you cannot simply translate the music sound by sound. In a different language that would make a different music. The music of the receiving language has its own centre.

At the end of the interview I would like you to analyse one of the poems you remember well or you like especially from the point of view of translation. I know that you particularly like István Vas's 'Rapszódia az őszi kertben,' and the other poem I thought might have been interesting to translate was 'Lázár' by Nemes Nagy Ágnes.

The poems of Vas and Nemes Nagy move at a very different pace. Vas, I think, is much closer to conversation, an ordinary conversation with romantic elements. These elements are part of the literary voice. Of course, he makes literary references and all the time you are aware you are reading literature, not simply overhearing a conversation. Yet there is an intimacy to his voice which is like talking informally. He is not addressing you from a mountain, he is not a magician in a cloak, he is not crying in the street. He is a voice in a chair, sitting and talking. In *Rapszódia egy őszi kertben* his voice is both colloquial and literary. It adopts a rich musical timbre too and it is very important to catch that music, but even here his subject is fitted to talk rather than to song or public rhetoric. I am delighted to have written some of his lines in English.: "Mit tud a virág, mit tud a tenyészet? Rettentő szép rakéták roppanva repüljetek!" with

its little purring and explosive series of r,r,r,p perfectly embody the sense of a launched rocket. In my version it goes:

> What do the flowers or vegetation know?
> Imperious rockets, pursue your explosive trajectories!

Vas's rhyme scheme is important too because the rhymes are part of the poem's manners, part of the courtesy of the poem. I had to write something equally courteous. Something in which the syntax was not too hard, not too tight. It didn't matter too much that every line should be the same length as it was in Hungarian. Vas's lines are irregular. If a poet is using something terribly strict, like rhyming couplets and very precise rhythms then, I think, that is part of the manners of the poem and the poem would lose a lot without it, so I try to follow it. If, on the other hand, a poet has a semi-formal approach, now long, now short, now with an ABAB rhyme scheme, now with ABBA, then I think it is less important to repeat that pattern precisely. I too will be semi formal in a similar way but not in the same places, unless that falls naturally.

With Vas it is a matter of feeling for the voice, for the right manner, trying to find an appropriate music. His syntax gives the translator plenty of room. Nemes Nagy is quite different. She is a highly compressed poet. The first poem of hers I translated was *Napló*, an early series of short epigrammatic poems. *Lázár* resembles those in some respects. It was very difficult.

> As slowly he sat up the ache suffused
> his whole left shoulder where his life lay bruised
> tearing his death away like gauze, section by section
> since that is all there is to resurrection.

One of the difficulties for me was that the last two sentences of the original, which constitute the last two lines, are not full sentences. The word *mert*, which means 'because' or 'since' is normally expected to join to clauses into a single sentence but does not do so here. I couldn't reproduce this effect in English because it would have sounded more stilted than I think it does in Hungarian. I had to concentrate instead on what was happening in the poem as a whole. Part of the poem's power lay in the detached use of *mert* and in the rather enigmatic perception that hangs on it. (In what way is resurrection as simple as tearing away your gauze or mummy cloth? You would have had to have been resurrected first. Then it's not so simple after all...) It is the full rhyme that lends the poem its authority and carries us through the enigma, so I thought it important to achieve that. It was also very important to convey the sense of

grammatic concentration, which Nemes Nagy often uses in order to concentrate intellectual energy, without losing the naturalness of speech. Nevertheless I don't follow the sentence structure too closely in English. It seems less unnatural in Hungarian to leave a sentence hanging, but if I did so in my version the device would attract far too much attention to itself: people would notice that and not the whole poem. I lose the breath she provides at the end of each line but had I kept it, I felt, I might have lost more. The effect is more important than the local detail and the effect is epigrammatic or gnomic, like one of Blake's *Songs of Innocence* or *Experience, The Sick Rose* for example. These four lines took longer than the whole of *Rapszódia egy őszi kertben*, and I'm still not absolutely sure it's finished.

Yes, the words have enormous weight which might have been difficult to translate.

It's true. That is the great difference between Vas and Nemes Nagy. He is conversational and human: she is compressed and godlike. Her words have an enormous weight. It's like moving a mountain every time. Perhaps Nemes Nagy's poems might be seen in such geological terms, her work is like a crystal mountain ...

April 1998

Anna T. Szabó

The Architecture of Poetry

Helen Vendler: *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Harvard University Press, 1997.

"Our talking about poetry is a part of, an extension of, our experience of it, and as a good deal of thinking has gone to the making of poetry, so a good deal may well go to the study of it." These lines by T. S. Eliot are one of the quotations Helen Vendler starts her book with; it is telling that the other five are also by poets. Vendler comes to the Sonnets as a critic of lyric poetry, but at one point she has to admit that she aimed to position herself into "the vantage point of the poet who wrote them, asking the questions that a poet would ask about any poem." She believes that the Sonnets are calling for us to enter the lyric script because they "are preeminently utterances for us to utter as ours."

Although many modern critics are interested in the Sonnets, few of them pay enough attention to them as poems, Vendler says. The predominantly social and psychological approaches tend to forget the fact that a lyric poem or even a whole sequence of sonnets is primarily a form of dramatic solitary speech and not a social or historical narrative. One should still read it as a work of art: the structure of the text itself is as much or even more interesting than the social structure it is part of. Helen Vendler, therefore, makes no attempt to link any of the poems to the social, political or personal references of the age or of the author; she is very careful not to mention any of the names or events that were common starting points for former commentators. It may be regretted that together with the social aspect an interesting historical point is left unmentioned in most of the analyses - that is, how do the Sonnets relate with the works of other major Renaissance poets, and to what extent are they innovative compared to other sonnet sequences; but perhaps this contrastive analysis would require a radically different viewpoint.

Vendler's wish is to defend the sonnets she admires from being treated as relics of the past, even though this kind of ornamented finery is very far from modern aesthetics and poetics – as can be demonstrated by the English poet

Basil Bunting's 'purified' (or rather: drastically maimed) version of Shakespeare's Sonnets. (Bunting, on Ezra Pound's advice, cut out from the sonnets everything he thought superfluous, and in this way he arrived at a more modern but much less satisfying poem.) Shakespeare's text is so dense and complex, Vendler states, that nothing can be altered or taken from its structure. She demonstrates the futility of this attempt by quoting and writing several prose versions, collages, pastiches and even modern "translations" of the Sonnets, showing that Shakespeare is Shakespeare not in spite of, but because of the "old finery" he deliberately employs.

Her love of the Sonnets leads Helen Vendler to try to find not only the aesthetic strategies at work, but also some possible compositional motivations – at this point she admittedly follows Auden, whose two basic questions when reading a poem were: "How does it work?" and "What kind of a guy inhabits this poem?" For Vendler, mind and heart are equally important in the composition of a good poem ("The poet's duty is to create aesthetically convincing representations of feelings felt and thoughts thought"); she says that all significant features in a Shakespearean sonnet serve "a psychologically mimetic end": the dynamics of the poems reflects the changes of mind of their "speaker."

(Vendler makes it clear that the fictive "speaker" of the Sonnets, although a poet himself, is not the same with the author proper, Shakespeare, the ultimate aesthetic organiser of the text). This complex inner motion creates a credible speaker and a voice which even the modern reader finds "real."

Lyric poetry is "interior meditative drama": it stages conflicting words instead of actual persons. This is a play of words; inner emotional dynamics are created by the verbal and rhetorical structure of the poem. Structure itself is motion, and the aim of the critic must be to find the very points in the poem where any significant change in the linguistic pattern can be witnessed, because these can be treated as basic evidence useful for any further interpretation ("This Commentary consists primarily of what might be called 'evidential' criticism: that is, I wanted to write down remarks for which I attempt to supply instant and sufficient linguistic evidence"). Helen Vendler argues strongly for the necessity of helping the reader by laying out firm foundations on which the reader's own interpretation can be built; her main problem with Stephen Booth's 1977 edition of the Sonnets (to which she frequently refers) is that Booth offers no "evidence" but only possible readings (as Booth puts it: "The notes in this edition are designed to admit that everything in a sonnet is there"); she disagrees with the

relativism of this approach that leaves it up to the reader to construct the poem - she considers this too ready a surrender to hermeneutic suspicion. Not that she would stress the importance of "meaning" and meaning alone - as she points out in the Introduction, theological hermeneutics that seeks the one and only Meaning can hardly be applied to lyric poetry.

However, she must be convinced that there *is* a meaning in the poem, because she fears the overflowing abundance of ambiguities which – since William Empson's first analyses of the Sonnets – are a must for critics to point out. Later in the book (while analysing sonnet 107) Vendler says that some interpretations generate ambiguities instead of solving an interpretational problem; she is convinced that "Shakespeare's meaning need not be tortured to make a poem interesting." It may be considered symbolic that this statement is a part of an argument on line 7 sonnet 107: "Incertainties now crown themselves assured." The line, without its context, is fully ambiguous. Vendler's careful analysis of the context presents strong evidence that one meaning is much more plausible than the other – however, to overstress authorial/authoritative meaning ("firm authorial instruction") would certainly lead to intentional fallacy.

There is a term Helen Vendler uses which at certain points seems to reconcile her approach with that of Booth's. If she senses a strong subversive ambiguity in a sonnet, she constructs parallel readings, one rewriting and negating the other, and terms the second reading as a "ghost poem" or "shadow poem" (see for example her discussion of sonnet 61). This "implicit undersong" is indecorous or accusatory - and it can always be construed from the poem itself. This approach, on the rhetorical level, is parallel with what Booth does on the verbal level - demonstrating that everything can be distorted or reversed (re-versed), *uncertainties are assured.* Vendler, however, permits only one "ghost poem," and she seems not to be troubled by the elemental hermeneutical uncertainty that is triggered by this double vision.

The other duality she employs is a duality of character. She treats most of the sonnets as replies to some anterior utterance (usually the words of the Fair Youth), and analyses them as speech acts employed by the speaker of the poem in order to achieve a certain goal. It sometimes seems disturbing (and also superfluous) to read her long 'reconstructions' of antecedent scenarios, of the words possibly uttered by the object of the speaker's affections (the Youth or the Dark Lady). This approach is intended to emphasise the dramatic quality of the sonnets and is successful in doing so, but it also seems to

overemphasise the thematic and situational element of the sonnets. Helen Vendler at first appears to employ this method of 'quoting' the words of the beloved with full self-confidence, but later on (in the essay on sonnet 92) she suggests that maybe many of the sonnets that have apparently direct address are in fact internal meditations directed toward the image of the young man.

The only danger of any emotionally motivated approach to the Sonnets is that at some points it can verge on being too psychological. Vendler's emotional aestheticism – which otherwise makes the book not only absorbing but also beautiful – sometimes leads her to try to prove things that, being a question of individual taste and interpretation, cannot be proven by intellectual means (for example that sonnet 114 is "anguished and self-lacerating" instead of coldly intellectual as Booth says; or the claim that the technical aim of sonnet 151 "is to enact appetite and orgasm"). Vendler appears to agree with John Berryman whom she quotes saying "When Shakespeare wrote 'Two loves I have,' reader, he was *not kidding*." She uses the word "heartbreaking" more than once in her essays: the poems, in her view, are "true," at least psychologically and dramatically. One needs only to read the poems without intellectual detachment to agree. Yet, even Vendler herself admits that there is a great deal of authorial irony involved in many of the sonnets.

As she considers Shakespeare a hyperconscious writer, Vendler doubts that anything in the Sonnets could have been unintended (Keats, on the other hand, as quoted by Vendler, thought that the Sonnets are "full of fine things said unintentionally"). Therefore, in her analytic essays on each sonnet, she aims to discover the "architecture" of the poems in order to "advance our understanding of Shakespeare's procedures as a working poet - that is, a master of aesthetic strategy." This is the most interesting, most revealing feature of the book - to proceed with keen and careful analysis from the very graphemes upwards to the grammatical and rhetorical structures in order to find and enlist every element that makes the poem work the way it does. She intends to present the reader with a structural analysis instead of a thematic one; from this aspect every sonnet is equally interesting. Critics focusing on topical questions are usually less interested in the sonnets that are thematically weaker, but Vendler wonderfully proves that in terms of linguistic strategy the first subsequence is as fully dramatic as the second.

Helen Vendler has a unique talent of describing the (possible) workings of a poet's mind. She (together with such contemporary editors as Katherine Duncan-Jones) suggests that the Quarto of the Sonnets could have been based on

an authorised manuscript, she ventures on guessing the order of composition of some of the sonnets (she is convinced, for instance, that the philosophical sonnets of the first sub-sequence are of later composition than the complimentary ones; she also tries to solve the problems of the weaker sonnets - like sonnets 145, 153 and 154 - by saying that they were early work inserted as a closure to the whole sequence). She offers many thought-provoking insights concerning word choice and word origin - she contrasts Shakespeare's use of disturbingly elaborate Latinate words with the simplicity and frankness of his Anglo-Saxon vocabulary (sonnet 125), or she points out that Shakespeare was consciously applying Latin words with implied reference to their etymology (sonnet 96); in her commentary on sonnet 7 she suggests that Shakespeare puns on the French word 'or' while describing the route of the golden sun: '*or*ient,' 'ad*ore*,' 'm*or*tal;' she also makes a witty remark about how "Time always brings out the Latin side of Shakespeare" (sonnet 123). She attempts to explain (sometimes verging on apologetic criticism) Shakespeare's frequent use of proverbs in the Sonnets: in the first sub-sequence these appeals to the *consensus gentium* serve the goal of revealing the young man's real character - he is shown as someone who can only be convinced by such commonplaces. Proverbs, on the

other hand, express the speaker's despair at solving the problem exposed by the sonnet - and when the problem itself is insoluble, the common wisdom can rarely offer any real consolation.

Helen Vendler is especially interested in the phonetic and graphic overlaps that occur between many words in the Sonnets. As the Renaissance poets had an unusually "intensive ear-training," Vendler systematically uncovers the possibilities of resonance between the words of a given sonnet (see for example the commentary on sonnet 81, where she talks about the play with the antithetic meaning of 'death' and 'breath;' or on sonnet 87, where Shakespeare's puns on the word '*king*': ten rhyme words end in -*ing*). Graphic overlaps are also abundant - Shakespeare, according to Vendler, played self-testing games with anagrammatic words (with 'hews', 'hues' and 'use' in sonnet 20, with 'store' and 'rose' in sonnet 67, or with 'abuse,' 'sue' and 'usurer' in sonnet 134, and so on). In her analysis of sonnet 126 (which is not a regular sonnet but a six-couplet poem) Vendler offers a table presenting all the phonetic interrelations in the poem, because she finds it extraordinarily rich in alliteration and assonance.

There are such tables and diagrams in almost every commentary (they show phonetic, syntactic, relational or conceptual patterns); many of them are interesting (especially the ones dealing with the organising grammatical figures,

for example tense-relations - see the commentary on sonnet 146), but some of them seem only to enlist the linguistical features of a poem or show the rhetorical structure that is fairly evident in the sonnet itself. However, as Helen Vendler points out that Shakespeare's favourite figure and organising principle is antithesis, a clear division of contrasting elements is a sure proof of this structural and thematic feature. She is also interested in the rhythmical patterns of the Sonnets, especially when the changes in prosody reflect on thematic variation (e.g. the "wintry" rhythmic irregularities in sonnet 5, or the easy conversational intonation suggested by the amphibrachs in sonnet 126).

The sonnet as a form comes to focus in many of the commentaries. Because it has four parts, the Shakespearean sonnet is far more flexible than the two-part Italian sonnet; the sequence is dominated by patterns of 4-4-4-2 and 8-4-2, but some of them exhibit a well-defined octave. In her commentaries, Vendler surveys the logical relations that structure the sonnets, and comes to the conclusion (in the commentary on sonnet 75) that "almost every conceivable restructuring possible within fourteen lines is invented by Shakespeare in the course of the sequence."

Yet the most inventive part of the sonnets is the couplet, the reflective-analytic ending of each poem. In Vendler's opinion the couplet is the point where the view of the speaker and the view of the author almost converge: the pathetic-emotional speaker in the course of the poem is analysing his own position until he reaches the couplet and expresses a self-ironising turn – this "intrapsychic" irony is in fact authorial irony (this is the tonal difference Jan Kott sensed when he termed the couplet as "an actor's line").

In order to defend Shakespeare from the charge of idle superfluity Vendler systematically proves that there are words that link the quatrains to the couplet, and these take on different emotional import in the course of the poem. She terms the aggregate of these words (and their variants) the Couplet Tie, and enlists them at the end of each commentary, after having reflected on their importance. "Shakespeare expended real effort in creating verbal connections between the body of a sonnet and its couplet, and the words he chose to reiterate in this way are almost always thematically highly significant ones." In some sonnets where repetition is so frequent that the same word is repeated five or more times, Helen Vendler lists the root words that appear in each quatrain (and the couplet), and she terms them Key Words. She also takes notice of the Defective Key Words, and tries to explain their presence – or absence – in the poem. These lists of emphatic words may be of

special importance not only to the commentators but to the translators of the Sonnets, because they point out those words which keep the poems together both structurally and psychologically.

The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets is a book of almost 700 pages; one cannot say that it makes an easy reading. It is worth reading throughout, but it will surely be helpful for those who only wish to read one or two commentaries. The Quarto facsimiles of the Sonnets are intended to satisfy not only the philologist but also the devotee of beautiful books. There is an extra supplement to the book, a CD with Helen Vendler reading sixty-six of Shakespeare's Sonnets.

Katalin Pálinkás

The Roundness of a New Keats Biography

Andrew Motion: *Keats*, London: Faber and Faber, 1997

After Walter Jackson Bate's (1963), Aileen Ward's (1963), and Robert Gittings's (1968) excellent biographies of Keats, which already made extensive use of Hyder E. Rollins's annotated edition of the *Letters* (1958), there can hardly be any justification for a new Life – unless, of course, some new documents have been unearthed – but the excavation of new significances by applying a radically new approach to the already established data.[1] That is exactly what is claimed by Andrew Motion in the *Introduction* to his 636-page *Keats*: as part of the new historicist reassessment of the Romantic Movement (Marilyn Butler, Jerome J. McGann, John Barnard), his ambition is to recreate Keats "in a way which is more rounded than his readers are used to seeing.(...) My intention is not to transform Keats into a narrowly political poet. It is to show that his efforts to crystallise moments of 'Truth' combine a political purpose with a poetic ambition, a social search with an aesthetic ideal" (xxv). He promises to give substantial interpretations of the "forms and idioms" (xxiii) of the works in this "rounded" way, thus the reader expects some exciting interplay of "resonance and centrality" (Stephen Greenblatt): the autonomy of the self-centred vision and the cultural complexity of the age "resonating" in the integrity of the work.

As Motion remarks, there is no need to prove the radical liberalism of Keats. The traditional view of him as

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effeminate, which he traces back to Shelley's "Adonais" and Leigh Hunt's memoir, is getting essentially re-shaped in the current historicist urge to see him as more socially and politically engaged. As representative volumes, Motion mentions Nicholas Roe's 1995 collection of essays *Keats and History*, and his book *John Keats and the Culture of Dissent*, which appeared too late, in 1997, for him to consult seriously. However, Motion's Keats is the first book-length study of the poet's life and work incorporating similar views. The fairly great number of current studies with a historicist approach makes the reader wonder to what extent this can be taken as the authoritative and representative perspective of our age. We might be warned, what the author might have thought valid in his relationship with the world might be overshadowed, as Roland Barthes's definition of the critical activity suggests, by the terms and attitudes the current critical language establishes with the language of the author.

Motion's biography excels in the sociographic portrayal of the figures surrounding Keats, and gives an enjoyable reading into the Georgian and Regency worlds. It also presents valuable information about the medical practices of the age; his extensive reading in that field is most memorably reflected in the portraits of the figures in Guy's Hospital, who can be supposed to have had a shaping influence on Keats's personality. His factual documentations of some of the possible sources of the poems are also serviceable.

All in all, he does a good job in the presentation of data, also including the recurrent quotes from the letters as his most important source. Also, he adds to the interpretation of the texts by trying to reconstruct the possible associations of the contemporary reader. Nevertheless, this intention may lead both to valuable and dispensable emphases, as, for example, his reading of the ode "To Autumn" shows. After interpreting how the poem balances abundance and decay, and affirming Keats's persistent intention to transmute history in the working of the imagination, Motion states that the poem refers to the social anxieties that dogged him all his life. Thus in the image of Autumn in the second stanza ("And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep/ Steady thy laden head across a brook") we might realise that "the reference to the gleaner is more certainly charged with contemporary references. Gleaning had been made illegal in 1818, and although the figure is part of an appeal to the world of Classical fulfilment, and a refracted expression of Keats's wish to glean his teeming brain [cf. the sonnet "When I have fears" – K.P.], it also refers to his sympathy for the denied and the dispossessed. So does the description of the bees. They are a

reminder of the miserable facts of labour that Keats had condemned during his walking tour in Scotland ..." (p. 462) Motion also remarks, the fact that the poem was written in the aftermath of the Peterloo Massacre does not establish it as a political poem, but offers a possible context that we should weigh. The problem with these possible contexts is that they are not necessarily justified in a close reading to give an integrity of interpretation, and thus may remain facts of mere contiguity. It may be particularly difficult to feel sorrow for the dispossessed bees when "they think warm days will never cease, / For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells."

In his reading of the poems, Motion may slip into statements that are irritating not because they would be untrue, but because they do not sound relevant, or remain powerful assertions without validating elaboration. It could be illustrative to quote the main argument he makes about the sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer": "It is a poem about exclusion as well as inclusion. Its title suggests that Keats felt he had come late to high culture (it is 'On *First* Looking'). It draws attention to the fact that he could not read Homer in the original Greek. It mistakes Balboa (whom Robertson rightly credits as the discoverer of the Pacific) for Cortez, and so undermines its air of learning. It even, for all its wonderfully bold energy, succumbs to a moment of awkward translationese ('pure serene') which creates a sense of Keats standing apart from the main event. (...) It is a poem written by an outsider who wants to be an insider – on his own terms" (p. 112). Reviews have already pointed out the errors of some of these views,[2] since, obviously, his exclusion from "high culture" is exaggerated in view of his prose translation of the *Aeneid* into English before the age of nineteen. Moreover, it would be odd to read the poem as a negative discovery of exclusion and ignorance, rather than a tribute to Chapman, whose work meant the discovery of a new and rich demesne: a potential example. I would think that the poem's ascending imagery is more rooted in Keats's feeling of exultation over his own mastery of poetic expression than in frustration. The last lines can read as self-revelation: he is able to mount that height of poetry, and thus he *becomes* an insider, both in the sense that with this poem he enters the company of English poets, and confirms his belief in the power of imagination. Regarding the other psychoanalytically based arguments of the book, Motion might draw his main idea from the anxiety theory of Harold Bloom, which, of course, in itself is convincing, surely

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[2] e.g. Helen Vendler, "Inspiration, Accident, Genius" *London Review of Books*, 16 October 1997.

there is much anxiety in Keats to create his own poetic idiom, but it may be more fruitful to discuss that problem for instance in the context of his relation with Spenser, or with Milton in *Hyperion* to show his struggle to extricate himself from their influence.

The very same argument is recurrent in the book, for example in Motion's reading of the "Ode to Psyche": "Keats sees himself, like the goddess, a kind of arriviste, struggling to find place in the hierarchy of poetry without the 'privileges of birth and education.'" (In slightly exaggerated terms, do not they both, the goddess and the poet want to build a fair enough career?) Once again, the argument could not be untrue, the quote comes from the letters, Keats must have felt the sore lack of these privileges, but to offer it as the main line of interpretation is a bit fruitless for me. As Motion searches for this argument thematized in various poems, not only does he fail to give complex and insightful readings for those who rely on him as a source, but also ignores the intertextuality Keats's poems create with each other and the recurrent motifs of the poetic idiom. He also fails to fulfil another expectation of ours: he, being a poet himself, could possibly provide insights into the way form coheres in the poems. The problem is not that he offers some external perspectives, but that one is left with the sore absence of what is swept aside for their sake. In all cases,

the feeling of an integrated wholeness of interpretation, of roundness is missing.

It follows from the nature of the approach that the social aspects of Keats's works are favoured: the liberal sympathies, the healing power of the poem, which should be a friend to man, and the means of gaining ever widening knowledge, a process of soul-making. Yet he cannot avoid commenting on the independence of the creative imagination and it is at that point that he often seems to handle the problem with simplified theories and to shift the viewpoint back to some socio-historical arguments.

With Keats's definitions of the imagination in mind, the reader may be struck by Motion's recurring interpretation of imagination as a power for compensation: for creating alternative or parallel universes in the poems where the difficulties of life can be confronted, as in a kind of projection, in "a way of achieving control of experience through explanation. (...) When he began writing poetry, he devised strategies for making it seem a parallel universe in which loss and gain could both be examined with equal clarity. The half-real, half-statuesque existence of his mythical figures allows this, and so do characters such as Porphyro, Madeline, Isabella, Lamia and Lycius in his narrative poems. Part familiar and part allegorical, they prove their breathing humanity while insisting they are deliberately created things" (p.

41). When he refers back to the Chapman sonnet, Motion writes that Keats's feelings of exclusion "prompted him to create an imaginative substitute for what he had been denied" (p. 404). With this theory Motion does not imply an escapist attitude: his book is dedicated to the exploration of the social and psychoanalytical context of this poetry, and, after all, it gives enlightening examples of the transfiguration of these stimuli. For instance, "the traumatic, broken shape of Keats's relationship with his mother – losing her first to Rawlings [her second husband – K.P.], then recovering her, then losing her again to death – created a pattern of possession and abandonment which runs throughout his poems" (p. 42). However, it is difficult to reconcile his theory of visionary alternatives with Keats's faith in the power of imagination not to compensate but to transcend time and the self. I raise these objections not only because Motion's language is overloaded with notions implying a rather consciously devised, possessable and workable constuction at its best (e.g. invent, devise strategies, examine, explain), whereas Keats's poetical conceptions are rather worded in the language of passion, inspiration and intensity. (We should recall the axioms from the letters, and the richness of its metaphors, as the only sufficient means to describe the revelation felt by the writer and the reader). But Motion also

seems to avoid Keats's belief that some inconceivable knowledge can be gained through the workings of the imagination, that the spiritual significance of experience can be constituted in this way, something finally life-affirming and life-enriching against all indicative urge to escape into an alternative reality.

While reading the biography, a short passage from the letters kept lurking in my mind. Written to his brother George in December 1818, these lines read like a piece of admonition: the reality and intensity of our experience, he seems to say, depends on our ability to live in two worlds: both in that of historical reality and that of the creative imagination. The leisurely elegance of the sentences as they keep winding express the duality and interplay: each world gains its significance through the existence of the other: "recollect that no Man can live but in one society at a time – his enjoyment in the different states of human society must depend upon the Powers of his Mind – that is you can imagine a roman triumph, or an olympic game as well as I can. We with our bodily eyes see but the fashion and manners of one country for one age – and then we die. Now to me manners and customs long since passed whether among the Babylonians or the Bactrians are as real, or even more real than those among which now I live.

Zsolt Maróti

Poets and Masks

István D. Rácz: *Költők és maszkok –
Identitáskereső versek az 1945 utáni brit
költészetben* [Poets and Masks – The Quest for
Identity in British Poetry after 1945] Orbis
Litterarum Series 1, Debrecen: Kossuth
Egyetemi Kiadó, 1996.

"The objective of this series," say the
general editors of Orbis Litterarum, "is
to publish high quality monographs and
thematically homogeneous volumes
containing the latest achievements in the
study of classical and modern literature,
thus providing the authors with publicity
in academic circles." The first piece in
this series is the work of István Rácz
with the title *Poets and Masks - The Quest
for Identity in British poetry after 1945.*

In the "Introduction," defining his
aims and methods, Rácz identifies the
search for identity as one of the central
categories in 20th century literature. He
sets out to examine this effort from the
point of view of poetics, through the
genre of the dramatic monologue.
Dramatic monologue is situated
somewhere at the intersection of the
three main poetic categories but usually
categorised as a basically lyrical genre
holds a special place in British poetry –
especially since the age of Browning and

Tennyson. The author seems to agree
with Randall Jarrel, according to whom
dramatic monologue has become the
yardstick for all modern poetry.

The main body of the book, framed
by the "Introduction" and the
"Summary," falls into two larger
sections: in "Theoretical Questions" the
author's prime concerns are to give his
own definition of the dramatic
monologue, to list its subtypes and to
examine the role played by dramatic and
narrative elements in this lyrical genre; in
the second, much bulkier section, the
concept of the search for identity is
approached through the literary text
itself, through analysis and
interpretation. Rácz hastens to point out
that Part 2 is not simply Part 1 put into
practice, since it deals with a series of
new problems and aspects which arose
during the process of analysis. (Due to a
lapse of attention the title of Part 2 given
in the table of contents slightly differs
from the one within the book, on page
45.)

The first section opens with an
enumeration and comparison of the
various, usually largely divergent
definitions and concepts of the dramatic
monologue as a poetic genre. Mixing
elements borrowed from the theories of
M.H. Abrams, Robert Langbaum and
Ralph W. Wader he arrives at a
definition which he himself considers to
be rather vague and wide: "a dramatic
monologue is a lyrical poem in which the

poet presents the individual experience from the point of view of a fictitious speaker, in a 'reality' perceived by him/her." Sensing the inherent dangers of such a loose category Rácz finds it necessary to break down the genre into subcategories. Relying on Ralph W. Wader he draws a distinction between dramatic monologue proper and mask lyric. While in the former the speaker in the poem addresses his/her words to someone belonging to the imaginary world of the poem itself (Browning's major poems are mentioned as examples), the latter addresses itself directly the reader. In Rácz's theoretical system these two subcategories are in co-ordinate relation, though he also admits in a footnote: "The categorisation which treats the dramatic monologue as a subtype of the mask lyric or the role lyric is widespread. We accept it as a possible typological viewpoint ..." At the same time he takes issue with Rader about the justification for his creating a third subcategory, the so called dramatic poem.

In the second chapter of the theoretical section Rácz embarks on the difficult task of defining the concept of identity and mask. Having accepted that the represented figure (the author here uses the term 'character' borrowed from narratology) is one of the most important (if not the most important) elements one is overwhelmed by a number of questions concerning the nature of the relationship between the poet and the character(s) in his/her poem. In an effort to answer these questions Rácz has to go beyond the boundaries of poetics, since as he observes: "it is related to the universal human problem of searching for or building an identity." For help and theoretical background he turns to 20[th] century social psychology, relying mainly on the findings of Gordon W. Alport, Erving Goffman, Eric Berne and Erich Fromm. He attaches particularly great importance to Goffman's concept of role distancing. He practically places a sign of equality between the unconscious role-playing in our everyday life (which is an important element of identity building) and the fully conscious literary role-playing performed by the author of dramatic monologues. He points out that role playing and role distancing are not identical with the negation of identity, what is more, they constitute a crucial step in identity building. Since on the level of form this identity building often manifests itself as mask creation Rácz – once again invoking the authorities of social psychology – feels it necessary to define the concept of mask as well: "Mask in this work is interpreted as the poetic rendering of a stage in the process of identity building when a temporary, conscious and artificial unity is created between the inner self and an outside

self." He compares the mask concepts of several British poets of the first half of the 20th century (Wilde, Yeats and Eliot) and offers a brief survey on their influence on the post-war generation of British poets. Listing the possible intentions behind mask creation he mentions the 'mask of age' (preferred by younger poets) and the character, less complex and sophisticated than the poet himself, which is created with the intention of eliminating self-pity and sentimentalism.

In the third chapter of Part 2 Rácz concentrates on the dramatic and narrative qualities of dramatic monologues. He notes that the epic elements of a dramatic monologue do not form a complete, coherent story, but it is in this fragmentariness that the main strength of this genre lies. Another very important characteristic feature of the dramatic monologue is its embeddedness in time, which once again connects it to the epic. The third parallel can be observed in the field of character-drawing: similarly to modern novels, direct character-drawing is not to be found in dramatic monologues, while, at the same time, the character characterises himself indirectly and unintentionally by everything he says, and by the way he speaks.

Rácz goes on to explore the similarities between the theatrical monologue (as part of a work of art) and the dramatic monologue (as a self-sufficient piece). He concludes that the mask lyric can be related to the theatrical monologue, while the dramatic monologue proper (i.e., where the presence of the listener addressed by the speaker can be sensed) is closer to a stage dialogue in which we hear only one of the two participants. In Rácz's interpretation the elements of the three traditionally separated general categories of poetic literature get emphatically mixed in poems dealing with the search for identity or identity-building: "The lyric I is dramatised in an epic environment." Before winding up the theoretical part the author points out that in the dramatic monologues of contemporary British authors the question of identity-building is almost inseparable from the problems of language, self-expression and communication.

Part 2, entitled "Dramatic monologues in British poetry after 1945," is comprised of five chapters which, exploring the oeuvres of seven poets (Philip Larkin, Geoffrey Hill, James Fenton, Ted Hughes, Carol Ann Duffy, Paul Muldoon and Derek Mahon) and analysing some of their major poems, present the different stances a poet or the lyric I can possibly take up. (Rácz justifies the choice of the year of 1945 as a dividing line by saying that the

poetic career of the Movement poets started around that time.)

The chapter dealing with the poetry of Philip Larkin, who, for Rácz, embodies the agnostic lyric I, is the dominant part of the whole work both by its length and the depth of insight. Working himself through the oeuvre volume by volume he traces Larkin's effort in experience distancing, its modifications and aesthetic-poetic consequences. As a starting point he chooses Larkin's novels, (*Jill* and *A Girl in Winter*) in which he believes he has discovered the main characteristics of mask creation employed fully fledged in Larkin's volumes of poetry. What also sets this chapter apart from the rest is the author's heavy reliance on biographical data and biographical methods. Having collected an impressive amount of material on Larkin (his personal letters, interviews with him, memories of his friends, etc.) he is determined to map out the intricate system of correspondences between Larkin the everyday man, his poetic I and the various masks to be found in his poems. He points out that Larkin himself, who on the basis of his self-definitions and his manifestations had constitutionally a lyric turn of mind and who, of course, achieved world-wide fame as a poet, regarded the novel as the most mature genre of the age. Citing from one of Larkin's letters he even

finds some (not very convincing) evidence that the poet showed a strong striving for dramatic effect and for dramatisation. Having analysed the problems of identity and difference and the relationship of the objective and the subjective side he concludes that the typical speaker of the Larkin poems, which appeared in the late 1950s, is a mask. He traces the development of this mask in the volumes *Less Deceived* and *The Whitsun Weddings*: during the detailed analysis of individual dramatic monologues he focuses on differences to be found in the relationship between the lyric I and the speaker of the poem. He finds that in most cases the lyric I stays in the background and the experience itself is pushed into the foreground (e.g., "Deceptions").

In certain poems there is a point where, due to the identity of experience, the speaker and the lyric I merge into one (e.g., "Church Going," "Days"). Rácz views Larkin's obsession with the conservation of the acquired experience as a manifestation of the poet's ontological conservatism. The author identifies a separate group of poems within Larkin's oeuvre ("Mr Bleaney," "Dockery and Son," etc.) which he terms as "dramatic lyrics based on the tripartite system of speaker-person, remembered-third, neutral party." In Larkin's last volume, *High Windows* the character of the dramatic monologues undergoes

considerable changes: the reader is faced with an embittered, cynical and rather vulgar person.

Rácz believes that the main conflict in the monologues of the last volume is generated by the conflict inside Larkin between "the romantic poetic I" and the "disillusioned Movement poet." He concludes that mask lyric and dramatic lyric were more appropriate for Larkin's poetic cast of mind than dramatic monologue proper.

In the second chapter we have two poets grouped together who apparently do not have much in common. What makes the author treat Geoffrey Hill and James Fenton under the same heading is that he discovers the same kind of scepticism in their poetry. Hill's poetry, though firmly embedded in Christianity and history, is characterised by a sceptical view of both religion and the historical past. As Rácz points out this scepticism often gives birth to seemingly impersonal dramatic or mask lyrics in which the poet's inner world is projected onto outside reality. Interpreting Fenton's poetry he focuses on the ongoing struggle inside the poet, the result of which is a "curious blend of personality and impersonality."

In the third chapter the poetry of Ted Hughes is presented by the author as the opposite of Larkin's oeuvre: while Larkin's works abound with images of decay, in Hughes' poems they are counterbalanced by images of vegetation and fertility. Rácz emphasises the consistency with which Hughes, throughout his poetic career, sticks to his lyric I. This lyric I, as he notes, always measures himself against nature and as a result he is (similarly to the poet himself) in constant interaction with everything in the outside world. That is why his lyric I often puts on the mask of a shaman capable of communicating with the different elements of nature. In Rácz's interpretation Hughes' dramatic monologues and mask lyrics are the projections of the inner struggle of a lyric I who is striving for unity with nature. The comparative analysis of Ted Hughes' "Daffodils" and William Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud" is one of the best and most original passages of the book.

Chapter 4 on the poetry of Carol Ann Duffy entitled "The you and the I" fails to provide us with a new angle. The analysis is once again revealing and sharp, but still one does not feel his choice justified.

The closing chapter of Part 2 does present us with a new angle but this time one cannot help feeling that the author has grasped too much. He is struggling with his material, trying to cram an enormous amount of information into a chapter of a couple of pages. The result is quite disturbing: it is enough to mention the overcomplicated title and

the way the author's mind flits from Jorge Louis Borges and the Koran to W. B. Yeats and Louis MacNeice. This topic, i.e., the search for national identity in the poetry of Northern Ireland could only be discussed properly within the framework of a separate book.

On the whole Rácz's book is impeccably researched and annotated, and he gives some penetrating and thought-provoking analyses. It is a valuable contribution to the study of the genre of dramatic monologue.

Béla Polyák

The Story Goes On

Zoltán Abádi-Nagy: *Világregény - Regényvilág* [The Novel of the World – The World of the Novel] Orbis Litterarum Series 2, Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, Debrecen, 1997.

The foremost Hungarian critic of contemporary American literature has at long last disclosed some of the secrets hidden in his drawers – or disk files, times being what they are. Those in the know had long been aware that he had kept something from us, and even the less attentive readers might have spotted the six relevant references in Abádi-

Nagy's previous work, which, in a gesture not unlike those of some of the authors he analysed, sent us looking for a book not yet published, basically whirling us in a time warp. The previous critical volume, published in 1995, tells us that interviews with certain renowned American authors are available in a book called *The Novel of the World - The World of the Novel*. However, this latter work came out two years later, although, obviously, it was in the making at the time its predecessor was put together.

The Novel of the World – The World of the Novel is Zoltán Abádi-Nagy's fifth volume of criticism. He started out with *Swift, a szatirikus és a tervező* [Swift: Satirist and Designer" Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1973], went on with *Válság és komikum – A hatvanas évek amerikai regénye* [Crisis and Comedy – The American Novel in the 60s" Magvető, 1982], which latter proved to be the first in a series of critical works covering contemporary American fiction from the late fifties up until December 31, 1999. No kidding. After *Az amerikai minimalista próza* [American Minimalist Prose" Argumentum, 1994] came *Mai amerikai regénykalauz, 1970-1990* [A Guide to Contemporary American Novels" 1970-1990] and *Világregény – Regényvilág* [The Novel of the World – The World of the Novel, hereinafter: NOW-WON], and there is no stopping: Abádi-Nagy (hereinafter: ZAN) is already working on the next volume, which both

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chronologically and logically follows the themes of the preceding works. This time, however, he also decided to take care of his intellectual heritage by launching a commendable project; he has gathered around him a group of five, researchers and students, named them *America 2000*, and is involving them in writing and compiling the next book, which will be on the question of identity in the literature of the 1990s (hence the exact closing date above), and whose chapters will be produced by respective members of the group – including ZAN himself both as editor and contributor. The book will be published in 2001.

The latest volume, NOW-WON, includes interviews with six American classics: Walker Percy, Kurt Vonnegut, William Gaddis, E.L. Doctorow, Ronald Sukenick, and Raymond Federman, and strays from the paths of the author's other works on Am Lit in at least one major way, and from interviews in general in another. The one way in which NOW-WON deviates from the series is chronological. *Válság és komikum* explored American fiction in the 1960s with a focus on black humour and entropy; *Az amerikai minimalista próza* concentrated on the generation(s) following the high postmodern period; while the *Mai amerikai regénykalauz, 1970-1990* took on introducing a wide range of American novels and novelists in the period indicated in its title. In other words, the real sequel to these three, as far as chronology is concerned, will be the identity volume; rather than continuing it, NOW-WON complements the Guide. What ZAN offers us in NOW-WON is a selection of the by-products of the first two volumes in the series. Notice I have not said "only." You would assume it is not a critical work but simply a bunch of conversations typed up and neatly edited – and this is exactly where you would be wrong. A mere generic change takes place, not one in quality; it must be stressed that as a consequence of the thoroughly researched, well-considered questions, the book, with all its analytical and theoretical conclusions, gains an importance that is characteristic of an indispensable critical volume.

The authors have been arranged according to a pattern that is neither alphabetical nor chronological in order. ZAN starts out by admitting this in the preface: he informs us that he had picked as an organising principle the extent to which the authors in their writings dissent from conventional novel forms in terms of structure and technique; that is, Percy, who mostly employs traditional means and effects of mimesis, precedes Sukenick and Federman, who sometimes engage in creating an elaborate structure, sometimes a cheap disguise; while Vonnegut, Gaddis and Doctorow linger in between, mingling elements of both strategies, experimental in spirit and

often in methods, yet, at the same time, their roots strong and firm in tradition.

While reading this review in English, on interviews with authors whose mother tongue is also English, we should keep in mind that this particular collection of conversations was published in Hungarian. Although we find no translator named on the copyright page, we are certainly right in assuming that ZAN translated the text himself. There is only one reference to translation in the preface: in his last but one opening remark ZAN says *he* felt that any formality of the language "would misrepresent the circumstances of the interviews, and would distort their atmosphere and style, when used in conversations recorded in a casual mood based on informality" (p. 12.). At first I took this to define all of the interviews, but now it seems the words "when used" mark a subtle, perhaps unintended distinction: they imply that formal language is perfectly appropriate when used in conversations lacking that certain mood. Should it be so, we might conclude that only Gaddis and Doctorow refused to cooperate in establishing a relaxed situation (the reason why formal language is used in the Sukenick interview probably being that, as an exception in the collection, it had been published before, and the text is a reprint of the 1984 version). It is no wonder, considering the widely known fact that these two authors tend to turn

down interviews with repugnance. Our conclusion is further supported by Gaddis's opening statements and by ZAN's mention of how Doctorow refused to consent to the publication of the interview in English and how he cut the Hungarian version by half during revisions. Unlike Gaddis, who seems to warm to the situation and gets fairly loosened up with time, Doctorow remains uptight and pedantic throughout. A tough guy. Oh, and by the way, the translations are excellent.

Although this seems contradictory to what I just said, openness appears to be one of the remarkable common features that prevail in the interviews. In spite of Doctorow's rigidity, which can in fact be put down to an uncompromising strictness and precision not only with the critic but himself as well, the fact remains that he did agree to the interview and afterwards to its publication in Hungary – a true achievement on ZAN's part. ZAN also managed to tame Gaddis, and was successful in coming to terms with the other four writers in a manner that reflects both mutual respect and an urge to explore and explicate. He succeeded in putting the authors in a state of mind in which they sensed not only an obligation to satisfy the base information hunger of the everyday reader but also an inner drive to crystallise certain crucial points in critical reception, no matter what their general attitude

towards it. Strangely enough, the parties reach a point in each conversation where, as a result of how ZAN seeks to understand them and their work, the authors are driven to search for responses to their own unanswered questions as well. The questions appear to awaken a need in the interviewees to put into words some sort of self-definition, or describe the process of its evolution without prevarication. A process full of struggles, obviously; and the expectation of the partner luckily coincides here with the speaker's fundamental urge to express this formula – another common feature of the six conversations.

Gaddis does not hesitate to come out with reasons for his reluctance to appear in public as a writer: he says he cannot stand stupid questions and does not think very much of criticism. He claims his resistance stems from the tendency to ask childish chit-chat questions in a talk show fashion, whereas he prefers the focus to be on the work rather than the author. Let us face it: he does have a point there. It suffices to thumb through two volumes of *Interjú! - Nagy írók műhelyében* [Interviews with Great Writers, Budapest: Európa, n.d.] and check out the Anglo-Saxon authors. One cannot be more baffled when coming across questions like "Can you play cards?," "Which is your favourite season?," "What do you have for breakfast?" or "Do you write in the

morning or at night?". These are the type of questions Gaddis ridicules by calling them "Which side of the paper do you write on?" questions. Make no mistake about it, you will be happy to find ZAN crushes that tradition.

In addition to the chance of meeting the six authors, we have an excellent opportunity to get acquainted with ZAN's analytical mind and his tireless drive to interrogate the writers. He makes excuses in advance, saying that he feels bound in his questions to give the reader an angle on the works in question and their context, as a consequence of which his deeply probing questions are at times in sharp contrast to the brief answers. This is especially true for the cynically pragmatic Vonnegut, who relapses into an attitude reminiscent of his characters and habitually shortcuts the interviewer's well-researched abstract questions. Not a wordmonger, not he. Each author refutes ZAN's interpretation once or twice, saying that it is too far-fetched and is aimed at establishing links that conflict with their original intentions; and no doubt, there is sometimes a sense that ZAN intends to push a preconsidered idea a little. The fact that the interviews are edited reinforces this suspicion because any unevenness in the dialogue might create in us the false impression that some remarks and comments are cut out and thus left unreflected, when, in reality, the author is simply hard pressed for time

due to his tight schedule.

Two things kept bothering me throughout the book, and one of them ended up turning into a strong irritation. Firstly, to my taste, ZAN massively overuses italicisation in his collection. I frequently bumped into sentences where two or *even three* words were printed in italics, as if ZAN did not trust us to spot the *really significant* parts in what they (yes, the same goes for his questions) had to say, or he preferred the readers' stresses to coincide with his choices. Secondly, I had a strong sensation of being treated like a high school nincompoop welling up in me at the sight of some of the footnotes. Try as I might, I cannot come to understand why you would want to clarify in a university press publication on world literature the following "obscurities": neuron, mutatis mutandis, carte blanche, euthanasia, fait accompli, par excellence, erratum, dyslexia, Watergate scandal, or Armageddon, to name but a few. I am sure we deserve more credit ab ovo. Particularly irksome are the verbatim definitions imported from Bakos' dictionary of foreign words. On the other hand, uninitiated and underinformed novices are left in the dark as to what the key sentence is in Percy's *The Moviegoer* (p. 49.), which about-to-be-ready novel Vonnegut describes (p. 97-8.), which of his books had been officially burnt and where (p. 116.), and when the Hungarian weekly *Élet és Irodalom* [Life and Literature]

published a debate on where Houdini was born (p. 174.).

As usual, ZAN has again produced true pioneering work. His critical volume precedes the publication of most of the primary literature it is based on: with the exception of Vonnegut and Doctorow, the authors included in ZAN's selection have been hugely neglected both by Hungarian publishing houses and academia, the extreme being William Gaddis, whose work does not seem to be considered worth being introduced to the Hungarian public. As usual, I said, because the lack of corresponding material available in Hungarian has been a major characteristic of ZAN's critical works ever since the second book in the series, the one on Minimalism, which broke into a total critical vacuum, and will be succeeded by the publication of the Hungarian translation of the primary pieces only early next year.

For two reasons, it is a pity that the last interview was reduced to half the length of its original version. First, it would have made nice symmetry to begin and end the book with a seventy-page interview. More importantly, I have found Federman the most likeable writer – or I should use the word "person" because when I say this it is not his artist's credo or fiction theory I recall. ZAN claims the conversation was cut in order to reduce the size of the book, but I must say I do not really see what difference thirty more pages would have

made in a 250-page book. Either way, let us hope that some time in the future we will have access to the full versions of all the interviews as well as more leftover bits and pieces from Zoltán Abádi-Nagy's drawers – first of all, to what he has on Coover and Barth, if I may suggest.

Judit Bakos

Legitimising the Apocryphal?

Tamás Bényei, *Apokrif Iratok. Mágikus realista regényekről* [Apocryphal Texts. Magic Realism in Novels], Orbis Litterarum Series 3, Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 1997.

The term 'magic realism' itself is rather contradictory so far as it interpolates the subjective, the magical, and the spiritual 'mode' within the objective, the realistic, and the physical 'mode' of writing. According to the author the supernatural is 'immanent' in magic realist texts, a 'hidden property of reality,' growing organically out of the represented world.[3] Are they meant to be sacred texts, the apocryphal versions or

simulations of holy books (R. p. 174)? Bényei's compact, well balanced study supplies the reader with an answer to this question among many others.

The introduction, by observing the 'popular' connotations of 'magic realism' – that is, the allusions to the exotic, the fantastic, the unknown – emphasises the need for a closer analysis, a possible rereading of the term, suggesting new approaches to the understanding of this 'mode' of writing. Following the critical canon, Bényei defines the texts of magical realism to be analysed as 'paradigmatic' and 'typical.' There is a wide range of authors and works he labels 'magic realist' out of which his paradigmatic texts will be: García Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981); and the 'typical': Tony Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977), Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* (1984), Graham Swift's *Waterland* (1983).

The author's underlying assumption is that the magic realist 'mode of writing' is a part of the postmodern mode, although the two terms should not be blurred, or understood as synonyms. It is, as he sees it, close to the postmodern novel-poetics elaborated by Linda Hutcheon in the 1980s. Though he accepts the theory that most 'magic realist' texts have been born in a postcolonial context, Bényei emphasises that this mode of writing itself is not necessarily, 'per definitionem' the

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[3]Tamás Bényei, 'Rereading "Magic Realism"' *HJEAS, vol.3, No.1* (1997) p. 152., further referred to as 'R'

made in a 250-page book. Either way, let us hope that some time in the future we will have access to the full versions of all the interviews as well as more leftover bits and pieces from Zoltán Abádi-Nagy's drawers – first of all, to what he has on Coover and Barth, if I may suggest.

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Legitimising the Apocryphal?

Tamás Bényei, *Apokrif Iratok. Mágikus realista regényekről* [Apocryphal Texts. Magic Realism in Novels], Orbis Litterarum Series 3, Debrecen: Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 1997.

The term 'magic realism' itself is rather contradictory so far as it interpolates the subjective, the magical, and the spiritual 'mode' within the objective, the realistic, and the physical 'mode' of writing. According to the author the supernatural is 'immanent' in magic realist texts, a 'hidden property of reality,' growing organically out of the represented world.[3] Are they meant to be sacred texts, the apocryphal versions or

simulations of holy books (R. p. 174)? Bényei's compact, well balanced study supplies the reader with an answer to this question among many others.

The introduction, by observing the 'popular' connotations of 'magic realism' – that is, the allusions to the exotic, the fantastic, the unknown – emphasises the need for a closer analysis, a possible rereading of the term, suggesting new approaches to the understanding of this 'mode' of writing. Following the critical canon, Bényei defines the texts of magical realism to be analysed as 'paradigmatic' and 'typical.' There is a wide range of authors and works he labels 'magic realist' out of which his paradigmatic texts will be: García Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981); and the 'typical': Tony Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977), Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* (1984), Graham Swift's *Waterland* (1983).

The author's underlying assumption is that the magic realist 'mode of writing' is a part of the postmodern mode, although the two terms should not be blurred, or understood as synonyms. It is, as he sees it, close to the postmodern novel-poetics elaborated by Linda Hutcheon in the 1980s. Though he accepts the theory that most 'magic realist' texts have been born in a postcolonial context, Bényei emphasises that this mode of writing itself is not necessarily, 'per definitionem' the

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[3] Tamás Bényei, 'Rereading "Magic Realism"' *HJEAS, vol.3, No.1* (1997) p. 152., further referred to as 'R'

monopoly of the literature of peripheries, minorities, oppositions (postcolonial or feminist) or of any specific geographical region (Latin America, the past colonies; pp. 15-16).

The first chapter surveys the history of the use of the term 'magic realism' going back to the 1920s when the term was first used in Europe, in the context of art history, by Franz Roh, the German art historian, in his book *Nach-Expressionismus: Magischer Realismus* (p. 21). The ambiguous nature of the term used in the European context, for paintings mainly, was quite different from that of the Latin American usage, for literature, from the late 1920s, and later on, from the postcolonial and postmodern notion of 'magic realism' in the 1980s. Bényei agrees with Brian McHale and Linda Hutcheon that the postmodern features of ontological fear, carnivalistic textuality, the polyphony of discursive realities can all be found in agreement with the characteristics of the so called 'magic realist' texts (pp. 45-46).

In the second chapter Bényei redefines magic realism as a mode of writing in his discussion of the aspects of the fantastic as critical heritage, its appearance in inversion and 'adjunction,' magic and reality; the rhetorics of magic: causality and figurativity; the pragmatics of magic: storytelling; writing and speaking (narrating); genealogy; magic as the transgression of taboos; magic as apocryphal and the magic word.

The rhetoric inversion between fantastic and real, supernatural and ordinary, is a basic strategy in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. In Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* the first sentence, – "I was born in Bombay … once upon a time"– in Bényei's analysis, already performs two conflicting codes, the realistic and the fabulating (p. 64). It is rather the subversion of boundaries, the use of hyperboles, the adjunctive logic of magic realist texts whereby the nivellation and not simply the inversion of the elements at the level of narration takes place. The miracles are "self-sustained, taking place independently of the other miracles, neither reinforcing them nor invalidating them" (R. p. 154).

Magic and realism should not necessarily be read in the term of 'magic realism' as an oxymoron. If one reads realism as 'mimesis,' its meaning will correlate with 'magic' (p. 74). Magic itself is representational, the magical activity is largely mimetic. One may as well say that mimesis is in itself magical: "the wonder of mimesis lies in the copy drawing on the character and power of the original, to the point whereby the representation may even assume that character and that power" (Taussig, qtd. p. 74; R. p. 156). Thus magic and realism have, instead of an oxymoronic, a rather complementary, or supplementary, 'adjunctive' relationship (p. 77). There is no synthesis, however, between the two 'worlds,' those of magic and realism, they

are not two alternatives (pp. 79-80).

Magical figurativity influences magical causality. Bényei goes back to Nietzsche's thoughts on causality: "In the phenomenalism of the 'inner world' we invert the chronological order of cause and effect. The fundamental fact of 'inner experience' is that the cause is imagined after the effect has taken place" (*The Will to Truth*, quoted, p. 84; R. pp. 160-161). The interpretation of magic (metaphorical and metonymical) in Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Cassirer's concept of the magic of language are among a series of other antecedents also considered. Magic as such cannot be translated to conceptual language. The 'immanent transcendence' of magic can be understood as both an interpretation of the world and a praxis, an interpretation of the world that is a praxis (p. 95; R. p. 167). "Magic provides a language or grammar by means of which the elements that make up the world can be inserted into a meaningful system" (p. 97; R. p. 168).

The ontological and pragmatic features of the language of magic realist narratives come to the focus when one observes magic not as an interpretation of the world but as an activity. "On the thematic level magic realist narratives are full of activities that can be called magical" (p. 99; R. p. 169). There is name magic, love magic, black magic, prophecy, alchemy, incantations and spells, witches, magicians; there is stage magic, confidence trick, and where the magical activity is a "verbal act," that is a possible "selfreflexive metaphor" of storytelling (p. 99; R. p. 170). There is an anthropological interest in the act of narration, not as an aesthetic self-reflexivity, but as "a broader curiosity concerning narrative understanding and the narrative transaction in general" (p. 100; R. p. 170). "The primary objective of story-telling can be persuasion, understanding, seduction, confession and therapy," though in some cases it can be of existential importance, that is a 'matter of life and death' (in *Waterland* and *Midnight's Children*; pp. 101-102; R. p. 170). "Narrative equals life, the absence of narrative, death" (Todorov's *Poetics*. qtd. p. 103; R. p. 171). Storytelling can become a "life-metaphor," or elsewhere, more profanely, a "magical trick of performance."

The dramatising of the act of narration can be linked with the imitation of the oral tradition. The author claims that the heritage of oral storytelling, that is, its imitation, or illusion, what Bakhtin called 'skaz' is only simulating the oral tradition (p. 105). With writing comes the absence of living memory (Derrida, qtd. p. 107), orality is living memory itself and life without living memory does not exist (cf. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*). Writing itself is the loss of the subject (R. Barthes), the trope of forgetting, of loss, of death, and at the same time, through a postcolonial

understanding, it can imply symbolically a transgressive meaning as well (p. 108). In the texts of magic realism the difference between the subjectivity created within the narrative text and the living presence expressed in the oral narration appears at a linguistic level.

The notion of genealogy is interpreted, relying upon the concepts of Nietzsche, Derrida, and Foucault, as an archetypal form of the story, a paradigmatic form of the story of origins. Bényei concludes that in the magic realist novels genealogy is basically a figurative space of the search for self-identity and that of origins, where the code of naming and that of the body meet. He also claims that genealogy is the ambiguous space of writing, the space of security of belonging to a family, being part of a family tree, and, at the same time, it is 'the empty space,' the figurative space of insecurity, of a loss of identity, a non-presence. The written text (that is, the names themselves, the family tree) is recited (here the written narrative and the oral narration mingle) and becomes finite, liturgical, scriptualised (p. 121). Thus takes place the rite of the losing of identity. On the other hand, the body can also become the symbolic space of genealogical identity (cf. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*). Bényei uses here the notions of 'bodywriting' and 'bodyreading' referring to Michael Ragussis's theory that the signs on the individual body will be symbolic and will

contain all the 'texts' of the family in a latent form (p. 123).

Magic is traditionally a transgressive human activity; through magic, with the help of the magical rite, man can get in touch with the supernatural, get beyond the profane, 'thiswordly' existence. Thus Bényei says that magic conceived as an act of rite can stand as a metaphor for transgression. Hybridity (incest), carnivalisation and textual excess, that is, hyperbolic figurativity, narrative excess, a tendency toward all-inclusiveness, are the characteristic features of magic realist texts the author finds to be relevant and obvious markers of magical transgression (R. p. 172). As Bényei remarks, in the storytelling code of magic realist novels there is an emphasis on the binarism of history and storytelling, that is, the written, 'official' story versus the fictional, narrated story. Magicality is not only the trope for the rhetoricity of these texts but can stand for their performativity too (p. 138). The "desire to push outward, to project forms and figurative strategies outside, connects the magical figurativity and the performative pragmatics of these texts in the transgressive effort to cross the boundary that separates language from the world" (p. 140; R. p. 172).

"The multitude of magical-figurative links established between elements of the narrated world – that is, the semiotisation of the entire fictional universe – are features that simulate the

structure of a sacred text" (p. 140; R. p. 172). Declaring this, Bényei explores the underlying difference between the sacred text and that of magic realism. The textual, rhetorical, pragmatic characteristics of sacred texts are borrowed, and thus, the profane, historical existence "begins to resemble sacred existence, at least in a formal, structural sense" (p. 140; R. p. 173). "Several magic realist texts conceive of themselves as sacred texts, or rather as apocryphal rewritings of sacred texts, borrowing their thematic, structural, rhetorical, and performative features but, of course, lacking their absolute authority of signification and presence" (p. 141; R. p. 173). Sacred texts, that is, "the holy book is the archetype of the book as totality: it names/creates/reveals the world in its totality" (p. 144; R. p. 173). Magic "is a fallen trope of the performative capability of sacred language" (p. 145; R. p. 174).

After the theoretical chapters the author turns to 'practice' and offers most interesting and carefully elaborated analyses of the chosen novels according to special categories, selected from the characteristics of magic realist texts demonstrated previously. The chapter 'The Book of Meanings' explores Latin American magic realism in García Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The central category is presence, and the analysis focuses on how it is questioned in the fictional world by the apocalyptic character of time and history in the novel. The novel postulates and then questions the logocentric opposition, and uses writing as the trope for non-presence, for death that is already present in the oral narration. Writing is present as 'catastrophe,' the losing of memory and presence. The author looks for possible centres the text could offer to be organised around, like the cosmos (the world), sound, repetition, oppositions, none of which, as discussed, proves to satisfy the expectations.

In *Song of Solomon* – analysed in the chapter 'The Book of Names' – the logocentric opposition is postulated and questioned again. The opposition of speech and writing is explored in the contexts of self identity, name-giving, genealogy and magic.

It is magical causality and figurativity that Bényei examines in *Midnight's Children* – in 'The Book of Salim' chapter. The author reads the novel as an allegory according to Paul de Man's understanding where allegory is a metatrope that implies and at the same time questions totalising figurative systems. The figurative systems Bényei focuses on are based on the tropes of typology, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche. He also examines the apocryphal features of the text, the rhetorical, figurative, and performative strategies of the imitation of the totalising sacred book and the problem of allegory and imitation. Then he turns

to the description of the role of magic, magical rite.

In the chapter 'The Book of Clowns' *Nights at the Circus* is analysed centring on the category of self identity. Bényei disagrees with the accepted critical reading of the novel that regards the text as a feminist pamphlet. The clowns, he argues, play an important role in the novel's questioning of subjectivity, the model of self identity offered by the novel itself, in the form of performance. Magic, conceived as performance, 'stage' magic, can stand as the most important self-metaphor of the novel. Writing, note-taking, read as a metaphor for fixing reality, is opposed to oral narration (p. 332). The confidence trick, which is a central element of the novel, is played, first and foremost, of course, upon the reader.

Waterland, discussed in the chapter 'The Book of Wounds,' offers repetition as the central category of analysis. In the novel's narrative logic all the events are wounds, traumas, the repetitions of previous events. The novel thus has an apocalyptic time dimension. Bényei explores the act of narration as the symbolic repetition of the narrated events with the help of the psychoanalytical transference model. Repetition also works with magic causality, it brings defacement and wounds (as opposed to Garcia Marquez's novel). Storytelling appears as the foundation of the tradition-preserving act of speech; naming and storytelling become the foundation of knowledge, in the same way as in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Storytelling, the selection of repetition, however, has the function of forgetting too. The hermeneutic search for authenticity of existence, first at a historical then at an individual level is, doomed to failure.[4]

Bényei's flexible use of definitions provide a panoramic outlook, attempting to widen further the circle of cultural and literary phenomena studied.

Among the many important merits of *Apokrif Iratok*, the most challenging one, perhaps, is its extended use of so far largely fixed categories and definitions. The author's all inclusive historical and theoretical knowledge of his subject and his brilliantly fresh, manifold and energetic arguments throughout the analyses convince of the success of his challenge, of the validity of his rereading.

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[4]Tamás Bényei, 'Narrative and Repetition in "Waterland"' *British and American Studies, vol.1, No.1* (1996) p. 112.