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Editing Shakespeare for the Stage

A comparative analysis of Act I Scene iv of *Romeo and Juliet*

After the text-based editorial approach of the 17th and 18th centuries, from the end of the 19th century, and even more from the middle of the nineteen-seventies, more and more scholars turned towards the study of stage directions. They started to discover their origins, their meanings, and their impact on the understanding of Shakespeare's plays. These researches led to the fact that Shakespeare criticism could no longer remain within the limited realms of literature, but it had to involve other disciplines such as cultural studies and theatre history in its researches too. The traditions of Elizabethan theatre and the relationship between theatre and literature came into the focus of research. This paper gives a comparative analysis of stage directions in one particular scene, the ballroom-scene (I.iv) of *Romeo and Juliet*, as they are presented in six prominent 20th-century editions. This study is to prove that nearly all the problems an editor has to face are theatrical in nature and therefore it is necessary to re-establish the relation between page and stage and to make performance-based editions that are useful to theatrical personnel as well as academics.

Around the turn of the millennium, the editorial board of the Arden Shakespeare started working on a new scheme to rediscover and re-establish the relation between page and stage, academic research and theatre. They observe and analyse several prominent 20th-century productions of the Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford-upon-Avon and use all their observations for the editing of a new series called *Shakespeare at Stratford Series*.[1] While in a classical critical edition the focus of interest would be mainly on the bibliographical and textual his-

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1. So far the following volumes have been published: *Richard III*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Merchant of Venice* in November 2001, *Romeo and Juliet* and *As You Like It* in September and December 2002, and *The Tempest* in March 2003.

tory of a given play, the editors of this series concentrate on the narrative focus, the themes and characters, and the scenery and costume in the mirror of stage productions.

In the case of Shakespeare's plays – or of any plays, in fact – theatre and academic research should not be two separate fields since for the more profound understanding of the plays theatre people as well as scholars do need the exchange of thoughts and experience. The first step in this co-operation could probably be that editors should analyse performances for their editions, and directors and actors should consult critical editions for their productions. Another step could then be the sharing of ideas, and a third step the making of collaborative editions beneficial to both scholars and theatre people – and hopefully to the interested readership too.

What literary scholarship can give to the furtherance of communication between theory and practice, page and stage is to provide the historical background information to the plays: to explore the several theatrical and linguistic layers of the play-texts (with all the Renaissance connotations), to map out the characteristics and facilities of the Shakespearean stage as much as possible, and to give analyses of the plays from a literary perspective.

This paper wishes to contribute to the understanding of play-texts by scrutinising the stage directions and thus unravelling problematic points of one particular scene, the ballroom-scene (Act I Scene iv) of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The reason for choosing this is that this scene has a broad spectrum of stage actions and it is divided into two by most editors although it is evident from the Quartos that Romeo and his friends would march from the street to the Capulet house without any change of scene on the Renaissance stage – thus retaining the fluidity of action. *Romeo and Juliet* is unusually rich in stage directions, and it survives in two Quartos, the first of which is, in all probability, a theatrical copy. This play, because of its special textual qualities, has a very rich editorial history, which makes it a good example to show the shift in editorial attitude from the literary to the performance-based.

The paper is divided into two parts. The first, theoretical part is going to discuss the differences and meeting points between theatre and academic research. The second, more pragmatic part is going to analyse stage directions – their changing editorial treatment and their effect on the production of a play – in I.iv of *Romeo and Juliet*.

1 Theoretical background

1.1 The editorial history and treatment of stage directions

The idea of watching performances and basing editions on them did not spring out of the blue, of course. The printed versions of Shakespeare's plays were first based on performances in his own time. It would be an exaggeration to say that the editorial history of Shakespeare started in the Renaissance since editorial awareness as such simply did not exist. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the editions of the 16th and 17th centuries were performance-based, and that the editorial attitude from the 1700s onwards diverged towards a more literary direction.

In the 18th century, one derivative folio followed the other. For example, the edition of Nicholas Rowe (1709), the first editor known by name, was a reprint of the Fourth Folio (1685). He was followed by many others like Alexander Pope (1728), Lewis Theobald (1733), Samuel Johnson (1765), Edward Capell (1768), George Steevens (1778), and Edmond Malone (1790), whose merits are invaluable since they established the set of editorial principles, and therefore the classical editorial history of Shakespeare starts with them. This is a positive result of the English literary enlightenment. A negative result, on the other hand, is that the theatre-centred approach of the Renaissance receded into the background. Most of the eighteenth-century editors were poets or literary critics, consequently their editorial practice was merely literary – and not without faults. They concentrated on the creation of pure Shakespearean texts in the most elevated sense, but, as Gary Taylor summarises it, they did not know "much about the circumstances of performance or the mechanics of textual transmission in Shakespeare's time; none had a coherent textual theory." [2]

Inspired by the idea of creating a perfect Shakespearean play, from the 18th century, it became widespread to invent new stage directions on the basis of the text. This editorial practice prevailed in the 19th century too, and resulted in several kinds of stage directions, usually one following the other, at places where the Quartos had nothing. For instance, at the beginning of II.i when Romeo enters the Capulet orchard, the following directions ranged: *Exit* (Rowe, 1709);

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2. Gary Taylor, "General Introduction," in *Textual Companion*, general ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 55.

leaps the Wall (Capell, 1768); *He climbs the wall, and leaps down* (Malone, 1790); and *He approaches the house* (White, 1857–66). The inventors of these stage directions believed that they had improved the play-text this way. But actually they had created a literary text with a location confined to one single possibility while Shakespeare's text reserves the symbolism and plurality of the Renaissance stage where everything was possible because nothing was visible. On Shakespeare's stage there was neither a wall, nor an orchard or a house; Romeo was primarily *on stage*, and he created the location through his words in the audience's imagination. [3] We will see that, with the growing interest in rediscovering Shakespeare's theatre, twentieth-century editors returned to the authoritative sources, and often preferred adding no stage directions at all to inventing ones perhaps alien to Shakespeare.

It was the Cambridge edition, published in 1862–6, edited by W. G. Clark, W. A. Wright, and J. Glover, that had to come to illuminate an important textual aspect of Shakespeare's plays: the origins of the early editions. This edition was the first to collate the sixteenth and seventeenth-century editions of the plays, and to define most texts as derivative or substantive by origin. Their efforts showed the way towards the professional academic research of Shakespeare, but it was not until the 20th century that even more significant steps were taken for the better understanding of Shakespeare.

W. W. Greg and R. B. McKerrow, whose names mark the beginning of the "new bibliography," placed the bibliographical researches of Shakespeare on new bases. Their activities coincided with the appearance of the Oxford English Dictionary that made it possible to understand Shakespeare's language more profoundly. They paid special attention to the rethinking of editorial practice, and examined meticulously all the contemporary materials available of the plays. Although not all their results had been put into editorial practice – which still followed in many aspects the editorial conventions of the earlier centuries – Greg and McKerrow represented a new scholarly attitude. Their attitude, however, was still mainly literary and text-based.

By the end of the 1970s, textual critics became aware of the significance and consequences of the fact that the plays had been written for the stage. This idea

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3. On the emblematic and symbolic nature of the Renaissance stage see Attila Atilla Kiss, "A tanúság szemiotikája az emblematikus színházban," in *Színház-szemiográfia: Az angol és olasz reneszánsz dráma és színház ikonográfiája és szemiotikája*, ed. Katalin Demcsák and Attila Atilla Kiss (Szeged: JATEPress, 1999; Ikonológia és Műértelmezés 8), pp. 263–265.

started to develop simultaneously in literary scholars' essays and editors' texts. By this time, the focus of theatre semiotics [4] – a new field of study growing out of the structuralist and semiotic tradition of the first half of the century – turned from the study of signs of the drama-text to the interpretation of theatrical sign-systems of the performance-text. [5] The identification and analysis of these sign-systems (that range from the actor's through the visual and acoustic to the textual ones – only to mention the main categories) [6] made it possible to understand more of the complex communication and meaning-creating process that takes place during a performance. Along with the findings of theatre semiotics (e.g. Jiři Veltrusky, Petr Bogatyrev and Tadeusz Kowzan), the rethinking of plays as performance pieces (Stanley Wells), the implications of stage directions (Alan C. Dessen), and the rise of performance criticism (Bernard Beckerman) all had significant influence on the editing of the Shakespeare plays.

Romeo and Juliet is a good example of this: a definite line can be drawn between the editions before 1980 and after. The 1980 Arden edition by Brian Gibbons is the last edition that can afford to disregard the performative approach. The shift towards this new approach can be seen, for example, in the cover notes to G. Blakemore Evans's 1984 edition of the New Cambridge Shakespeare, which advertises itself as follows:

> The New Cambridge Shakespeare aims to be of value to a new generation of playgoers and readers who wish to enjoy fuller access to Shakespeare's poetic and dramatic art. While offering ample academic guidance it reflects current critical interests and is more attentive than some earlier editions have been to the realisation of the plays on the stage, and to their social and cultural settings.

The real break-through, however, was the Oxford Shakespeare edition of the *Complete Works* in 1986, edited by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, and William Montgomery. Their volume marks the beginning of a new era in editorial thinking for they based their researches on more theatrical grounds.

Wells, talking of the plays, claims that "it is in performance that the plays lived and had their being." This implies that "it is impossible to recover exactly

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4. On the history of theatre semiotics see Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theater and Drama* (London: Methuen, 1980).

5. Cf. Kiss, p. 250.

6. Cf. Martin Esslin, *A dráma vetületei*, trans. Rita Fober *et. al* (Szeged: JATEPress, 1998), p. 103. (Martin Esslin, *The Field of Drama* [London: Methuen, 1988].)

the form in which they stood either in his [i.e. Shakespeare's] own original manuscripts or in those manuscripts, or transcripts of them, after they had been prepared for use in the theatre." [7] For the Shakespeare plays where only one copy exists we cannot claim for certain that it is the authoritative copy. Today the theory that Elizabethan drama is the product of more than one hand prevails. In Shakespeare's time there was no copyright, so from the author to the printer basically anyone could interpolate anything into the copy of a play. This means that we have no hard evidence that all stage directions are included in the existing copies, and even if they are, they might not be authoritative. And if so, editors can take the challenge, with careful consideration, to insert more stage directions in order to make the text more explicit. This brings about the problem of the editor's responsibility.

Wells deals with this matter in his essay, "The Editor and the Theatre: Editorial Treatment of Stage Directions." [8] According to Wells, the conscientious editor should always bear in mind that he edits a text written for the stage, and only those changes and emendations should be made which serve the better understanding of the play. The Complete Oxford edition, for example, uses "broken brackets" (e.g. [*The music plays again, and the guests dance*]) instead of the traditional brackets, and Wells explains that with the use of these they want to indicate that their stage directions are not ultimate solutions, only the editor's suggestions, and as such they can be challenged or omitted or accepted.

The editor's responsibility is difficult to define. Editing is creating: editors, through their ideas and decisions, necessarily create a new text. Therefore editing is inevitably subjective (like all creative activities). Alan C. Dessen emphasises that an editor's decisions can have a great influence on other people's interpretations of a play. Discussing the omission of an Elizabethan stage direction in a prominent edition he claims that "Since many readers concentrate upon the text rather than the notes, such an editorial decision (especially in this prestigious series) can have a greater impact upon future interpreters than an equivalent choice by an actor or a critic." [9] Consequently, editors, even though subjective, should be very cautious about their decisions.

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7. Stanley Wells, "General Introduction," in *The Complete Works*, general ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. xxxix.

8. In *Re-Editing Shakespeare for the Modern Reader* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

9. Alan C. Dessen, *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters* (Cambridge: CUP, 1984), p. 4.

1.2 The problems of staging

Before moving on to the analytical part of the paper, let me give a brief summary of some intriguing issues concerning stage production in comparison with the editor's text. The stage obviously provides a more authentic venue for stage directions than do editions. As a matter of fact, the problems present themselves in a completely different manner. The editor's question (of what a stage direction should contain) gets narrowed down for the director to one single aspect: whether the stage direction is feasible or not. If it cannot be put into practice, it is simply omitted.

Editors interpret the works through texts. Directors interpret the works through performances. W. B. Worthen, rethinking our understanding of authority and performance, distinguishes three realisations of a play: the work, the text, and the performance. Defining these terms and their relationships to one another he claims that "Performance dramatizes the complex, concrete decisions made to produce the immaterial work in a given material state (the printed text, the text on the page, the book)."[10] He also shows these connections graphically: W – T1, T2, T3 . . . Tn; and Tx – P1, P2, P3 . . . Pn. That is neither texts nor performances represent Shakespeare's works in themselves. The plays were written for the theatre, consequently their written copies are based on performances. These copies have been edited in various ways by different editors thus multiplying the number of existing copies, which are used by directors to create performances, which again have an impact on future editions. This is the circulation of Shakespeare's works.

Stage directions do not belong strictly to the corpus of the Shakespeare oeuvre. As for the main text, editors' aim is to recover the original version as much as possible, but for the stage directions they have fewer demands. They treat them more freely. Similarly, directors deal with stage directions rather liberally. Roger Apfelbaum, in his doctoral dissertation, shows that there are basically two types of directors: one who scrutinises the different editions meticulously to find various interpretations which he can finally build into his own, and the other that starts his directing with the pruning of all directions from the script.[11]

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10. W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), p. 16.

11. Roger Apfelbaum, "Introduction," in *Author's Pen or Actor's Voice* (Doctoral thesis at The University of Birmingham, 1996).

The scrutinizing director wants to understand all the possible interpretations that settled on a given play in the last 400 years in order to choose the best possible solutions from which he can create his own interpretation of the play. He does so not because of the lack of imagination or originality, but because he wants to discover as many layers of interpretation as possible to possess an extremely rich bank from which he can develop his own conception.

Linda McJannet explains that the latter type finds stage directions unnecessary because he believes that they restrict his artistic creativity: "Whereas the scholar values directions as evidence of the original staging or the 'virtual performance' inscribed in the text, performers often see them as mere relics of past performances and obstacles to the exercise of their creative freedom." [12] Obviously, this type of director is wrong about the judgement of stage directions in the text. He treats the text merely as a skeleton or a starting-point from which he can create his own original work. But there is no such thing as *original* work. Even most creative directors necessarily draw their inspiration from the past, and this raises the question of where the historical boundary is from which performances still affect their work, and from which everything before can be regarded as "mere relics." There is no such point. Even the Creation has left its mark on our thinking, let alone the Greeks. This is the basis for Worthen's argument too: there is an eternal interaction between texts and performances that all give interpretations of the immaterial work. In terms of performing arts, there are no old and new forms, only alternatives which come to the foreground and then move into the background again in the course of time, and consequently there is no real reason not to take into consideration the original stage directions (or even the invented ones). This argumentation underpins the importance of making workable editions.

Nevertheless even if a director decides to use the text's stage directions (hoping to discover something of the Renaissance stage conventions), necessarily he has to observe the work through the editor's glasses. Dessen argues that the "readers (e.g., theatrical professionals) who do read the plays as scripts often end up viewing the original effects through invisible barriers set up (often unwittingly) by the modern editor." [13] Besides the restrictions of the edited text, the director also has to face twentieth-century presuppositions of theatrical condi-

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12. Linda McJannet, *The Voice of Elizabethan Stage Directions: The Evolution of a Theatrical Code* (London: Associated University Presses, 1999), p. 17.
13. Dessen, p. 7.

tions and our prevailing logic. Theatrical as well as human logic was remarkably different in the Elizabethan times. Dessen notes that

> If the language of the theatre does include more than the words on the page, then editor, director, and critic should recognize that the on-stage language available to Shakespeare included terms and phrases that made excellent sense then but at best are dimly understood today. [14]

Whether a director takes the gap of time into account or not depends again on which type of director he belongs to. The pruning type will definitely have no problem with interpreting a text through the wide gap of time: he will follow his own instincts and ideas disregarding the original directions. The scrutinizing type, on the other hand, will probably debate how to interpret, for example, the dated addressing in I.iv of *Romeo* (*ah sirrah*) which can be a self-addressing, addressing of an older person, or a younger one.

So far I have discussed similarities and meeting points of editors' and directors' works, and I partly share Beckerman's view that on most questions of Shakespeare's works editors and directors will probably never agree:

> Whereas for the scholar Shakespeare's medium is primarily verbal, for the director, as he works in the contemporary theatre, it is comprehensive: gesture having as much validity and force as speech, both being expressive manifestations of that elusive phenomenon known as 'action.' Thus, while the scholar's activity in regard to Shakespeare is essentially *protective*, the director's activity is *explorative*. Starting from these fundamentally conflicting premises, it is no wonder that these two lovers of Shakespeare frequently disagree, that an uneasy truce exists between them, and that the claims of each remain unreconciled. [15]

Yet, despite the fundamental discrepancy between the directors' explorative and the editors' protective attitudes, I believe that the very challenge for editors of the twenty-first century is to create editions that are protective *and* explorative at once. How can this be accomplished? Shakespeare's text, the main corpus has to be protected. Stage directions can be handled (with careful consideration) more freely, but they still have to keep to the Elizabethan staging conditions.

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14. Dessen, p. 162.

15. Bernard Beckerman, "The Flowers of Fancy, the Jerks of Invention, or, Directorial Approaches to Shakespeare," in *Shakespeare 1971*, ed. Clifford Leech and J. M. R. Margeson (Toronto and Buffalo, 1972), p. 202.

Regarding these two things (main corpus and directions) the editor's work is protective. The introduction and footnotes (that a critical edition also contains) can however provide room for exploration: the editor can include theatrical pieces of evidence and solutions for certain problematic parts of the text with the help of modern performances. The aim of such notes is obviously not to explore more of the Renaissance staging, which today's productions cannot show anyway, but to enrich and update our understanding of Shakespeare's plays.

2   A comparative analysis of stage directions in I.iv of *Romeo and Juliet*

Romeo and Juliet is one of those "problematic" Shakespeare plays that have so-called "bad" quartos. [16] Scholars generally agree that *Romeo* Q1 is not a typical "bad" quarto, because its text coincides with the "good" quarto (Q2) to a great extent, and it borrows much less from other plays than other "bad" quartos. Critics' theories and opinions vary as to the genesis of Q1 (1597) and Q2 (1599), and the connection between them has also been a subject of debate. There are only two hypotheses that scholars generally agree on. The one is that Q1 was intended for the stage, and the other is that Q2 was printed from Shakespeare's "foul papers."

Most editors use the second quarto as a copy text when editing the play because it is poetically more elaborate, but since it cannot be established for certain to what extent or in what way the two quartos of *Romeo* are authorial, there is no real argument against using Q1 as a copy text along with Q2. The stage directions of Q1 accurately represent the action that occurred on stage, it has more elaborate and descriptive stage directions than Q2, and this feature makes it an excellent material for the modern editor.

This scene consists of two parts: Romeo and his friends prepare for the Capulet ball in the street, then they enter the bustling Capulet house that is

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16. The distinction between "good" and "bad" quartos was first suggested by A. W. Pollard (*Shakespeare Folios and Quartos: A Study in the Bibliography of Shakespeare's Plays 1594–1685* [London: Methuen, 1909]). Kathleen O. Irace (*Reforming the 'Bad' Quartos: Performance and Provenance of Six Shakespearean First Editions* [Newark, Del., London, and Toronto, 1994]) argues that the so-called "bad" quartos are from certain aspects (e.g. considering stage directions) better than their "good" counterparts, and therefore Pollard's designation is inappropriate. Irace suggests "short quarto" instead. This name, however, also has its weak point for "short" quartos are often longer than their "long" counterparts.

ready to introduce Juliet to the world of masquerades with all the ladies and guests, music and dance, and Capulet, the perfect host, of course.

To discuss this rather long scene (257 lines in the 2000 Oxford Shakespeare edition), I divided it into nine smaller episodes for the sake of easier handling. I will systematically compare six prominent editions of the 20th century by John Dover Wilson (Cambridge: CUP, 1955), George Walton Williams (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1964), Brian Gibbons (The Arden Shakespeare, 1980), G. Blakemore Evans (Cambridge: CUP, 1984), John Jowett (Cambridge: Clarendon Press, 1986), and Jill L. Levenson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). [17] In my comparative analysis I will also refer to the first two Quartos of the text. [18]

There are two basic editorial conventions that concern this scene. The first is the use of scene-divisions. The ballroom-scene is a long sequence of different events which are represented in the first and the second Quartos as a continuous flow without the clearing of the stage. Nevertheless, precisely because of its length and variety, most editors, following Steevens (1773), introduce a scene-division between the maskers' dialogue and the entrance of the servants, which may seem obvious at first sight, but in fact causes several editorial problems. Editors' opinions differ about how this scene should be staged – and therefore edited.

This scene-division is supported and inspired by the fact that the maskers' episode takes place in *A street before Capulet's house* (Theobald, 1733) while the servants appear in *A hall in Capulet's house* (Theobald, 1733). Therefore the change of locations may induce the change of scenes. In Shakespeare's theatre, however, there were probably no scene-changes. Q1, in which the servants' episode is missing, reads *Enter old* Capulet *with the Ladies* (C2v) immediately after Romeo's last words in the street. Q2 reads *They march about the Stage, and Servingmen come forth with Napkins* (C2v). Neither Quarto has exit and re-enter for Romeo and his friends. Wilson notes, agreeing with Chambers, [19] that "marching about" was "a stage-convention to signify a change of locality." He

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17. In this paper I will use Jill L. Levenson's edition as a reference point if not indicated otherwise.

18. *Romeo and Juliet 1597*, ed. Jill L. Levenson (facsimile edition, 2000) and *Romeo and Juliet 1599*, ed. W. W. Greg (facsimile edition, 1966).

19. E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford: OUP, 1923, Volume iii) pp. 99–100 and 38; 117 n5.

adds, however, that "since we are supposed to pass from the street into Capulet's hall, a change of locality . . . is necessary in a reader's text." Thus Wilson makes the maskers exit at this point: *"they march into the house."* Williams, in his "Staging Notes," also elaborates on the authentic staging practice of an Elizabethan public playhouse, yet he retains the traditional I.iv–I.v division too "for convenience of reference." He inserts [*and stand aside*] for the maskers into the Q2-direction. Gibbons also employs scene-division here (without changing the original direction), and does not question the validity of this editorial convention. Evans also uses scene-division, and follows Williams in his stage direction. Jowett, similarly to Wilson, clears the stage with *They march about the stage and* [*exeunt*].

Levenson is the only one who retains the original fluidity, and refers to Alan C. Dessen who interprets the lack of "marching about the stage" in the Q1-direction as follows:

> The shorter text [Q1] . . . does not include a march about the stage and does not bring on any servants; rather, Romeo's line is followed immediately by '*Enter old* Capulet *with the Ladies*,' saying 'Welcome Gentlemen, welcome Gentlemen.' The effect in Q1 is therefore comparable but simpler and more direct, with fewer personnel required, a more abrupt change of place, and no specifying of physical action by the masquers to suggest, however elliptically, a movement from street to house. In both quartos, then, the ball comes to the masquers; in neither do the masquers *exeunt* and *re-enter* to a new place. [20]

Levenson discusses the evidence of promptbooks too: "performances have treated the shift in various ways. . . . Many prompt books omit the servants' dialogue (not in Q1); and most have the masquers exit here, re-entering for the ball." She also remarks in brackets that the expression "march about" is "ambiguous, because the preposition means both 'round the outside of' and 'across over,'" and therefore this direction allows more than one interpretation.

The second basic editorial convention is the use of location, which has been kept up since the eighteenth-century editions. As it has been expounded earlier, it was only in the nineteen-seventies that bibliographers started to ignore locations on the grounds that "they are the invention of editors and often obscure or

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20. A. C. Dessen, "Q1 *Romeo and Juliet* and Elizabethan Theatrical Vocabulary," in *Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet*,' ed. J. L. Halio (Newark, Del., 1995), p. 115.

contradict the principles and practices of the Elizabethan stage." [21] From the six editions under discussion, only Wilson uses locations. Williams's edition, nine years later, is a special case because it is a semi-facsimile edition of *Romeo* based on Q2 and completed with the editor's directions and notes, and therefore it does not use locations. The idea of re-printing the original quarto and providing "Staging Notes" in an appendix shows how the editorial approach gradually changed direction. Since the Arden Shakespeare edition (1980), critical editions have all disregarded locations, and included them only in the collation. Popular editions, however, still often use them.

2.1 Romeo and his company's preparation for the ball (I.iv.1–112)

When we meet them, Romeo and his friends, Mercutio and Benvolio, and other maskers are in the street (*Without Capulet's house* as J. D. Wilson inserts at the beginning of this scene). The second quarto prints: *Enter Romeo, Mercutio, Benuolio, with fiue or sixe other Maskers, torchbearers.* This direction gives a permissive number for the on-stage players of which there are two possible explanations: the playwright when writing the play either did not know how many hired men would be available for the play, or it was simply not important to him since the point was not the number of the maskers and torchbearers but their presence as attendants on stage.

The stage direction in Q1 reads *Enter Maskers with Romeo and a Page.* Supposing that the compiler of this quarto arranged the play for tour for a reduced cast, we can assume that the word *Maskers* stands for the four speaking parts, and the *Page* (who can possibly hold a torch) stands for the five or six masquers of Q2.

In the Q2 direction there is no "*and*" between the two last words. This induced some editors to believe that the two groups are the same. Levenson cites R. B. McKerrow's argument that "this permissive Q2 direction does not require *torchbearers* as well as *masquers.*" The same idea is adopted in Jowett's edition: *Enter Romeo, Mercutio, and Benvolio, as masquers, with fiue or six other masquers,* [*bearing a drum and torches*]. Jowett's direction, the most detailed of the six editions observed here, is interesting for two reasons. Traditionally, editors agree that considering the usual 12–14 players of an Elizabethan company Shakespeare's demand for extras is excessive. This corresponds with McKerrow's

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21. Gibbons, p. 26.

opinion which is endorsed by Jowett too, and therefore Jowett interprets this direction requiring five or six other maskers who are torchbearers at the same time. Nevertheless he mentions another possibility in a footnote. He suggests that the number of actors in this first episode together with the entering three or four Serving-men is within the usual limits of a company, which prompts that Shakespeare "was not oblivious to the limitations of staging." If we accept this suggestion, we can see an example of the doubling of roles, which was a common practice in an Elizabethan theatre company. The second interesting point in Jowett's direction is the inclusion of "*a drum*" (after Theobald, 1740), since this sequence ends with Benvolio's command: "Strike, drum." (l. 112). Thus its indication in a stage direction is logical and useful, yet Jowett is the only editor who uses it.

Williams, Evans and Levenson follow Q2, while Gibbons finds it useful to insert an "*and*" in square brackets in order to clarify – apparently disregarding McKerrow's suggestion – the relation between the maskers and torchbearers.

In his opening lines Romeo refers to a speech that was traditionally given to the host: [22] "What, shall this speech be spoke for our excuse? / Or shall we on without apology?". The demonstrative pronoun he uses indicates that the scene starts *in medias res*, and that at this point he might be pointing at a prop in his hand that is a piece of paper with their speech. The possibility of a prompt-copy onstage as prop in the beginning of the scene seems to be confirmed by Benvolio's two only-Q1 lines (not included in Levenson's edition), which most later editors (since Pope, 1728) have inserted into their Q2-edition on the grounds that their omission from Q2 was due to the carelessness of the compositor or to later insertion. Levenson argues that she does not edit these lines into her edition because "Despite various conjectures … the omission is unexplained." These two lines ridicule the tradition of this speech: "Nor no without-book prologue, faintly spoke / After the prompter, for our entrance." [23] Romeo's doubtful questions are continued and culminating in Benvolio's comic voice, which also tells about the practice of such an apology in Shakespeare's time. Although editors do not take note of this implied stage direction (that is of the use of a prompt-copy as prop on stage), performances prove that directors do use it occasionally.

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22. See Wilson's note about the tradition of masquerade.
23. Gibbons, ll. 7–8.

Romeo's dejected mood becomes obvious at the very beginning of this sequence. In line 9, he asks for a torch so that he does not have to take part in "this ambling." Wilson explains that "The torchbearers, attendants at all masquing, looked on, but did not participate either in the dance." Gibbons, Evans, and Levenson also expand on this line in footnote.

Levenson adds that Romeo's "request invites stage business." Indeed, a director cannot disregard Romeo's request: he has to be either given a torch or not. Most probably, Romeo will not get the torch after line 9, for he repeats his request: "A torch for me." twenty-three lines later. In this case, a director has to decide how to instruct the actors to react to Romeo's request. Performances prove that Mercutio's speech ("Nay, gentle Romeo, we must have you dance."), immediately after Romeo's lines, provides good opportunity for him to stop Romeo from taking a torch. As for his second reference to the torch (l. 33), directors stage it in different ways: Romeo either gets it or not – both interpretations are meaningful. Editors do not try to interpret this stage business – except for Jowett, who creates a direction for Romeo after line 37: [*He takes a torch*].

We can see that things like the maskers' speech or Romeo's torch may seem unimportant to an editor, while they are crucial on stage where the text starts living, and the director has to decide whether Romeo needs a piece of paper or not, and whether to give him a torch or not. The stage business of giving a torch to Romeo has already been highlighted by Levenson and Jowett, but that of the maskers' prompt-copy has not. Editors must watch performances in order to see the critical points of a play better.

2.2 The Servingmen's preparation (I.iv.112–128)

If Romeo and his company remain on stage (as Q2 suggests), they must stand aside to give room to the Servingmen's sixteen-line conversation (not in Q1). This short interlude is to divert the audience's attention from one location to the other. Nevertheless this sequence also indicates a change of pace: after the maskers' rather slow and leisurely conversation the servants' brisk dialogue prepares the lively atmosphere of the ball.

Q2's speech headings are confusing. To denote the entering servants Q2 prints *Ser.*, *1.*, *2.*, and *3.* Wilson, Williams, and Gibbons simply change these headings to *First*, *Second*, *Third*, and *Fourth Servingmen*, and they all leave the stage at the end of their scene. Evans uses the same speech headings, but in his edition the *Second Servingman* exits after "let the porter let in Susan Grindstone

and Nell" (l. 121) – as though obeying the command. Evans edits on a new line "Anthony and Potpan!"; in his interpretation these are the names of the third and fourth servants who enter to this call.

In Jowett's edition [*Peter*] *and other Servingmen come forth with napkins.* He employs Peter and only two more servants – giving the last line of this sequence (attributed to *3* in Q2) to the first servant (following Folio's emendation). He considers this a deliberate alteration since the ball-scene "would put severe casting demands on an Elizabethan company; a reduction in the number of Servingmen would save a part." In the previous scenes we met only two Capulet servants quarrelling with two Montague servants (I.i), and there will be no need to have more than four servants onstage at a time in the rest of the play too. Therefore even if there are only three servants (as Jowett suggests) onstage here, one of them must be "borrowed" from the Montagues: an example of doubling, which was a common practice in the Elizabethan theatre. Jowett also remarks in a footnote that F alters Q2's false *Enter* Romeo to *Enter Seruant*. This might indicate a separate entrance for Peter before the other servants, "which would be an attractive staging," concludes Jowett.

Levenson, following Q2, differentiates the [*Chief*] *Serving-man* from the other three. She mentions that some modern editors "tend to identify Anthony and Potpan with Serving-man 2 and Serving-man 3, sometimes providing them with a separate entrance at l. 121 so that they seem to answer to their names." However, she believes that the lack of directions in Q2 during this sequence allows "different kinds of business in performance." Indeed, the director must decide whether to employ three or four servants, whether one of them should be Peter or not, and at which point to have them enter at all. Here again, it is the editor's task to give some possible variations in order to help the director's work.

Q2 reads *Exeunt* at the end of the servants' scene. Levenson uses the same direction. Williams and Gibbons also add [*Servingmen*] to make the direction clearer. Wilson's and Evans's directions (*Servingmen withdraw*, and *They retire behind*, respectively) go back to Malone (1790) who was the first to edit this scene-change this way. The words "*withdraw*" and "*retire behind*" leave us in uncertainty of whether this movement ends up-stage or off stage. Jowett definitely keeps the servants onstage, as do most performances, and they usually "*come and go, setting forth tables and chairs*" just as Jowett instructs them, while the guests are entering. Jowett's direction is placed immediately after the servants' dialogue followed by a direction for the guests' entrance. While Leven-

son manages to retain the continuity of I.iv by regarding the traditional I.iv and I.v as one scene, Jowett manages to retain the fluidity between the servants' and the guests' parts within one scene. His conjectured direction is obviously based on stage practice.

2.3 Capulet welcomes the guests (I.iv.129–142)

After the servants' lead-in the stage is suddenly filled with people. Q1-direction reads *Enter old* Capulet *with the Ladies*. This is preceded by Romeo's "on lustie Gentlemen" (C3v), and the maskers are immediately welcomed by the entering Capulet: "Welcome, Gentlemen." In Q2 the following direction stands: *Enter all the guests and gentlewomen to the Maskers*. Due to the variations of the two quartos, at this point editors introduce a wide range of stage directions.

Wilson inserts *Capulet and Juliet* into the Q2-direction. Williams and Levenson, following Capell (1768), edit *Capulet and attendants*. Gibbons gives even more details: *Capulet, Lady Capulet, Juliet, Tybalt and Nurse*. Gibbons follows Furness (1871), but Furness added only four characters, and the Nurse seems to be Gibbons' contribution to the stage direction. Evans's direction lists *Capulet, Lady Capulet, Juliet, Tybalt and his Page and Nurse*. He refers to Capell and the Riverside edition (1974). This latter one was also edited by him, but then he had the servants exit, so he had to have them re-enter with the others. Therefore he included *Servingmen* in his 1974 stage direction, and left Tybalt's page out.

Jowett's stage direction is the most detailed, although inconsistent: he employs broken brackets at some parts and nothing at others, but since he does not give the source of either, it is not clear which parts are his own invention and which are not: [*They come and go, setting forth tables and chairs.*] *Enter* [*Musicians, then*] *at one door Capulet,* [*his wife,*] *his Cousin, Juliet,* [*the Nurse,*] *Tybalt, his page, Petruccio, and all the guests and gentlewomen; at another door, the masquers:* [*Romeo, Benvolio, and Mercutio*]. He makes a good observation when he divides the entering characters between the two presumed doors of the Renaissance stage indicating that the two groups arrive from different places: the household and guests from the house, and the maskers from the street. Jowett explains this editorial solution in his footnote to an earlier direction (I.iv.112.1–2): "the formula 'Enter x to y' leaves it unclear whether the masquers enter or are already on stage, but the only other use of this formula in

Romeo, at V.ii.0.1 ['*Enter Frier* Iohn *to Frier* Lawrence.' (Q2)], is clearly an example of entry from separate doors."

From all these variants it is obvious that to imagine the staging of this entrance demands great consideration. Editors have to make sure that they have all the strategically important characters enter the stage for the ball-scene so that the reader is able to imagine it, and does not get lost or confused. Directors do the same as editors, but their main concern is not only to call all the important characters onto stage, but also to create the image of a crowd for the party. This means that they usually employ much more actors than sufficient.

Virtually all directors put Paris into this scene, although, curious enough, neither the quartos nor the editors mention him in their guest-lists. István Géher suggests that Paris's absence from the ball is strategically important. [24] Supposing Paris is there, Juliet has no choice but to be with him according to her parents' wish. But since he is not, it becomes possible for Juliet to talk to other gentlemen such as Romeo. Paris's absence also tells a lot about his character. He is a fashionable aristocrat who wants to marry Juliet only because she is *socially* attractive. It is because of his superficiality that he does not attend Capulet's party: he either forgets about the invitation, or simply ignores it as something superfluous and unnecessary. Although very intriguing, Géher's suggestion remains only a hypothesis. I am not convinced that the idea of leaving Paris textually out of this scene is strategically important. Theatrical performances prove that Paris's presence creates a competitive atmosphere in which Romeo's secret conquering appears to be an especially daring exploit. However, it would be interesting to try out Géher's version on stage. It would certainly give Paris's character a turn.

Returning to the beginning of the party, Capulet welcomes the guests and says a few teasing remarks to the ladies. Jowett prints ("*to the masquers*") before his first words ("Welcome, gentlemen."). The other editors do not insert any directions here – leaving more to individual interpretation. With his repetitive words Capulet creates a warm and cheerful atmosphere that culminates in the middle of his speech: "Come, musicians, play. / *Music plays and they dance*" (ll. 138–138.1). (Lines 134–139 of Q2 are missing in Q1.) This Q2 stage direction is followed by Williams and Levenson. Jowett extends it as follows: *Music plays, and the masquers, guests, and gentlewomen dance.* [*Romeo stands apart*]. Wil-

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24. I am grateful to Professor Géher for this comment.

son and Gibbons insert the Q2-direction a line later, after "foot it, girls!". Evans divides the direction into two: "Come musicians, play. / *Music plays.* / A hall, a hall, give room! and foot it, girls. / *And they dance.*" According to the original stage direction, Capulet orders the musicians to play, and the dancers start dancing by themselves. In Wilson's and Gibbons' interpretation, however, it is Capulet who gives orders both to the musicians and the dancers, and this way his central managing role is more emphasised.

After Capulet's asking the Musicians to play, he has a series of orders that demand stage business. His speech is interesting because the different orders are addressed to different people. That is, in performance, he must turn here and there with his sentences making great hustle around himself. His orders require servants, tables and fire. Just like the servant's orders in lines 118–119, Capulet's words stand more for the stirring up of the stage creating a fizzy atmosphere than for presenting everything manifested on stage. Nevertheless the tables should probably be present for they have to be moved to give room to the dancers (l. 140).

The various voices of Capulet's speech are not separated in Q1 and Q2. Most editors use dashes to indicate when Capulet turns to another guest. Levenson edited the speech this way:

> A hall, a hall! Give room, and foot it, girls. –
> More light, you knaves, and turn the tables up,
> And quench the fire, the room is grown too hot. –
> Ah sirrah, this unlooked-for sport comes well. –
> Nay sit, nay sit, good cousin Capulet. . .

> (I.iv.139–143)

Levenson's editing is clear. In her interpretation line 139 obviously goes to the guests and ladies, lines 140 and 141 to the servants, and line 142 seems to be a private moment before he turns to his cousin in line 143. As another possibility besides the self-address, Levenson suggests that Capulet may also address "a servant or young male guest (*sirrah* = a man or boy with whom one assumes authority)."

Wilson puts a dash into the middle of line 141 to indicate that the second clause is a private remark that gives reason for Capulet's request. There is no dash at the end of line 141, because according to Wilson Capulet "hugs himself" with the words of line 142, that is he addresses himself. After line 142 Wilson edits a dash to separate it from the next line when Capulet notices cousin Capulet.

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Williams modifies the punctuation of Q2. The Q2 compositor used a comma at the end of line 140. If we accept that the colon stands for a change of addressees, Williams is right to correct it. He changes the punctuation-marks of these two lines, and in this way line 139 can go for the guests while line 140 for the servants. He keeps Q2's colon at the end of line 142.

Gibbons thought it best not to insert any punctuation-marks into the text so he edits out even the two Q2 colons of lines 140 and 142. By this editorial choice he leaves the interpretation to the reader. Evans employs a semicolon instead of Q2's colon at line 140, and leaves the rest to the reader's creativity. Both Wilson and Gibbons make reference to Onions[25] who explains that *sirrah* is an "ordinary form of address to inferiors," or "in passages of soliloquy *ah sirrah* is apparently addressed by the speaker to himself." Evans asserts that Capulet is addressing himself, and gives the argument that "Except as self-address, with 'Ah' (see Schmidt), 'sirrah' was used only in addressing social inferiors; this makes it difficult to accept . . . that 'sirrah' . . . refers to 'Cousin Capulet' named in the next line." Indeed, Schmidt, along with Onions, claims that *sirrah* is sometimes "addressed to an imaginary person or rather to the speaker himself (always preceded by *ah*)."[26]

Jowett edits this passage in the most articulated way. He provides stage directions before line 140: ("*To Servingmen*"), and before line 142: ("*To his Cousin*"), so he – in contrast with the other editors – does not regard it as a self-address, which coincides with theatrical practice (in performance, line 142 is usually addressed to Cousin Capulet). Looking up old lexicons and scrutinising the origins of a particular expression is typically scholarly work, and even if some directors prefer disregarding such linguistic difficulties and direct them arbitrarily, other directors may be grateful for the illumination of these problems.

2.4 Capulet and Cousin Capulet (I.iv.143–153); Romeo and a Servant (I.iv.154–166)

Shakespeare the director organised the ballroom-scene in a cinematic way: totals and close-ups alternate all through the scene. In this chapter I am going to examine the realisations of two 'close-ups' on page and stage: Capulet's talk to

25. C. T. Onions, *A Shakespeare Glossary*, rev. Robert D. Eagleson (Oxford, 1986).
26. Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon* (1923).

cousin Capulet, and Romeo's talk to a servant. Both dialogues are relatively short, and both display a private talk amongst the stir of the ball.

After arranging the dancers Capulet turns to cousin Capulet (at line 143 according to the editions, and at line 142 according to stage practice).Their conversation calls for two items of stage business. One of them is that this conversation has to be brought into focus, which in performance usually means that Capulet and cousin Capulet walk to the front, downstage centre with the dancers behind them. The other is that they need at least one chair (probably a *joint-stool*) so that Capulet's invitation in line 143 makes sense.

The characters' movements are not signified in the editorial footnotes. Wilson, Williams, Gibbons, Evans and Jowett do not make note of the stage business this episode requires. Levenson's edition is the only one where the footnote briefly remarks: "This line [i.e. l. 143] calls for at least one seat near Capulet and a bit of stage business." Only Evans and Levenson call attention to the double meaning of "in a mask" (l. 146): it can either mean the masquerade or the visor. Both editors refer back to line 135 where Capulet speaks about the day when he wore a visor. These lines together make it clear that after a certain age people did not wear masks in the masquerade, that is Capulet and cousin Capulet are not in masks.

But is Juliet masked? After the elderly participants' dialogue the "playwright's camera" swiftly moves onto a completely separate dialogue:

> ROMEO (*to a Serving-man*)   What lady's that which doth enrich the hand
>   Of yonder knight?
> SER.   I know not, sir.
> ROMEO   O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
>   It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
>   As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear,
>   Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear.
>   So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows,
>   As yonder lady o'er her fellows shows.
>   The measure is done, I'll watch her place of stand
>   And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.
>   Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight,
>   For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.
>
> (I.iv.154–166)

With his words Romeo addresses a servant. Only Wilson, Evans, Jowett and Levenson, following Capell (1768), indicate in stage direction to whom Romeo is

speaking. Williams and Gibbons remain faithful to the copy-text (Q2), and use no stage direction. Obviously, after the servant's answer, the dialogue turns into a monologue. This is indicated only in Wilson's edition where Romeo's speech is separated by a round bracket from the servant's line. In Q1 the servant's answer is missing, and thus Romeo's question seems rhetorical, and to be used only to introduce his monologue about Juliet's beauty. Perhaps the Q1 compositor was right because the Q2 dialogue, despite its brevity, is a confusing part of the play. It is strange that a Capulet servant cannot recognize his master's only daughter, yet this could be explained by Juliet's wearing a mask. Accepting this explanation raises another problem: Is Romeo admiring a mask?

Evans was the first editor to notice that there was a logical crux in this situation. He assumes that "the Serving-man here should be identified with one of the Torch-bearers who accompanied the maskers." Levenson agrees with Evans, but she underpins her opinion with theatrical accounts as well: "prompt books since the mid nineteenth century show that some productions have cut this line (not in Q1) or assigned it to a more credible speaker (e.g. Benvolio, Balthazar, Mercutio's page)."

2.5 Tybalt's rage (I.iv.167–205)

From an editorial point of view, this part contains three problematic points: Tybalt recognises Romeo's voice (l. 167), he sends his page for his sword (l. 168), and Capulet notices Tybalt's anger and goes to him.

Tybalt overhears Romeo's speech, and this is what makes him realise that "This, by his voice, should be a Montague" (l. 167). Levenson notes wittily: "What identifies a Montague voice is unclear; but the auditory clue seems logical because Romeo, wearing a mask, provides Tybalt with no visual evidence." Later on it is even less explicable how Capulet can see at first sight that he must be Romeo, and why his question makes Tybalt suddenly so sure that he is Romeo.

Following Tybalt's order: "Fetch me my rapier, boy" (l. 168) the quartos indicate no stage directions. All the editors, after Collier (1853), insert *Exit Boy* (Williams and Gibbons) or *Exit Page* (Evans, Jowett and Levenson). Wilson edits *his page goes*. None of the editions indicate when the page should re-enter. This cannot be deciphered from the text. Most stage productions, however, act out the page's re-entrance too, and a well-timed re-entrance with a rapier can add a lot to the dramatic tension of the scene.

Only Jowett employs stage direction for Capulet when he notices Tybalt's anger. Last time we left Capulet sitting and talking with old Capulet. Now *standing* – indicates Jowett – he moves towards Tybalt with line 173: "Why, how now, kinsman, wherefore storm you so?" This part of the text requires particular movements of Romeo, Tybalt and Capulet. Tybalt has to be close enough to Romeo to overhear his speech, but then Romeo has to move on so that he cannot hear Tybalt's fury. Capulet, on the other hand, has to be within earshot to be able to reach Tybalt by the end of his four lines. Their dialogue (ll. 173–198) occurs probably away from the rest of the party.

From line 198 the situation changes. The host starts dominating in Capulet again, and (perhaps to divert the attention from his cousin) he speaks to different people at the same time:

> You must contrary me – marry, 'tis time –
> (*To the dancers*) Well said, my hearts – (*to Tybalt*) you are a princox, go,
> Be quiet, or – (*to Serving-men*) more light, more light – for shame –
> (*To Tybalt*) I'll make you quiet. What! (*To dancers*) Cheerly, my hearts!
> <div align="right">(I.iv.198–201)</div>

He does the same as in lines 138–143. In Levenson's edition the difference is that while no stage directions are inserted at Capulet's first speech (only dashes), this speech contains both dashes and directions. Excluding editorial inconsistency, the only possible explanation is that in the first speech all the addressees are named in the text ("gentlemen," "musicians," "girls," "knaves," "Ah sirrah," and "good cousin Capulet"), so it would be superfluous to indicate them in stage directions. In this second speech, on the other hand, "my hearts" does not reveal too much. Consequently, this speech leaves much to the editors, especially because the quartos do not help but make editors' work even harder. Q1's speech consists of less lines:

> Goe too, you are a saucie knaue,
> This tricke will scath you one day I know what.
> Well said my hartes. Be quiet:
> More light Ye knaue, or I will make you quiet. (C3v)

The first two lines obviously go to Tybalt. The first clause of the third line may go to the dancers and the second clause to Tybalt again as it is suggested by Levenson. The punctuation of the fourth line, however, is misleading. It suggests that if the serving-man does not bring more light, Capulet will make him quiet.

Levenson, whose edition contains an edited version of Q1 too, interprets this line as follows: "(*To Serving-man*) More light – ye knave – (*To Tybalt*) or I will make you quiet."

The punctuation of Q2 is misleading too:

> You must contrarie me, marrie tis time,
> Well said my hearts, you are a princox, go,
> Be quiet, or more light, more light for shame,
> Ile make you quiet (what) chearely my hearts.

Evans notes that "[t]he light comma pointing in the early texts makes it difficult to be sure exactly whom Capulet is addressing." Evans tries to interpret the text with dashes and exclamation marks. In contrast with Levenson, he does not put a dash in the middle of line 198, but he explains in footnote that the second part of the line can either be addressed "to Tybalt, who perhaps indicates with some gesture his unwilling compliance," or Capulet may remind himself that it is "time to turn his attention to his guests," which he does in the first half of line 199. Levenson claims that Capulet may address line 198 to Tybalt, the company, or himself. Because of the several possible interpretations she edits this half-line between dashes.

In his 1986 edition, Jowett is the first to use stage directions to puzzle out these problematic lines. His directions are more extended than any other editors'. After line 198 Jowett edits in broken brackets that [*A dance ends. Juliet retires to her place of stand, where Romeo awaits her*]. Naturally, it is not necessary that the dance stops at this point, yet stage productions show that this can have a great dramatic effect that most directors exploit. Jowett edits the rest of Capulet's speech similarly to Levenson, except that he attaches "What" in line 201 to the clause addressed *To the guests*, and finishes the speech with a direction in broken brackets: [*The music plays again, and the guests dance*]. Jowett considers the text as a theatrical piece more than anyone before in the editorial history of the play. His directions in broken brackets explicitly suggest a possible theatrical interpretation – not the only one, however.

The earlier editors, Wilson, Williams and Gibbons, break up this speech similarly to Evans, Jowett and Levenson, but they do not seem to recognise the interpretative difficulties. Wilson puts a dash to the end of line 198, and to the middle of line 199; links "for shame" to Capulet's order to the servants, and encourages the dancers with "What, cheerly, my hearts!" – similarly to Jowett. Williams, in his original spelling edition, uses parentheses to separate the differ-

ent sentences, but he chooses basically the same division as Wilson. Gibbons leaves the first line together, and connects "For shame" to "I'll make you quiet" – as later editors. Nevertheless, he does not separate the last line, which shows editorial inconsistency unless he interprets the whole line as addressed to Tybalt, which would be at least surprising.

The above speculations about the interpretation of Capulet's lines may well seem complicated or even senseless, but when all these ideas are weighed and finally gathered in one edition, they can be useful for a director in the hands of whom the text suddenly comes to life.

2.6 The first encounter between Romeo and Juliet (I.iv.206–223)

This dialogue is competing with the balcony-scene for the title of the most famous part of *Romeo and Juliet.* The staging of this episode requires delicacy because of the sonnet form of its first fourteen lines. The poetic form reinforces the textual content, and creates a special atmosphere for the first encounter of the lovers. Consequently, it is always a challenge for directors to provide proper circumstances for this part. Once provided, a second challenge – both for directors and editors – is the placing of the one or two kisses traditionally inserted into the sonnet. There is no general agreement among editors about this since none of the quartos contains any directions at this point of the play. Williams argues in his "Staging Notes" that

> Most editors who provide a direction for Romeo to kiss Juliet place the direction after l. 109 ['Thus from my lips, by thine, my sin is purged'], but the direction should follow the close of the sonnet and not interrupt the quatrain. Line 109 refers as properly to an event completed as to one anticipated. It is not clear whether or not Shakespeare intended that there should be a second kiss. If the director includes one, it should come after 'You kisse bith booke' (not before as editors have it) so as to take advantage of the shock provided by the intrusion of the Nurse.

Apart from Williams, all the editors insert two kisses. Wilson and Evans, following Rowe (1709), place the first kiss after "Thus from my lips, by thine, my sin is purged" (l. 220) – neglecting the structure of the sonnet. Gibbons, Jowett and Levenson insert the first kiss after line 219 – following Williams. None of the editors follow Williams's suggestion of the "shocking" placing of the second kiss after line 223; they all edit it after Romeo's last sentence ("Give me my sin again"). Directors, on the other hand, sometimes do take advantage of Williams's idea.

The lovers' first encounter, however, cannot be confined to two kisses. The rich imagery of their sonnet builds upon the religious symbolism of their hands. The text refers to Romeo's intention to take Juliet's hand earlier in lines 163–164: "The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand / And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand." When they meet, Romeo starts his speech as follows:

> If I profane with my unworthiest hand
> This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this,
> My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
> To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

This text poetically implies Romeo's taking Juliet's hand and kissing it. Presumably he takes her hand at the first line, and kisses it after the fourth, but this stage action is not indicated by all the editors. Wilson inserts, following Capell (1768), *takes Juliet's hand* before Romeo's first line, Evans edits *To Juliet* at the same place, and only Jowett inserts both: *to Juliet, touching her hand*. Yet, even in their editions it is not clear when he kisses her hand (probably after l. 209).

2.7 The Nurse and Romeo (I.iv.224–231); the farewell (I.iv.232–240)

The lovers are surprised by the Nurse who comes to call Juliet to her mother. After the Nurse's sentence: "Madam, your mother craves a word with you," the quartos have no directions. Jowett edits: *Juliet departs to her mother*, and Levenson employs a variation of Jowett's direction: *Juliet moves towards her mother*. This direction is necessary so that it makes sense why Romeo asks the Nurse about Juliet, and not the girl herself. It is not indicated in the editions whether after her words with Romeo the Nurse leaves him or not. In performance she usually does, since immediately after her lines Romeo starts speaking to himself, and their conversation does not start again because Benvolio is approaching.

Benvolio proposes that they should leave the party. Probably Mercutio joins them too, and this draws Capulet's attention to the gentlemen. He addresses them with the same hospitality as in the beginning of the ball. In Q2 after "We haue a trifling foolish banquet towards" Capulet continues: "Is it ene so?" (D1v). A link is obviously missing between these two sentences.

This link can be found in Q1: *They whisper in his eare* (C4r) – a detail that reveals something of the Elizabethan stage business. Most editors keep this direction in their Q2-based editions. Wilson rephrases it like this: *The masquers*

excuse themselves, whispering in his ear. Williams keeps the original Q1 stage direction as well as Gibbons, Evans and Jowett. Levenson edits *They signal to Capulet that they must leave*. She explains this alteration in the footnote giving staging information again:

> Prompt books stage the moment variously: Benvolio, Mercutio, or the group whispers to Capulet; Mercutio or Benvolio mimes that the gentlemen wish to be excused; the masquers bow a negative; the guests murmur; Capulet's lines are cut and the guests simply depart. (Curiously, many prompt books give no annotations for staging of the polite rebuff, although most of them carefully orchestrate these exits.)

In line 238 Capulet asks for more torches apparently to provide light for the leaving guests. Nevertheless most productions do not finish this scene with "more torches." According to G. I. Duthie, who co-edited the 1955 edition with J. D. Wilson, the torches do arrive at stage. After line 238 he edits *Servants bring torches to escort the masquers out*, and explains in footnote that "The masquers' torches are burned out, or nearly so." Levenson inserts a stage direction before line 238: *To Serving-men*. In line 239 Capulet sighs "Ah, sirrah" again, which has been discussed earlier. Jowett believes that Capulet addresses these words *To his cousin*. Levenson notes that curiously Capulet "gives no further thought to the banquet" after the masquers left.

2.8 Juliet and the Nurse (I.iv.241–257)

In Chapter 2.6 we left Juliet somewhere at the back of the stage (or offstage according to some interpretations) with her mother. Now, as the guests start leaving, she presumably comes forward and calls the Nurse to ask the names of young Tiberio, young Petruccio, and finally Romeo. After line 247 ("Go, ask his name.") no stage direction stands in the quartos; the first and the second clause ("If he be married") of the line is separated by a comma. Williams modifies it to a colon. Wilson and Evans use a dash to indicate that the order and Juliet's aside do not belong together. Gibbons simply puts a full stop to the end of line 147. Levenson, following Jowett, inserts: *The Nurse goes* and (*returning*) at the beginning of the Nurse's speech (l. 249).

The Nurse is present at Juliet's second aside (ll. 251–254). She obviously does not understand her words that's why she asks "What's tis? What's tis?". This might require stage business: she either has to be a bit further from Juliet, or hard of hearing. Their conversation is interrupted by Lady Capulet's call.

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Q2 contains the stage direction *One cals within* Iuliet (D1r). Q1 does not have this direction, but the reason why they have to leave the stage is included in the Nurse's last sentence: "Come your mother staies for you, I le goe a long with you" (C4r). Later editors all retain the Q2 direction although the juxtaposition of the two quartos makes it obvious that it is Lady Capulet who calls Juliet offstage. Stage productions prove the same. After the Nurse's final sentence they *Exeunt*, and this is the end of scene I.iv.

3 Conclusion

It is an exciting and amusing task for the editor to ponder how a particular episode *could* be imagined on stage, but it is also a responsible task to decide on how it *should* be edited in the end. The most difficult and delicate part of the editor's job is to find a balance between remaining loyal to the original quartos and adding new directions for the better understanding of the text. On the one hand, providing too many instructions can be restrictive, on the other hand, the lack of stage directions can make the reading of the text cumbersome. From the comparative analysis of the ballroom-scene (I.iv) it is evident that the editing of a play entails fundamentally a theatrical perspective and not a literary one. Although philological and bibliographical research is essential to unearth the different literary and historical layers of the text, all these findings become irrelevant when it comes to the performing of a play – which is "the end to which they were created." [27]

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27. Wells, p. xxxix.

Géza Kállay

"It is not so, nor 'twas not so"

Funny words and the role-playing of 'double-tongues' in *Much Ado About Nothing*

This paper examines one of Benedick's remarks in the play: "Like the old tale, my lord: 'It is not so, nor 'twas not so: but indeed, God forbid it should be so!' " This quotation is from "an old tale," first identified in 1821 by a certain Mr Blakeway for the old Variorum edition of *Much Ado*. Drawing especially on the *Oxford English Dictionary*, I first examine the semantic and the grammatical nature of "It is not so, nor 'twas not so"; then, relying on Paul Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor* and Stanley Cavell's *The Claim of Reason*, I argue that reality, just like fiction, is always created in an attitude, in a mode of approaching what is before us; we are only given the *so*, never the *is*. Thus, whether what we, *within* the *so*, are encountering is 'real' or 'imaginary' will not depend on the *amount* of certainty we have with respect to the approached object; the object will always be in the mode of *is* and *is not* at the same time. Within *so*, we construct both reality and the imaginary rather through 'it is not not so' than through either just 'is,' or just 'is not.' The difference in our respective attitudes might be that with respect to the imaginary we have a greater awareness of the ever-presence of *not* in *is*, or rather of the *not not*: we do not have a greater or lesser amount of *certainty* of, but a greater amount of *intimacy* with, the *not not*.

The phrase "funny words" – like puns Elizabethans and Jacobeans were so much fond of – is in itself ambiguous: it may refer to surprising expressions which make us laugh, to double entendres, to innuendoes, to in-vogue vagueness and to speechified specificity, to phonetic or semantic equivocality or univocality, and to so much more. From the linguistic point of view – and, for that matter, from interpretative, and "analytical" aspects – *Much Ado About Nothing* seems to be one of the least controversial plays in the canon, although, as it will become clearer below, this is not necessarily so because of its widely accepted, indisputable merits. However, right now let us keep the linguistic perspective in mind:

those who tend to treat Shakespeare's language play by play – such as Ifor Evans [1] or Frank Kermode [2] – emphasise that "it is in liveliness and quickness that much that is most attractive in the language of the play is to be found" [3] and that "the main of the play lies in the wit combats . . . and they are not always successful." [4] For those who approach Shakespeare's language from the point of view of grammatical or semantic categories, rhetorical figures, etc. – such as N. F. Blake, [5] Hilda M. Hulme [6] or S. S. Hussey [7] – this comedy (compared, for example, to *Troilus and Cressida*, or to *The Winter's Tale*) does not seem to be of particular interest; Blake largely quotes it to illustrate the use of the subjunctive, [8] Hulme provides some brilliant readings of a few puns, [9] and Hussey points out those features of the play for which it is, in most commentaries, acclaimed: Dogberry's malapropisms and the frequent use of euphuism. [10] Evans and Kermode also remind us of the unusual proportion between prose and blank verse [11] (42 percent to 58), [12] yet Evans also notes the remarkable lack of references to language itself in the play: "The only comment on language," he says,

> is made by Benedick, where he speaks of the change of Claudio, once he is in love: "He was wont to speak plain and to the purpose, like an honest man and a soldier, and now is he turned orthography – his words are a very fantastical banquet, just so many strange dishes" (II.iii.18–21). [13]

Yet there is an even earlier instance when Benedick wishes to sketch out the landscape of enamoured Claudio's state of mind (or his "five wits," in the sense

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1. Ifor Evans, *The Language of Shakespeare's Plays* (London: Methuen, 1959 [1952]).
2. Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 2000).
3. Evans, p. 111.
4. Kermode, p. 77.
5. N. F. Blake, *The Language of Shakespeare* (London: Macmillan, 1989 [1983]).
6. Hilda M. Hulme, *Explorations in Shakespeare's Language* (London: Longman, 1962).
7. S. S. Hussey, *The Literary Language of Shakespeare* (London and New York: Longman, 1992 [1982]).
8. Blake, p. 126 and p. 8.
9. Cf. Hulme, p. 173, concerning a pun Borachio and Conrade produce, or see pp. 284–285, where she explores the puns turning on the word *base*.
10. Hussey, p. 28 and pp. 75–76; see also Evans, p. 108.
11. Cf. Evans, p. 108.
12. Kermode, p. 48.
13. All textual references are to the Arden edition of *Much Ado*, ed. A. R. Humphreys (London and New York: Methuen, 1985 [1981]). Below, I will refer to this edition as Humphreys.

of 'common wit, imagination, fantasy,' cf. I.i.60). After Benedick, without further ado, lets Don Pedro know that Claudio is in love "with Hero, Leonato's short daughter" (I.i.198), Claudio retorts with a conditional: "If this were so, so were it uttered" (I.i.199), to which, in turn, Benedick responds with: "Like the old tale, my lord: 'It is not so, nor 'twas not so: but indeed, God forbid it should be so!' " (I.i.200). Whereas in the passage Evans quotes Claudio goes through a kind of metamorphosis (he becomes orthography, i.e. 'over polished style'[14]) and his changing attitude to language is described in terms of food metaphors, the language characterising his attitude to the newly met Hero is a quotation, a guest text in the play, indicating that Claudio is not only wavering between 'two realities' but that he fears one of the alternatives coming true as well: "God forbid it should be so!" The matter – at least in the first approximation – could easily be settled by the following note: 'Benedick wants to tell Don Pedro that his friend, Claudio, has fallen in love with Hero, yet Claudio – especially because of the novelty of his feelings – is still in two minds about his emotions; he does desire them, yet at the same time he would like to deny them, too.'

However – as I will argue below – Benedick's quote perhaps deserves some more attention. As he himself, and all editions, note, 'It is not so, etc.' is from "an old tale," first identified, it seems, in 1821 by a certain Mr Blakeway for the old Variorum edition of *Much Ado*.[15] As usual, the tale – as A. R. Humphreys tells us in the fifth appendix of the Arden edition[16] – exists in several versions (the most well-known is the *Robber Bridegroom* one, of which the *Bluebeard* story is a variant), yet in the version Mr Blakeway knew, the first two clauses, "It is not so, nor it was not so," are introduced by the heroine of the story, Lady Mary, who is hopelessly wooed by a certain Mr Fox – the name surely secures a place for the story also among the bestiaries in the Mediaeval *Reynard the Fox* tradition (cf. *Volpone*[17]).

In the story Mr Blakeway recounted, Lady Mary is down in a country seat with her two brothers and a cheerful company – very similar to the one we find in *Much Ado* – gather around them. They are eating and drinking, they are tell-

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14. Humphreys, p. 132.

15. See for example the Arden edition of the play from 1917, ed. J. C. Smith (Boston, London, etc.: D. C. Heath and Company, 1917), pp. 80–81.

16. Humphreys, pp. 232–233.

17. Ben Jonson, *Volpone, or The Fox, Epicene, or The Silent Woman, The Alchemist, Bartholomew Fair*, ed. Gordon Campbell, Oxford Drama Library (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. xiii–xiv.

ing fantastic stories to one another but Mr Fox would like to see Lady Mary privately as well and invites her to his house. One day the lady decides to accept the invitation but in Mr Fox's house she finds the most horrible things: tubs of blood, skeletons, dismembered female bodies, etc. Yet also an inscription above every door: "*Be bold, be bold, but not too bold*," which is appended above the last door by "*lest that your heart's blood should run cold.*" This is the first "refrain" of the story, which – like *It is not so. . .* – has a kind of *modal* value as well, in characteristically recommending, or even prescribing, a certain attitude or state of mind, or even a kind of expectation the heroine should have with respect to the 'piece of reality' she is going to encounter. We can only infer that Lady Mary "was," indeed, "not *too* bold" because she does not have much time to think: Mr Fox is approaching the house with a young lady-victim and Lady Mary has "just time to slip down, and hide herself under the stairs." [18] As Mr Fox is dragging the unfortunate young woman up the stairs by the hair, she tries to catch hold of the banister with her hand, on which there is a rich bracelet, yet this hand lands in Lady Mary's lap because Mr Fox mercilessly cuts it off. [19] Lady Mary manages to get back to her brothers' house safe and sound, and it is obscure whether she relates them the horrors or not because we next see her amid the large company again, amusing "each other with extraordinary anecdotes" [20] and Mr Fox is also present, as if nothing had happened. It is then that Lady Mary

> at length said, she would relate to them a remarkable dream she had lately had. I dreamt, [21] she said, that you, Mr. Fox, had often invited me to your house. I knocked, etc., but no one answered. When I opened the door, over the wall was written, '*Be bold, be bold, but not too bold.*' But, said she, turning to Mr. Fox, and smiling, *It is not so, nor it was not so*; then she

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18. Humphreys, p. 233.

19. The hand with a bracelet, or a finger with a ring, in which psychoanalysts would surely see either the symbol of violated chastity, or, because of its further function, even an (inverted) castration-complex, is a recurring element in all the variants of the story, for example in the Grimm-version (*The Robber-Bridegroom*); or see Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, where, again as an "inverse" of our story, two brothers torture their sister and the younger brother, Ferdinand, nourishing an incestuous passion for the Duchess, in Act 4 Scene 1 presents her with a ring "on a dead man's [Antonio's, her husband's] hand . . . for a love-token" (John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi and Other Plays*, Oxford English Drama, ed. René Weis [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996], IV.i.43 and 46).

20. Humphreys, p. 233.

21. That the 'robber-bridegroom' has to face 'reality' disguised as a dream is, again, a recurring *topos* of the tale, see again the Grimm version for example.

pursues the rest of the story, concluding at every turn with *It is not so, nor it was not so*, till she comes to the room full of dead bodies, when Mr. Fox took up the burden of the tale, and said, *It is not so, nor it was not so, and God forbid that it should be so*: which he continues to repeat at every subsequent turn of the dreadful story, till she came to the circumstance of his cutting off the young lady's hand, when, upon his saying as usual, *It is not so, nor it was not so, and God forbid it should be so*, Lady Mary retorts, *But it is so, and it was so, and here the hand* [sic!] *I have to show*, at the same time producing the hand and bracelet from her lap: whereupon the guests drew their swords, and instantly cut Mr. Fox into a thousand pieces. [22]

Benedick's quote ("Like the old tale, my lord. . .") is triggered by – as we saw – a conditional coming from Claudio "If this [i.e. his being in love with Hero] were so, so were it uttered" (I.i.199), meaning, it seems, that 'if Claudio's state of mind, as a piece of "reality," really contained the content that he is in love with Hero, then Benedick's words would be the appropriate ones to describe this state of mind.' Thus, Benedick's plain, straightforward statements, uttered – and quoted – earlier: "he [Claudio] is in love. With who? . . . Mark how short his answer is: with Hero, Leonato's short daughter" (I.i.195–198) are given a kind of hypothetical, or even retentive truth value; Benedick's words are true if and only if they describe Claudio's 'five senses' accurately. Therefore, from Claudio's tentative phrases we might infer that the usual, familiar order of representation is upset: it is not so that there is an emotion one feels and then calls it by a name; rather it is so that there is a description which might help a feeling to come into being (or, perhaps more accurately, language and reality are born in the same moment). It is also noteworthy that Benedick quotes Mr Fox, the trap-maker, rather than Lady Mary: he uses the longer version appended by "God forbid it should be so."

That reality (this time a piece of mind with Claudio as its sole authority) is playing hide-and-seek with language might be just as unsurprising and negligible as Benedick's reference to Mr Fox, if *Much Ado* were not a comedy in which much is at stake as regards words and belief. Much depends on whether words can adequately describe what is and what is not, what was and what was not, so. At the beginning of the play, Beatrice charges Claudio with having "caught the Benedick" (I.i.81), as if her future bridegroom were a disease; now in the play

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22. Humphreys, p. 233.

belief is like a disease, and most of it is contagious and false. If the interpreter of the play thinks that Beatrice and Benedick fall in love only at the end of *Much Ado*, then it may be claimed that words are able to create a reality and then 'real reality' catches up with it; if one believes that 'in fact' they are in love from the start, then language is 'lagging behind' reality and is, after all, nothing but fireworks – most of it is even superfluous. But there is the more 'serious case,' the case of the "falsely accused woman," testifying to what, ironically, it is precisely Hero's lot to formulate. Hero, in the deception scene she plays with Ursula, half-mockingly says: "one doth not know / How much an ill word may empoison liking" (III.i.85–86). At the beginning of the play there is peace, since the war is over, so instead of swords, tongues and even "double tongues" may fight (cf. Don Pedro's: "there's a double tongue, there's two tongues," V.i.166–167). Yet tongues are also acknowledged as dangerous weapons which can kill: Hero 'dies' and gets 'resurrected' in the course of the comedy (like Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*) but if there were no Friar trusting her innocence, if there were no Beatrice being convinced that this is just a misunderstanding, and if there were no Benedick ready to challenge Claudio to a duel (to prove his love and manliness to Beatrice as well), the epitaph Claudio reads out for Hero's tomb would become permanent. Love moves in the dangerous presence of death all the time, as Leonato's strange, almost Lear-like outburst ("Could she here deny / The story that is printed in her blood? / Do not live, Hero, do not ope thine eyes," IV.i.121–123) also indicates. Language can create and destroy at the same time, and some of it must be erased with, of course, language again. It is hard to deny that the play raises questions like: does love need acknowledgement in words, or is it enough if one "just loves?" – a question which might again recall *King Lear*. If language is nothing but a social construct, then can love – a necessary but not necessarily sufficient condition for marriage – and marriage be considered to be solely – or at least largely – social fabrications? [23] Or: "God

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23. As, for example, Stephen Greenblatt argues in the "Introduction" to *Much Ado* in the Norton Shakespeare (*The Norton Shakespeare*, gen. ed. Stephen Greenblatt, with Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus [New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1997], pp. 1381–1387, especially p. 1386). Below, I will refer to this edition as the Norton Shakespeare. Or see Adam Piette's wonderful recent study on the role of split subjects in the play, in which he remarks: "The dangerous corollary of the [orchard] scene is that love is fabricated by social scenes, and the way one lives out one's self is conditioned by team performances of ideal and satirical role versions of one's supposed interiority" (Adam Piette, "Performance, Subjectivity and Slander in *Hamlet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*," in

forbid that it should be so”? Is there anything outside (besides, above, behind) language? If nothing is, is it worth much ado? What is the relationship between what one can say and what one can see (note)? Can one mean what one can see?

It is in line with the above questions that I would like to deal with what the “very fantastical banquet,” Benedick’s “funny words” recalling the “old tale” might treat us to. First, I will try to examine the semantic and the grammatical nature of “It is not so, nor ’twas not so”; then I will try to argue that the sentence could not only be treated as a kind of motto to the play, but, in a certain way, as the display of an attitude one might have to the fictitious, to the product of imagination in a wider sense, and finally, and as a corollary of this section, I will return to the vexed question of the relationship between representation by language, and reality.

What does “It is not so, nor ’twas not so” mean? Of course, it is the double negation in the second clause (“nor ’twas not so”) which is of particular interest. Yet perhaps what we are encountering here is nothing extraordinary; as several dictionaries and grammars on early modern English testify, a negative following *nor* in Shakespeare’s time is still quite common; in the *Oxford English Dictionary* we find the following examples for “*nor* followed by another negative”: “I may not eate your benys . . . nor I may not drink your thyn ale.” The text is from 1440, and it is also remarkable that *nor* does not bring about the inversion of the modal auxiliary and the subject, which is the standard operation in modern English (instead of *nor may I* we read: *nor I may*), as there is no inversion in Benedick’s quote, either; we have “nor ’twas [it was] not so” (instead of *nor was it not so*). In the example from 1440, the double negation (the standard procedure, by the way, in modern Hungarian, too) is just to emphasise that the speaking persona thinks he should neither eat the other’s “benys” (beans?), nor drink his or her ale, so the purport is that he is adamant on not drinking. A similar example is from 1568, from Grafton’s *Chronicle*: “No man was called to answere, nor no question put unto any person by the sayd enquest.” A third example is from 1598, the year in which *Much Ado* was most probably written: “He could lay no iust cause against him, nor openly durst not command the murdering of his brother.” Here the meaning is quite straightforward (and quite natural to a Hungarian ear): ‘he could not charge his brother with anything, nor did he dare to order his assassination openly.’ Finally, here is a quote from *Henry V* (and many

other examples can be found): King Charles tells Harry that "[n]or this [i.e. that in signed documents Charles will call him 'King of England and heir to France'] I have not, brother, so denied / But your request shall make me let it pass" (V.ii.115–116). [24]

Thus, Lady Mary, relating the truth she experienced in Mr Fox's house, yet disguising it as a dream, might not be saying more than: 'all that I am telling to you now is not so (not true), and it was not so (not true) when I dreamt it (or: *because* I dreamt it), either.' Applied by Benedick to Claudio, the sentence might mean, roughly: 'It is not so that he is in love, and it is not the case that he was in love when he talked to me about Hero, either,' or, more simply: 'he is not in love, nor was he in love when we talked a moment ago.' So the double negation, both in Lady Mary's and in Benedick's respective locutions might not serve any other purpose than to emphasise the continuity between past and present: it is not so that this or that *was* the case but by now it has changed, but this is what *has always been the case*. Not surprisingly, all this can be taken as plain, straightforward irony: both Lady Mary and Benedick are implying that the exact opposite of what they are saying has been the case all the time: Mr Fox *is* a lady-killer and Claudio *is* in love.

Yet the *Oxford English Dictionary* knows of another sense of *nor* (listed as the fifth meaning of the word) when *nor* means 'and not.' It is true that this sense might usually be read into *nor* when the first clause is an affirmative one, as in the following example from 1523: "I greatly desyre to see the kynge my master, nor I will lye but one nyght in a place, tyll I com there," where the following paraphrase could be constructed: 'I greatly desire to see the king, my master, and I will not sleep more than one night somewhere before I get there.' Thus here *nor* is nothing but emphatic *not*; however, as both the *Oxford* and the *Webster* Dictionaries note, it may also be used "in continuative narration, with the force of *neither* or *and not*" (*Oxford*), and *Webster*, giving a very similar definition, [25] provides the following example: "They are happy, nor need we worry," where perhaps the following paraphrase is in place: 'They are happy, and we need not worry, either.' Now if we accept that the 'and not' meaning of *nor* is not a totally implausible interpretation of the conjunction in "It is not so, nor 'twas not so," then we might come up with the following reading: 'It is not so, and it was not not so, either,' where the double negation in the second clause

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24. The quotation is according to the Norton Shakespeare.
25. "[U]sed after an affirmative clause or as a continuative in the sense of *and not. . .*"

only logically implies an affirmative: *it was so.* Rhetorically, there is a very significant difference between saying: *it is (was) so* and *it is (was) not not so.* First I will try to show what we gain if we support that this reading might also colour the meaning of the sentence, and then I will return to the difference between the simple affirmative and the affirmative through double negation.

I take my first clue from the fact that the sentence occurs in a tale and that it involves the existence and non-existence of a certain state of affairs through the copula *be* in its relatively rare 'existential' meaning, supplemented by the adverbial *so*, the latter standing for a whole clause or sentence. Now in fairy tales, existence is usually clarified as early as its very beginning, with the help of the pronoun *there* as subject + copulative *be* as subject-complement, *be* meaning 'exist': "Once upon a time there *was* a young lady, called Mary..." Yet – and here comes my second clue – Paul Ricoeur, in *The Rule of Metaphor*, quotes (in the chapter "Metaphor and Reference") Roman Jakobson's "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasia Disorders":

> The supremacy of poetic function over referential function does not obliterate the reference but makes it ambiguous. The double-sensed message finds correspondence in a split addresser, in a split addressee, and what is more in a split reference, as is cogently exposed in the preambles to fairy tales of various peoples, for instance in the usual exordium of the Majorca storytellers: "Aixo era y no era" (It was and it was not). [26]

I just note in passing that among the "various peoples" Jakobson refers to there are also the Hungarians, who often start their fairy-tales very similarly to the storytellers in Majorca: "Hol volt, hol nem volt (volt egyszer egy leány)," a literal translation of which could be: 'Where was, where was not (there was once a girl)' – perhaps my fascination with Benedick's (and Lady Mary's and Mr Fox's) "It is not so, nor 'twas not so" has to do with this fact, as a part of my linguistic competence, as well.

But let us proceed with Ricoeur, who builds a substantial portion of his theory of metaphor on "Aixo era y no era," using it as a kind of motto. As a comment on Jakobson, Ricoeur says: "Let us keep this notion *split reference* in mind, as well as the wonderful 'It was and was not,' which contains *in nuce* all that can be

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26. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny, with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello, SJ (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979 [1977]), p. 224.

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said about metaphorical truth." [27] Ricoeur, who argues for a referential conception of poetic language, [28] claims that while in metaphor a new semantic pertinence, a semantic innovation emerges out of the "ruins" of the literal meaning, the "metaphorical interpretation *also* sustains a new referential design, through those same means of abolition of the reference corresponding to the literal interpretation of the statement." [29] Drawing also on Wittgenstein, Marcus B. Hester, and Nelson Goodman, Ricoeur tries to convince us that the proximity of the (ruined) literal meaning and the (new) metaphorical one – the 'content' of this proximity given in the resemblance between the two meanings – establishes a proximity between the references (the 'things' the two respective meanings denote) themselves. The 'new thing,' the reference of the metaphorical meaning can be caught sight of only through a "new vision," [30] which is metaphorical itself: it is metaphorical 'seeing as.' Yet *as* implies more than the simple reorganisation of reality; what comes within the scope, the range, the efficacy of *as*, is the manifestation of "a way of being of things," in which 'mode of being,' a 'being so' corresponds to the semantic innovation in language. [31] And for Ricoeur *as* "must be treated as a metaphorical modality of the copula itself"; *as* operates alongside the copula, *as* "is not just the comparative term among all the terms, but it is included in the verb *to be*, whose force it alters." [32] Consequently, in metaphor operating with the verb *be* (e.g. *she is a rose*), [33] the subject (*she*) is seen *as* a rose, yet it is not only the relational function of *is* (*be*, the copula) which is affected by the metaphorical process but its existential sense as well. [34] she is 're-created' as a rose, she arrives at a new being in being seen as a rose, yet the tension between the subject and predicate (so often noted by theories of metaphor) is retained also in terms of the fact that *she* is, at the same time, *not a rose*. For Ricoeur, if I understand him correctly, the '*is not*' part of *is* is not only implied in the impossibility of the literal interpretation of the sentence, in the claim that the literal meaning is ruined so that the innovative, new semantic pertin-

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27. Ricoeur, p. 224.
28. Cf. Ricoeur, p. 230.
29. Ricoeur, p. 230.
30. Ricoeur, p. 230.
31. Cf. Ricoeur, p. 239.
32. Ricoeur, p. 248.
33. Ricoeur does not use this example here but this sentence is among the standard illustrations for metaphor.
34. Cf. Ricoeur, p. 248.

ence might prevail, but *is not* is present in the newly created reference of the metaphorical meaning as well. In other words, the new creation: 'she-(seen)-*as*-a-rose,' has a 'dual' status: she, a woman, is not only no longer just a woman but a rose as well, but she is not *totally* a rose, either. Yet she is not totally a rose not only in the sense that 'something of the woman still remained in her' but also in the sense that there is a resistance in the referential function of *rose*, which prevents it from totally turning into a woman. Somebody being a rose, it seems, is not a simple denial of the previous mode of existence for either of the two parties (*she* and *rose*) involved; through the created resemblance – established through *is* – between the woman and the rose, the former way of being is rather accompanied, or complemented by, the new one, and the newly created referent will be a "split" one: a woman who is and is not a rose at the same time. [35]

Neither doing full justice to Ricoeur's refined theory, nor to the notions of "split addresser and addressee" introduced by Jakobson, I will concentrate on "split reference" in the above sense. Now Ricoeur's fascination with "It is/was and it is/was not," illustrating here the way (subject-predicate) metaphors operate, might be extended to express an attitude, a state of mind we may have to the fictitious, to the verbally invented, to the product of the imagination. Or I should perhaps rather say that "Aixo era y no era" is a 'royal road' to reconstruct the way the imaginary is constructed, yet it seems to me that – especially through embedding one fiction into another – there are more than one splits in the references. Let me explain this.

In the story Mr Blakeway recounts, there is a heroine, who relates a story, yet what she tells is, within the fiction of the whole story, true in the sense that she tells what is retained in her memory, in 'ideas,' and 'impressions,' from the horrors she actually went through and saw with her own eyes, heard with her own ears, etc. But she, in order not to frighten Mr Fox away right at the beginning, in order to create a 'narrative space' for her story, to be able to tell, from the beginning to the end, what she experienced, disguises the true story *as* a dream; she pretends that her mind contains nothing more than a special kind of

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35. It could be claimed – and this has always been a controversial part of the theory of metaphor – that the *rose* 'is and is not a rose,' either, yet the grammatical structure of a metaphorical expression (this time what is in the subject and what in the predicate position) cannot be neglected, since it seems that there is no absolute (or complete) symmetry between the two positions; although it would be hard to deny that the word (phrase, etc.) which plays the role of the predicate is affected by the subject-word as well, the subject will always be 'more in focus.' Yet this problem cannot be pursued any further here.

fiction. Ignoring here the hopelessly vast literature on dreams, I only single out two features of theirs. First, a dream is a special type of fiction because we are and are not the authors of it; apart from day-dreaming, I cannot *make* myself dream something, at the same time I cannot avoid my dreams; once I have one, I have to watch it, from the beginning to the end, and after waking up I know that I saw it in a movie of which I was the single spectator; there is no other authority for it than me. Therefore only I (my mind, my previous impressions, repressions, my attitude to people, to things, etc.) can be responsible for it. Yet when I want to share my dream, to make it 'social,' I – and this is the second feature I wish to emphasise – cannot but use *language*; the dream *I tell* is, strictly speaking, *not* my dream but a *report* of it, verbalised and transformed into a narrative, which might be fragmented, discontinuous, chaotic, yet, precisely for the sake of being understood, it *must* strive towards some kind of coherence, imposed on it by the interpretative process. [36] So what lends a fictive aura to Lady Mary's narrative within the narrative is that a dream is and is not one's invention, that it is and is not what was actually dreamt. But these *is*'s and *is not*'s are further split by the (within-the-story) fact that what she relates is *not* a dream and the 'reality' that reaches out, like a hand, from the dream into the 'reality' of the whole tale is precisely the hand, the hand with a bracelet that had been cut off and can now be produced as evidence. It is the unfortunate young woman's hand which erases the 'fiction' and 'awakens' everyone to 'reality,' it is the hand which wipes off the optative-volitional subjunctive with which Mr Fox joins in the narrative as if he were trying to find out the 'truth' together with Lady Mary: "God forbid it should be so," it is the disclosure of the hand which changes *so* to *show*: "upon his saying as usual, *It is not so, nor it was not so, and God forbid it should be* so, Lady

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36. Cf. "To begin, there [in psychoanalysis] enters into the field of investigation and treatment only that part of experience which is capable of *being said.* . . . This screening through speech in the analytic situation also functions as a criterion for what will be held to be the object of this science: not instinct as a physiological phenomenon, not even desire as energy, but desire as meaning capable of being deciphered, translated, and interpreted. . . . We can already see the misunderstanding that prevails in ordinary epistemological discussions: facts in psychoanalysis are in no way facts of observable behaviour. They are 'reports.' We know dreams only as told upon awakening, and even symptoms, although they are partially observable, enter into the field of analysis only in relation to other factors verbalized in the 'report' " (Paul Ricoeur, "The Question of Proof in Freud's Psychoanalytic Writing," in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: An Anthology of His Work*, ed. Charles E. Reagan and David Stewart [Boston: Beacon Press, 1978], pp. 185–186).

Mary retorts, *But it is so, and it was so, and here is the hand I have to* show," the *so-show* pair serving as a verbal index to the dramatic turn. Even further, as we can see from "But it is so, and it was so," uttered together with the exposure of the hand, the enigmatic double negation in "nor 'twas not so" is, retrospectively, disambiguated: since the "positive" counterpart of the negative "it is not" and "nor 'twas not" is "it is" and "it was," respectively, we may now conclude with certainty that *nor* was nothing but 'just' a 'standard' emphatic *no(t)*. However, on the strictly verbal level, *nor* and *not* are *there* and they are there *together*; Lady Mary could have said: "It is not so, and it was not so" but she chose the more complex double negative, creating, very much in line with the nature of dreams and fairy-tales, at least some uncertainty around what is and was so, and what is not and was not so. So even if the 'and not' reading of *nor* is not colouring the standard reading of the conjunction, "nor-not" does become, through the hide-and-seek 'reality' plays with 'fiction,' a verbal index of a constant splitting and *re*-splitting of *re*-ferences. 'It was so-it was not so-it is so-it is not so,' yet my main point, drawing on Ricoeur, is that copulative-existential *be* and *not* do not simply create a positive-negative pair; what offers itself here to describe our attitude to the fictitious is an 'is not not so,' which *is* a statement, logically yielding *is*, yet, rhetorically, the double negation heavily curtails the absolute triumph of the positive, and the second *not*, its intrusive, or even obtrusive *presence* is pertinent or even impertinent because it accentuates the 'is not' inhering, always already, in every *is* in fiction or in metaphor. Thus it seems that one way to describe our relation to the imaginary, or rather to reconstruct our way of creating it is to say that, instead of straightforward *is* or *is not* we need a 'third' category, where *is* restricts the scope of, and suspends the power of *not* just as much as *not* compromises and withholds *is*. Benedick's outburst in Act II Scene i, after the first dance-and-mask scene, is equally telling: "But that my Lady Beatrice should know me, and not know me!" (189–190). The positive and the negative are in operation at the same time; yet if we return to Benedick's quote "Like the old tale, my lord. . ." we are immediately reminded that "It is not so, nor 'twas not so" is not only appropriated, i.e. applied to Claudio here, but it is embedded, as a further twist, or split, in the fiction of the play as well. Now we could raise the issue of how the vision of the spectator or reader of the play, conscious, always already, that he or she is watching a *play*, a piece of fiction, is guided by the visions of the various characters, such as Claudio, or Benedick, how that is further complicated by the spectator's awareness of the flesh-and-blood 'reality' of the

actors (as real, human beings) *personifying* Claudio, or Benedick, how this awareness is further split by the post-modern notion of the subject as "the originally divided, split subject of desire, the profoundly subjected subject, reduced to only the desire for that part of itself that language simultaneously arouses and forbids it from rejoining,"[37] and how Shakespeare participates in this 'deconstruction,' staging his "cultural nightmare, which could be expressed by this question: what is to distinguish selves fabricated by social performance of interiority from the secret roles being performed by the vicious and slanderous forces in our culture?"[38] The relationships might be so complicated that perhaps all the factors could not even be expressed in human language: they are rather to be *seen*, *shown*, as the cut-off hand; *so* can only be given substance by *show*.

But is that really so? First, it could easily be claimed that not only in any of Shakespeare's plays but also in any art-work of significance (whatever that means) the destabilisation of reference, the dismantling of straightforward meaning, the displacement of signifier with respect to the signified take place all the time, together with the work of art in question reflecting, and further reflecting (re-reflecting) on these problematisations. Why I think *Much Ado* deserves special attention is precisely because of the light treatment it usually receives; as David Lucking rightfully observes, the play is "too easily dismissed," even by serious scholars, "as a mere bagatelle unworthy of serious consideration."[39] Another way of putting this is that *Much Ado About Nothing* lives up to its title.[40] Yet, as Lucking further argues, the problem I called at the beginning of this study the problem of representation and our attitude to fiction and reality "is radicalised [in the play] by reducing the sign to a mere cipher":[41] we might as well take *nothing* seriously and treat it – as generations of philosophers, from Parmenides to Heidegger, have done – as an exciting enquiry into the "non-event or aporia . . . as the centre of significance in the play,"[42] or, I would ven-

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37. Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen's words in "The Freudian Subject, form Politics to Ethics," quoted by Piette, p. 1.

38. Piette, p. 29.

39. David Lucking, "Bringing Deformed Forth: Engendering Meaning in *Much Ado About Nothing*," *Renaissance Forum*, Vol. 2 No. 1 (Spring, 1997); <http://www.hull.ac.uk/renforum/v2no1/lucking.htm>.

40. Lucking refers to Will and Ariel Durant, *The Age of Reason Begins* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1961) as an exponent of this view. Cf. Lucking.

41. Lucking.

42. Lucking.

IT IS NOT SO, NOR 'TWAS NOT SO

ture to say, into the nature of 'non-existence.' And, as far as I can see, it is the *non*-part of this word, or the *no*-part of *nothing*, which receives an early verbal index in the double negation *nor 'twas not*, a quote from a tale, as a preamble to the tale we are going to see and hear, a motto to what is entitled *Much Ado About Nothing*, where even the scene which can be rightfully called the most significant one with respect to dramatic deception, the scene in which Claudio witnesses Borachio's counterfeit wooing of Margaret, is hidden from the spectator's sight and is only reported. And it is reported by Borachio himself to Conrade (and *overheard*, in turn, by the two Watches), and Borachio, perhaps not insignificantly, refers to the whole incident as a "tale": "– I tell this tale vilely – I should first tell thee how the Prince, Claudio, and my master, planted and placed and possessed by my master Don John, saw afar off in the orchard this amiable encounter" (III.iii.143–147). Borachio even echoes the double negation before he starts his tale proper; to Conrade's question, "But art not thou thyself giddy with the fashion too, that thou hast shifted out of thy tale into telling me of the fashion?" he replies: "Not so, neither" (III.iii.136–139). As it has been observed several times, the play is, indeed, permeated with the replacement of *so* by *show*, connected, and connectable, with *no* (no-thing, non-existence). [43] This might be given a further – and here final – twist, which, this time, is less a split than a real connection.

Stanley Cavell, scrutinising, in *The Claim of Reason*, the question whether representation through language provides us with certainty about the existence of the object which we represent, at one point, among other things, observes:

> Criteria [which must be present for something to be the case] are 'criteria for something's being so,' not in the sense that they tell us of a thing's existence, but of something like its identity, not of its *being* so, but of its

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43. Now it seems to be a widely accepted fact that in Shakespeare's time *nothing* could also mean the female genitalia (as, for example, *Hamlet*, III.ii.101–109 testifies to it) as well as the insight that *nothing* could also be pronounced as *noting*: "The *o* in *nothing* was long, and the *th* could be sounded as *t* (as still in some regional or plebeian speech)" (Humphreys, p. 135). So when Balthazar apologises for his bad voice and says: "Note this before my notes; / There's not a note of mine that's worth the noting" and Don Pedro answers: "Why, these are the very crochets [musical quarter notes] that he speaks! / Note notes, forsooth, and nothing!" (II.iii.54–57), he might mean "pay attention to the musical notes and nothing else is important," or "to pay attention to musical notes is to note nothing worth noting," or "you note the notes and then you go on noting them: this is all what singing is about." (Cf. the note, provided by Stephen Greenblatt in The Norton Shakespeare, p. 1383.)

being *so*. Criteria do not determine the certainty of statements, but the application of the concepts employed in statements. [44]

According to Cavell's argument, based on Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, it is not only in metaphorical or in poetic language (in fiction) that our certainty with respect to 'reality' is destabilised but in ordinary, everyday language as well. Approaching the problem from Ricoeur's side we might say that the 'not' is inhering in 'is' even when we say, in the most everyday sense: *This is a chair*. Yet Cavell's insight calls attention to *so* as well, so emphatically featuring in the original dictum: "It is not so, nor 'twas not so." Cavell calls our attention to the fact that we can never approach *being* (*is*, existence) 'directly'; what we have is, always already, an attitude, a way, a mode of relating to things, and to the question whether what we, in a given situation, are encountering is real or imaginary, the answer can only be "it depends": it depends not on the thing but on my attitude. Here is Cavell:

> And I would want to say: The difference between real and imaginary, between existence and absence is not a criterial difference, not one of recognition. And so the answer to "Am I wrong?" is, It depends. It depends on whether the question I am asked is one of identification or of something else (something I waver between calling existence and reality). The problem, or something I am trying to make a problem, is: How do I know whether I am asked the one or the other? [45]

Perhaps one way of answering Cavell's last question is to combine his insights – quoted painfully sparingly here – with those of Ricoeur's on metaphor. Without trying to "solve" ancient riddles of aesthetics at one stroke, I offer the following contribution: reality, just like fiction, is always created in an attitude, in a mode of approaching what is before us; we are only given the *so*, never the *is*. Thus, whether what we, *within* the *so*, are encountering is 'real' or 'imaginary' will not depend on the *amount* of certainty we have with respect to the object approached; the object will always be in the mode of *is* and *is not* at the same time, it will always carry an affirmation of itself, and a denial of itself simultaneously: language, indeed, speaks with "double tongues." Art (the theatre, the play, the "funny words" in it) is not something opposed to 'reality' or 'removed' (twice or

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44. Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 45.

45. Cavell, p. 51.

three times) from reality; from social contexts, through well-identifiable and socially acquired circumstances (signs, etc.) we will be able to tell whether we are in the theatre or not, we will sooner or later be able to tell whether we were dreaming or not, we understand that somebody is – ironically – disguising truth as a dream, we realise that a play is dramatising, in front of us, our relationship to the stage by representing precisely eavesdropping and "noting," etc. Yet all this is possible because we are somehow aware of the 'is not' in the 'is,' and it seems to me to be likely that this awareness, as part of our socialisation, grows in proportion to our participation in the imaginary, perhaps even more so when the imaginary – as in *Much Ado*, for example – emphatically calls our attention to itself *as* the imaginary, so that we may – in addition to 'naive' participation – have a distance from it, so that we may also *relate* to it. This, I know, amounts to saying that the more we attend, for example, the theatre, the better grasp we will have on reality: the 'royal road' to reality is not to it directly but precisely through the imaginary. I at least believe this to be so, as I believe that within *so*, we construct both reality and the imaginary rather through 'it is not not so' than through either just 'is,' or just 'is not.' The difference in our respective attitudes while constructing reality and the imaginary might be that with respect to the imaginary we have a greater awareness of the ever-presence of *not* in *is*, or rather of the *not not*: we do not have a greater or lesser amount of *certainty* but a greater amount of awareness of, and a greater amount of *intimacy* with, the *not not*. But you might shake your head and say: "You heard the warning: *Be bold, be bold, but not too bold*, yet haven't you been *too* bold; is your much ado not another case of *it is not so, nor it was not so: but indeed, God forbid it should be so*?"

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Ágnes Matuska

An Ontological Transgression

Iago as representation in its pure form

This paper attempts to present various approaches to Iago's function and position in Shakespeare's *Othello* in order to show different cultural-dramatic levels and layers of contrasting interpretations that are present in the drama. The suggested hypothesis of the paper is that the peculiar ontology of this figure can be explained by the late-Renaissance epistemological crisis and the basic change in the logic of representation that took place at the beginning of the 17th century. A painting by Velazquez, *Las Meninas*, is examined as a parallel to Iago's paradoxical existence and as another example that, similarly to Iago's, reflects and comments on the changed modes of representation of the age.

Through Shakespeare's Iago I will examine a change which may be dated to the turn of the 17th century, a change which brought a radical turn in the representational logic of our culture. I will suggest that from the perspective of this change it is possible to draw a parallel between Iago and a mid-17th century painting. The painting is as witty, nuanced and complex in its reflection on the problems of representation as Iago is. Both the character and the painting are radically new forms of representation made possible by the historical, cultural and epistemological changes often grouped under the term early modern. I will also examine the ways Iago and the painting display this new means of representation; on the one hand, they themselves are examples of theatrical and pictorial representation and thus they demonstrate how signs are produced; and on the other hand, because they are self-referential with regard to the problem of representation.

    The existence of Iago is unique for several reasons. First, he is "present" both in the drama and on the stage on several levels, with roles of different kinds. He is Othello's ensign or flag-bearer; he is the intriguer who concocts the plot of the play; he is the director who makes the show go on; and he is the mas-

ter of ceremonies who moves easily between the world of the play and the world of the audience. Indeed, the number of Iago's roles is dazzling. Second, within the structure of the drama, it is possible to attribute different "roles" or functions to him regarding his relationship to the other characters. Third, he is the product of a period in the development of drama in which a transition between two epistemological models is taking place. Since this transition also takes place in the theatrical tradition, it calls into play residual and emergent theatrical models at the same time. From one point of view Iago is a villain, while from another he is doing nothing but what is necessary for all play and theatre: he is creating a world. And to make him even more intriguing, he is willing to comment on his machinations.

I will now map the elaborate context in which it is possible to interpret the multitude of roles and selves in which Iago is realised.

It is beyond dispute that we are dealing with a villain who intentionally misleads his master, infects him with false jealousy, which leads to Othello's killing of Desdemona, and his subsequent suicide. The investigation of Iago's motives has been a basis for a number of interpretations of the play since Coleridge. My concern, however, is not so much the detectable motives and drives of the villain in his intrigue, but rather the forms or perhaps "types" of evil that appear on stage during this period in English drama. These forms should provide us with a wider context for examining Iago's villainy than the plot of the play or the "hidden psychological motivation" of the characters. A major element in this wider context is the theatrical tradition in which the drama has its roots.

According to Rosalie Colie, Iago represents the kind of moral privation that Augustine attributed to the devil. Iago's devilishness is indisputable.[1] The most obvious explanation is the structure of the play, which might be compared to the traditional structure of moralities, a psychomachia, the combat of an angel and a devil for the human soul. In this design the pole opposite to Iago is the innocent Desdemona, described within the text as a near saint.[2] As Robert Grudin also observes, the play ascribes a number of Christian epithets to Desdemona, including "heavenly sight" (V.ii.348) and "heavenly true" (V.ii.135). Grudin even goes

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1. Rosalie Littell Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 246.
2. Robert Grudin, *Mighty Opposites: Shakespeare and Renaissance Contrariety* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 126.

further in opposing the two characters, Iago and Desdemona, defining them as pure opposites standing in mutual necessity with each other and both being universal psychological presences: "If Desdemona embodies the lure and agony of an absolute morality, Iago embodies the natural result of this civilising influence, the rude will chafing against moral law." [3]

With reference to other character-types within the English dramatic tradition, Iago is the successor not so much of the fallen angel or devil, as of another figure from the morality plays. He may be said to descend from a companion to the devil called Vice, who, although villainous, enjoyed the sympathy of the audience thanks to his mischievous but funny tricks and shrewdness. Since the Vice usually played a dramaturgically central role in the moralities, and since this function was passed over from the Tudor dramatic tradition to Elizabethan theatre, we should take a closer look at him.

It is important to note the relationship of this type to the rest of the characters as well as to the audience. The Vice was usually "performed by the leading actor and 'director' of the troupe." [4] The two functions, namely that of the Vice and the director, were clearly related, and the player of Vice had a distinguished position in the hierarchy of actors, his role in the hierarchy of roles. This is supported by the fact that in the case of moralities, where we are sometimes provided with the distribution of roles among players, the Vice appears as either the first or the last. Moreover there is usually no doubling required in his case because of the importance and complexity of his role. [5] Robert Weimann describes the fool and the Vice acting as a kind of Master of Ceremonies or as figures who constitute a link between play and community. [6] The multi-faceted nature of the Vice is explicit in *Mankind*, one of the first plays written for a professional troupe – it this case a troupe of six. The play was written around 1470. One of

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3. Grudin, p. 132.

4. Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 43.

5. David M. Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 81.

6. It is impossible to make a clear distinction between the two characters because in both cases we are dealing with a trickster. In the 16th century the term "Vice" also worked as a synonym for the fool, and there are clear references that their costumes could be identical as well. Cf. David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 4–5.

the characters, *Mischief* informs the audience in his entrance that he came in order to entertain: "I am come hither to make you game" (l. 68). According to David Wiles, he is "at once a villain, whom the audience learn to shun, and the welcome game-maker who makes the play possible."[7] Wiles claims that Mischief as a game-maker and master of ceremonies is central to the dramatists' conception, and introduces an intriguing idea: although we cannot be sure about which "other" character doubled Titivillus, the chief devil – a character who is advertised as a major attraction to the audience before he actually appears on stage – we have good reason to suppose that the actor playing Mischief was the one to put on the devil's mask in the play-within-the-play, that is, the character who originally introduced himself to the audience as the prime mover of the "game."[8] Wiles points out that the Vice is the chief comedian, and he is the one who dominates the play whenever he is present. Likewise he has the power to juggle layers of reality. "He plays at one and the same time the devil, the allegorical person Mischief, and a crooked actor organising robberies from houses that are empty because everyone has come to see the play. At the same time, the player is himself, gathering real money to fund the itinerant troupe in which he is the

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7. Wiles, pp. 1–2. Not everyone has given so distinguished a dramaturgical position to Mischief. For example Jean-Paul Debax in his essay entitled "Vices and Doubledeckers," Mischief is performing his "duties" with three other characters: Newguise, Nowadays and Nought, and Debax does not make a distinction between them (*The Show Within: Dramatic and Other Insets. English Renaissance Drama [1550–1642]*, ed. Francois Laroque [Montpelliér III: Publications de Université Paul Valéry, 1990]). Still, I find David Wiles's argument convincing, taking into consideration that the Vice had minions in other moralities as well.

8. Wiles bases his argument on the fact that before the appearance of Titivillus there are only three other players visible. Actually, they are collecting money from the audience before the big spectacle. He suggests that the exit of Titivillus may be interpreted as the entrance of Mischief. It also seems appropriate that the *par excellence* showman doubles the part (Wiles, p. 3). Still, there is a lot of evidence that would support the notion that Mercy played Titivillus instead of Mischief. Because of the limited number of actors the two poles of psychomachia were frequently played by the same actor. It is difficult to decide who is right, but regarding the complexity of the Vice and the multiplicity of dramatic layers he is involved in, we cannot rule out Wiles's suggestion. The other solution is more characteristic of moralities where it is not the mischievous evil character who rules the stage, but rather the allegory of mankind. In the latter case, the allegorical mankind-figure would be the protagonist, and the other characters would be doubled by the same actor(s) (Bevington, p. 87 – although he relates the same to *Mankind* as well).

principal. There is no fixed boundary between actor and role – for to perform a play is in a sense necessarily to create 'mischief.' " [9]

The multitude of the Vice's roles is interesting not only because it lends a highly complex existence to the player/character, but also because this complexity is present in his relationship with the audience. Since he is capable of shifting the boundaries of the action between the fiction of the play and the real world of the audience, the latter is put in a peculiar situation, "on the move between the polar position of observer and participant." [10] The audience of the game, play, and mischief, of the carnival's disturbance of order, become an accomplice when they pay to see the devil, or when they witness how the vices organise the robbery of the empty houses. Titivillus, the chief evil makes this explicit when he suggests that the audience not warn Mankind of the perils that are ahead of him. J. A. B. Somerset points out lines which suggest that although we are in a position to warn Mankind, we do not do so, since "[w]e enjoy a 'good sport' instead, performed by a villain who reminds us of vaudeville in his close rapport with us, playing upon dramatic illusion": [11] "And ever ye did, for me keep now your silence; / Not a word, I charge you, pain of forty pence" (590–1). Temptation in the play is clearly parallel to the play as temptation, and the devil is a director not only of the play but of the audience as well.

If we add to the already mentioned characteristics of the Vice that he was frequently a servant, or a person whose goal is upward mobility, we find new parallels between the Vice and Iago, whose wish was to become a lieutenant. Another character trait of the Vice can be detected in Iago's behaviour: in spite of his horrible deeds and his iniquity he enjoys the sympathy of the audience. His intelligence and the wide range of his tools and styles of behaviour he employs in carrying out his tricks while he directs the steps of other characters deserve our admiration. We can assume that he enjoys his game, and he concentrates not so much on the outcome, as on the pleasure of the game itself. Iago's tool for "making the game" is clearly language, with which he manages to screen a fake reality to Othello in the famous scene when they are supposedly eavesdropping to Cassio and Bianca, and with this fake reality he will manage to blur the vision of Othello. But we should also keep in mind that his method, namely picturing,

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9. Wiles, p. 2.

10. Wiles, p. 3.

11. J. A. B. Somerset, *Four Tudor Interludes: Introduction* (London: Athlone Press, 1974), p. 9. The line numbers of the play *Mankind* refer to the same edition.

creating a reality with words, is dangerously similar to the one of the Renaissance actor when he was inviting the audience to enter the distant and exotic reality of the play-world.

The weight of words on the Renaissance stage was different from the one we are used to, and there was a simple practical reason for that, namely, the small number of props. The single fact, for example, that there was no significant artificial lightning and the plays were performed for the most part in daylight – including the night-scenes – is perhaps a good illustration of how different the function of words, gestures or props was in creating a proper atmosphere for a scene, since these were the only tools with which the actors were able to plunge the stage into darkness. For present audiences, there is only one acceptable way of experiencing this, when the lights really go out. Alan Dessen's examples for tools that were used to create the illusion of darkness are the dialogues, candles, night-gowns and situations when the characters act as if they did not see each other on stage. [12] At that time different methods were used for creating illusion and words were more significant for this reason. Dessen also points out that there was a greater need for the imagination and active participation on the audience's part. [13]

Returning to the similarities between the Vice and Iago, the latter is continuing the tradition of his ancestor by establishing a typically direct relationship with the audience. Although Grudin does not mention a generic relationship between the two characters, he points out those attributes of Iago which are characteristic of the Vice as well. He describes Iago as the liaison between action and audience, since Iago confides in the audience, explains what is happening and why he is making it happen. "He not only conceives and directs the action, but also is the play's chorus, satirist and fool . . . he obviously delights in his own schemes and artfully ornaments them in their execution. In short, he thoroughly reflects, on one level, the values of the dramatist." [14] Thus it is not only that he wins the sympathy of the audience with his wit and stagecraft, but similar to Mischief, he is making the audience his accomplice by revealing his plans to it. No matter how much he is the embodiment of evil (or perhaps the chief evil)

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12. Alan C. Dessen, *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 92.
13. Dessen, p. 89.
14. Grudin, p. 125.

according to a religious moral scale, [15] he is a necessary driving force behind the game. His function as director and dramatist is discussed by Patricia Parker as well. Counterfeit representation and the juggling with time when precipitating and delaying events are interpreted as tools of Iago's in manipulating his environment, making the others see a reality which he wants them to see. [16] An objection could perhaps be raised against Iago's function of director and dramatist, since in the end he is incapable of controlling events and finds himself enmeshed in his own web. This objection is answered if we look at it through the Vice tradition, since similar characters are able to be present in the play on several levels at the same time. We have to acknowledge his failure if we suppose some sort of revenge to be behind Iago's intrigue, since although he achieves a bloody goal, he is consumed by it. Iago as the master of ceremonies, however, may account the play to his credit, since he successfully manipulates both the characters and the audience throughout the play.

Note here that no matter how similar the functions of the two characters are, in the case of Iago we clearly have to deal with a more complex character than the Morality's vice. In the case of Iago, the creation of disorder is not confined to simple mischief. The main reason for this is perhaps that in the case of moralities there was a fairly stable world order behind the play, which served as a context for the devilry thus allowing the audience to laugh at the roughness and topsy-turvidom, and even take part in the game without risking their certainty of the world order and their own place in it. I term the world order which served as a context for the moralities the 'Renaissance order' following Foucault, who claims that it was succeeded by what he calls the 'Classical model' at the turn of the 17th century. [17] In the case of Elizabethan drama, we can witness the interplay of the two models: the stability of the hierarchical medieval world view

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15. The parallel between Mischief and Iago may offer a possible answer to the frequent question of Iago's devil-like existence. As we have seen, Colie is inclined to interpret Iago as the devil. But as we will see in the following, Serpieri, for example, finds that we are missing the very essence of Iago's existence in seeing in him anything particular, including the devil. If we accept Wiles's argument according to which it is the master of ceremonies who puts on the mask of the chief devil, then Iago is and is not the devil at the same time. The devil is just one mask in Iago's collection.

16. Patricia Parker, "Shakespeare and Rhetoric," in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, eds. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (London and New York: Routledge, 1985) 54–74, p. 65.

17. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), pp. 17–45.

is passing; the new model is still being formed. [18] With the advent of Iago, the coherent, all-encompassing Christian world-view gave way to the uncertainty of opposing epistemological models.

I will now suggest a change in the perspective from which Iago's misbehaviour takes on greater power with respect to his predecessor. This change primarily concerns the audience. If Iago is regarded as the Bad Angel of the Moralities, his benign *pendant* is Desdemona. The soul of man will be damned or saved depending on the outcome of their fight. From the perspective of the psychological drama in which characters are not allegories as in the moralities but are much more complex, having personal psychological motives and doubts, Iago's opposite is Othello himself. The dialectics of these two characters and their interdependence can be traced on several levels.

Serpieri in his semiotic analysis of the play shows some points where this duality governs the meaning of the two identities. [19] He describes Iago as not being able to identify with any situation or sign or *enoncé*, which is Serpieri's term for something that represents the definiteness of being. Since we can attribute anything more easily to Iago than a stable identity, his identity is indeed but a simulacrum. Facing the emptiness of his own self, in his envy of the others' *énonciations*, he deconstructs them and transforms them into simulacra. [20] Serpieri explains that the characteristic rhetorical figure of this scheme is *litotes*, a figure which persuades by denying. The other side of the coin, the lord of the *enoncé* is Othello, who is always able to represent himself. The rhetorical figure that is characteristic of his way of affirming his identity is *hyperbole*. Othello defines – and perhaps finds – his identity through the tales he tells about himself. But to do so, he has to transform the present into past, into the stability of his role, as he did in the tale with which he won Desdemona. In opposition to

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18. Timothy Reiss attributes a special role to the tragedies of the age in creating the discourse which was formed at the beginning of the 17th century, which he terms analytico-referential discourse. Timothy J. Reiss, *Tragedy and Truth: Studies in the Development of a Renaissance and Neoclassical Discourse* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 2–7.

19. Alessandro Serpieri, "Reading the Signs: Towards a Semiotics of Shakespearean Drama," in *Alternative Shakespeares*, ed. John Drakakis (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), 119–143.

20. Serpieri does not define the term simulacrum. In Baudrillard's use simulation is "the generation by models of a real without origin or reality," it is "substituting signs of the real for the real itself." Cf. Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," in *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp. 166–7.

Othello's *enoncé*, which finds its validation in the past, Iago's activity of depriving the *enoncés* of the others of their meaning and transforming them into simulacra is always linked to the present. In Serpieri's words: "While Iago is condemned to a continuous mental present – of thinking, projecting, of seducing – Othello tends to elude the present in symbolic certainties." [21] The two extremes, however, are also parallel, and express the two opposite images of the same cultural mask, presenting the opposed modes of unreality. The closely-knit relationship and dependence of the two extremes is formulated by Serpieri: "There is, between these two rhetorical modes, a hidden resemblance that constitutes an important key to the understanding of the complementary relationship between the two characters. Iago is imprisoned in negation . . . and in the void and envy of being, which he translates into litotic form in order to attack and punish the 'other.' But Othello is likewise imprisoned, in hyperbolic affirmation." [22]

In this scheme, one in which Iago is not Desdemona's but Othello's opposite, the intriguer is a much more dangerous agent to the world of the audience than in the morality-model. They have to face that the character who lacks a normal self is capable of destroying the identity of the play's hero – an identity that was functioning well in the social context. [23] I imagine that the smile of the audience left on their faces by the moralities might turn into a grin, [24] since Iago's bustling and his success may suggest that any identity is questionable, and

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21. Serpieri, p. 140.

22. Serpieri, p. 142.

23. Howard Felperin in his analysis of *Othello* also finds that the drama may be interpreted from both sides of the boundary between different theatrical traditions: on the one hand it is possible to detect the allegorical structure of the moralities, but only in order that the allegory lose its validity later on. Cf. Howard Felperin, *Shakespearean Representation: Mimesis and Modernity in Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 77–8. He finds that the characters become obviously human in their distancing from the allegory (p. 85), and that the allegorical structure is created by Othello and Iago together (pp. 76–80).

24. Charlotte Spivack describes medieval laughter as the victory of the soul over the inferiority of the mortal, material body. "To put it metaphysically, laughter is the response on the part of Being to the exposure of non-Being. In other words, then, laughter occurs when that which is real perceives the absence of reality, and when that which is good becomes aware of that absence of good which we call evil" (Charlotte Kesler Spivack, *The Comedy of Evil on Shakespeare's Stage* [Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1978], p. 26). In this sense laughter is morally condemning. But even in the case of moralities the situation is less clear-cut: "While various pieces of comic business may have originally had some symbolic or homiletic function, they apparently came to be elaborated for their humour alone" (Somerset, p. 5).

although it may not be obvious that man has irrevocably lost the ground beneath his feet, "the play makes it clear that with some artfulness it is not that difficult to undermine the world's ostensible stability. In a conventional morality the good Christian, after admitting the mistake of temporarily giving in to evil, would cry out for and get mercy. The evil was just a transitional threat to the eternal bliss of the good Christian with whom the audience identified. In *Othello*, however, the situation is more complicated. No matter that there is no "reality" behind the intrigues of Iago's lies, he is still capable of attacking the *enoncé* of the others. The loss of the secure sense of reality is a genuine threat in *Othello*, while this was utterly inconceivable in early moralities. This change is a consequence of a development which started with the splitting of the allegorical everyman-protagonist of the morality in two. Such a constellation provides as little threat of damnation to the good character, as it is clear that the evil one will surely not repent – the influence of Calvinism is unambiguous in the scheme.[25] This episode, however, serves as a major turning point in the development of the kind: a character is born who is not redeemed at the end of the play. And when the obvious difference between the good and the bad, the former to be saved and the latter to be damned, disappears, the temptation may pose a genuine threat of damnation.

Taking into consideration the available representational models of the age the character under scrutiny is most interesting regarding its *way of* existence. Clearly the plurality of roles detected so far lends a peculiar plurality to his existence – and perhaps it is possible to venture at this point that the multiplicity of the character's dramatic layers and the plurality of his position in the dramatic design all contribute to the play's structural tautness and richness of interpretive horizons. Still, if we continue examining the uniqueness of the existence of the character, I think it is possible to detect more than one aspect of the structural duality. On the one hand, the interplay of the two contexts, that of the morality play and the one of the rising psychological drama exemplifies that the old functions of Vice have a new meaning in Iago's new context. On the other hand, Iago's non-being also has two aspects: from Colie's perspective it is one that points backwards to the medieval paradigm, while from Serpieri's perspective it is one that points forward to the early modern. In other words, Iago's non-being is inherited from a previous tradition, but it means something else.

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25. Bevington, pp. 152–3.

Next I will examine Iago not in his relation to other characters from the play or compared to the his character's prototypes, but from a different point of view. In other words, I am interested not in Iago's position in the play, but his function in the age of competing epistemological models; an age when, due to the disappearance of the security given by a coherent world-picture, the act of representation and understanding lost its reference. In trying to understand Iago's identity, critics with different theoretical orientations and different tools of interpretation have come to the remarkably similar conclusion that it is not his *identity* that defines Iago as a character, but rather his *lack of identity*, not his *being* a somebody, but his *not being* a somebody or his being precisely *nobody*. We have already seen how Serpieri points out that Iago lacks the *enoncé*, the definiteness of being. He formulates this in another way: "Iago, in fact, is a prisoner of his own *imaginaire*, and thus condemned to *not being* in reality: his manifest desires and motives are only the slidings of an *unspeakable* desire. If criticism considers him at the level of *being* (and identity: jealous, Machiavellian, diabolic etc.), it is in danger of missing his actual dramatic depth." [26]

Relying on Colie's argument, Iago's existence may be approached from two directions. One is that he is a nobody in the social hierarchy. Colie defines Iago as a man left to his own devices in a society where everybody else has a recognised station and origin, thus a recognised identity. Iago must try to "make" himself through promotion into as an officer. In the context of the disrupted social order of the age and the arrival of new men in every social group, Iago is a nobody. Colie summarises her other approach to Iago's non-existence: "[Iago] is fundamentally false to being, the bearer of the contagious disease which Augustine had defined as evil, spread by him amongst those in whose midst he lives. Iago is the carrier of not-being, and his not-being invades the being of being to destroy it." [27] The similarity with Serpieri's suggestion that Iago's simulacra destroy the others' *enoncé* is remarkable. In my opinion, however, here we are facing two different things: from Colie's perspective Iago's non-being is actually the non-being of the Augustinian evil, which is denied a share of even the smallest particle of Good. According to Serpieri, as quoted above, Iago's non-existence is due to his confinement to his own imagination. While in a previous model a stable hierarchy would banish Iago from the realm of being, in this case it seems that the very stability of being is questioned. Iago has too many ties to the world

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26. Serpieri, p. 136.
27. Colie, p. 249.

for us to identify him with the allegory of evil and so we cannot confine him to the position of an evil where he embodies no threat to the existence of the system. [28]

Thus the world has changed, we are facing a different mode of representation, a different theatre. New ways of non-being have been revealed; the notion that Iago and the play in which he appears may be seen as a comment on the problem of representation finds support in the play's frequent references to the problem of appearance and how it is evaluated. In the scope of this paper I will examine one of these examples. There are several parts in *Othello* which refer to the problem of appearance and value or the authenticity of representation. Iago is especially generous in hints on the hidden and the visible, the real and the fake. [29] The most interesting example of these is perhaps a twenty-five-line

28. I do not want to disregard the fact that at the end of the play Iago's intrigue is revealed, the truth uncovered. Still we should note Moretti, who criticises Tillyard, according to whom radical destruction in Elizabethan tragedy confirms the power of what is to be destroyed. "It is as though it were argued that in strangling Desdemona, Othello paid tribute to her importance. No doubt he does, but he strangles her all the same, and similarly, tragedy, in its destruction of the medieval world picture, recognises its importance, but destroys it nonetheless" (Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders* [London: Verso, 1988], p. 49). If we remained in the context of the medieval world-view, Grudin's model would be the only valid one for mapping the relationship of the characters of the drama. The angelic Desdemona and the devilish Iago presuppose and complement each other. We have to see, however, that the same Iago can be said to match Othello as well according to a different tradition, and this is the one from where the other has to fall.

29. Although I am expanding a single example in the present paper, let me just mention a few related passages: II.i.305–12 (here Iago talks about iniquity as being detectable when in action. It sounds as if he is thinking that iniquity is realised through action. The quotation is really significant because in the major part of the play the audience are the only one able to identify iniquity); III.iii.127 (Iago is assuring Othello that people should be identical with what they seem to be. This means on the one hand that we should not look good if we are not good, but on the other the reverse of it is equally possible: those who seem evil should become the same); III.iii.135–151 (Part of Iago's devilish technique is that he is not simply lying but he is telling the truth and makes Othello believe that he is not telling the entire truth because of his admirable modesty. Here the case is not simply that he is generating signs that do not correspond with reality, but he is creating a context where reality is envenomed, since Othello does not accept the face value of his words. Still he believes him); 155–61 (Iago's words may have an indirect meaning according to which he admits that the whole evil game does not bring him any profit, i.e. he is annihilating the others for the sheer pleasure of the game); IV.i.16 (He is attacking the ideal of chastity by saying that those who can't have it may possess it too, since its essence is invisible).

speech by Iago, at the end of which he utters a most paradoxical self-referential remark: "I am not what I am" (I.i.65). This sentence may be interpreted on several levels. First, as the textual variation of A≠A, it is opposed to a basic law of Aristotelian logic. Second, Iago may mean that he is not what he seems to be to the others on the stage. The first "I" of the sentence, the one who is speaking is, therefore, not the one who he appears to be, i.e. the second "I." Had Roderigo been wise enough to get even this message of the sentence, he would not have believed him afterwards.

The sentence is also a variation of two other paradoxical sentences. One is the classical example of self-contradiction known as the "Liar": Epimenides, the Cretan said, "All Cretans are liars." It is impossible to define the truth of this sentence for similar reasons as make it impossible to define that of Iago's, since even if he is speaking the truth about his being not what he seems to be to other characters, or what he seems to be in the eyes of the audience, he is undermining his credibility on every level and every stage at the same time. On the other hand, there is an even deeper truth in this paradoxical sentence, as Rosalie Colie observes: "Iago lies and does not lie; for he *is* in fact what he is not, since he is, and proves himself by the action of the tragedy to be, not really a man, a member of human kind."[30] Colie is referring here to the devilish being of what he is not, but again, Iago is not what he is if his "existence" is compared to the emptiness of pure representation.

The other sentence of which Iago's is a variation, is a tautological sentence of the Lord of the Old Testament: "I am that I am." This, as a mirror image, leads to infinite oscillation between the thing and what it reflects. Therefore Iago in his utterance of this sentence not only identifies his position as the opposite of God's, but blurs his position so that it loses its referent no matter from which side we are examining it. He is a thing that was probably not conceivable in a Renaissance world view. Not merely a nobody with its hideous non-existence, but a representation without a referent.

It is the same line that Robert Weimann uses to show the two sides of representation. He claims that they both were characteristic of the Renaissance stage. He is borrowing the terminology of Jean Alter to describe the inherent duality of codes. The two different types of sign and behaviour on stage are the following: one is a performative statement ("I am acting") and the other is a representational code ("I am not acting" – "I am another person"). Weimann ex-

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30. Colie, p. 243.

plains that "as opposed to the modern proscenium stage, where a representational mode strongly predominated, the Elizabethan stage tended to project both these codes in intriguing patterns of entanglements."[31] He finds that Iago's aforementioned sentence is an example of his introducing his *own* inherent duality.

The next step will be the examination of Velazquez's painting *Las Meninas* and the way it contributes to our understanding the question of Iago's non-being. The picture is analysed by Foucault as describing the altered modes and possibilities of representation at the beginning of the 17th century. By comparing the two works I would like to support my argument according to which the character under scrutiny, in spite of all the links that tie him to a previous theatrical model, is offering itself as representation in its pure form – something that was utterly unimaginable in a previous world system. It is interesting that Velazquez's painting is discussed by Colie in a different chapter of her study already cited on Renaissance paradoxes. Colie also notes that paradoxes appear in periods of competing intellectual systems.[32] She regards both Iago and the painting to be paradoxes although they appear in different contexts. I would like to expand this so that in both cases we are faced with paradoxes which apart from being self-reflective (as all paradoxes are) also reflect on themselves as representations: they are pointing to the way representation "works," they are in a sense revealing or at least commenting on its logic.

What is represented by the picture? According to its title, "Las Meninas" is about the young Infanta's maids and courtiers. According to the central position of the Infanta Margarita – probably a familiar representation to the spectator, since it is similar to other paintings about her – she could be the primary subject of this one as well. However, the diagonals structuring the painting cross at a mirror hanging in the back of the room, which reflects the royal couple, thus giving a possible clue to the whole situation: the Infanta and her retinue are looking at the couple while the couple is being painted by Velazquez. And here we may suppose that on the other side of the canvas in front of the painter, King Philip IV and his wife, Mariana are being painted. So, the painting is, after all, not about the royal couple, but about the royal couple being

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31. Robert Weimann, "Playing with a Difference: Revisiting 'Pen' and 'Voice' in Shakespeare's Theater," *Shakespeare Quarterly* (1999) 415–432, p. 425.

32. Colie, p. 33.

painted by Velazquez – which includes the self-portrait of the painter, a self-referential remark.

The inner structure of the painting, with almost everybody gazing outwards, looking at something which is clearly not the spectator, excludes us from the view according to the inner rules of the painting. But as Foucault points out, the three positions in front of *Las Meninas*, in relation to the picture, are the starting point making representation possible: the gaze of the model, of the painter and of the spectator, who are all present in the picture at the same time: the royal couple in the mirror, the painter in front of the canvas and the spectator in the right corner of the room, standing on the threshold of the door leading to the hall.

The problem is not merely the multiplicity of positions viewing the picture (namely that of the painter, the model, and the spectator), but the impossibility of imagining this scene represented *in reality*. In other words: the *original* of the painting is inconceivable. The original *view* is conceivable, though, from the perspective of the royal couple, and the whole setting is conceivable with the royal couple present in it, but again, it was not the original of the painting, of which it is the representation, since Velazquez cannot see himself while painting the royal couple if he is actually recording the event of the couple being painted.

Catherine Belsey comes to a similar conclusion, analysing the painting and its original in reality:

> The event the painting depicts is possible as an event. But its depiction is not possible in this painting, because the painter is not in the right place to paint it *from*. Or, to put it differently, it is possible as a painting, on condition that it is not an event, because the painter cannot see *this* scene from *there*. What we see is not what the artist sees. The painting triumphantly imagines an impossible set of spatial relations, and convinces us that we have seen *that*. [33]

If we wished to put an edge on the question of impossibility, we could try to extend the triple position defined by Foucault with a fourth one, the position of another mirror, in which Velazquez is reflected while standing exactly in his position depicted, and sees exactly the scene depicted, painting a double to the reflection in the mirror, thus fulfilling both the function of the painter and of the spectator, enabling the existence of the original of *Las Meninas*, which would pre-

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33. Belsey, p. 53.

sent the reflection of the other mirror. Both Colie and Belsey suggest the use of another mirror. Colie considers this picture to be the example of self-portraits insisting on "speculation" because they are indicating the mirrors in which they were painted and force the beholder into thinking about what reality "really" is. [34] She claims it is not probable that Velazquez should have painted the scene from one single perspective: "The likelihood is that Velazquez did not paint the whole scene from its mirror reflection, but painted the Infanta and her retinue straight, as usual; then he painted himself in, of course from a mirror, as it is usual for the portrait." [35] The inclusion of two points of view could suggest Velazquez's comments "on different levels of reality, but also his own power . . . to manipulate that reality, to present the royal family as it 'should' be presented." [36]

Belsey ventures to say it is possible that there were several mirrors placed in front of the scene (she points out that Velazquez was known for having ten of them) and these mirrors enabled the painter to realise what is seemingly impossible. She has to reject the hypothesis because of the presence of the mirror at the back of the wall which, she suggests, may be the reflection of the unseen side of the canvas; it is, after all, the couple that is being painted, not *Las Meninas*. [37] A mirror in the place of the model may also make that reflection impossible, but then one may jocularly add: the position of the spectator is no less impossible, and yet we are convinced that we see the painting.

The equivalent of Foucault's triple position *outside* the picture is Colie's explanation with the double perspective *within* the picture. Foucault's triad is the models (the royal couple), the one who represents (Velazquez, the painter) and us, the audience of the painting. The two perspectives within the painting discussed by Colie reveal a different kind of stratification in the process of representation: the one that is present in the painting, and the one that may be deduced from it. Foucault, however, points out the elements that he considers essential for making representation possible. It is necessary to note that only Colie gives more probability to double perspective than to the mirror-solution. But actually the (at least) double perspective is the only one possible, since the mirror in the place of Foucault's triple function of model-painter-spectator, if placed in front of the model, would disallow their reflection in the mirror at the far end of the

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34. Colie, p. 385.
35. Colie, p. 359.
36. Colie, p. 359.
37. Belsey, p. 53.

room, or if placed behind, it would also reflect their backs, which should have, in that case, become an element of the composition.

No matter how faithful to reality the painting is at first glance, what we arrive at in the end is a multiple reference to the impossibility of representation and at the same time a reference to the power of the painter, who is governing if not the impossible, then the possible within it. The plurality of the spectator-position, of the painting's perspective and of the model, and the actual *impossibility* of the original of which the painting is a representation, hide something similar to the nothing of Iago, the non-existence of his being. The origin of both nothingnesses is a void exemplified by Foucault through the analysis of *Las Meninas*. Foucault in his analysis shows how the painting presents to us the post-Renaissance disappearance of the foundation of resemblance: the person it resembles and the person in whose eyes it is only a resemblance. Or, in Foucault's own words: "representation, freed finally from the relation that was impeding it, can offer itself as representation in its pure form." [38] This is exactly the freedom of representation that appeared in the early 17th century. The epistemological change, and the crisis that characterised it, an inalienable context of Shakespearean drama. The residual and emergent models made a single perspective impossible in the same way as Iago's unfathomable and shifting references, since they offer at least two different traditions as contexts of interpretation and create a unique situation where it is possible to reflect on the operation and relativity of the systems of reference. Similarly to the painting, Iago contains only an absence of what he is representing, but he is equally burdened with this emptiness as the painting. Both Iago and the painting have power over the reality they represent and they are capable of juggling with different layers of it, and both of them are able to create themselves in their respective games, that is, in the worlds which their spectators are inevitably drawn into. They both play with the difference between truth and illusion, and their authors (created and included in these transitory worlds) place themselves in a context, in an ontological position where non-being turns into being, where the reality represented is conceivable both as pure reality and as a created illusion at the same time.

The picture that Iago the director is screening for Othello is an indisputable lie in the world of the drama. The truth value of the play that Iago is directing at the audience depends on the audience's attitude towards the play as pure illusion

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38. Foucault, p. 16.

or a game which is perhaps at an unbridgeable distance from reality. The question is whether the audience interprets the phenomenon as the freedom of representation, the way Foucault describes it, or they perceive the human creation of any kind of reality as a crucial moral question. [39] The contemporary (first of all Puritan) opponents of theatre found faults with the institution of theatre precisely for this reason. At the peak of the anti-theatrical bias, in 1633, Prynne in his *Histriomastix* burst out vehemently against any kind of theatre, summarising the themes that started to emerge a generation earlier. According to Barish, Prynne "expresses, one might say in most agonized form, the fears of impurity, of contamination, of 'mixture,' of the blurring of strict boundaries." [40] A fearful consequence of the mixture is, clearly, that the world would collapse, as in a nightmare. Iago perhaps shows that yes, the world *is* capable of collapsing in a nightmarish fashion. The nightmare's threat is real. But it is only so if we approach it from a perspective where we believe in the stability of our own attitude. We may even be excluded from the position where we can decide, since when we notice that we have become the participants of a work like *Othello* or *Las Meninas*, it may be too late.

I therefore think that the existence of Iago may be compared with the existence of the painting if we take into consideration that on the one hand they are primarily saying something about representation and it is perhaps only secondary that they are representations themselves. On the other hand, they both are paradoxes of representation, since they are "purely" representations, representations it its pure form. They do not offer anything as a content which they would stand for in its absence. Still, it seems that they describe representation as having this "content," or at least they do not rule it out: in the painting, although in a mirror, there is a model, and the duality of signifier and signified is present even behind Iago's "I am not what I am." It is a fact, however, that the painting *Las Meninas* has no proper model, and it is just as difficult to imagine that Iago is a faithful image of anything outside him – game and improvisation are much more char-

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39. The moral ambiguity of these characters is supported by the fact that although they were the devil's minions and the champions of temptation, their aim was not exclusively evil. F. H. Mares in his article on the dramatic origin of the Vice explains that this character was carrying out good and evil deeds haphazardly. See Francis Hugh Mares, "The Origin of the Figure Called 'the Vice' in Tudor Drama," *Huntington Library Quarterly* XXII (1958–59) 11–29, p. 14.

40. Jonas A. Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 87.

acteristic of him than imitation. It seems that both the painting and the character are sustained by their own dynamism, the way they talk about their own possibility and impossibility, and the way they reflect both on how representation is possible and on what makes it impossible. The wall of the room depicted in the painting is covered with paintings and an additional canvas is in the process of emergence. In the drama a lot is said about role-playing, story-telling, and acting; an illusory reality accepted as valid by the Moor is conjured up in front of us during the play. The painter and the master of ceremonies are both talking about their role and their machinations, and they tell a lot more to the audience than to the others in the drama or in the painting. Although they appear to be different within and without their work, the borderline between the two worlds is also blurred. And by the time, after following them along the path of their dynamism and logic, we finally think we can identify them as representations without a referent, or as the empty operations of the mechanism; the very non-existence of what they stand for seems to have such a dense and unique meaning that with their obvious non-being they are capable of thumbing their nose at the audience, who may have lost their security, but hopefully not their good humour.

Larisa Kocic

Predestination in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina Christiana*

Reply to Paul R. Sellin

In 1992 William B. Hunter challenged Milton's authorship of the heterodox treatise *De Doctrina Christiana*. The mainstream of the debate following it was faithfully recorded on the pages of the *Studies in English Literature* but there were a number of articles published in both *Milton Studies* and *Milton Quarterly* that added to the discussion of the treatise's provenance. In this paper I aim to develop the issue of predestination in the above-mentioned debate based on Paul R. Sellin's article "Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina Christiana* on predestination." In his article, Sellin tries to maintain Hunter's assumption that Milton could not have been the author of the treatise, by demonstrating a discrepancy between *De Doctrina Christiana* and *Paradise Lost* in the matter of predestination. I, on the contrary, hoped to show by detailed analysis the uncanny resemblance between the two works regarding predestination, especially when observed from a broader perspective of the *doctrine of grace*.

The discovery of a heterodox theological treatise in 1825, later known as *De Doctrina Christiana*,[1] had all the potential to reshape the face of the contemporary Milton studies changing the orthodox image of the great English poet into a heretic, or at least into a mind with quite extreme theological assumptions. Yet despite its possibilities, the treatise, immediately identified as Milton's long lost "Body of Divinity,"[2] was not exploited to its fullest[3] until Maurice Kelley's book *The Great*

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1. Henceforth *De Doctrina*.

2. A reference title given by Milton's Anonymous Biographer. See Maurice Kelley, *The Great Argument: A Study of Milton's "De Doctrina Christiana" as a Gloss upon "Paradise Lost"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942), p. 10.

3. Michael Lieb notes David Masson's saying in 1880, some fifty years after *De Doctrina*'s discovery, that the treatise "seems to have found few real readers" (Michael Lieb, "*De Doc-*

Argument was published in 1942. It was Kelley's great argument that founded *De Doctrina*'s reputation as the major interpretative gloss on Milton's *Paradise Lost* for it gave, as David Masson noted, "an indispensable commentary to some obscure parts"[4] of the poem. It is no wonder, therefore, that in 1991 William B. Hunter summarized the effect of his challenge of the treatise's Miltonic authorship as follows: "It is safe to say that lacking the thesis of *This Great Argument Bright Essence* would not exist and *Milton's Brief Epic, Toward Samson Agonistes*, and *Milton and English Revolution* would be quite different books from the ones we know."[5] The same is confirmed by John T. Shawcross in his answer to Hunter:

> The suggestion that Milton may not have been the author of *De Doctrina Christiana* obviously has major implications for the study of his works, particularly of *Paradise Lost*, and of his beliefs. Denial of his authorship nullifies much of the scholarship of the last century and three quarters, or makes it redundant.[6]

The implications of Hunter's assertion, however, have reached far beyond "the last century and three quarters," for the debate on *De Doctrina*'s provenance is still far from settled despite the great number of studies, articles and symposium panels dedicated to the matter.[7] As one of the participants noted, "the burden of proof is

trina Christiana and the Question of Authorship," *Milton Studies* 41 [2002] 172–230, p. 193). About the initial reception of the treatise see also Harry F. Robins, *If this Be Heresy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963), pp. 5–6.

4. Christopher Hill, "Professor William B. Hunter, Bishop Burgess, and John Milton," *Studies in English Literature* 34 (1994) 165–193, p. 184.

5. William B. Hunter, "The Provenance of the *Christian Doctrine*," *Studies in English Literature* 32 (1992) 129–142, p. 129. Hunter here lists the most important classics in Milton scholarship written under the influence of Maurice Kelley's *The Great Argument*. These are: W. B. Hunter, C. A. Patrides and J. H. Adamson, *Bright Essence: Studies in Milton's Theology* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1971); Barbara Lewalski, *Milton's Brief Epic: The Genre, Meaning, And Art of "Paradise Regained"* (Providence, RI: Brown University Press; London: Methuen, 1966); Mary Ann Radzinowicz, *Toward "Samson Agonistes": The Growth of Milton's Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); and Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977).

6. John T. Shawcross, "Forum: Milton's *Christian Doctrine*," *Studies in English Literature* 32 (1992) 155–162, p. 155.

7. William B. Hunter delivered his challenge on 8 August 1991 to a session at the Fourth International Milton Symposium at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. The main stream of the subsequent debate has been faithfully recorded on the pages of *Studies in English Literature*, although the articles contributing to the provenance of *De Doctrina* are

on those affirming the attribution, not on Hunter, and until the matter of author-ship is settled, the received wont of reading *Paradise Lost* or Milton's other works in light of *De Doctrina Christiana* stands on grounds less firm than before." [8]

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far from being contained in a single Journal. Chronologically these are the following: William B. Hunter, "The Provenance of the *Christian Doctrine*," *SEL* 32 (1992) 129–42, and in the same issue "Forum: Milton's *Christian Doctrine*," with responses by Barbara K. Lewalski (143–54), John T. Shawcross (155–162), and a counter-response by William B. Hunter (163–66). Gordon Campbell, "The Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Milton Quarterly* 26 (1992) 129–30. William B. Hunter, "The Provenance of the *Christian Doctrine*: Addenda from the Bishop of Salisbury," *SEL* 33 (1993) 191–207 followed by "Forum II: Milton's *Christian Doctrine*," *SEL* 34 (1994) with essays of Maurice Kelley, "The Provenance of John Milton's *Christian Doctrine*: A Reply to William B. Hunter" (153–64), Christopher Hill, "Professor William B. Hunter, Bishop Burgess, and John Milton" (165–94), and William B. Hunter, "Animadversions upon the Remonstrants' Defenses against Burgess and Hunter" (195–203). Gordon Campbell, Thomas N. Corns, John K. Hale, David I. Holmes, and Fiona J. Tweedie, "The Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Milton Quarterly* 31 (1997) 67–117. Paul R. Sellin, "The Reference to John Milton's *Tetrachordon* in *De Doctrina Christiana*," *SEL* 37 (1997) 137–49. Also Paul R. Sellin, "John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina Christiana* on Predestination," *Milton Studies* 34 (1997) 45–60. Again Fiona J. Tweedie, David I. Holmes and Thomas N. Corns, "The Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*, attributed to John Milton: A Statistical Investigation," *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 13 (1998) 77–87. Barbara K. Lewalski, "Milton and *De Doctrina Christiana*: Evidences of Authorship," *Milton Studies* 36 (1998) 203–28. "Responses" and "Further Responses" were issued by William B. Hunter and Paul R. Sellin, respectively, in *Milton Quarterly* 33 (1999) 31–37. Stephen M. Fallon, "Milton's Arminianism and the Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 41 (1999) 103–27. Neil D. Graves, " 'Here Let The Theologians Take Notice': A Note on the Provenance of Milton's *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Notes and Queries* 46 (1999) 332–34. William B. Hunter, "*De Doctrina Christiana*: Nunc Quo Vadis?" *Milton Quarterly* 34 (2000) 97–101. Paul R. Sellin, "Some Musings on Alexander Morus and the Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Milton Quarterly* (2001) 63–71. John T. Shawcross, "Milton and Of *Christian Doctrine*: Doubts, Definitions, Connotations," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 27 (2001) 161–78. Neil D. Graves, "Milton and the Theory of Accommodation," *Studies in Philology* 98 (2001) 251–72. Michael Lieb, "*De Doctrina Christiana* and the Question of Authorship," *Milton Studies* 41 (2002) 172–230. John K. Hale, "On Translating the *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Milton Quarterly* 37 (2003). See also books by William B. Hunter, *"Visitation Unimplor'd": Milton and the Authorship of "De Doctrina Christiana"* (Pittsburgh, 1998); Stephen B. Dobranski and John P. Rumrich eds., *Milton and Heresy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Kristin A. Pruit and Charles W. Durham eds., *Living Texts: Interpreting Milton* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2000), Barbara K Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography* (Oxford, UK; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000).

8. Paul R. Sellin, "John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina Christiana* on Predestination," *Milton Studies* 34 (1997) 45–60, p. 45.

Encouraging further research for others, Hunter in his recent article puts forth a number of discrepancies between the treatise and the Milton oeuvre. My present paper focuses on one of these discrepancies, namely on "Dr. Sellin's distinction of differing interpretations of predestination." [9]

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In his article, "John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina Christiana* on Predestination," Sellin suggests that an isolated "doctrinal issue" might be used as "a decisive limitus to determine whether the two documents [*De Doctrina* and *Paradise Lost*] are in fact as compatible as much scholarship maintains" provided that this issue is "large enough and central enough" [10] to both works in question. Building on Barbara Lewalski's response to William Hunter, [11] Sellin further suggests that this "isolated doctrinal issue" be that of predestination.

Since by the second half of the sixteenth century, the doctrine of predestination had become a major point of controversy between Reformed, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic churches and had thus received a substantial elaboration in the hands of Reformed theologians and exegetes, [12] there is no doubt that the treatise, and even the epic, addressed the issue. Sellin is therefore quite right in putting it forth as an issue of great importance, perhaps even of "decisive limitus," when comparing the compatibility of *De Doctrina Christiana* and *Paradise Lost.*

In order to compare the treatise's and the epic's stand on the problem Sellin gives a description of the standard orthodox Reformed views of predestination building on paradigms developed by the Dutch scholar Klaas Dijk. Accordingly, he examines each system in terms of (1) end, or purpose of the decree; (2) the position of predestination among other divine decrees preceding or following it; (3) the object of, or creature subject to the decree; and (4) the nature of the acts of election and reprobation that the decree entails.

Since the differences between *De Doctrina Christiana* and *Paradise Lost* in terms of end, object and nature of act are of minor importance, and mostly a

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9. William B. Hunter, "*De Doctrina Christiana*: Nunc Quo Vadis?" *Milton Quarterly* 34 (2000) 97–101, p. 98.

10. Sellin, p. 45.

11. Sellin quotes the following sentence of Lewalski: "in terms which recall *De Doctrina* I, ii–iv, Milton has God himself deny predestination. . ." (Sellin, p. 45).

12. For a comprehensive study on predestination in sixteenth and seventeenth century see Hans J. Hillerbrand ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), Vol. 3, pp. 332–38.

matter of wording, Sellin emphasises the "glaring" difference manifested in the position of predestination among other divine decrees preceding or following it, for as he states: "With respect of the order of decrees . . . the difference between *Paradise Lost* and *De Doctrina Christiana* is both essential and undeniable." [13] Namely, in Sellin's observation, the treatise places the decree of predestination before the Creation, whereas the epic puts the decree after the Creation but before the Fall of Man. Furthermore, by the same principle, Sellin also sees an "unbridgeable" gulf between Arminius and *Paradise Lost*, because in the view of James Arminius, according to Sellin, the decree of predestination comes not merely after the Creation, but also after the Fall of Man. [14] Thus Sellin also denies the common assertion of Milton's Arminianism. [15]

Now let us see whether his assertion really stands firm under a close examination of the order of decrees in *De Doctrina* and *Paradise Lost*.

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The treatise is quite explicit in its statement: "The principal special decree of God relating to man is termed predestination, whereby God in pity to mankind, though foreseeing that they would fall of their own accord, predestined to eternal salvation *before the foundation of the world* those who should believe and continue in faith. . ." (43, my emphasis). [16] Sellin argues that the expression "before the foundation of the world" locates the position of the decree of predestination as preceding both Creation and the Fall. Accordingly, "such a stand on sequence amounts to nothing less than classical supralapsarianism [17] in that the decree of predestination *precedes* those effecting Creation and Fall, and it necessarily

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13. Sellin, p. 52.

14. Sellin, p. 54.

15. On the development of Milton's theological opinion from Calvinism towards Arminianism, as well as on predestination related to Milton see Barbara K. Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography* (Oxford, UK; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 420–424; and Stephen M. Fallon, "Milton's Arminianism and the Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 41 (1999) 103–27.

16. All parenthesised references are to this edition: *The Prose Works of John Milton* (London, 1891), Vol. 4, John Milton, *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine, Compiled from the Holy Scriptures Alone: Book One*, p. 43.

17. Supralapsarianism (or Ante-lapsarianism) is a form of Calvinistic doctrine of predestination which maintains that God decreed the election and non-election of individual men before the Fall of Adam.

takes precedence over them." [18] However, the expression is not decisive since it directly implies the words of Paul from the Epistle to the Ephesians chapter one, verse four: "Accordingly as he hath chosen us in him *before the foundation of the world...*" [19] And, as Stephen M. Fallon correctly observes, "this biblical formula is common to all discussions of predestination in the period" and therefore fails "to distinguish between chronological priority ... and logical priority, on which the distinction between Arminianism and Calvinism depends." [20] I would also like to emphasise that the treatise speaks only about the decree of predestination preceding the *act* of Creation, and does not assert an order of decrees whatsoever. In chapter three, concerning the divine decrees, the author of *De Doctrina* writes that "it is absurd to separate the decrees or will of the Deity from his eternal counsel and foreknowledge, or to give them priority of order" (30). The logic of this statement is drawn directly from the Scriptures, for if God knows "all his works from the beginning of the world," [21] and that simultaneously, "according to his perfect foreknowledge of all things" (30) it is quite absurd to reason some kind of order of divine decrees resting upon a multidimensional foreknowledge of God.

In categorizing the treatise among the various trends of Reformation, the expression "foreseeing" is far more significant. Namely the act of foreseeing in predestining to "eternal salvation ... those who should believe and continue in faith" defies the treatise's Calvinistic form inasmuch as basing the predestination on divine foreknowledge of human virtue or merit would make the human condition, not the divine decree, the cause of salvation. This subordination, or coordination of the divine decree to human conditions is all but denied by Calvin and his followers. [22] Later on I will return to the significance of the treatise's use of "foreseeing," but now let us see the order of divine decrees in *Paradise Lost*.

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18. Sellin, p. 51.

19. King James Version of the Holy Bible (my emphasis).

20. Stephen M. Fallon, " 'Elected above the rest': Theology as Self-representation in Milton," in *Milton and Heresy*, ed. Stephen Dobranski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 98.

21. Acts 15:18 (King James Version of the Holy Bible).

22. For an exhaustive study on the development of the doctrine of predestination and its various trends see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), Vol. 4 (*Reformation of Church and Dogma*), pp. 217–244.

In the epic poem we read the following setting of God's declaration:

> Now had th' Almighty Father from above,
> From the pure Empyrean where he sits
> High Thron'd above all highth, bent down his eye,
> His own works and their works at once to view:
> . . . .
>   On Earth he first beheld
> Our two first Parents, yet the only two
> Of mankind, in the happy Garden plac't,
> Reaping immortal fruits of joy and love,
> Uninterrupted joy, unrivall'd love
> In blissful solitude; he then survey'd
> Hell and the Gulf between, and Satan there
> Coasting the wall of Heav'n on this side Night
> In the dun Air sublime, and ready now
> To stoop with wearied wings, and willing feet
> On the bare outside of this World, that seem'd
> Firm land imbosom'd without Firmament,
> Uncertain which, in Ocean or in Air.
> Him God beholding from his prospect high,
> Wherein past, present, future he beholds,
> Thus to his only Son foreseeing spake.
>   (3.56–59; 64–79) [23]

The setting is chronologically clearly defined: God the Father observes the already created "first Parents," "the only two of mankind," described in their *prelapsus* condition, i.e. prior to their Fall, "reaping immortal fruits of joy and love, / Uninterrupted joy, unrivall'd love / In blissful solitude." From this point of setting God the Father turns to his Son and relates the future disobedience of mankind, foreseen and not presently observed, and at the same time declares his purpose of grace towards them:

>   Man falls deceiv'd
> By th' other first: Man therefore shall find grace,
> The other none: in Mercy and Justice both,
> Through Heav'n and Earth, so shall my glory excel,
> But Mercy first and last shall brightest shine.   (3.130–134)

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23. All parenthesised references to *Paradise Lost* are to this edition: Merritt Y. Hughes, ed., *John Milton: Complete Poems and Major Prose* (New York: Macmillan, 1989).

Seemingly this setting confirms Sellin's assertion, but there are a few things that one has to take into consideration before drawing a conclusion. For convenience's sake I will not enter into a debate whether the declaration of the Father in Book Three is properly called Predestination as such, [24] but it is important to note that here we are given merely "the moment that the decree is pronounced" [25] – a fact observed by Sellin himself. But as we continue reading, the following words of the Father put the decree into its proper position:

> O Son, in whom my Soul hath chief delight,
> Son of my bosom, Son who art alone
> My word, my wisdom, and effectual might,
> All hast thou spok'n as my thoughts are, *all*
> *As my Eternal purpose hath decreed*:
> Man shall not quite be lost, but sav'd who will,
> Yet not of will in him, but grace in me
> Freely voutsaf't. . .

> (3.168–175)

Here we read the Father's profession that the whole plan of salvation, the decree of grace towards the fallen mankind, was his "*Eternal purpose*" now only articulated and confirmed by the Son's reassurance of this purpose. So if we would want to erect an order of events as depicted in *Paradise Lost* it would be the following: (1) the "Eternal purpose" of the Father, that is, his decree of salvation or predestination (for predestination is but a decree related to the salvation of lost men); (2) the act, not the decree (for it is probably included into his eternal purpose as well) of Creation; (3) the proclamation of predestination before the "multitude of Angels" (3.345); and (4) the act of the already foreseen Fall. [26] This of course erodes Sellin's assertion that *Paradise Lost* presents a remarkable "*prelapsarian*" position, as he calls it – i.e. setting the decree of predestination

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24. The interpretation of the above mentioned quotation from *Paradise Lost* depends heavily on the preconditioned reading of the epic. To illustrate this it is enough to compare the conclusions drawn by Sellin, who reads it as a "short, simple, yet eternal decree of predestination," and by Stavely, who interprets it as a "prophecy, not decree." See Sellin, p. 46; and Keith W. F. Stavely, "Satan and Arminianism in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 25 (1989), p. 125.

25. Sellin, p. 52.

26. I have deliberately omitted the events of Heavenly rebellion, Satan's voyage through Chaos, the warning of Adam, and a number of other events taking place in the epic, and reduced the order of events merely to those mentioned in Sellin's article.

after the creation yet *antecedent to the Fall* – because it is not the decree itself that is positioned thus, but its utterance. Reading the epic it is quite clear that Milton strives not to "avoid the shoals of the 'supras' on the one hand and the rocks of 'infras' on the other"[27] by introducing a public declaration of the Father's intentions with the *homo creatus et labilis*,[28] but is simply and yet magnificently dramatising the very end of the decree, namely, God's mercy which "first and last shall brightest shine" (3.134).

It seems to me, that the "glaring" difference between *De Doctrina* and *Paradise Lost* detected by Sellin is due only to the peril of treating the poem as it were a treatise and vice versa. As an author of the treatise, firmly resolved to "adhere to the Holy Scriptures alone" (8) leaving "as little space as possible might be left" for his own words (6) Milton would not be allowed "the kind of equivocation that marks *Paradise Lost*."[29] The author of the treatise must follow his own rule, demanded also by the genre of the treatise: "As to the actions of God before the foundation of the world, it would be the height of folly to inquire into them, and almost equally so to attempt a solution of the question" (169– 170). However, Milton as a poet will pursue "things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhyme" (1.16) and that not out of "folly" but out of *mania*, the folly of poets who are not only craftsmen of their art but also inspired to the words of poetry. So revisiting "with bolder wings" the "holy Light," he durst to sing "of Chaos and Eternal Night, / Thought by the heav'nly Muse to venture down / The dark descent, and up to reascend" (3.13, 18–20).

Being aware of the limits this paper enforces on an examination of theological matters, I have tried to find a quotation from the works of Arminius that would in a most explicit manner and clear reasoning present his views concerning the order of divine decrees thus allowing us a relatively simple comparison with *De Doctrina* and *Paradise Lost.*

The following statement is taken from Arminius' *An Examination of the treatise of William Perkins Concerning the Order and Mode of Predestination*:

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27. Sellin, p. 52. "Supras" i.e. the *supralapsarian* view of predestination that claims the decree of predestination being issues before both the creation and before the Fall of Man, with sin a subsequent and necessary means to the end. "Infras" i.e. the *infralapsarian* view that puts the decree of predestination after, and not antecedent to, both the Creation and the Fall.

28. *Homo creatus et labilis* i.e. man that has already been created, not yet fallen, but capable of such fall.

29. Fallon, p. 96.

> I think, indeed, that both the creation, and the fall preceded every external act of predestination, as also the decree concerning the creation of man, and the permission of his fall preceded, in the Divine mind, the decree of Predestination. [30]

At first glance it does look like a confession of an *infralapsarian* view, which asserts the decree of predestination following both the Creation and the Fall of Man, as Sellin asserts. But after a close examination of the statement we see that Arminius is emphasising the "external act of predestination" and "the Divine mind." That is, the *action* of both creation and fall precedes only the *external act* of predestination, and not the decree of it – although *the decree* concerning the creation of man, and the permission of his fall does precede, *in the Divine mind*, the decree of Predestination. Now if we would like to avoid a mistake prevailing "extensively on almost all religious questions, and is utterly subversive of candour and truth," [31] that is, if we do not want to be biased by the use of words, it is essential to distinguish whether *De Doctrina*, *Paradise Lost* and Arminius speak of decrees or the acts of decrees.

To make the statement of Arminius even more explicit I would like to present a further expansion of his thoughts thus letting him interpret his own words.

> Every act, which has reference to an object, is posterior in nature, to its object. It is called an object relatively. Therefore, it has an absolute existence prior to the existence of its relation to the act. The object, then, exists in itself, before it can be under the influence of the act which tends towards it. But man is the object of Predestination. Therefore, man is prior to the act of Predestination. But man is what he is by creation. Therefore, creation is prior to Predestination — that is, in the divine mind, or the decree concerning the creation of man is prior to the decree of Predestination, and the act of creation is prior to the execution of the decree of Predestination. If any one should reply that God, in the internal act of Predestination, is employed with man considered as not created, but as to be made, I answer that this could neither take place, nor be so understood by a mind judging rightly. For Predestination is a decree, not only to illustrate the divine

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30. *The Works of James Arminius* (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1997; v1.0), Vol. 3, James Arminius, *An Examination of the treatise of William Perkins Concerning the Order and Mode of Predestination*, p. 270.

31. John Brown and Edward Harold, *An Exposition of the Thirty Nine Articles: Historical and Doctrinal* (London: Longmans, 1878), p. 419.

glory, but to illustrate it in man, by the mode of mercy and justice. From this, it follows that man must also exist in the divine mind before the act of Predestination, and the fall of man must itself, also, be previously foreseen. The attributes of God, by which creation is affected, are, therefore, considered as prior, in the divine nature, to those in which predestination originates. Goodness, simply considered, wisdom, and power, operating upon Nothing, are, therefore, prior to mercy and punitive justice. Add, also, that since predestination originates, on the one hand, in mercy, and on the other, in justice, in the former case having reference to salvation — in the latter, to damnation — it cannot be that any means exist pertaining, in common, to the execution of election and of reprobation. For they are provided neither in mercy, nor in justice. [32]

Here again an emphasis is clearly made distinguishing between the act and the decree of both Creation and Predestination: "creation is prior to Predestination — that is, *in the divine mind*, that is, the *decree* concerning the creation of man *is prior to the decree* of Predestination, and *the act of creation* is prior to *the execution of the decree* of Predestination" (my emphasis). To put it simply: the act of Creation is only prior to the execution of the decree of predestination but not to the decree itself. This of course does not seem to be an "unbridgeable gulf" between "the Dutch theologian" and *Paradise Lost* for nothing contradictory or even dissimilar is presented in the epic.

The reason why Arminius seems to juggle with the words "decree" and "act" is that he is trying to set not so much a chronological but rather a logical order of the divine decrees. His argumentation is directed against the assertions of the extreme Calvinism which from Theodore Beze onward posits a predestination-centred theological approach to salvation. [33] This, so called, *supralapsarian*

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32. Arminius, pp. 270–271.

33. Although the amount of space dedicated to predestination increased with each subsequent edition of his *Institutes*, Calvin vehemently denied predestination being the starting and thus the central point of his exposition of the certainty of salvation. However, it would be a mistake to associate supralapsarianism solely with the name of Beze. For although his views were more strictly patterned than Calvin's, and more indicative of the direction of later supralapsarianism, Beze did not argue an "order of the decree" in the manner of later supra- and infralapsarianism. Supralapsarianism as such is more a development of orthodox writers such as Amandus Planus, Francis Junius, Bartholomaus Keckermann, Johannes Scharpius, Lucas Trelcatius, Antonius Walaeus, Johannes Maccovius, and Franciscus Gomarus (the chief opponent of James Arminius), their teaching paralleling William Perkin's in England. For details see Pelikan, pp. 217–218; and *The Oxford Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3, pp. 335–37.

view, gives an absolute priority to the decree of predestination from which all the other decrees stem from. As it also asserted the principal aim of the decree of predestination to display God's glory through the manifestation of mercy and justice Arminius felt it necessary to debate its priority for as he puts it:

> It is certain that he [God] could not, first of all, have done this by means of mercy and punitive justice [i.e. to display his glory by issuing a decree of predestination]. For the former could be exercised only towards the miserable, the letter only towards the sinners. But since, first of all, the external action of God both was and must be taken up, so to speak, with Nothing, it is, therefore, evident that goodness, wisdom, and omnipotence were, first of all, to be unfolded, and that by them the glory of God was to be illustrated. These, therefore, were unfolded in creation, by which God appeared to be supremely good and wise, and omnipotent. [34]

In other words: God must have created men first, at least in his thought, and foreseen their fall, before even thinking about how to manifest mercy and justice towards them that would at the same time display his own glory too. And since the act of predestination has reference only to fallen men, the execution of the very decree of predestination must follow both the act of Creation and of the Fall. [35]

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Now let us step back to *De Doctrina* for a moment. If Sellin's assertion is right, the gulf between the treatise and Arminius is even more unbridgeable than that between the Dutch theologian and *Paradise Lost*. We have already concluded that the treatise unmistakably puts the decree of predestination "before the foundation of the world," which, in Sellin's argumentation, leaves the act of both Creation and Fall in between the treatise's and Arminius' stand on the order of divine decrees. However the following argumentation from *De Doctrina* re-

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34. Arminius, p. 265.

35. As a matter of fact, Arminius in his mature views argued, rather than a single eternal decree, four decrees and an order of priorities in the mind of God that rests on a distinction between an universal will to save and a consequent particular will directed toward believers. In the universal divine willing, a first eternal decree appoints Christ as the saviour of the human race in general, a second declares the divine intention to save in Christ all who repent and believe, and a third establishes the means of salvation. Then, and only then, a fourth decree, expressing God's consequent will concludes the salvation of the believers and the damnation of non-believers by foreseeing the choice of individuals to believe. See *The Oxford Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3, p. 337.

markably corresponds to the arguments of Arminius in respect of the logical order of divine decrees:

> It was not simply man as a being who was to be created, but a man as a being who was to fall of his own accord, that was the object of predestination; for that manifestation of divine grace and mercy which God designed as the ultimate purpose of predestination, presupposes the existence of sin and misery in man, originating in himself alone. (47)

There is of course a difference in wording (e.g. Arminius emphasising mercy and justice, whereas the author of the treatise mentions grace and mercy) but the logic of the argumentation is the same: the object of predestination can be only fallen, sinful man as mercy – the ultimate purpose of predestination – is justly endowed only if there is misery and sin involved. For Arminius this sets an order of divine decrees in which the decree of creation and the permission of fall precedes the decree of predestination. And although mentioning no set order, the author of the treatise does assert the same, when stating:

> if God foresaw that man would fall of his own free will, there was no occasion for any decree relative to the fall itself, but only relative to the provision to be made for man, whose future fall was foreseen. (47)

Yet this statement makes him no *infralapsarian*, in the sense Sellin uses the word, nor denying the position of predestination being that "before the foundation of the world." Rather than that, we are simply witnessing an attempt of two theologians to rebuff the extreme Calvinist view of predestination. They are neither contradicting each other, nor are they by any means identical, for both are following a different path in argumentation. And when they are compared to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, there is no difference found between them in regard to what they hold about the position of the decree of predestination.

In addition, Sellin says that "the order of decrees has probably more to do with determining a theologian's stand on human 'liberty' than the other way around" and therefore attributes but a slight meaning to the issue of free will. But however good Sellin's suggestion of an "isolated doctrinal issue" sounds, it is impossible to treat any doctrinal issue as an isolated phenomenon, without including in the debate at least some of the relative doctrines of the theological system involved. Whether we like it or not, the doctrine of free will is, was and presumably will always be the counterpart of the doctrine of predestination. One could, of course, argue the inclusion of the relative concepts such as of sin, God,

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justification, and of certitude of faith – not to exhaust the list – but even without these we are in a danger of sharing the same fate with the group of fallen angels, who "apart sat on a Hill retir'd, / In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high / Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will and Fate, / Fixt Fate, Free will, Foreknowledge absolute, / *and found no end, in wand'ring mazes lost*" (2.557–61, my emphasis).

While the freedom of will was axiomatic for the theologians prior to the Reformation, [36] all prominent Protestant reformers agreed with Luther's view that the doctrine of justification by faith alone implied the negation of free will in the fallen humanity. [37] However, in Milton's poem free will is a recurrent issue, which is asserted and affirmed over and over again. So much so that it seems to constitute the essence of *Paradise Lost*. We read its powerful introduction in the speech of the Father relating man's foreseen Fall:

> I made him just and right,
> Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall.
> Such I created all th' Ethereal Powers
> And Spirits, both them who stood and them who fail'd;
> Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell.
> Not free, what proof could they have giv'n sincere
> Of true allegiance, constant Faith or Love,
> Where only what they needs must do, appear'd,
> Not what they would? what praise could they receive?
> What pleasure I from such obedience paid,
> When Will and Reason (Reason also is choice)
> Useless and vain, of freedom both despoil'd,
> Made passive both, had serv'd necessity,
> Not mee. They therefore as to right belong'd,
> So were created, nor can justly accuse
> Thir maker, or thir making, or thir Fate;
> As if Predestination over-rul'd
> Thir will, dispos'd by absolute Decree
> Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed
> Thir own revolt, not I: if I foreknew,
> Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
> Which had no less prov'd certain unforeknown.

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36. For example see Duns Scotus, Gregory of Rimini, Anselm, etc. (Pelikan, pp. 33–35).
37. See *The Oxford Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, 141–46.

> So without least impulse or shadow of Fate,
> Or aught by me immutably foreseen,
> They trespass, Authors to themselves in all
> Both what they judge and what they choose; for so
> I form'd them free, and free they must remain,
> Till they enthrall themselves: I else must change
> Thir nature, and revoke the high Decree
> Unchangeable, Eternal, which ordain'd
> Thir freedom: they themselves ordain'd thir fall.
>
> (3.98–128)

At this point I cannot but wonder why Sellin writes in reference to the above mentioned lines that "the passage quoted refers not, as the pronominal plurals make abundantly clear, to human 'liberty' but to that of the fallen angels." [38] For as I see it, the pronominal plurals are not due to the reference to angelic host alone – for I wish not to deny their inclusion – but to the fact that God is foreseeing and relating not merely the fall of "Man" but as we read prior to the quoted passage: "So will fall / *Hee and his faithless Progeny*" (3.95–96, my emphasis). It seems also that angels and humans share not simply the Reason "differing but in degree, of kind the same" (5.490) – discursive being "oftest" humans' and the intuitive angels' "most" – but also the dower of freedom. For as we read, God made man "just and right, / sufficient to have stood, though free to fall" but also "such [He] created all th' Ethereal Powers / And Spirits, *both them who stood and them who fail'd.*" So the divine bestowment of "liberty" was due to all, including humans and angels of all kind (see emphasis in the previous sentence) not reduced by any means to "the fallen angels" alone, as Sellin asserts. This is also confirmed by Satan's soliloquy when contemplating about the reasons of his rebellion he says:

> Hadst thou the same free Will and Power to stand?
> Thou hadst: whom hast thou then or what to accuse,
> But Heav'n's free Love dealt equally to all?
>
> (4.66–67)

The fact of man's freedom is again reinforced by the Father when sending Raphael to admonish Adam of his obedience, of his freedom, and the approach-

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38. Sellin, p. 4

ing danger in the shape of Satan. Thus he commissions Raphael with the following words:

> such discourse bring on,
> As may advise him of his happy state,
> Happiness in his power left free to will,
> Left to his own free Will, his Will though free,
> Yet mutable.

<div align="right">(5.233–237)</div>

Before listing further the instances where human freedom is repeatedly confirmed it is important to note the emphasis laid in these passages on the conditionality of divine decrees, a fact denied both by Hunter [39] and Sellin. [40] For it is by emphasising the freedom of will that the conditionality of the divine decrees is established. As a matter of fact, when this emphasis of freedom is omitted Milton is careful to use *if* or *while* instead lest someone should miss the essence of the statement. Thus we read of the prospect of dwelling in earthly or "Heav'nly Paradise" conditioned by the following sentence: "If ye be found obedient, and retain / Unalterably firm his love entire / Whose progeny you are" (5.500–503).

So when we read again, in the words of Raphael directed to Adam, the confirmation of freedom being a general gift from God to all, we also witness the confirmation of the conditionality of divine decrees having the same general impact, equally manifested and efficient for both angels and men:

> That thou art happy, owe to God;
> That thou continu'st such, owe to thyself,
> That is, to thy obedience; therein stand.
> This was the caution giv'n thee, be advis'd.
> God made thee perfect, not immutable;
> And good he made thee, but to persevere
> He left it in thy power, ordain'd thy will
> By nature free, not over-rul'd by Fate
> Inextricable, or strict necessity;
> Our voluntary service he requires,

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39. Hunter writes that the poem "ignores its [the treatise's] 'conditional decrees,' a basic position as the treatise redefines predestination in favor of Arminian views" (William B. Hunter, "The Provenance of the *Christian Doctrine*," *SEL* 32 [1992] 129–42, pp. 130–131).

40. Sellin, pp. 46–47.

> Not our necessitated, such with him
> Finds no acceptance, nor can find, for how
> Can hearts, not free, be tri'd whether they serve
> Willing or no, who will but what they must
> By Destiny, and can no other choose?
> Myself and all th' Angelic Host that stand
> In sight of God enthron'd, *our happy state*
> *Hold, as you yours, while our obedience holds;*
> *On other surety none*; freely we serve,
> Because we freely love, as in our will
> To love or not; in this we stand or fall.
>   (5.520–540, my emphasis)

And when one thinks it over carefully, there is no other way around. For if the will is free the decrees must be conditional, for if they were not, the will would be subjected to the inevitable, and the agent would be void of intelligence and reason ("Reason also is choice"), and thus without freedom "useless and vain" (3.108, 109).

Yet, there is one decree mentioned in *Paradise Lost* that seems to be unconditional, for as we read:

> I form'd them free, and free they must remain,
> Till they enthrall themselves: I else must change
> Thir nature, and revoke *the high Decree*
> *Unchangeable, Eternal, which ordain'd*
> *Thir freedom.*
>   (3.124–128, my emphasis)

The incongruity of free will and of unconditioned decrees thus seems to be reconciled in one single decree that unreservedly provides freedom to all. To deny the freedom from his creatures, angels or men, would also mean to "revoke" this "high Decree / Unchangeable, Eternal, which ordain'd / Thir freedom." But the fact that God provides another decree – the one he is articulating in the Book Three, and which would be eventually manifested in the act of salvation – shows that His intention is not that of revoking, but rather that of renewing:

> once more I will renew
> His lapsed powers, though forfeit and enthrall'd
> By sin to foul exorbitant desires;
> Upheld by me, yet once more he shall stand
> On even ground against his mortal foe. . .   (3.175–179)

Thus with a conditional decree of grace God reinforces the "high Decree" ordaining freedom to all men, and to the "Ethereal Powers and Spirits." As a matter of fact, the thoughts on free will in *Paradise Lost* are so consistent, that even the seemingly unconditional "high Decree" provides freedom only as long as this freedom is required – "free they must remain, / *Till* they enthrall themselves" – which makes it, after all, a decree conditioned by the same freedom it provides.

Now, *De Doctrina* is emphasising the same importance of freedom and the conditionality of divine decrees because the author of the treatise is driven by the same imperative of theodicy as Milton and Arminius. Predestination and free will are both incorporated into a single argument of justifying "the ways of God to man" (1.26). In the poem, the rhetorical question of the Father, "whose fault? / Whose but his own?" (3.96, 97) introduces God's refuse of the foreseen, possible accusation to have caused man's Fall. Even the arch enemy, Satan, is left without just accusations in his soliloquy (4.66, 67). As for the treatise, there is an ostensible resemblance with the epic's argumentation:

> God of his wisdom determined to create men and angels reasonable beings, and therefore free agents; foreseeing at the same time which way the bias of their will would incline, in the exercise of their own uncontrolled liberty. What then? shall we say that this foresight or foreknowledge on the part of God imposed on them the necessity of acting in any defined way? No more than if the future event had been foreseen by any human agent. . . . nothing happens of necessity, because God has foreseen it; but he foresees the event of every action, because he is acquainted with their natural causes, which, in pursuance of his own decree, are left at liberty to exert their legitimate influence. Consequently the issue does not depend on God who foresees it, but on him alone who is the object of his foresight. Since, therefore, as has before been shewn, there can be no absolute decree of God regarding free agents, undoubtedly the prescience of the Deity (which can no more bias free agents than the prescience of man, that is, not at all, since the action in both cases is intransitive, and has no external influence,) can neither impose any necessity of itself, nor can it be considered at all as the cause of actions. If it be so considered, the very name of liberty must be altogether abolished as an unmeaning sound; and that not only in matters of religion, but even is questions of morality and indifferent things. There can be nothing but what will happen necessarily, since there is nothing but what is foreknown by God.
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> That this long discussion may be at length concluded by a brief summary of the whole matter, we must hold that God foreknows all future

events, but that he has not decreed them all absolutely: lest the conse-
quence should be that sin in general would be imputed to the Deity, and
evil spirits and wicked men exempted from blame. . . . Thus God foreknew
that Adam would fall of his own free will; his fall was therefore certain, but
not necessary, since it proceeded from his own free will, which is incom-
patible with necessity. (39–41)

The very first lines almost echo the epic in its assertion that "Reason also is
a choice." Namely, the fact that men and angels were created "reasonable beings"
leaves no doubt with the author of the treatise that it logically and necessarily
means that they are "free agents" as such.. The author then rebuffs the assertion
that God's foreknowledge of their [that of the free agents'] action imposes a ne-
cessity upon them, for this would be incompatible with the notion of liberty. The
conclusion drawn therefore is logical: there could be no absolute, unconditioned
decree of God regarding free agents because: (1) it would abolish the name of
liberty "as an unmeaning sound," and (2) it could serve as an excuse for "evil
spirits and wicked men" for their sins by imputing sin in general to the Deity.

So, when compared to the epic, Book Three, lines 112–122, I cannot but
agree with Barbara K. Lewalski's statement that "in terms which recall *De Doc-
trina* I.iii–iv, Milton has God himself deny predestination and insist his condi-
tional decrees guarantee human liberty." [41]

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In the conclusion of his article, Sellin writes that the discrepancy between *De
Doctrina* and *Paradise Lost* "touching predestination indicate that Hunter has
put finger on a problem that is real." [42] While I am not denying the problem I
cannot see how the issue of predestination could be the indicator of it. As I have
argued, the seeming difference Sellin detects between the treatise and *Paradise
Lost* can be easily resolved when one takes into consideration whether the work
under consideration speaks of the *decree* of predestination or the *act* of predes-
tination, or of the Fall as *happened* or as just *foreseen* by God's omniscience. I
hope I have sufficiently shown that the epic's so called *prelapsarian* view is by
no means in contradiction with the view of the treatise, for it does not assert a
decree of predestination positioned after the act of Creation and before the Fall
of Man, but is dramatising the approaching danger of the adversary "whom no

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41. Barbara K. Lewalski, "Forum: Milton's *Christian Doctrine*," *SEL* 32 (1992) 143–54,
p. 150.
42. Sellin, p. 58.

bounds" can hold (3.81–84) and for that very reason articulating the "Eternal purpose" in front of a "multitude of Angels."

I have further hoped to show how inseparably the issue of predestination is linked with that of free will along with their joined imperative toward theodicy. In this matter I have also found *De Doctrina* being compatible with *Paradise Lost*, not differing from it in regard of the conditionality of the divine decrees, and of the emphasis laid on man's free will. And lastly, the mode in which the treatise and the poem argue God's integrity in the matter of the origin of sin bears such a resemblance to each other that it is hard indeed to think of any discrepancy between the two.

János Barcsák

The Ending of "Tintern Abbey"

and Paul de Man's theory of the performative nature of language

The main purpose of this paper is to explain the puzzling changes that occur at the end of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" by the help of a theoretical structure outlined in Paul de Man's essay "Rhetoric of Persuasion (Nietzsche)." Besides, it also argues that the poem can be used to elucidate some theoretical procedures that de Man deploys in another essay of his, "Promises (*Social Contract*)."

The ending of "Tintern Abbey" (ll. 111–159) is certainly a very strange one. It contains several inconsistencies, such as, for example, the unexpected appearance of Dorothy Wordsworth in the poem, or the less conspicuous but perhaps even more surprising fact that the speaker in this last section of the poem appears as a man who knows, possesses and teaches the truth, although the previous parts of the text describe a man tortured by doubts and uncertainty. [1] These inconsistencies, if we think about them in a purely logical way, make it very difficult for us to interpret this last part of the poem as an organic development from the main body of the text. This, however, is not what we *feel* when we read "Tintern Abbey." We feel that the speaker's (and Wordsworth's) victory is somehow necessary at the end of this poem of defeat. Even if we cannot immediately explain Dorothy Wordsworth's appearance or the sudden change of tone from the problematic to the assured, we feel that the emergence of the authoritative voice somehow organically follows from the main part of the text. What is more,

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1. There is no general critical agreement on this latter point but recent readings tend to lay emphasis on the sceptical and gloomy undertow in the poem. See, for example, Harold Bloom's reading in *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (London: Cornell University Press, 1995) or Susan J. Wolfson's in *The Questioning Presence: Wordsworth, Keats, and the Interrogative Mode in Romantic Poetry* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986).

we feel this even in spite of the fact that this main part presents a speaker tortured by doubts, a Wordsworth who desperately and hopelessly struggles against his own irresistible scepticism.

In this paper I will try to show how the concluding part of "Tintern Abbey" can be interpreted as an organic development from the previous parts, and how the unexpected changes that occur at the end of the poem can be accounted for as necessary constituents of the whole. What will help me in accomplishing this task is Paul de Man's theory of the constative and performative functions of language, which he discusses primarily in the essays of his *Allegories of Reading*. [2] Having explained how the poem can be interpreted with the help of this theoretical structure, in the last section of this paper I will reverse the original set-up and will try to show how the poem can throw some new light on de Man's theoretical procedures.

I

The bounds of the present paper will not allow me to give a full account of the whole of the poem. In order to present my reading of the ending of "Tintern Abbey," however, I will still have to give a brief summary of the way I read the main body of the text. To do this, I will start out from the sentence which creates the link between these sections by summing up the result of what is said in the main body of the text and introducing the thoroughly different attitude of the last section.

The first thing that we notice in this sentence is that it opens on a sceptical note. The speaker begins with the clause "Nor perchance, / If I were not thus taught" (ll. 111–2), [3] which expresses his doubt about the theory he presented in lines 88–102. This theory comprises the speaker's central attempt in the poem to handle the problem of the loss that necessarily accompanies the process of growing up: the loss of the direct experience of nature. This loss can be identified as the central theme of the poem, while the main purpose of the speaker throughout is clearly to find compensation for this loss. In this central passage of the poem this compensation is found in a mysterious "presence" which – the speaker

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2. Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979).

3. When referring to the text of the poem I always use the final version, on which the author made his last emendations in 1845. All parenthesised references are to this edition: William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797–1800*, ed. James Butler and Karen Greed (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

would like to believe – is still accessible for him in nature. At the beginning of the closing section of the poem, however, it becomes clear that the compensation the speaker hoped to attain through this presence is not quite satisfactory, or at least he cannot be fully convinced of the validity of his theory of compensation. No matter how much energy he puts into the wording of this theory, no matter how hard he tries to convince his readers and himself that the loss has been compensated for, he cannot really believe in his own idealisations, as is expressed in the lines quoted above ("Nor perchance, / If I were not thus taught").

This doubt, incidentally, is already the second one in the poem. In lines 49–50 the speaker expressed similar scepticism in the clause "If this / Be but a vain belief. . ." which refers to another attempt at finding compensation, the theory of the compensatory imagination expressed in lines 35–49. In this passage the alienating environment of the city is contrasted with an imaginative recollection of the beauty of nature which is still accessible to an "inward eye" if not to the physical senses. This indirect experience is said to provide compensation for the loss of the direct contact with nature, but then this theory is called into doubt by the lines quoted above.

It seems, therefore, that at the beginning of the closing section of the poem the speaker has reached an impasse. He has made two attempts to prove that he still has some kind of access to nature and, what in this poem is almost identical with this, to the divine, but fails to disperse his lingering doubt about this. He has tried to convince himself that even if the immediate unity with nature that he experienced five years before (in the fictitious chronology of the poem) is a thing of the past, he can still experience this happy union in vicarious ways. However, by the end of the main body of the text he has to realise that he cannot really believe his own theories of compensation.

All this, of course, is not only acknowledged in the lines which openly express doubt but also in the tone of the whole poem, which – in spite of the conscious efforts of the speaker – is full of sadness, and establishes rather than denies the feeling of loss. The "undertow of questions," the doubting voice, that Susan Wolfson talks about, [4] appears at this point in the poem to be victorious.

This, however, is not the end of the poem. The speaker acknowledges this impasse only in the two lines quoted above and these lines – considered syntactically – are only the subordinate clause of a sentence that asserts exactly the opposite of the desperation that would be the logical consequence

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4. Wolfson, p. 61.

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of the impasse, and thus introduces the substantially different attitude of the concluding part of the poem:

> Nor perchance,
> If I were not thus taught, *should I the more*
> *Suffer my genial spirits to decay*
>
> (ll. 111–113; my italics)

What this sentence suggests is that the normal reaction to the situation described in the previous parts of the poem would be the decay of the "genial spirits" but Wordsworth consciously refuses to allow this to happen. This – as, I think, the text also acknowledges – is an unexpected reaction. What is even stranger, however, is what Wordsworth says in explanation of this reaction:

> For thou art with me here upon the banks
> Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
> My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
> The language of my former heart, and read
> My former pleasures in the shooting lights
> Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
> May I behold in thee what I was once,
> My dear, dear Sister!
>
> (ll. 114–121)

The appearance of Dorothy Wordsworth at this point in the poem is rather unexpected, to say the least, and it is no less surprising that Wordsworth sees in her a representative of his former self.[5] The real age difference between the two was a mere one and a half years, yet Wordsworth here makes Dorothy represent a stage in his own life which he experienced five years before. These inconsistencies must not, of course, be looked at as inconsistencies but rather as necessary elements in Wordsworth's design. They must be explained; just as the mysterious change in the tone of the poem that goes together with them must be explained. Indeed this latter element is perhaps the most unexpected thing that happens in this closing section of the poem. When he starts talking to Dorothy, the speaker's (Wordsworth's) tone of voice becomes elevated, hymnic and assured, and this is in very sharp contrast to the previous meditative, sometimes enthusiastic but then always

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5. Cf. Harold Bloom's reaction in *The Visionary Company*, p. 137.

sceptical tone.[6] The passage following immediately after the one quoted above is a perfect example of this changed tone of voice:

> and this prayer I make,
> *Knowing* that Nature never did betray
> The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
> Through all the years of this our life, to lead
> From joy to joy. . .
>
> (ll. 121–125; my italics)

This "knowing," as has been indicated, has not at all been sure so far, and thus we can say that to Dorothy now the speaker can affirm that which he could not convince himself of: that the access to the divine, to Nature, is and remains always available. An interesting further change here is that the key to this access is now to be found in Nature herself. In the central part of the text the speaker seemed to seek some proof of this access from his own "fallen" position, from within the boundaries of his own self, by giving some rational account of the connection. But what he ended up with this way turned out to be merely hypotheses, which he was unable to confirm. Now that he can affirm the connection to nature by turning to Dorothy, however, it seems that he must see it as something that comes from nature of her own accord. "Only nature," Harold Bloom comments, "has the privilege of leading us from joy to joy." [7] The divine, the text seems to suggest, is inaccessible for us unless it gives itself, and this access – if it occurs – will thus always remain something that is beyond us: it can never be understood or proved, it can only be experienced and affirmed in an act of faith. The rational control must, therefore, be given up completely if one wants to experience this coming of the divine. And this is exactly what happens in this closing section of the poem: the sceptical attitude of the first part is replaced in the last by the mode of faith, which affirms that which cannot be understood or proved.

This change of mode also makes it possible for the speaker to reintroduce and affirm his two earlier theories of compensation (compensatory imagination

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6. Thomas McFarland also recognises this movement. He says, "the poem is somewhat restless and uncertain at its beginning, settles down to a broad and deep current of Wordsworthian certainty, and concludes, with the benediction to Dorothy, in some of the most pure and limpid verse Wordsworth ever wrote" (*Originality and Imagination* [Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985], pp. 69f.).

7. Bloom, p. 138.

and the "presence"). The two following passages in this section of the poem clearly restate these earlier idealisations but without the element of doubt which accompanied them in the previous part of the poem:

> for she [Nature] can so inform
> The mind that is within us, so impress
> With quietness and beauty, and so feed
> With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
> Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
> Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
> The dreary intercourse of daily life,
> Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
> Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
> Is full of blessings.
>
> (ll. 125–134)

This passage is closely related to the passage about the compensatory imagination (ll. 29–49), as it is based on the contrast between the alienating city life and the memory of nature. [8] The only difference is that the working of memory is not described here as human action but rather as the gift of Nature herself: she is said to inform our minds actively. Otherwise the ideas are the same: the burden of adult existence and the alienating, impersonal life in the city are about to suffocate us but the memory of nature gives us assurance and a deeper understanding of the truth beyond the appearances. Yet, when comparing these two parts of the poem, we cannot help feeling that something is missing from the second passage which, it appears, is trying to restate in the mode of faith what was impossible to assert in the earlier part of the poem. The whole theory about the "inward eye," about the metaphysical experience – which was in fact the essence of that previous passage – seems to be left out of this restatement. It seems that the assurance and the powerful declaration of a strong faith go together with a certain loss of thoroughness, of epistemological subtlety.

We encounter the same lack of subtlety in the next passage, as well, which seems to restate the second great theoretical and rhetorical attempt at the reestablishment of the connection with the divinity of nature:

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8. John A. Hodgson quotes these two passages alternately when talking about the poem's picturing of city life, creating thus a direct connection between the two statements (*Wordsworth's Philosophical Poetry, 1797–1814* [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980], p. 38).

> Therefore let the moon
> Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
> And let the misty mountain-winds be free
> To blow against thee: and, in after years,
> When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
> Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
> Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
> Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
> For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
> If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
> Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
> Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
> And these my exhortations!
>
> (ll. 134–146)

We can easily recognise in this passage the theory about growing up, the idea that the wild ecstasies of youth will be compensated for by more mature, more sober adult pleasures. However, the whole theory about that "presence" which seemed to constitute the main part of the argument of the previous passage (ll. 93–102) and which the speaker finally came to doubt is completely missing. It seems that the cost of becoming able to affirm, to believe, is the loss of complexity; it seems that the mode of faith is necessarily accompanied by a loss of control, a loss of conscious mastery. Whereas in the previous part Wordsworth could check himself and could see the weaknesses of his idealisations, now these seem to be let loose and are presented without any epistemological control.

These successful restatements – and this is another, no less significant change in this last section of the poem – also go together with the appearance of futurity. When the speaker in the central part of the text tries to convince the readers and himself of the general validity of his idealisations and is unsuccessful, he talks about his own present state. Now that he manages to affirm these theories, however, he can affirm them only as applying in the future life of Dorothy. It seems that the way in which Wordsworth becomes capable of restating his theories is through presenting them as applying in somebody else's (this time Dorothy's) life and more particularly in the hypothetical future of that person's life. The impossibility in the speaker's present state becomes possible in Dorothy's hypothetical future. The form of the successful affirmation is, therefore, that of the promise made to another.

This is, however, not the only way in which the future appears in this section of the poem. It also appears as the speaker's own future and more particu-

larly as the dimension of his own possible absence in the future. In other words, the speaker manages to face death at the end of the poem. His personal future has already appeared in the main part of the text in a rather vague, meditative form when looking at the landscape and still having in mind his theory about remembering nature he hopes "That in this moment there is life and food / For future years" (ll. 64–65). Apart from this, however, the central part of the text is characterised by the anxiety about the future. It could even be said that the speaker makes the two attempts at re-establishing the lost unity with nature because he is afraid of the future, because having lost the unity with the divine the only possible futurity for him is his death, his personal finitude. When describing his present situation, the speaker compares himself to "a man / Flying from something that he dreads" (ll. 70–71). Lionel Trilling and Harold Bloom's footnote in *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature* comments "what he dreads is mortality,"[9] and it is indeed this mortality that the speaker cannot face in the central part of the text. It seems necessary, however, to come to terms with it somehow, for Wordsworth does not finish the poem until the speaker is able to do so. We could even say, therefore, that this is what the changes of the last part of the poem are ultimately needed for. It is only at the cost of making these changes that Wordsworth can face mortality and finish the poem on a reassuring note, very clearly spoken in the mode of faith:

> Nor, perchance –
> If I should be where I no more can hear
> Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
> Of past existence – wilt thou then forget
> That on the banks of this delightful stream
> We stood together; and that I, so long
> A worshipper of Nature, hither came
> Unwearied in that service: rather say
> With warmer love – oh! with far deeper zeal
> Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
> That after many wanderings, many years
> Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
> And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
> More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!
> (ll. 146–159)

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9. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling, ed., *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1973), Vol. 4 (*Romantic Poetry and Prose*), p. 148n.

II

The changes that I have described above undoubtedly show some logic. If the hidden theme of the poem is indeed mortality, then it seems necessary that at the close of the poem the speaker should somehow come to terms with the inevitable future of his death. This, however, he can apparently only do through the changes that he effects in the last section of the poem. It is clear then that the said changes are necessary but the questions why they are necessary and why just these ones are necessary have yet remained in the greatest part unanswered. And this is where Paul de Man's essay, "Rhetoric of Persuasion (Nietzsche)"[10] can help us. The part I will select from this essay reflects a typical and central structure in de Man's thought which I will use to explain the logical connections between the different alterations at the end of "Tintern Abbey."

De Man in this part of his essay analyses a Nietzsche text on the identity principle of logic. The identity principle is basically the statement that A, the subject of any logical proposition, must be identical with itself, that is to say, that we cannot ascribe opposite attributes to it. As this statement already shows, the identity principle is in fact based on the principle of non-contradiction, which is essentially the premise that – as Nietzsche himself puts it – "We are unable to affirm and deny one and the same thing."[11] It is this latter principle that Nietzsche analyses to "deconstruct" the former, the identity principle, which, he asserts on the basis of Aristotle's logic, is the ground of all logical truths. He points out thus that the law of non-contradiction either

> asserts something about actual entities, as if one already knew this from some other source; namely that opposite attributes *can*not be ascribed to them [*können*]. Or the proposition means: opposite attributes *should* not be ascribed to it [*sollen*]. In that case, logic would be an imperative, *not* to know the true [*erkennen*] but to posit [*setzen*] and arrange a world that *should be true for us*.[12]

Nietzsche here simply asserts that the law of non-contradiction can be understood in two different ways: as a statement about the truth on the basis of a former knowledge of this truth, a statement, that is to say, of our knowing the truth; or, in

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10. Paul de Man, "Rhetoric of Persuasion (Nietzsche)," in *Allegories of Reading* 119–31.
11. Quoted by de Man in "Rhetoric of Persuasion," p. 119.
12. Quoted by de Man in "Rhetoric of Persuasion," p. 120.

the lack of this previous knowledge, as a logical act that posits what this truth should be. Nietzsche, of course, argues that we can have no access to any prior knowledge and thus the principle of non-contradiction is not necessarily true in itself but is in fact only posited as true. From this it follows that the self-identical A, which depends entirely on this principle, is itself no more than a hypothesis.

This is the argument which de Man analyses in the part of his essay that I would like to discuss at some length. He identifies the two ways of understanding the law of non-contradiction with two different uses of language: when we make statements about the truth on the basis of a former knowledge of this truth we use the *constative* mode of language, and when we posit what should be true we apply the *performative* mode. [13] What is really important for us, however, is that having done this de Man establishes an essential connection between these two modes of language. Thus he goes farther in his argument than the original Nietzsche text did. He does not only say that there are two different ways of interpreting the statement that expresses the law of non-contradiction but that these two interpretations (now reduced to modes of language) are essentially connected to each other: they follow from one another and are the elements of the same structure. He says

> the inability to contradict – to state at the same time that A is and is not A – is not a necessity but an inadequacy, 'ein Nicht-vermögen.' Something one has failed to do can become feasible again only in the mode of compulsion; the performative correlate of 'I cannot' is 'I [or you] must.' The language of identity and of logic asserts itself in the imperative mode and thus recognises its own activity as the positing of entities. Logic consists of positional speech acts. As such, it acquires a temporal dimension for it posits as future what one is unable to do in the present: all 'setzen' is 'voraussetzen,' positional language is necessarily hypothetical. [14]

It is not quite clear in this passage what de Man means by that "something" we have failed to do. The word seems to refer to the principle of non-contradiction, as if the sentence of which it is the subject asserted that we want to state at the same time that "A is and is not A" and that we fail. This, however, is apparently not what de Man means to say. His meaning is rather that because we know that the only ground for our notion of the identity principle is a human inadequacy (ex-

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13. The distinction is originally John Austin's. Cf. John Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

14. De Man, "Rhetoric of Persuasion," pp. 123–124.

pressed in the principle of non-contradiction), we fail to establish the self-identical A as an unshakeable truth in the constative mode, the mode of "knowing," although this would be absolutely necessary, for the existence of this A is the grounding principle of logic. This interpretation is supported also by the clause "it posits as future what one is unable to do in the present." Now, clearly we do not want to posit in the future our inability to contradict because it is already well-established in the present, but exactly because it is so well established, we cannot in the present unconditionally accept the self-identical A (it being dependent on our incapacity) and thus we must establish it in the future as a hypothesis.

Whatever this passage in fact talks about, however, it is certain that it describes an essential, necessary connection between two modes of speech, whereas Nietzsche only talked about two alternative interpretations not linked in any organic way. For de Man the constative mode, the use of language, which is concerned with simply registering, reflecting the truth as it in itself is, necessarily ends in an "I cannot." But this must not mean the loss of this truth, for this is what all our discourse is built upon. We must, therefore, make this truth feasible again, we must create some possibility of accessing it even if we have failed in our first attempt. We can, however, only do this if we change our mode of language use from the constative to the performative, from the contemplative to the imperative, from the "I cannot" to the "I [or you] must." De Man, of course, qualifies his statement by saying that this structure is only characteristic of "the language of identity and of logic," yet he also makes it clear that all the "metaphysical" texts (like for instance Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey") were written in this language, and I would even venture to say – still not doing violence to de Man's thought in general – that every text must necessarily be written in "the language of identity and of logic." I think, therefore, that the generalisation of this structure is not at all unjustifiable.

It is not difficult to see that the change of mode de Man discusses here reflects the general structure of the ending of "Tintern Abbey" very well. It describes the organic development from the contemplative "I cannot" to the imperative "I [or you] must" and shows that this is a necessary development. De Man's structure makes it clear that what Wordsworth cannot assert in the constative or knowing mode characterising the main body of his poem, he must posit in the performative mode in the closing section. The doubting, uncertain main body of Wordsworth's poem can thus be identified with the constative mode which always tries to achieve general claims, certain truths, which always

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attempts to master the reality and come to a knowledge of things but must always fail; and the mode of faith at the end of the poem can be identified with the performative mode which posits the inaccessible truth in a hypothetical future. The change of tone in this last section of the poem is, therefore, the result of the inevitable and organic progress from one mode to another, which the structure of Wordsworth's thought makes necessary.

With the help of this structure, however, we can do more than just point out this general development in the text: we can explain some more particular changes at the end of the poem, as well. The unexpected appearance of Dorothy Wordsworth, for example, follows from the necessary presence of the "you" in the second element of de Man's structure. The imperative mode is never simply an "I must," or I would even say that this is never the primary element in it. It is always the "you," the other that makes it possible for us to change the mode and to perform. This performative act can only be done in the form of a promise, and thus we always need another to whom we can make this promise. The appearance of Dorothy at the end of "Tintern Abbey" is, therefore, a structural necessity in the poem even if it appears to be an inconsistency at first sight. Wordsworth can change the mode, can overcome his difficulties only with the help of Dorothy; only through another can he come to terms with his own self.

This overcoming of the difficulties in Wordsworth's poem is done – as I have said – in the form of a promise; and this promise already involves a temporal dimension which is again very similar to the one described by de Man: "it posits as future what one is unable to do in the present." I think that this is indeed exactly what happens at the end of "Tintern Abbey." Wordsworth posits in Dorothy's future what he cannot do in his own present. It is necessary for him, therefore, that Dorothy be in a much earlier stage of development than himself so that he can promise her the future fulfilment of what he cannot in his own present situation see as feasible. Wordsworth, in other words, must become the *teacher* of Dorothy and, therefore, he must make his sister appear in the poem much younger than she actually was. This inconsistency, therefore, is again revealed by de Man's structure to be a necessary development in the text.

This structure, therefore, – as its use in "Tintern Abbey" shows – is also a description of the general structure of teaching, or rather of "handing down" [15]

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15. The phrase was used by T. S. Eliot in his "Tradition and the Individual Talent" as a synonym of tradition (in Frank Kermode, ed., *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot* [London: Faber and Faber, 1975], p. 38).

something to the next generation. The poem's structure suggests that this "something" that the teacher or the adult in general must hand down is not primarily the load of information that schools usually burden young people with, but rather an affirmation. An affirmation of that which the adult could never fully convince him/herself of but which he/she has always already needed as the ground of his/her activity and identity. A teacher needs to promise to the students, for instance, that it is worth studying and teaching although we all know even too well that these activities are not always rewarded by the society; he/she needs to affirm to the students that hard work and an honest life will yield success and reward even though he/she cannot really convince even him/herself of the practical validity of these principles; and, ultimately, we must all teach our children that life is worth living even though this is not always easy for us to believe if we think only of our own situation. We need to affirm all this because our children, our students need our authority and our affirmation to be able to face the future, but – as the structure of the poem makes it clear – not primarily for this. We need to promise primarily because of ourselves, because only through this promise made to another can we affirm that which we have always needed as the ground of our own existence and which we have always already believed in. Through this handing down, through assuming the role of the teacher, we – just as Wordsworth's speaker – in fact save our own life, we in fact become capable of facing our own future, the inevitable future of death.

This description of the structure of teaching and of the human situation in general might indeed apply in the case of "Tintern Abbey" but is obviously very far from the spirit of Paul de Man's essay. The structure in these two pieces, one might say, is the same, or a very similar one, but the attitude the two authors show towards it is quite different. When, for example, de Man says "it now turns out that the future-projected, prospective assertion was in fact determined by earlier assumptions, that the future truth was in fact past error,"[16] we can argue that he in fact very closely describes the structure of the ending of "Tintern Abbey." It is, however, also clear that de Man does not consider the outcome of this structure – as Wordsworth in my opinion does – to be the final solution to the questions of our life. He just describes this pattern as a particular form of deconstruction which – according to him – Nietzsche happened to use.

This more neutral attitude is, in fact, very useful for us as it draws our attention to a fact which is necessarily present but is just as necessarily suppressed in

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16. De Man, "Rhetoric of Persuasion," p. 124.

Wordsworth's poem. This fact is that with the emergence of the strong, authoritative voice at the end of the poem, there is a noticeable loss of complexity, a lack of thoroughness. When analysing the changes in the last section of "Tintern Abbey" we could already observe this lack but could not then account for it. Having understood de Man's structure, however, we now can find an explanation for this disturbing and seemingly inconsistent development. We can say, namely, that this lack of complexity is caused by the fact that what we posit in the future – as de Man points out – can only be a hypothesis. The necessary futurity of the statement brings about the change from the actual to the hypothetical, which in turn causes the loss of epistemological subtlety. The performative speech act lacks the thoroughness and profundity of the constative mode even though the latter must necessarily end in an "I cannot" and must, therefore, give way to the mode of compulsion, of the "I [or you] must." The performative use of language is thus always deceptive (from the constative point of view; that is to say, inasmuch as it conveys knowledge of things), even though it is also equally true that the constative use of language is impossible without the performative act. The lack of theoretical subtlety in the statements at the end of "Tintern Abbey" is, therefore, again a necessary development and not a mere inconsistency. It follows from the general structure on which the poem rests.

The paradoxical relationship I have referred to above is, incidentally, fully and masterfully treated in the second half of de Man's essay which we can even read – in the present context – as a kind of critique of Wordsworth's procedures at the end of the poem. In this second half of his essay de Man proves that the performative act is not capable of fully replacing the constative claims of statements. As a result, the constative mode can by no means be fully eliminated, even though its validity is questioned by the performative interpretation. As de Man himself summarises this situation, "the text on the principle of identity established the universality of the linguistic model as speech act, albeit by voiding it of epistemological authority and by demonstrating its inability to perform this very act." [17] This means that with the necessary passage from the constative to the performative we have actually called into doubt the validity of the performative act itself, for without the possibility of constative claims no language would exist at all in which the performative act could take place. In a rather different context – in his essay "Promises (Social Contract)" [18] – but still talking about the

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17. De Man, "Rhetoric of Persuasion," p. 129.
18. Paul de Man, "Promises (Social Contract)," in *Allegories of Reading* 246–77.

constative and performative functions of language, de Man describes the same paradox in the following way: "It seems that as soon as a text knows what it states, it can only act deceptively . . . and if a text does not act, it cannot state what it knows." [19] What the text performs, according to this statement, must be something else than what it knows, but if it does not perform it, that knowledge cannot be stated at all.

De Man's thoughts about the constative and performative functions of language, therefore, do not only explain but also criticise Wordsworth's poem. They show that the changes at the end of "Tintern Abbey" are necessary and organically follow from the structure of the whole poem, but they also disclose the weaknesses of this structure – or at least of the way Wordsworth uses it. What we learn thus is that Wordsworth necessarily changes the mode of his text from the constative to the performative but does not notice that the performative cannot fully replace the constative, that the act he needs at the end of his poem is only a deception, an aberration. He does not notice, furthermore, that in order to achieve the performative mode, he had to assume a role, the role of the teacher which is in itself a reduction of the complexities of selfhood which, apparently, his original aim was to explore. Wordsworth, when he assumes the role of the teacher, becomes the "lawgiver" but the lawgiver – as de Man says in "Promises (Social Contract)" – is always an impostor and a mere fiction: he promises but as he has no right to do this he also necessarily deceives by this promise.

To explain Wordsworth's blindness or naiveté we can give a number of reasons. We could say, for instance, that he was a pre-Nietzschean poet and thinker and thus was not aware of such subtleties. This would, of course, be a very naive explanation, for – although Wordsworth indeed preceded Nietzsche in time – he wrote after Rousseau in whose writings de Man discovers the same structures that Nietzsche described. We could also say that Wordsworth is in fact not really naive, that his text deconstructs itself, that with the conspicuous discrepancy between the quasi-religious fervour of the tone and the lack of substantiality in the content of this last section of his poem he himself draws attention to the deceptive, unfinished nature of the poem. This explanation would certainly be less naive and would probably be quite close to the explanation that de Man himself would have given had he ever come across the problem. Yet I think it would attribute too much subtlety and self-awareness to the poet which would in this case be absolutely unnecessary and an insult to rather then a compliment on the

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19. De Man, "Promises," p. 270.

poet's genius. In the next part of this paper I will try, therefore, to find a third way to answer this question in order to avoid the difficulties present in both the possible answers mentioned above. I will try to prove that Wordsworth is neither too naive nor too subtle at the end of "Tintern Abbey" through arguing that the naiveté present at the end of the poem is in fact a necessary one: it is a naiveté that even Paul de Man must suffer his texts to embrace. I shall do this through analysing this time de Man's texts in the light of the structure given by Wordsworth in this closing section of "Tintern Abbey."

III

As I have mentioned above, the main difference between the way Wordsworth and de Man use this structure is that whereas in the poem it serves as the solution to the problems of the speaker, in de Man's essay it is only a means of deconstruction and as such it does not lead to any sure or final result. Thus having deconstructed in the Nietzschean way the validity of the constative function by the help of the performative, de Man immediately turns to the deconstruction of the performative. He says:

> Lest we be inclined to read this text as an irreversible passage from a constative conception of language to a performative one, there are several other statements from the same general period [of Nietzsche's life] in which the possibility of 'doing' is as manifestly being deconstructed as the identity principle, the ground of knowledge, is being put in question here. [20]

Using some other Nietzsche texts from the same period, therefore, he shows that action in language is just as deceptive as the belief that language reflects the truth, that it reports about things as they exist in reality. What we used to deconstruct knowledge turns out to be less powerful than what was deconstructed by it and thus it cannot fully take the place of the first element, or, as de Man himself puts this, it "never reaches the symmetrical counterpart of what it denies." [21] This pattern of insufficiency is then said to be characteristic of all deconstructive processes and thus of all language use; in de Man's own words "It is co-extensive with any use of language, and this use is compulsive or, as Nietzsche formulates it, imperative." [22]

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20. De Man, "Rhetoric of Persuasion," p. 126.
21. De Man, "Rhetoric of Persuasion," p. 125.
22. De Man, "Rhetoric of Persuasion," p. 125.

This statement, which is often made in different forms all through the essays of *Allegories of Reading*, seems to me to be a statement of a very powerful and convincing "I cannot" even if it is not accompanied – like in Wordsworth's case – with the feeling of regret or with any sense of loss. The reason why I still maintain that this structure is similar to an "I cannot" is that it is followed towards the end of the volume (more particularly in the penultimate essay of *Allegories of Reading*, "Promises (Social Contract)") by a gesture that in my opinion is very similar to the one Wordsworth makes at the end of "Tintern Abbey." The "I cannot" turns into an "I [or you] must:" de Man promises – or I should rather say that, even in spite of its author's intention, his text promises. It promises on two levels: first by announcing (and clearly this is de Man's intention) that language is structured so that texts must necessarily make promises; and then by enacting this theoretical observation, that is to say, by making (and de Man in my opinion is blind to this fact) an open promise to the readers.

In his "Promises (Social Contract)," de Man attempts to give "the linguistic model in general,"[23] an allegory of textuality itself. To do this he analyses Rousseau's political writings and in particular the *Social Contract*. After a long discussion of the contractual discourse in general, he concludes that this particular Rousseau text is not only a deconstructive one, but it also goes beyond the ever-existing constative/performative dilemma. De Man supports this claim by what I think is a reintroduction of a new, "transcendental" performative. All texts, according to him, are structured like an aporia: they keep performing what they have shown to be impossible to do.[24] What these texts perform, however, is not always the same thing. What, for example, the *Profession de foi* and *Julie* (two texts he has analysed in two previous essays of *Allegories of Reading*) perform are two different things, even though the performance of these two things is similarly impossible. The first one keeps listening to, the second keeps loving that which has been shown to be impossible to listen to and to love, respectively. Listening and loving are, however, also similar to each other inasmuch as they are merely referential, transitive acts (like the constative function of knowing in the essay on Nietzsche). The *Social Contract*, in contrast to all these, performs something that goes beyond this referential function. In de Man's own words:

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23. De Man, "Promises," p. 273.
24. De Man, "Promises," p. 275.

> What the *Social Contract* keeps doing however is to promise, that is, to per-
> form the very illocutionary speech act which it has discredited and to per-
> form it in all its textual ambiguity, as a statement of which the constative and
> the performative functions cannot be distinguished or reconciled. [25]

What makes the *Social Contract* special is, therefore, not that it keeps per-
forming what it discredits but that what it performs is the very ground of all per-
forming, the very ground of textuality itself: the constative/performative
distinction. Consequently, the promise made in the contractual text – the alle-
gory of all textuality – goes beyond the constative/performative opposition and
grounds it in its possibility. In the contractual text, therefore, textuality is shown
to become its own ground by performing, creating, as it were, what has always
already preceded it as its (non-original) ground.

What de Man establishes here is, therefore, a kind of meta-performative. He
reintroduces, in other words, the same constative/performative pattern that he
used on Nietzsche on a higher level. What is more, he uses this pattern in a nec-
essarily hierarchical construction, as if he disregarded the second half of his own
Nietzsche essay. Although he has proved in this second half, and many times in
other previous writings, that the constative and the performative cannot be
clearly distinguished and that neither of them can be said to be prior to the
other, here, at the end of "Promises (Social Contract)," he insists that the per-
formative is still stronger, that it even transcends in this Rousseau text and – as
this is a model of all language use – in all texts the very constative/performative
opposition itself.

The original structure of the turning from the constative "I cannot" to the
performative "I [or you] must" is, therefore, clearly present in this concluding
statement about "the linguistic model in general"; and, what is more, it is appar-
ently functional. Although he has many times shown in the previous essays of
the book that this turning from the constative to the performative is an aberrant
(though necessary) process as it does not produce the result for which it is im-
plemented; de Man himself uses here the same pattern and is apparently not
aware of its aberrant nature, not aware of the fact that he does not produce the
result that he desires. Another surprising element in the statement quoted above
is the conspicuous rhetorical effort and enthusiasm in its tone, which is other-
wise quite unusual for de Man.

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25. De Man, "Promises," pp. 275–6.

I must hasten to add that these surprising facts and shifts of emphasis at the end of "Promises (Social Contract)" do not at all strike the reader as unexpected or absurd. We are very well prepared for the reception of these changes, as de Man has already reintroduced his original structure (of the dialectic of performative and constative modes of language) previously to describe the general operation of the contractual model as established by Rousseau. The aporia that legislative or, more generally, political discourse has to face is – in this model – that whereas on the one hand it can only be productive if it becomes perfectly technical, mechanical and general; on the other hand, it can only be put to use if it applies to particular cases. It must operate as a "constitutional machine," which is organised only by its inherent, grammatical laws; but at the same time it must be able to refer to a particular phenomenon. The solution to this dilemma, the passage from pure theory to its phenomenal manifestations, can only be achieved through a change in the mode of speech, through – as de Man says – "a passage from constative theory to performative history." This process – de Man adds – can also be said to be the allegory of the inability of political discourse to achieve the status of a science, [26] to make constative claims.

I think that de Man's original structure is clearly recognisable here: the constitutional machine whose operation is only possible inasmuch as it maintains its constative, purely theoretical, nature necessarily reaches an impasse, an "I cannot," and this then necessarily must turn into the performative, into the "I [or you] must." This whole process – again very much like in the original structure – is accompanied by the appearance of temporality, more particularly by the introduction of futurity. To use de Man's own words: "the speech act of the contractual text never refers to a situation that exists in the present, but signals toward a hypothetical future" and "[a]ll laws are future-oriented and prospective; their illocutionary mode is that of the *promise*." [27]

So far this structure is perfectly analogous with the one de Man used in "Rhetoric of Persuasion (Nietzsche)." The only – by no means insignificant – difference is not in the structure itself but in the mode it is presented in the two different texts. In the former one on Nietzsche the passage from constative to performative was described only as a particular way of deconstructing the identity principle. It was a structure which in itself had no particular significance and which did not pertain to the nature of language. It was only a means through

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26. De Man, "Promises," p. 273.
27. De Man, "Promises," p. 273.

which the deconstruction could be effected and which itself was subject to the power of deconstruction. In the latter essay on Rousseau, however, the same process is presented as something that is a necessary development in the *Social Contract* and therefore is a general law of all language use. There is, therefore, a conspicuous turn here in de Man's mode of speech from the constative (which is merely concerned with what is susceptible of being spoken) to the performative (which posits the existence of what it talks about).

Besides these recurring elements and shifts of emphasis, there is also a wholly new constituent in the structure used to describe the working of the *Social Contract*. This new element is the "lawgiver." [28] De Man argues that the "lawgiver" is necessary in the contractual text because the laws should express the general will of all the people, but the general will in itself is voiceless, it needs an individual to speak for it. This "lawgiver" is, therefore, necessarily an impostor, not really a person who has authority but rather a structural necessity of the text, a speaker whose existence is grounded by a figure of speech (more particularly by a metalepsis). [29] The "lawgiver" is thus not a person but a role: the figure of a human voice that is assumed to be able to speak for the divine.

I have said that the impostor-lawgiver is a new element in the de Manian structure, yet I believe that this should not be a new element for the reader of the present paper, for (s)he should immediately recognise in this "lawgiver" the "teacher" of Wordsworth's poem. The teacher in "Tintern Abbey" is also just a role, a subterfuge. It is, however, a necessary one: the speaker of the poem can only achieve the authority that he desires, he can only achieve the level of generality necessary for him to be able to affirm, if he assumes this role. By assuming the role, however, he becomes an impostor thus undermining the authority which he was able to achieve only through the assumption of this role. This is what we can feel at the end of "Tintern Abbey," where the authority and convincing power of the speaker's voice is accompanied and undermined by an apparent epistemological, theoretical vagueness of the assertions made in the text. There is only one way to escape from this rather difficult situation and that is – as is shown by Wordsworth's case – that the impostor must claim to speak for the divine. The authority, which has been shaken by the fact of the subterfuge, can only be restored through direct reference to the divine authority. This is clearly what happens in "Tintern Abbey," for Wordsworth can only affirm his previously

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28. De Man, "Promises," p. 274.
29. De Man, "Promises," p. 274.

unsuccessful theories after he can announce "that *Nature* never did betray / The heart that loved her" (ll. 122–123; my italics). The reason why he can now speak in the voice of authority is, therefore, that Nature, the divine itself, has made the first step, has promised herself to us.

This element of the recourse to the action and promise made by the divine is, I think, a necessary element of the structure that has so far been described. It follows, therefore, that it must also be present in de Man's text, which – as has been indicated – is itself organised by the same pattern. So far I have only shown how de Man reintroduces this fundamental pattern in his analysis of the *Social Contract* as a necessary process of this particular Rousseau text and, by analogy, of all texts in general. De Man, however, does more than this: he himself enacts the same process or, to put it in another way, his text itself is organised by the same structure.

As I have already indicated, de Man's claim that the passage from the constative to the performative is a necessary tendency, a "must" in all texts, already marks a change in his position from the constative to the performative. This tendency is further strengthened when de Man asks the question whether Rousseau himself becomes the lawgiver of the *Social Contract* or not. His answer is, as is predictable, negative. This, however, does not mean that Rousseau never assumes the role of the lawgiver but rather that even if he does so occasionally, the lawgiver is still only an impostor, a role whose authority thus always remains questionable. If, therefore, Rousseau wants to remain the author of the *Social Contract*, if he wants to retain the status of his text as an allegory, he must be more than the lawgiver whose role he sometimes needs to impersonate but whose subterfuge he must remain aware of.

What de Man says after this, however, is much more interesting than this answer and shows a marked turn towards the performative inasmuch as in it de Man himself undertakes the task of promising. Having confirmed that the lawgiver's status is questionable, he does not draw the logical conclusion that the promises made in the text by this impostor are also questionable but introduces his theory of the "meta-performative," which I have referred to above. There is a need for the lawgiver – he seems to suggest –, because it is only him that can utter the promise. This promise itself, however, is something greater, something more than the lawgiver: it comes in fact from the text itself. This statement is obviously very far in its implications from de Man's previous claim that the text can only act deceptively. [30]

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30. De Man, "Promises," p. 270.

Another very interesting element here is the way de Man supports his insistence on this meta-promise. Instead of giving structural reasons, he turns to something that is quite unusual for him: to empirical evidence which – again quite unexpectedly – he declares to be an undeniable proof of the existence of the promise as a necessary element of all texts. He gives two quotes from Rousseau's text and then concludes: "it is impossible to read the *Social Contract* without experiencing the exhilarating feeling inspired by a firm promise." [31] If he accepts this as a legitimate argument, then he could have just as legitimately argued that the presence of divine authority is undeniable in the *Social Contract* because we can always feel this. This would, of course, not follow from the structure that de Man's text is built on but it clearly shows the seeming absurdity, or at least inconsistency, of the claim.

These unexpected changes at the end of the essay, however, again must not be looked at as mere inconsistencies or absurdities; they must be explained. And here Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" becomes very helpful, for what happens at the end of that poem is, I think, very similar to what happens at the end of de Man's essay. The seeming inconsistencies occur, therefore, not because of de Man's carelessness but because of a structural necessity in the text itself. He must now change the mode of his text into the mode of faith, into the mode of the promise, because this is a necessary development from the mode of the "I cannot" that the previous part of the essay, and in fact all the previous essays in *Allegories of Reading*, established. He must affirm to us in the form of a law, whose illocutionary mode is that of the *promise*, what he has always already believed in and what has always already grounded his argument all through the essays but what he has so far remained unable to control and to affirm. In order to achieve this, he must assume the role of the teacher, he must become the impostor and overlook the loss of epistemological control (apparent for instance in his recourse to empirical evidence) that goes together with this subterfuge.

Having questioned the authority of the lawgiver de Man faces the question "who is then making the promise if it cannot be the lawgiver?" and his answer – as has been pointed out above – must inevitably be: the text itself. It is language itself – de Man declares – that keeps promising itself: "*Die Sprache verspricht (sich).*" [32] This is why – he argues – the *Social Contract* maintains the promise: not because of the author's intention but because "This model is a fact of lan-

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31. De Man, "Promises," p. 276.
32. De Man, "Promises," p. 277.

guage over which Rousseau himself has no control."[33] When de Man announces this, however, he obviously becomes an impostor himself. If it is true – as he maintains – that the promise is a fact of language and that it does not occur at the discretion of the writer, then it must follow that it cannot be consciously stated by anybody. If it is an immanent part of language then it must also be voiceless and unspeakable. It can only be expressed in the text by the help of a subterfuge, by introducing a "lawgiver" who must necessarily be an impostor, as well. And this is exactly what happens at this point of the essay. Just as at the end of "Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth assumes the role of the teacher, so at the end of his essay de Man must necessarily become the impostor of his own text announcing and affirming that which he has proved to be impossible for anyone to affirm.

De Man's original intention with shifting the authority from the "lawgiver" to the text itself was to eliminate the notion of divine authority from the contractual model, the model for all language use. What he achieves with this shift, however, is only a displacement or a new distribution of the roles. Instead of questioning the authority of the "lawgiver" he himself assumes this role, and instead of eliminating the necessary recourse to the divine authority he paradoxically makes language function as the divine.

What I mean by this latter statement becomes clearer if we put the sentence "die Sprache verspricht (sich)" in its original context, contrasting it with Heidegger's famous "die Sprache spricht."[34] Without going into the full complexity of this statement, I think that we can safely say that what Heidegger expresses with this assertion is that language exists in itself prior to everything else: it is sufficient to itself and does not need us for it to be what it is. Language is, therefore, the only thing that can be truly said to *be*, for it is independent of anything else whereas everything else in the world, including human beings as well, is entirely dependent on it.[35] This entirely self-sufficient "being," which alone can be said to be identical with itself and thus to *be*, is obviously analogous with Wordsworth's concept of nature, or with the God of the Judeo-Christian tradi-

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33. De Man, "Promises," p. 277.

34. Martin Heidegger, "Der Weg zur Sprache," *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 12 (*Unterwegs zur Sprache*), ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1985), p. 243.

35. In his "Letter on Humanism" (*Basic Writings*, ed. D. F. Krell [London: Routledge, 1993] 217–65.) Heidegger famously says, "language is the house of being" (p. 217).

tion. As this divinity is in all these cases entirely self-sufficient, however, we can have no access to it, just as we could have no access to language as it appears in Heidegger's famous statement if we had not already lived in this "house of being." This, however, cannot be sufficient for any serious thinker, for if this were true, then our whole discourse about these divinities would be impossible. There is only one way out of this situation: the divinity must be seen as giving itself. And this is exactly what happens in Wordsworth's poem, just as in de Man's essay. [36] This "giving itself" is what de Man's statement expresses: this is why, in my opinion, the word "sich" becomes for him a necessary part of the statement.

This pattern is, of course, analogous with the one I have already presented when describing the ending of "Tintern Abbey." The teacher-impostor whose authority is questioned can regain this authority only by recourse to the divine power: Wordsworth must say "Nature never did betray / The heart that loved her" (ll. 122–3) and, similarly, the impostor de Man must say "Die Sprache verspricht sich."

All this, however, does not lessen the convincing power of the promise made at the end of de Man's essay, just as it did not lessen the effect of Wordsworth's victory at the end of "Tintern Abbey." The reason why we can still feel these statements convincing and powerful is that they are – in spite of their theoretical impossibility – necessary developments of the structure that organises both texts. Beyond the negative truth of the theory, which de Man talks so much about, there is, it seems, an even stronger force of structural necessity that drives the thinker towards affirmation, the affirmation of the truth in the future, in spite of the impossibility of such an act. This is what I think Jacques Derrida means when, in his *Memoires: for Paul de Man*, he describes de Man's achievement in the following way: "Underlying and beyond the most rigorous, critical, and relentless irony . . . Paul de Man was a thinker of affirmation." [37] And the structure that Derrida uses to describe the form of this affirmation can very well be applied to the analysis I have presented in my paper of de Man's "Promises (Social Contract)," even though Derrida's reading of this text (in the third lecture of *Memoires* [38]) is very different from mine. He argues in the first lecture of the

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36. Perhaps God's promising and then sending the Messiah can also be interpreted as representing the same structure in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

37. Jacques Derrida, *Memoires: for Paul de Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 21.

38. Derrida, "Acts," in *Memoires* 89–153.

Memoires [39] that de Man's affirmation takes place in the form of an alliance. He says, "This alliance is much more ancient, resistant, and secret than those strategic or familial manifestations that it must actually make possible and to which it is never reduced." [40] The first "yes" then with which de Man affirms, with which he commits himself to this alliance, had to be said before and beyond everything, before he sat down to writing at all. This "yes," however, is not enough in itself even if it is absolutely necessary and is the ground of everything else. The first affirmation, the first secret alliance must itself be affirmed again, this time expressly. De Man must commit himself to his first commitment, to keeping the memory of this first and primordial affirmation. He must say "yes" to that first "yes" "if anything is ever to come from the future." [41] And this second "yes," which Derrida so beautifully describes, is in my opinion most powerfully pronounced in de Man's essay on the promise.

If we accept that the final affirmation – even at the cost of the loss of epistemological control – is a necessary development of the pattern of thought that both Wordsworth and de Man used, then it follows that Wordsworth was in a sense right when he blindly performed the promise at the end of "Tintern Abbey." The naiveté in this act – which was revealed by the help of Paul de Man's description of the structure – was in fact a necessary one. We could say, therefore, that de Man, when seen as criticising the weakness of the affirmation, remains blind to the fact that this affirmation is necessary, so much so that even his own text must undergo the transformation that this necessity causes. In this sense then Wordsworth's text criticises de Man's blindness just as much as de Man's text has criticised Wordsworth's, and they both affirm the profundity of the insight that both texts have ultimately succeeded in conveying to us.

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39. Derrida, "Mnemosyne," in *Memoires* 1–43.
40. Derrida, "Mnemosyne," p. 19.
41. Derrida, "Mnemosyne," p. 20.

Tom Hubbard

Dance of the Marionettes

Arthur Symons and symbolist theatre[1]

"How can we know the dancer from the dance?" In poems such as "Javanese Danc-ers" and in many prose texts (including fiction) Symons (1865–1945) offers a gloss on that well-known line by his friend and fellow-Celt, Yeats. This paper explores the relationship between Symons's views on theatre and those of Edward Gordon Craig (1872–1966); the two men commented on each other's work. There is a trajectory from Symons's response to dance (owing something to the popular native English tradition of music-hall, as well as to the more sophisticated developments of French Symbolism), towards Craig's theory of the *Übermarionette*, which found so little fa-vour in Edwardian England – Symons apart – but was hugely influential in mainland Europe, anticipating Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekte* and providing a strong intellectual basis for the avant-garde Polish theatre of Tadeusz Kantor. Symons is clearly a key figure in the challenge to naturalism and to other forms of naïve representationism, including crudely emotional identification with characters and 'star' actors. I con-clude with a brief reference to the non-naturalistic (but didactic) Edinburgh 'masques' of the Scottish polymath Patrick Geddes (1854–1932).

Arthur Symons (1865–1945) came from a remote part of Britain – remote, that is, from the perspective of London or Paris. He was a Celt, born in Wales into a family which had originated in Cornwall. He once published an essay on Welsh poetry, and many of the protagonists of his 1905 short story collection, *Spiritual Adventures*, are Cornishmen who seek the sophistication of the wider world.

The first piece in that collection is the autobiographical "A Prelude to Life." Here Symons recounts both his upbringing by parents who were strictly religious, and his youthful desire to obtain 'forbidden' works of literature. He tells us of his early conflicts: "I wanted to want to be good, but all I really wanted was to be

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1. This paper was delivered at the University of Montpellier, France, in January 2002.

clever."[2] In due course he left behind the milieu of provincial puritanism, moved to London, experienced Paris, translated Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Verlaine, and became the leading exponent of French Symbolism in the English-speaking world.

In 1899 appeared the first version of his book *The Symbolist Movement in Literature.* He proclaimed Symbolism's "revolt against exteriority, against rhetoric, against a materialistic tradition" and championed its "endeavour to disengage the ultimate essence, the soul of whatever exists and can be realised by the cosnsciousness; . . . this dutiful waiting upon every symbol by which the soul of things can be made visible. . ."[3] Such language would suggest that although Symons had rejected the religion of his parents, he had, via art, found another spiritual faith which offered a foil to the dominant culture of reductive rationalism/positivism.

For him "symbol" concerned the inner essence, as opposed to allegory, which was a matter of merely external likenesses, unsubtle, literal-minded. W.B. Yeats, the dedicatee of Symons's book, had maintained that a symbol was "the only possible expression of some invisible essence . . . while allegory is one of many possible representations of an embodied thing or familiar principle, and belongs to fancy, and not to imagination. . ."[4]

So the symbol did not *represent* or *refer* to anything "other": it represented, referred only to itself. Symons found this exemplified most potently in the performing arts: in music, and in dance. Let us take the latter. Symons wrote many poems about dancers: the best is perhaps "Javanese Dancers."

> Still, with fixed eyes, monotonously still,
> Mysteriously, with smiles inanimate,
> With lingering feet that undulate,
> With sinuous fingers, spectral hands that thrill
> In measure while the gnats of music whirr,
> The little amber-coloured dancers move
> Like painted idols seen to stir
> By the idolaters in a magic grove. [5]

2. *The Collected Works of Arthur Symons* (London: Secker, 1924), Vol. 5, p. 13. Unless stated otherwise, all references to Symons's works are to this 9-volume edition, hereafter cited as *CWAS*.

3. *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, with an introduction by Richard Ellmann (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1958), p. 5. Hereafter cited as *SML*.

4. W. B. Yeats, *Selected Criticism*, edited with an introduction and notes by A. Norman Jeffares (London: Pan Books, 1976), p. 22.

5. *CWAS*, Vol. 1, p. 125.

In the late nineteenth century westerners were intrigued by the Far East and its subtle aesthetics of understatement and impersonality. In France, the American-born dancer Loïe Fuller, an admirer of Japanese dance, was a sensation at the Folies-Bergère. She could create an illusion of fire by the manner in which she swirled her veils in relation to the lighting in the theatre. There was no other décor. By these minimal means she could suggest the immolation of Wagner's Brünnhilde; for this we have the witness of the Symbolist poet Georges Rodenbach, who was an *aficionado* of her art. [6] Fuller, as a dancer, did not so much *perform* her art; by the movement of her body she *became* her art. As Yeats famously put it in the poem "Among Schoolchildren": "How can we know the dancer from the dance?"

Symons was similarly impressed by the dancing of Jane Avril in Paris and even by the performers in the London music-halls. [7] A dancer does not speak, and one of the basics of Symbolism was the power of silence. For Symons, Symbolism prefers suggestion to statement. Any words spoken on stage, he maintains, should be the words of poetry, of heightened language, not the banal language of everyday life. "Silence" might not seem compatible with music, but for Symons it is in the music dramas of Wagner – that guru of the Symbolists – that he finds an art of suggestion, of reticence. [8]

He goes on to commend *Parsifal* in performance: here all the arts flow into one another. Rhythm is everything. Every movement, every gesture is deliberate; even the music is subordinated to the visual dimension. The figures move across stage slowly but significantly: they can express much even when they are not moving, when they are not even singing, when only the orchestra is providing the sound. To Symons, this is the opposite of the sheer bustle of most theatre in the latter part of the nineteenth century: he objects to the hyperactivity of realism, which, as he puts it, "tears" the picture "out of the frame." [9] Symons finds Wagner's deployment of leitmotifs to be suggestive of psychological nuances that are absent in the wordy plays of Ibsen and Shaw. He considers these two to be obsessed with quotidian externals, topics of the day; in their plays there is too

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6. Georges Rodenbach, *La Jeunesse Blanche* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1913 impression), pp. 203–206.

7. His fellow poet of the 90s, John Davidson, had a more joyless experience of the dingy music-halls of Glasgow.

8. For most of us, I suspect, that last word does not immediately relate to Wagner.

9. Symons, "Ballet, Pantomime, and Poetic Drama," *The Dome* 1 (October–December 1898), p. 70 *et passim*.

much business, with supposedly "realistic" scenery cluttering up the stage – such points are made *passim* in Symons's writings on the arts. He remarks that Grieg's incidental music for *Peer Gynt* supplies all the poetry that Ibsen has left out of the play. [10]

Symons the poet is not downplaying words as such, and it is *writers* for the theatre – such as Villiers de l'Isle, Adam and Maeterlinck – to whom he devotes many pages of *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, and whom he considers great progenitors of the Symbolist stage. Maeterlinck, for Symons, extends Symbolism into mysticism: again, Symons cannot altogether abandon his religious upbringing.

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One of the great *impresarios* of Symbolist theatre, as distinct from *writers*, was Aurélien Lugné-Poe, whose production of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* was reviewed by Symons. This piece takes place in Poland, which is called "the land of Nowhere." Symons is interested in the way that the actors play marionettes – or, as he expresses it, "living people pretending to be those wooden images of life which pretend to be living people." Ubu, though, does not attain the dignity of a marionette – Symons remarks that "he remains a monkey on a stick." The thrust of Symons's review is that *Ubu Roi* is somewhat callow, gimmicky, but it is a step in the right direction. The artificiality of marionettes suggests primitive theatre, primitive emotions. We are witnessing, as it were, the beginning of the twentieth-century theatre of cruelty; Symons refers to the "painted, menacing puppets" in Lugné-Poe's production. [11]

A Symbolist theatre opposed to naturalistic representation is going to be predisposed to the deployment of masks and marionettes. The oriental influence recurs in Yeats, with his study of the Noh plays of Japan, whose actors are mask-wearing marionettes. Yeats distinguishes the poet who is a real man, living his everyday life, from the *masks*, the personae which he takes on when voicing his poetry. As for Symons, his enthusiasm for the marionettes of Maeterlinck and Jarry is reinforced by his mutually enriching professional friendship with Ed-

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10. Symons, *Plays, Acting and Music: A Book of Theory* (London: Cape, The Traveller's Library edition, 1928), p. 144. Hereafter cited as *PAM*. As for Shaw's interpretation of Wagner's *Ring* as a vast tract against capitalism, nothing could be further from Symons's response to *Parsifal*.

11. *CWAS*, Vol. 9, pp. 236–240. The review dates from 1898.

ward Gordon Craig (1872–1966). Craig was that quintessential artist of the theatre who did more than anyone else to champion the marionette – or, rather, to use his quasi-Nietzschean term – the Über-marionette.

The marionette can suggest the inner essence better than the all-too-obviously-human actor. The marionette suggests emotions that are generalised, and therefore universalised, more effectively than can a consciously unique individual, an evidently fleshly person in all his or her limited specificity. It is the doctrine of impersonality, familiar to Craig from the utterances of Flaubert, but here applied to the twentieth century stage. Craig summed up the Über-marionette as "the actor plus fire, minus egoism: the fire of the gods and demons, without the smoke and steam of mortality." [12]

Minus egoism: that is, the actor not paraded to us as a star, as a celebrity. Similarly, Symons maintained that "a play is acted, not for the exhibition of the actor, but for the realization of the play," [13] and he disliked charismatic musicians who were prone to show off their virtuosity at the expense of respect for the actual music; he preferred those who, humbly and impersonally, conveyed the intentions of the composer. In contrast to the prevailing egoism, Symons in his short stories portrays creative and performing artists who lose their personal identities in their art. He quoted approvingly the declaration by the actress Eleonora Duse that the theatre must be destroyed in order to save it, "the actors and actresses must all die of the plague . . . It is not drama that they play, but pieces for the theatre." [14] She also remarks that the theatre should be something more than a good night out for the bourgeoisie.

These assaults on emotionally indulgent identification with supposed "realism," together with the advocacy of ancient contrivances which never pretended to such realism, all anticipate the "alienation," "estrangement" or *Verfremdungseffekte* of Brechtian theatre. "I like to see my illusions clearly," wrote Symons, "recognising them as illusions, and so heightening their charm." [15]

In his book *Studies in Seven Arts* Symons quotes Craig's definition of the "art of the theatre" as "neither acting nor the play. It is not scene nor dance, but

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12. Edward Gordon Craig, *On the Art of the Theatre* (London: Heinemann, 1911), pp. ix–x.
13. *PAM*, p. 53.
14. *CWAS*, Vol. 9, pp. 217ff.
15. Symons, *Cities and Sea Coasts and Islands* (London: Collins, Kings' Way Classics edition, n.d.), p. 169. From the text "London: a Book of Aspects," originally published in 1908. One would not quite associate the Berliner Ensemble with "charm."

it consists of all the elements of which these things are composed: action, which is the very spirit of acting; words, which are the body of the play; line and colour, which are the very heart of the scene; rhythm, which is the very essence of dance." [16] What is particularly "Symbolist" about that? Well, Symons interprets Craig's art of the theatre as addressed in the first place to the eyes – remember his insistence that the *music* of *Parsifal* is subordinated to the total *visual* experience on stage. Craig believes that the scene should have a single dominating image on stage, an image that will sum up, suggest, *symbolise* the total meaning of that scene. The stage is cleared of the distracting clutter of nineteenth century theatre; everything that happens in terms of action, voice and scene cannot be other than constantly referred to that commanding symbol. An example would be a design by Craig for a key scene in *Peer Gynt*. A mysterious, gigantic, and apparently seated figure (as if on a throne) is seen in profile and in silhouette. We can take it that this is the Great Bøjg: based on Norwegian folklore, this giant troll obstructs the progress of that impatient go-getter, Peer Gynt. Indeed he symbolises that something indefinable that frustrates the aspirations of us all. (And Symons accused Ibsen of leaving out the poetry!)

If that is not Symbolist theatre, I do not know what is. Craig's Great Bøjg image is suggestive, atmospheric, haunting, ultimately explicable only by itself – in spite of my presumptuous attempt to explicate it. [17]

How might Symons's insights resonate well into the twentieth century and beyond? We read of his association with fin-de-siècle decadence, aestheticism, and the anti-discursive nature of Symbolism. But his essential seriousness and spiritual commitment are evident in his need to look beyond Symbolism as a mere aesthetic and into its capacity to make us apprehend the relationship between life and death. Apprehend it, that is, not explain it – it remains a mystery, this "darkness out of which we have but just stepped, and the darkness into which we are about to pass." [18]

Cue Poland, the "land of Nowhere" in Jarry's *Ubu Roi*. The "theatre of death" of the director Tadeusz Kantor (1915–1990) owes much to Craig's teaching. The horror of Poland's history, especially during the Second World War, informs the work which emanated from Kantor's base in Kraków. Craig's "Über-

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16. *CWAS*, Vol. 9, p. 231.
17. The image is reproduced in Denis Bablet, "Edward Gordon Craig & Scenography," *Theatre Research / Recherches Théâtrales* 11/1 (1971) 7–22, facing p. 12.
18. *SML*, p. 87.

marionettes" become Kantor's "bio-objects": not only human actors playing marionettes, but often physically attached to mannequin-like figures and moving with them on stage. The meeting point of the tragic and the comic, in Kantor's theatre of death, is the grotesque. In a dehumanised, reified Europe, things and people change places, or – more unsettlingly – they merge. It is arguable if this is an unexpected development of the trajectory given out by Symons and Craig.

It is certainly something more than the self-indulgence of the complacent bourgeois or the fastidious aesthete. The Scottish polymath Patrick Geddes – botanist, designer of cities, arts and theatre impresario and eccentric genius – arrived in Montpellier, an ancient university city in the south of France, during the 1920s: his mission there was to create a more-than-university environment for the all-round, holistic development of individuals and communities. Back in Edinburgh, he had devised non-naturalistic, symbolic (if not quite Symbolist) theatre-pieces, and was ambitious for these to develop into a pan-Celtic festival involving Scotland, Wales and Brittany. In 1912 he wrote of his ideal of a "three-fold convergence of city, theatre and school."[19] I am forced to doubt if this very didactic – very Scottishly didactic – ideal would have been shared by that much more "reticent" Celt, Arthur Symons.

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19. Patrick Geddes, *The Masque of Ancient Learning, and of its Many Meanings: A Pageant of Education from Primitive to Celtic Times, Devised and Presented by Patrick Geddes* (Edinburgh, 1912), p. 89.

György Tóth

The Children of the Empire

Anti-imperialism in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*

"It is the child no one ever saw!" exclaims a British officer when he finds in a cholera-ridden Indian compound Mary Lennox, the heroine of Frances Hodgson Burnett's 1911 novel *The Secret Garden*. These words refer to the actual character of Mary as much as the socio-political hierarchy of British imperialism. The little girl leads a life devoid of love, caring and sharing, while the Empire she lives in is ailed by the same malady: the cholera killing her parents stems from a blind authoritarian colonialism Mary must leave in order to have a chance for recovery. "She only knew that people were ill," and readers know little more when this one-sentence thesis is given to them at the outset of a novel which aims to investigate the cure of Mary's illness and in the course of doing so possibly uncovers the root causes. This paper shows that while Frances Hodgson Burnett's work may be considered a piece of children's literature because it places in the centre the healing process of children from parental neglect, its strong linkage of this theme with images of the colonial socio-political hierarchy and master-servant relationships also makes it more than a harmless bedside reading. *The Secret Garden*'s question of whether Mary Lennox and Colin Craven can be cured of their illness can by implication be extended to a literary understanding of contemporary British society, and the novel can thus be interpreted not only as a creed of Rousseauistic pedagogy but also as a critique of the psychology, society and politics of British imperialism.

1 Introduction

All great empires leave marks that last long after the political structure proper has disappeared on the horizon of history. Whether it is ancient Rome, Napoleon's France, the Third Reich, or the United States of America in the late 20th,

early 21st century, these realms make their deep imprint on the environment, society, culture and the arts. Scorched ruins and blazing torches remind humanity of the awful potential of Empire for destruction or progress. The fate of any Empire depends on its ability to look beyond itself to the fringes and to rejuvenate itself by absorbing criticism approaching its own antithesis.

The 64 years of Queen Victoria's reign between 1837 and 1901 meant for Great Britain the height of her Empire. Her achievements and failures in this period have been portrayed on paintings, recorded in books, composed in music, and carved in stone. An invincible military and political force, the Victorian British Empire left a legacy pervasive long after its demise. A decade after Queen Victoria died, a British-American writer named Frances Hodgson Burnett published a novel about two ill children who are healed by a mysterious garden. For a keen-eyed scholar, *The Secret Garden* grapples with the problems of an aging Empire, pulsates with the anxiety of Victorian society, and tries to resolve its tensions by offering a pointed, albeit incoherent literary critique of contemporary socio-political structures. In a latently subversive novel infused with anti-imperialism, Frances Hodgson Burnett presents a beautiful story calling attention to the fate of the children of the Empire.

2 Gardening the Empire

2.1 Empire in full bloom

In order to understand the cultural connotations of the actual and metaphorical garden in Frances Hodgson Burnett's novel, one has to briefly survey the history of English gardening in the Late Victorian period and its relationship to British imperialism. Such a look at the social history of gardening in Britain and her colonies will highlight the intricate cultural network in which the movement was embedded and which *The Secret Garden* also cultivated.

Many scholars attribute both the rise of British imperialism to unprecedented heights and the emergence of gardening as a broad-based movement to the Industrial Revolution and the subsequent technological progress. By the late 19th century, British steam, naval transport and modern weaponry had acquired colonies for England in all parts of the world. Nature and the environment were subjects as well as a means in the scramble for Empire: while contemporary commercial geography explained imperialism with "'nature,' fertility or infertil-

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ity," [1] the colonizers modified their new surroundings in the act of claiming and settling it. Alfred Crosby in his *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* defines this process as the physical modification and reworking of the environment through architecture and the development of domestic social elites, cultures and arts such as travel photography, exotic and Orientalist painting, poetry, fiction, music, monumental sculpture and journalism. [2] Besides such far-reaching cultural consequences, strict *ecological imperialism* meant that Europeans used the colonial environment to recreate their old habitat: the new flora and fauna was populated with home species, and architecture underwent the same process. This physical and biological colonization brought diseases to the native species, threats to the environment, redistricting to indigenous settlement patterns, and banishment for the natives. [3]

As the process of British colonization steadily continued, the home society was also experiencing new developments. Overseas markets combined with new technologies resulted in unparalleled prosperity in the Late Victorian period. Among other things, rising living standards meant that former luxury items were becoming common, electricity was available in more households, and more people had free time to spend as they liked. While the upper and some of the middle classes increasingly left their isle for continental travel, the middle and some of the working classes could now afford seaside holidays in England and Wales. [4] But above all, at home or abroad, the British took time to cultivate and admire gardens.

According to David Stuart, the movement of gardening received its social base when the concept gained ground among the English middle classes. The well-established acquired and maintained cottage gardens, while those with modest means either turned their small yards into home gardens or enjoyed strolling in public parks. [5] Part of an international gardening craze, such a "cult

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1. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 272.

2. Quoted in Said, p. 131.

3. Quoted in Said, p. 271.

4. G. M. Trevelyan, *English Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries – Chaucer to Queen Victoria* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1965), pp. 558–561.

5. Pauline Fletcher, "Gardens and Parks," in *Victorian Britain: An Encyclopedia,* ed. Sally Mitchell (New York, London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), p. 320. Also see David Stuart, "Introduction," in *The Garden Triumphant: A Victorian Legacy* (United Kingdom: Viking, 1988); <http://www.cix.co.uk/~swinton/gardtriu.html> (Date of access: 8 March 2003) and

of the garden" not only produced a home market for plants, seeds, magazines, newspapers, and gardening props and tools, but it also resulted in the incorporation of the idea of gardens and gardening into the philosophy of social reform: the noble aim of improving the living conditions of the urban poor brought into life gardening societies throughout England. [6] With the profession becoming important, some gardeners achieved prominence and social status through their work and connections. While the Victorian nouveau rich exhibited their wealth through extravagant gardens, most people followed the trends even if only by reading gardening publications offered in all price ranges. [7]

Such a convergence of imperial expansion and economic and social trends produced a cultural current in both the top echelons and the broad basis of British society. Although the new ecology inaugurated the new government in the colonies, [8] the colonizers were not insensitive to the environment of their dominions. They not only 'exported' their passion for gardening by building gardens in far-away places like Singapore, Calcutta, Hong Kong and Durban, [9] but they also brought to England the specimens of imperial flora. Out of the need to accommodate, care for, and experiment with exotic plants on the British Isles was born the style of *subtropical gardening*.

Subtropical gardening was the prime product of the meeting of British imperialism and the English passion for gardens. Since the style aimed to create the appearance of a tropical garden in a temperate climate, [10] any collection of plants native to the colonies and foreign to England necessarily pointed beyond itself and highlighted the technological, political and material feat of gathering, transporting and nurturing it in the centre of the Empire. [11] It is not by accident that subtropical gardening came to be in vogue first in the 1870s [12] – when the period of *high imperialism* was beginning. [13] The fact that subtropical gardening was

Ian Barclay, "Subtropical Gardening," *Paper for Horticulture* 425 (Spring 2001); <http://www.angelfire.com/bc/eucalyptus/425_5html> (Date of access: 5 March 2003).

6. Stuart.

7. Stuart, see also Robert M. Craig, "Landscape Architecture and Design," in *Victorian Britain: An Encyclopedia*, p. 430.

8. Said, p. 272.

9. Barclay.

10. Barclay.

11. Fletcher, p. 320.

12. Barclay.

13. Said, p. 266.

present in misty Albion in the time of the Romans – themselves masters of a veritable world empire – before being revived in the 19th century also underscores the claim that it was closely connected to imperialism in one form or another. [14]

Tropical plants need shelter and the right temperatures to survive in cooler climates. The invention of the wrought iron glazing bar in 1816 had allowed for the building of glass houses and this supplied English gardeners with the means to accommodate non-native species on the island. [15] The stage was set for imperialist gardening on a large scale. The efforts of British travellers to recreate a colonial paradise were institutionalized with the formation of the Royal Horticultural Society in 1804, and subtropical gardens cropped up all over the milder parts of England. [16] The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, London became the national depository of plant collections in 1840; before assuming the garden's directorship in 1865, Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker had travelled on board *H.M.S. Erebus* to Madeira, the Cape of South Africa and the Antarctic, and also went to northern India and Nepal, all the while sending rare collections to Kew; and his work culminated in the publication of a book with a telling name: *The Flora of British India.* [17] Subtropical gardens were categorized according to the region their plants were native to. [18] The last significant movement in pre-World War II English gardening, the turn-of-the-century Arts and Crafts style advocated a Homeric and Virgilian idyll of rural retirement and expressed patriotic admiration for old English gardens with native flora. [19]

Late Victorians thus cultivated their Empire by tending their gardens. Not only did their exotic and lavish gardens constantly remind visitors and owners that they were part of a vast and glorious kingdom, but they were also a vehicle which fundamentally influenced their thinking about their relationship to life and the world. According to Edward Said, by the turn of the century Empire came to mean "a massive colonial system whose economy, functioning, and his-

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14. Barclay.

15. Barclay.

16. Barclay, Fletcher, p. 320.

17. "History and Heritage," *The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew*; <http://www.rbgkew.org.uk/aboutus/herikew.html> (Date of Access: 3 March 2003).

18. Barclay.

19. Craig, p. 430. See also "Arts and Crafts Style of Garden Design," *Garden Design 1870–1999*; <http://www.gardenvisit.com/t/c5s1.html> (Date of access: 8 March 2003).

tory had acquired the status of a virtual fact of *nature*,"[20] and this 'imperial nature' was fostering sciences and ideologies perpetuating the British monopoly over power and knowledge. As highlighted earlier, European expeditions to remote corners of the world had long served the dual purpose of scientific discovery and political acquisitions.[21] Now the emerging disciplines of botany and anthropology concurred in the importance they both attributed to climate. While botanists attested to the fact that plants were profoundly influenced by weather, aspiring anthropologists spread the notion that climate likewise determined ethnic, racial and national character and abilities.[22] Darwin's work and its alter ego, social Darwinism further strengthened this belief at the centre of which was the (Anglo-Saxon) white man's supremacy.[23] As Said points out, curiosity and thirst for knowledge was essential for imperial expansion: the rationale of ethnography, *get to know them and rule them*, linked the new science very closely to the notion of the Empire.[24]

While subtropical gardens spoke volumes about Britain's general power over other nations and the natural world, prevalent images of the human landscape were also heavily gendered. As late as 1942, the English social historian G. M. Trevelyan wrote of the period, "Europe was the English*man's* playground."[25] In his analysis of Kipling's *Kim*, Edward Said observes that the novel's world of the Empire is a *male* "playing field."[26] Gardens, scholars argue, were the female equivalent of masculine turf: Michael Walters observes that "it is virtually impossible to say anything about the garden in Victorian fiction without reference to the concept of home and the place of women within it."[27] "[A]n extension of the Victorian female sphere," gardening was an accepted way of self-fulfilment for Victorian women.[28] An example for the combination of the image of the gar-

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20. Said, p. 162 (my emphasis).

21. Barclay.

22. Said, p. 182.

23. Clayton Roberts and David Roberts, *A History of England*, Vol. 2 (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985), p. 663.

24. Said, p. 184.

25. Trevelyan, p. 584 (my emphasis).

26. Said, pp. 165–166.

27. Quoted in Anna Krugovoy Silver, "Domesticating Brontë's Moors: Mothering in *The Secret Garden*," *Victorian Studies Journal* 193–200, p. 200; <http://iupjournals.org/victorian/> (Date of access: 4 March 2003).

28. Krugovoy Silver, pp. 193, 195.

den and the nation is John Ruskin's "Of Queens' Gardens" in which he calls on women to transcend their closed gardens and look around in "the larger garden of England." [29]

2.2 "It isn't a quite dead garden"

With its roots in the Late Victorian gardening craze, Frances Hodgson Burnett's novel uses the image of the garden to frame and answer questions about parent-child and master-servant relationships in English society as well as to subversively criticize British imperialism. Burnett's language about the actual Secret Garden can reveal how her work feeds on, but also deviates from, Victorian concepts of the garden as a real and imaginary place.

References to Mary's attitude to gardening are rather telling about contemporary views on the activity. Early on in the novel, Burnett's heroine Mary Lennox makes attempts at creating a garden: in her parents' compound she pretends to make a flower bed by sticking hibiscus flowers into the earth (8), [30] while during her brief stay with the clergyman's family, she again tries to arrange soil and flowers to make a garden patch (14). The early introduction of the theme to the reader suggests that on Mary's part such uninvited attempts at gardening are manifestations of an intuitive quest to achieve harmony in life. It is not only the hot climate and the danger of cholera, however, that thwart her efforts to attain happiness through this activity. Basil's song mocking Mary is an explanation of why she fails much more than a cause of it:

> Mistress Mary, quite contrary,
>   How does your garden grow?
> With silver bells, and cockle shells,
>   And marigolds all in a row.
>
> (14)

A term adopted by Burnett to denote Mary's short temper, the girl's being "contrary" prevents her from building an attractive and fertile garden. As long as Mary remains a "mistress," her garden will not flourish. Along with the heat and the threatening disease, this quality also seems to be peculiar to Indian conditions, and although this judgment is later compromised, Burnett makes the

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29. Quoted in Krugovoy Silver, p. 195.

30. Henceforth, all parenthesized references are to this edition: Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden* (London: Penguin Books, 1995).

problem clear: flowers and children cannot grow in conditions "contrary" to the nature of life and society. What this 'nature' consists in only gradually unfolds in the novel.

The metaphor 'children-are-plants' is carried on in the novel in speculations by various characters about Mary's relationship to her late mother, and the little girl's fate. Mrs. Medlock voices the hope that "[p]erhaps she will improve as she grows older," much like a flower from a seed (16). Mary herself asks a version of the same question when she "wondered what [the secret garden] would look like and whether there were any flowers still alive in it" (35). It is here that Burnett presents the metaphorical thesis of the novel in the form of a question: what chances does Mary, a neglected and sickly child, have for a meaningful life – will she and the garden experience a full bloom?

Mary is taken to England in late winter-early spring, and the weather makes Misselthwaite appear bare and cold (36). Mr. Craven has a large estate which consists of a "queer" and "gloomy" old manor house with a multitude of rooms, antique furniture and strange portraits (19, 25, 54) – a conventional Gothic setting. Misselthwaite Manor has several kitchen gardens and an orchard, all opening into one another and enclosed by walls (36–37). The Misselthwaite gardens do not lack the *formal* axes of gaze other English landscape gardens utilized: their alleys and drives allow visitors to survey the expanse of land and accentuate the power and social status of the owner. [31] By contrast, the *informal* section is screened off and arranged in such a way that the sight of one garden from the other tends to lure and pull the visitor along. [32] In many cases *formal gardens* with axes and *informal gardens* with a circuitous layout were both built on the same estate, but it needs to be pointed out that the labyrinth-like landscape design of *The Secret Garden* suggests a spatial search for a centre and a meaning:

> When [Mary] had passed through the shrubbery gate she found herself in great gardens, with wide lawns and winding walks with clipped borders. There were trees, and flower-beds, and evergreens clipped into strange shapes, and a large pool with an old gray fountain in its midst. . . . This was not the garden which was shut up. . . . She was just thinking this when she

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31. Examples for this are the so-called "avenue vistas" at Kew. Craig, p. 431. For more on the visual and social aspects of 18th and 19th century gardens, see Fletcher, pp. 320–321.

32. Interpretation taken from the tour of Oldfields Gardens (Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana, summer 2002). The professionalization of gardening also resulted in "specialized garden areas within larger gardens" (Craig, pp. 430–431).

saw that, at the end of the path she was following, there seemed to be a long wall, with ivy growing over it. She was not familiar enough with England to know that she was coming upon the kitchen-gardens where the vegetables and fruit were growing. She went toward the wall and found that there was a green door in the ivy, and that it stood open. This was not the closed garden, evidently, and she could go into it.

(35–36)

Thus Mary progresses in space and mind from a formal to an informal place; from an exposed public domain to a sheltered private sphere; and, as it will be explained later, from a strict hierarchy to relatively egalitarian interpersonal relationships. [33]

Mary does find the hidden garden, but whether she can revive it – and find her true self – is not clear at first. The Secret Garden is "still" and "mysterious-looking," the "hazy tangle" of apparently lifeless branches and tendrils form "curtains" on the walls (75–76). This winter landscape is the antithesis of the lush vegetation of subtropical gardens where the Empire is so palpably present; for Mary, this "fairy place" rather invokes the image of the abandoned and overgrown garden in the tale of the Sleeping Beauty (86). It takes more close looking to find that the seeds in the soil are alive and ready to grow (77). "It isn't a quite dead garden," Mary exclaims, and her statement refers not only to the flora, but also to herself, and possibly to the society of the British Empire.

Mary promptly sets to work in the garden and she gradually acquires a helper in the person of Dickon Sowerby. Putting the place in order requires considerable labour, but the attitude of the 'gardeners' is rather peculiar:

> "I wouldn't want to make it look like a gardener's garden, all clipped an' spick an' span, would you? It's nicer like this with things runnin' wild an' swingin' an' catchin' hold of each other."
> "Don't let us make it tidy. It wouldn't seem like a secret garden if it was tidy."

(102)

Instead of untying the knots and straightening the lines, the children do only what is absolutely necessary for the maintenance of the garden, letting nature to do the rest of the work. Thus the 'colonization' of the environment by

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33. Analytical framework taken from Christopher Lindner's "An Introduction to Historical Archaeology" (Course at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York: Spring 2002).

subduing and forcing it to follow preconceived models is replaced by a *laissez faire* attitude, which eliminates all control beyond the bare minimum. In this image of a wild rose garden Burnett compresses the creed of Rousseau about a free and healthy childhood, [34] the Romantic notion of unspoilt nature, and the ideal of female care and charity: "with things *runnin' wild* an' swingin' an' *catchin' hold of each other*" (my emphasis, 102). Indeed, the author goes out of her way to emphasize that instead of forming a controlled, servile space, Mary and Dickon are creating a wild and egalitarian garden: "the lovely wild place was not likely to become a 'gardener's garden' [but] it would be a wilderness of growing things" (155).

Although Mary receives from Mr. Craven "several beautiful books such as Colin had, and two of them were about gardens and were full of pictures" (163), and both children study these guides (189), most of the advice about gardening comes from an authentic source, Dickon (95, 100). This is in keeping with the early introduction of Mary as a child unconsciously searching for harmony through gardening. Her helpers in this quest are also products of nature: the robin belongs to the environment, while Dickon claims he sometimes feels as if he was also an animal (95).

The garden as a wilderness of plants may appear to be egalitarian, but much of the language Burnett uses to characterize it retains impressions of a monarchy. Blooming flowers are in successive passages "royal purple" and yellow (146), purple, orange and gold (148), purple, gold and white (199), again purple, gold, "violet blue," scarlet, white and ruby (275), both purple and gold suggesting imperial colours. Images of monarchy taken from fairy tales strongly resonate with contemporary concepts of the Empire: the blossoming plum tree over Colin's wheelchair is like a fairy king's canopy (201), the boy's ride around the garden "was like being taken in state round the country of a magic king and queen and shown all the mysterious riches it contained" (202), while the old gardener tells Colin to "set [the rose] in the earth thysel' same as th' king does when he goes to a new place" (216). These similes of authority have contradictory functions, but as it will become clear later, they assume a new meaning in the Secret Garden: they signify not power *over* life, but the power *of* life.

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34. Owain Jones, "Tomboy Tales: The Rural, Nature and the Gender of Childhood," *Gender, Place, and Culture* 6/2 (1999) 117–136, p. 121.

3 The disease: cholera and its colonies

3.1 Colonial afternoons

"She only knew that people were ill," Burnett writes of Mary Lennox, the daughter of a British crown official in India who "had always been busy and ill himself" (9, 7). This 'illness' with all its symptoms and consequences as well as the possible ways to cure it, is clearly at the centre of *The Secret Garden*. By mapping up some of the social, cultural and political meanings of the metaphor of cholera and hysterical convulsions, the present section will attempt to reach to the core of the notion and apply Burnett's treatment of the theme to Victorian imperialism.

Michael W. Doyle defines the notion of Empire as "a relationship, formal or informal, in which the state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or political dependence. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire." [35] Edward Said in turn takes this strictly geopolitical description and extends it to include more abstract and elusive fields of life like the realm of psychology, society, identity and culture. For the purposes of this paper, Said's view that imperialism is "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory" [36] is a more useful device, because it orients the inquiry to these aspects of Britain in the age of Empire.

According to William Golant, the Indian subcontinent in the late 19th, early 20th century was a region rife with diseases. In addition to floods caused by the periodic monsoon, a multitude of people lived in a country with an inadequate system of sanitation: refuse rotting in streets and millions of pilgrims polluted the water, which flowed into the Ganges, and the great river carried the filth causing infections. Because there were few water closets and no extensive system for filtering drinking water, food and drink were often contaminated. Infectious diseases inflicting the population included the plague, smallpox, fever, dysentery, diarrhoea, malaria, tuberculoses, venereal diseases, leprosy, trachoma, diphtheria, whooping cough, pneumonia, meningitis and rabies. *Cholera*, which by the late 19th century had been almost completely eradicated in Europe, not

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35. Quoted in Said, p. 8.
36. Said, p. 8.

only persisted in the colony, but its presence earned Calcutta the title of "world headquarters of cholera," and some remote villages worshipped the virus as a bloodthirsty goddess, offering sacrifices to pacify her. In 1900 alone, some 800,000 people died of cholera in British India. [37]

Contemporary theories of how cholera is transmitted mingled unfounded superstitions, educated guesses, and limited scientific research. The cause of the sweeping epidemics, *vibrio cholerae*, was discovered as late as 1883 by the German physician Robert Koch. [38] For much of the 19th century, however, views of the cause and vehicles of the disease were hazy at best. Besides fears that cholera was the wrath of God, was connected to the stars or was the result of supernatural forces, many scientists shared the belief that the illness was caused by bad air generated by rotting organic matter or *miasmata*. [39] Correspondingly, protection against cholera usually took the form of cleansing the household and neutralizing bad smells with camphor and herbs or by smoking. To combat the disease, public authorities conducted campaigns to detect and remove sources of bad smells, while the population hoped to protect themselves by consuming alcohol. [40] An indication of the extent to which Victorian society took diseases seriously[41] can be found in the 1876 edition of *The Scholar's Handbook of Household Management and Cookery*, which advises readers that in living quarters air must be "constantly changed" to remain breathable. [42]

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word *cholera* has been used to denote two different illnesses. Of these, the one already discussed is called *Asiatic*, *epidemic* or *Indian* cholera, and "is characterized by violent vomiting, purging with watery rice-coloured evacuations, severe cramps, and col-

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37. William Golant, *The Long Afternoon: British India 1601–1947* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1976), pp. 47–48.

38. Howard C. Baker, "Cholera," in *Victorian Britain: An Encyclopedia*, p. 149. Also see "Competing Theories of Cholera," *The John Snow Site* <http://www.ph.ucla.edu/epi/snow/choleratheories.html> (Date of access: 7 March 2003).

39. Baker, p. 149. Also see "Competing Theories of Cholera," and "Cholera History," *Supercourse*; <http://www.pitt.edu/~super1/lecture/lec1151> (Date of access: 7 March 2003).

40. "Cholera History," "Competing Theories of Cholera."

41. Baker also points out that cholera was sometimes regarded as an economic and political tool. Baker, p. 149.

42. W. B. Tegetmeier, *The Scholars' Handbook of Household Management and Cookery* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1876), p.78. In *The Victorian Dictionary*, compiled by Lee Jackson; <http://www.victorianlondon.org> (Date of access: 4 March 2003).

lapse, death often occurring in a few hours." The first significant epidemic of Asiatic cholera in Europe and England broke out in the 1830s. [43]

The other cholera, also called "colick" or *cholera infantum*, is "a disorder, attended with bilious diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach-ache, and cramps." Labelled *British* or *English* cholera, this illness visited children during the summer months, and often proved to be fatal. [44]

Victorian children were in fact exposed to a host of actual and imagined diseases. As early as 1725, cholera was described as "a *Convulsive* Motion of the Stomach and Guts," [45] and the term *convulsions* were probably used to classify a large group of disorders parents and physicians were alike uncertain about. Giving an outline of the social history of Victorian children's diseases is beyond the scope and means of this article, but it is necessary to briefly touch on the topic in order to help clarify the cultural background and the functions of illness in *The Secret Garden*.

Published in the 1871, *Cassel's Household Guide* has a section on child-rearing which discusses the most frequent children's sicknesses and advises readers about prevention and treatment. According to the manual, youngsters are susceptible to diseases in general caused by "improper food, by bad air, by cold, and by heat." Many of these illnesses are "affections of [children's] nervous system, such as *convulsions*" which has to do with "the extreme sensitiveness" of the infants' psyche. The author of the *Guide* seems to go out of their way to emphasize that "*fits* imply a morbid sensitiveness, which is often constitutional," but hastily adds that "a child is not always *convulsed* when it is said to be so," a qualification that signals uncertainty and doubts over feigned cases. With regard to the immediate sources of convulsions, the booklet lists as diverse causes as too much food, teething, diarrhoea, bad air, and worms. Accordingly, the *Guide* claims that fits can be prevented in general "[b]y good food, by pure air, by plenty of sleep, and regular living on the part of the parent." [46]

Why are the notion of cholera and convulsions important to the understanding of Victorian society and Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Gar-*

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43. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, eds., *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), Vol. III, p. 157.

44. *OED*, Vol. III, p. 157.

45. Quoted in *OED*, Vol. III, p. 157 (my emphasis).

46. *Cassell's Household Guide, New and Revised Edition* (London, 1871), p. 83 (my emphasis). In *The Victorian Dictionary*. Date of original publication from Michael M. Clarke, "Advice Manuals," in *Victorian Britain: An Encyclopedia*, p. 7.

den? This paper will argue that, at least in the novel, similarly to female hysteria, both *cholera* and *convulsions* can be interpreted not only as actual pathological disorders, but as manifestations of tensions arising from the power-relations of imperialism and child-adult relationships. [47] Mary's illness and Colin's fears of premature death both stem from parental neglect, and may be understood as a symptom of the faults of the socio-political power structure of the Victorian British Empire. To make a convincing case for such a reading of *The Secret Garden*, this paper will now turn to look at the caste system in British Indian society, and Victorian views of discipline in child-rearing.

While naval power and trade were certainly instrumental in the acquisition of the British colonies, Noel Annan's observation that stable imperial rule in India depended on the social conventions forcing individuals to obey the system [48] highlights an important aspect of imperialism, namely the extent to which political hierarchy can be embedded in a given society. Edward Said asserts that the love-hate relationship of Britain and India was the product of the interaction of two hierarchical societies, both of which saw in the stratification of the other something similar to their own. [49] It is this contact between English class and Indian caste, as well as the tensions rising from the colonial hierarchy, which is the key to interpreting the theme of illness in Burnett's book.

The British rulers of India may have imagined it as an idyllic society based on deference, but they also experienced a great deal of anxiety about the stability of their hold over the subcontinent. While Jane Brown's term for the products of the Late Victorian Arts and Crafts landscape design movement, "the gardens of a golden afternoon" [50] invokes images of peace and leisure, the title of William Golant's book on the history of British rule in India, *The Long Afternoon* suggests a gradual eclipse of imperial power. Behind this serene picture lay doubts and nightmares about what might happen should the tables be turned.

Much of the social unease was suppressed by denigrating "the Indian race." [51] The white masters quelled their fears from rebellion by depicting their native subjects as they are portrayed in Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. Here indigenous

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47. About the psychosomatic and social aspects of some illnesses in the Victorian era see Rosa Lynn Pinkus, "Health," in *Victorian Britain: An Encyclopedia*, p. 355.
48. Quoted in Said, p. 186.
49. Said, p. 187.
50. Quoted in "Arts and Crafts Style of Garden Design."
51. Golant, p. 22.

characters are almost exclusively products of the climate: untruthful, illogical, lazy, and lacking moral steadfastness. [52] Another expression of imperial apprehensions was a concern with the weather and various diseases: "[s]ensing danger, both real and symbolic, proper English ladies protected themselves from 'the harsh Indian light,' remained behind drawn curtains during the day, rode in the sun wrapped from head to toe and crowned by large umbrellas." [53] The perceived gap between Victorian 'refinement' and Indian 'primitiveness' has prompted William Golant to remark that "[t]he British presence in India was engulfed in *miasma*." [54] Metaphors from climatology, temperament and humour, and Victorian epidemiology all helped to frame and make palatable the sometimes violent and often precarious colonial power structure. Golant's keen observations highlight the dynamics of this political and social pathology:

> Dislike of the Indian people [by the English] was a corollary of feeling 'out of place' in India. Home was not here but in a land far away. The unending conversations about 'foul weather' were symptomatic of deeper discontents with immediate surroundings. Unable to have a natural rapport with the Indian world around them, the Raj had to rely on its own small community to reiterate the values of England, though this might only be a memory of people and places. Ultimately, Indians could be blamed as the cause of their misery, for India 'called' them and alienated them. 'Here we stand on the face of the broad earth, a scanty pale-faced band in the midst of three hundred millions of unfriendly vassals.' [55]

The abusive excesses of the ruling Raj, [56] including the frequent beating of Indian servants, can be thus explained by the need for "some form of psychological relief which reassured the master of his superiority." [57] According to Clayton and David Roberts, "hard, insensitive, and too exacting" morality created "in the Victorians a streak of cruelty dramatic in the case of flogging and fifty-round, bare-knuckled prize fights, coldly quiet in the severe rules in the workhouse, the repressive codes of the family, and men's insensitivity toward women," [58] but

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52. Said, p. 182. For the role of evolutionary anthropology in colonial rule, see David K. Van Keuren, "Race," in *Victorian Britain: An Encyclopedia*, p. 658.
53. Golant, p. 23.
54. Golant, p. 23 (my emphasis).
55. Golant, p. 22.
56. Said, p. 185.
57. Golant, p. 24.
58. Roberts and Roberts, pp. 628–629.

surprisingly enough, they forget to add that such expressions of frustration were at least as widespread in the British colonies as they were in Merry England. At the same time, colonial servant-master relationships had another remarkable quality:

> In one sense the Englishman's life in India induced a return to childhood, a time of fears when a person is dependent on others and insignificant. The average English household had eight servants, with the family dog having a servant of its own, while the school-age child had a 'boy' to carry his satchel. [59]

Golant goes as far as to assert that British Indian society experienced the infantile repressed sexual desires of the colonizers towards exotic "Mother India." [60] Substantiating such a psychoanalytic view of colonial culture falls beyond the scope of this paper. The child-like uncertainty of the Raj, who by Charles Trevelyan were dubbed the "Platonic *Guardians*" of India, [61] is nevertheless central to the understanding of child-adult relationships as portrayed in *The Secret Garden*.

If the colonial power structure was fraught with trepidation about submission and non-compliance, the Late Victorian home society was likewise concerned about discipline, albeit in another field: child-rearing. Mothers, the "appointed *guardian*[s]" of babies, were in charge of instilling in them obedience to parents. [62] Victorian morals demanded that children be kept under control as much as – if not much more – natives in the imperial colonies. While the latter used metaphors of the family to achieve a harmonious social order, discipline in child-rearing was sometimes conceptualized in terms of master-servant relationships: giving youngsters all they want was thought to be wrong because "[b]y thus inverting the order of things, and making themselves instead of their rulers, slaves to their children, [parents] create a double misery – neither themselves nor the children are happy." [63]

Apparently, the metaphor 'master-servant' was prevalent enough to be used to frame and permeate the most intimate of circles: family life. Although upper and middle-class children were cared for in nurseries and schools and had toys,

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59. Golant, p. 22.
60. Golant, p. 23.
61. Quoted in Trevelyan, p. 131 (my emphasis).
62. "Moral Influence – Obedience," *Cassell's Household Guide, New and Revised Edition* (London, 1871), p. 38 (my emphasis).
63. "Moral Influence – Obedience," p. 38.

governesses, nurses, housemaids and cooks, the young of the working class were perceived to be largely unattended when not in school. [64] The overall concern with obedience is apparent in a mother's journal entry published in 1896:

> I find in giving any order to a child it is always better not to look to see if he obeys, but to take it for granted it will be done. If one appears to doubt the obedience, there is occasion given for the child to hesitate. 'Shall I do it or no?' If you seem not to question the possibility of non-compliance, he feels a trust committed to him to keep and fulfils it. It is best never to repeat a command, never to answer the oft-asked question 'why?' [65]

The connection between family and imperial discipline is not apparent at first sight, and it is useful to conclude by a review of the elements of this link. Here Julia Briggs' summary of Late Victorian portrayals of the figure of the child provides a keen insight into the interaction of science, politics, literature and society, clarifying some of the child characters of Dickens, Kipling, and indeed, Frances Hodgson Burnett. According to Briggs,

> As childhood came to be seen as a state distinct from and potentially opposed to being 'grown-up,' so it came to be figured as 'other,' with all the idealization, horror, and projection that such a status implies. ... [T]he theological doctrine of original sin came to be replaced by scientific theories of evolution which represented the child as biologically, intellectually, or socially primitive. Children were 'savages,' awaiting the education that would transform them into civilized adults. The children of the poor ... were referred to as 'street arabs,' that is, alien and homeless wanderers who shared with the criminal classes 'degenerate' elements. And as such theories of origin began to take hold, the concept of 'recapitulation' became popular, the idea that childhood was a process during which different stages of animal or human development were progressively transcended, eventually reaching the evolutionary summit of fully formed adulthood. The uninhibited high spirits of childhood were equated with those of supposedly 'primitive' societies, and progress towards socialization was identified with progress towards civilization. Both the family and the extended family of empire required to be ruled with a mixture of kindness, firmness, and self-confidence. [66]

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64. Trevelyan, p. 562.

65. Augustus Hare, *The Story of My Life* (1896). No pagination. In *The Victorian Dictionary*.

66. Peter Hunt, ed., *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 168–169. After permeating ethnography in the 1870s, Dar-

3.2 Fury in the garden

Among its many connotations, the term *choleric* designates a person who is "[i]nclined to wrath, irascible, hot-tempered, passionate, fiery: these being the characteristics of the choleric 'complexion' or temperament." [67] This social sense of a word otherwise denoting medical categories is what much of *The Secret Garden* utilizes. Accordingly, what follows is an examination of the manifestations of this convulsive social pathology in the novel with a special emphasis on Mary's illness and her experiences in and memories of India.

Charting reflections of history and society in American film adaptations of *The Secret Garden*, Julaine Gillispie aptly points out that because of its Gothic elements the novel lends itself for cinematographic dramatization, and she also observes that the 1949 Metro Goldwyn Mayer version directed by Fred M. Wilcox expresses post-war social anxieties. [68] Interestingly enough, most scholars only highlight the cryptic setting and themes introduced *after* Mary arrives in Misselthwaite. Looked at from the angle of imperialism, it becomes clear that the darkest and most disheartening episode is in fact the first major scene of Burnett's work: Mary's abandonment in the compound can be interpreted as the worst nightmare of colonial rulers.

"When Mary Lennox was sent to Misselthwaite Manor to live with her uncle everybody said she was the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen" (7). With this opening, the author not only attracts the reader's attention, but she also establishes the central problem she later explicitly formulates. Mary's thin body, yellow hair and face, and unattractive expression are the results of her being born in India and of her recurring illness. The daughter of a "busy and ill" father serving an apparently "busy and ill" Empire, and of a mother only caring about being celebrated at parties, Mary is raised "out of sight as much as possible" by an Indian Ayah, who "always obeyed her and gave her her own way in everything, because the Mem Sahib would be angry if she was disturbed by her crying" (7–8).

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win's ideas also filtered into the psychology of childhood from the 1880s. Michael Shortland, "Psychology," in *Victorian Britain: An Encyclopedia*, p. 648.

67. *OED*, Vol. III, p. 157.

68. Julaine Gillispie, "American Film Adaptations of *The Secret Garden*: Reflections of Sociological and Historical Change," *Victorian Studies Journal.* 132–146, pp. 133, 134 <http://iupjournals.org/victorian/> (Date of access: 4 March 2003).

Burnett's heroine has thus been alienated from her parents who gave her out to be raised in the arms of strangers, the Others. Mary's utter selfishness, insensitivity and lack of affection are direct consequences of this situation, as is the onset of the *cholera* epidemic which threatens a *choleric* child infected by the colonial master-servant hierarchy: "[B]y the time she was six years old [Mary] was as tyrannical and selfish a little pig as ever lived," chasing away English nurses and terrorizing the native servants. A sign of the extent to which the little girl has already identified with the imperial socio-political structure is the fact that, albeit through narration, she calls her own mother "Mem Sahib" (9). For a 21st-century reader imbued with Western notions of equality, this hint that Mary has already settled in a conqueror-conquered relationship is more chilling than any dark secret of Gothic Misselthwaite. A subsequent mention that as a punishment for some perceived fault, the child calls her Ayah a pig because she knows such an epithet is culturally charged (8)[69] confirms that in typical colonizer-fashion Mary has mastered just enough of the native Indian ethos to make her aggression understood.

In accordance with contemporary imagination, Burnett portrays India as a place where climate profoundly influences people. "One frightfully hot morning . . . [Mary] awakened feeling very cross" (8), her irritation obviously stemming from the weather. Later references to her Indian environment, although gradually becoming infrequent and rather shallow, include two instances of the sentence repeated almost word-for-word: "[i]n India she had always felt hot and too languid to care much about anything" (47, 67). The abandonment episode is introduced by dark premonitions – "There was something mysterious in the air that morning" – and hints of chaos – "Nothing was done in its regular order" – the latter of which again conjuring a nightmarish vision of colonial anarchy for a society obsessed with decency and deference (8).

Following the scene where the Mem Sahib's fatal vanity is revealed comes a period of menacing lull. Awaiting her fate in the nursery, Mary is upset about neither her mother nor her Ayah, because she never loved either (11). More than frightened, the child is angry that no servants come to attend to her, a behaviour atypical of children but rather characteristic of leaders or monarchs whose authority is being eclipsed.

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69. As Islam forbids contact with pigs and the consumption of pork, Mary's native nurse was probably meant to be Muslim.

"When people had the cholera it seemed that they remembered nothing but themselves. But if everyone had got well again, surely someone would remember and come to look for her" (11), Mary ponders, and on a more abstract level her thoughts are a diagnosis of imperialist socio-politics communicated through the perspective of a child. Mary, herself inflicted with the same pathological self-centeredness of which cholera is only a metaphorical symptom, unconsciously wonders whether the British Empire will ever notice how it is causing its own decay by maintaining a rule founded on submission and fear, and a society based on deference.

If such a verdict is unnerving, the next event is deeply upsetting. Two British officers enter the house in search of survivors, and Mary overhears their conversation. "I heard there was a child though no one ever saw her," one of them says, unaware that the little girl is just a few doors away (11). The ensuing several-minute pause constitutes the lowest point of Burnett's novel: the officer's remark puts into doubt the very existence of Mary, the fertility of her parents who represent the white colonial elite, and questions the productivity and continuity of the British Empire. All these hang in the balance as the soldiers ponder about how to proceed with the search. On their next step depends not only the dramaturgy of *The Secret Garden*, but also whether their whole realm and culture can be rescued from the impending cholera. This Conradian scene of the 'imperial Gothic' by far surpasses all of the later horrors produced by the 'native' genre in Frances Hodgson Burnett's novel.

"[T]he child no one ever saw" (12) is rescued, but she has a long way to go until she is healed of her illness. The officer's answer to her query "[t]here's nobody left to come" (12), clearly refers not only to the immediate situation, but also to the inhospitable 'climate' of colonial society as a whole: in order to have a chance to be cured, Mary must leave British India for good.

The heroine's short sojourn with an English clergyman's family while still in the sub-continent does not leave pleasant memories. Of her foster parents and siblings Mary expects servile obedience (13), and her attitude prevents her both from forming healthy relationships and achieving harmony through building a garden. Subsequently, both the clergyman and his wife and Mrs. Medlock speculate how the child of a beautiful woman can be such an ugly creature (15–16), really posing a question about the impressive appearance and nasty underbelly of the Empire. Mary in turn wonders why she never meets people who would love her (17), a sign that she in fact craves for positive emotions.

Crave, she does. So do her uncle and cousin she is headed to meet in England. The names of Archibald *Craven* and his son *Colin* can be easily seen as telling about their *craving* and *calling* for love and harmony. Interestingly enough, the person who will help them restore health and peace of mind will be a little colonial girl who herself suffers from the same disease of neglect. This neglect is likewise present in British India and the gloomy Misselthwaite Manor, the master of which orders his servants to cater for Mary in a room out of sight to "make sure that he's not disturbed and that he doesn't see what he doesn't want to see" (26).

Mary's first real 'culture shock' is generated by her encounter with Martha Sowerby. A highly ambiguous character, Martha not only does not conform to the child's expectations of how servants should behave, but conversing about India, the only place Mary knows, she deeply upsets the child: after voicing the view that colonial society is servile because there are so many blacks "instead o' respectable white people," Martha admits that she thought Mary too was black, like most Indians (30). Here Burnett's writing is clever and her psychology is credible: by turning contemporary stereotypes and imperialist apologies against the heroine (and perhaps the reader!), the servant causes Mary's bitter breakdown over eroding notions of black service and white mastery.

Old habits are hard to die, and Mary's attitude is slow to change. Recurring fits of imperialistic choleric temper, possessiveness, stubbornness and pride punctuate the gravity of her illness (96–97, 110, 138, 164). Burnett's phrasing in passages like "[s]he knew she felt contrary again, and obstinate, and she did not care at all. She was *imperious* and *Indian*, and at the same time hot and sorrowful" (97) is deliberate and as explicit as such writing can get about the downside of the contemporary socio-political landscape.

The frequent references to servant-master relationships in *The Secret Garden* constitute the core of the novel's anti-imperialistic streak. In connection with Mary, Burnett refers to British-Indian interpersonal relations at least seven times (17, 28, 32, 41, 53, 135, 157). While Mr. Craven is mostly characterized *in absentia*, the author does not fail to drive home the point that the estrangement of Colin's father has to do not only with the death of his wife, but also with his being around (non-English) servants "accustomed . . . to accepting without question any strange thing [their] foreign master might do" (267). Of special interest, however, are Colin Craven's interactions with manorial domestics.

If Mary can be regarded as a key to the enigmatic illness of the British Empire, Colin's character is another figure constituting an intricate network of mysteries. For one, the boy himself *is* a secret, hidden by his father who shuns him not to be reminded of his late wife (120). Archibald Craven suppresses his affection for his son because inside he fears that Colin will go the way of his mother. Secondly, Mary's cousin himself *has* a secret: he knows that people believe he will not live to grow up (125). What results from this double burden on Colin is his refusal to live a full life combined with an aversion of death: the boy voluntarily keeps to his room (121). It is perhaps not an impermissible stretch of analysis to read adult attitudes toward Colin as foreboding later views of an Empire in decline.

Considering his heavily repressed psychology, it is no wonder that Colin Craven has a *convulsive* temper. "It makes me ill to be angry," the boy explains his tantrums (122), and this rationalization of violent fits is fully in keeping with an imperialist ideology blaming native subjects' disobedience for any aggression perpetrated by the colonizers. Colin's behaviour is accordingly given metaphoric lenses by Mary, the 'Indian' child when she tells him about the Indian Rajah and his servants (135). It is important to point out that this imaginary ruler is not the *white Raj* but a "young *native* Prince" with "a small *dark* hand" (my emphasis, 181) – this 'nativization' of imperial power structure being necessary to take away the edge of Burnett's sharp social criticism.

"As [Mary] listened to the sobbing scream she did not wonder that people were so frightened that they gave [Colin] his own way in everything rather than hear them" (163). A reformed Mary unconsciously reflects Victorian views of child-rearing, as does Colin's nurse when she asserts that "[h]ysterics and temper are half what ails him" (160). On one level, the tantrums of a child-master to his adult-servants constitute emotional blackmail, while on another plane they are the mental cholera plaguing this projection of colonizer-colonized / ruler-subjects relationship onto the rapport between child and adult. To be sure, Mary tells Colin off by echoing the opinion of the nurse and contemporary society: "You can [stop]! Half that ails you is hysterics and temper – just hysterics – hysterics – hysterics!" (165), although what *cures* the boy will involve more than a simple diagnosis. In subsequent passages, the healing process of Colin will make the appearances of his Rajah-persona increasingly stylized and weightless (180–181, 182, 186, 194, 227). Burnett also takes pains to show the boy's unstable 'rule' from the servants' point of view, who, as opposed to the narrator's stock designation "Master Colin," mockingly call him "His Royal Highness" (192, 195, 197).

4 The cure

4.1 Children's gardens

Writing about the history of England, Clayton and David Roberts term the period between 1873 and 1914 "an age of crisis." Among the reasons for such a designation are a slowing British economy, escalating conflicts in the labour market, and the appalling gap between rich and poor.[70] In many cases, Late Victorians conceptualized these crises and the solutions for them in terms of their relationship to nature.

According to G. M. Trevelyan, American competition in a market created by free trade doctrines facilitated the collapse of British agriculture and alienated the home society from land and nature.[71] With the number and importance of agricultural workers dramatically decreasing,[72] former farm workers flocked to the cities, and the separation of urban segments from the countryside only intensified.[73] At the same time, a number of authors had started exposing in detail the conditions and lifestyle of the cities' poor in the 1880s,[74] significantly influencing public opinion by awakening the conscience of a society preoccupied with sanitation and moral purity in the first place.

If the British lower classes were impacted by economic inequalities, the Empire's intelligentsia also faced crises in science and ideology. Charles Darwin's 1859 book *On the Origin of Species* had revolutionized the natural sciences but it was also steadily undermining religious beliefs.[75] To be sure, reading of the Bible and family prayers were common until the end of the 19th century, but "[i]n literature and thought [this] was a period of quasi-religious movement away from religion."[76] The spread of agnosticism was only a manifestation of a process in which the truth and principles of the early Victorian era were giving way to doubt and free inquiry.[77]

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70. Roberts and Roberts, p. 668.

71. Trevelyan, p. 553.

72. Jane Darcy, "The Representation of Nature in *The Wind in the Willows* and *The Secret Garden*," *Victorian Studies Journal* 211–221; <http://iupjournals.org/victorian/> (Date of access: 4 March 2003), p. 212.

73. Trevelyan, pp. 554, 579.

74. Roberts and Roberts, pp. 674, 678.

75. Roberts and Roberts, p. 611, Trevelyan, pp. 551, 565.

76. Trevelyan, pp. 564, 565.

77. Trevelyan, pp. 551, 563.

The perceived and actual dilemmas received different answers from different quarters of British society. As G. M. Trevelyan points out, Late Victorians social reform reacted to, rather than anticipated, emerging problems. [78] While in 1883 a group of literati established the Fabian Society to achieve a "democratic, peaceful, gradualist, and pragmatic socialism," [79] both the celebrated art critic John Ruskin and the influential thinker John Stuart Mill urged a more equal distribution of wealth. [80] Besides advocating women's suffrage, the latter with novelist George Eliot believed that Christ's example communicated the message that religion consisted in leading a humane life. [81]

While social engineers were pushing for practical measures, much of the intellectual and art community conceived of the situation in terms of an idyllic nature versus a corrupt civilization. According to this widespread view, humans have strayed from a pure and healthy nature and have surrounded themselves with the physical and spiritual filth of the city. G. M. Trevelyan, a social historian writing during World War Two, still referred to the agricultural lifestyle of pre-Victorian ages as an environment in which "the mind and character of ploughmen and craftsmen were formed by the *influences of nature*." [82] The concept of society's return to and reconnection with nature – and this golden age – permeated the social planning and art of the period.

Gardening societies for the alleviation of the misery of the poor have already been mentioned; with them the garden as a space assumed a role in Victorian social reform. Surveying the institutions caring for the children of London, Thomas Archer recommends "a '*kinder-garten*' school-of a place where the infant life is made bright and genial, and instruction is like a pleasant round game, carried on with zest and ardent gaiety." Such nurseries have "swings and hoops and a *flower-bed*" that provide an opportunity to play and enjoy nature. [83] In his exhortation, Archer laments the present bleak conditions, but also envisions a bright future:

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78. Trevelyan, pp. 556–557.

79. Roberts and Roberts, p. 680.

80. Trevelyan, pp. 557–558.

81. Trevelyan, p. 558, Roberts and Roberts, p. 622.

82. Trevelyan, p. 582 (my emphasis).

83. Thomas Archer, *Terrible Sights of London and Labours of Love in the Midst of Them* (London: Stanley Rivers and Co., 1870), pp. 45–46 (my emphasis). In *The Victorian Dictionary*.

[B]ut we have not yet learnt to be liberal enough of space and air. We are too much afraid of profaning the name of 'learning' by making it easy and pleasant; we have certain theories about 'hard work,' which bind us to certain mouldy old scholastic fetishes that oppress the child-life, and make the class-room with its dim walls and frouzy windows, still more gloomy. Happy will it be for us, and for that rising generation of Somebody's children which is to form the future men and women of England, when we ourselves have learnt the lesson of a mud-pie, and practically remember that child's play is man's work. [84]

The *kinder-garten*, literally meaning 'children's garden,' was taken up as an actual and metaphoric solution for British problems both by society and the arts. The concept of 'natural' childhood was popular, and the British countryside was considered an idyllic setting for infancy: with its outdoors, fresh air, green spaces and minimal adult supervision, it seemed to provide a harmonious symbolic and real space for growth. [85] Rousseau's *Emile*, first published in 1762, was still affecting the literary picture of the child in England more than a century later, making many believe that the naturally innocent infant ought to be protected from the corrupting influence of civilization. [86] Growing up in the countryside was thought to endow the children of the Empire with "a purified identity of rural childhood," [87] and it dispelled fears "of children becoming in some ways 'knowing' beyond their years." [88] As Julia Briggs observes, "the child occupied an Eden before the fall that was puberty. The proper place of the child was in the lost playground – an Arcadia not yet touched by mortality, a past not yet burdened by the guilts of adult sexuality . . ." [89]

In English literature and the British popular mind, the countryside was also a place of physical and psychological healing. [90] According to Edward Said, imaginary experiences of revival by contact with nature already had precursors in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* and Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady* [91] before Rudyard Kipling depicted in *Kim* what literary critic J. M. Tompkins calls

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84. Archer, p. 46.
85. Jones, pp. 117–118.
86. Jones, p. 121.
87. Colin Ward quoted in Jones, p. 119.
88. Jones, p. 121.
89. Hunt, p. 167.
90. Jones, p. 120.
91. Said, p. 173.

the "theme of healing." [92] Here Kim's encounter with "Mother Earth" "restores India to health," and Said sees in the hero's awakening from a healing slumber a re-conquest of the subcontinent by Britain. [93] In his *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*, Neil Smith expands on the ideas of Hegel, Marx and Lukács when he argues that if the imperial world is "second nature," anti-imperialism must search for a "third nature," a nature "not pristine and pre-historical . . . but deriving from the deprivations of the present." [94] Whether Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* indeed offers such a nature is yet to be seen.

4.2 A Kind of Magic

Several scholars of Burnett's oeuvre have noted the author's talent for non-confrontational criticism. Her biographer Ann Thwaite points out that the young Burnett questioned conventional views on marriage, smoking and religion, and that she supported her family by writing, a career still rather unusual for Late Victorian and Edwardian women. [95] Phyllis Bixler observes that in her writing the novelist "often expressed anger at male domination and suggested a more equitable balance between the two sexes" and "shared with late-nineteenth-century feminist novelists an exaltation of female virtue and power." [96] Even John Rowe Townsend acknowledges that the values of *The Secret Garden*, independence and teamwork, radically deviate from Victorian ideals of submission and obedience, adding that the novel's value system is "potentially subversive." [97]

Yet Burnett mostly refrained from openly challenging contemporary power structures. Julaine Gillispie maintains that "[d]espite her feminist stance, Burnett understandably and shrewdly (given her era, goals, and breadwinner status) masqueraded behind an 'ultrafeminine romantic public image that gained her economic and social independence.' " [98] Interpreting the shift of focus from Mary to Colin in *The Secret Garden*, feminist critic Lissa Paul concludes that "Burnett

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92. Quoted in Said, p. 169.
93. Said, pp. 174, 190.
94. Quoted in Said, p. 272.
95. Quoted in Gillispie, p. 134.
96. Quoted in Gillispie, p. 134.
97. John Rowe Townsend, *Written for Children: An Outline of English-Language Children's Literature* (London: The Bodley Head, 1990), p. 66.
98. Gillispie, p. 134.

ends the story in accordance with the social and economic truths and values of her particular time and place." [99] These views are in accordance with the analysis put forth by the present paper, namely that *The Secret Garden*'s depiction of master-servant and child-adult relationships constitutes a latently subversive criticism of British imperialism.

Burnett's streak of veiled dissent can be tracked by examining her careful portrayal of the healing process in *The Secret Garden*. The author's treatment of religion, equality, evolutionism, and 'the Gothic secret' all constitute elements of anti-imperialism.

Of the group of characters communicating a healing egalitarianism, the first to be encountered by the heroine is Martha Sowerby. While it is possible to be seen merely as dysfunctional characterization, the remarkable ambiguity of Martha's figure may in fact be an instance of Burnett's disguised criticism. The author first introduces Martha as the antithesis of Indian servants:

> Mary listened to her with a grave, puzzled expression. The native servants she had been used to in India were not in the least like this. They were obsequious and servile and did not presume to talk to their masters as if they were equals. They made salaams and called them 'protector of the poor' and names of that sort. Indian servants were commanded to do things, not asked. It was not the custom to say 'please' and 'thank you' and Mary had always slapped her Ayah in the face when she was angry. She wondered a little what this girl would do if one slapped her in the face. She was a round, rosy, good-natured-looking creature, but she had a sturdy way which made Mistress Mary wonder if she might not even slap back – if the person who slapped her was only a little girl.
>
> (28)

By connecting Martha's *healthy* appearance with the notion of *reciprocity* (returning a hypothetical blow), Burnett creates a pervasive atmosphere of restorative equality. It is Martha herself, however, who compromises this egalitarianism when she acknowledges that she is unusual. She is too "common" and speaks Yorkshire, the local dialect, instead of standard English. Martha claims that she was hired as a personal maid because of the frequent absence of the lord: "[s]eems like there's neither Master nor Mistress except Mr. Pitcher and Mrs. Medlock." (29). The maid's apology is deliberately ambiguous: Martha can

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99. Quoted in Gillispie, p. 133.

indeed be seen as deviantly egalitarian, but she can also be considered a figure representing a redemptive force. By confirming and questioning the socio-political structure at the same time, Burnett makes sure to maintain a way out for herself and her writing.

While Martha's behaviour and messages are certainly contradictory, the role of the Yorkshire vernacular in *The Secret Garden* is somewhat less ambiguous. At first reading, one cannot help but associate the dialect with the English of the King James Bible, even though all the native characters insist that it is 'common.' At the same time, the "Yorkshire habit" of "blunt frankness" in speech (41) is contrasted with the Indian "custom" of servitude (32) and its contrived formulae of communication seen above (28). The Yorkshire of Misselthwaite Manor is clearly the language of love, belonging, nature and equality (30–31, 215), and Mary and Colin as impressionable children acquire it in the course of the healing process (173–174, 201). Mary's subsequent remarks on the use of Yorkshire being similar to that of an Indian dialect – clever people learn the local language to win over the natives (181, 105) – are not so much a memory as an imperialist prescription.

The character of Martha's brother Dickon is another example of the author's use of complex portrayal. From very early on, the boy is held up as a model for Mary – and a curious model for that. Dickon, whose name suggests Christianity (*deacon*), turns out to be a Pan-like figure, a free spirit of the Yorkshire moors (35, 42, 51, 79, 92–94, 106). For his part, Colin is convinced that Martha's brother is an animal charmer, and he has power over the other characters because *humans are animals* (144, 222), and the boy himself acknowledges a kinship with wild beasts (95). Thus in Dickon's person converge traditional religion, a pagan nature-cult, and upstart evolutionism.

To be sure, Christianity wins out in the end. Burnett feeds the reader hints long before she explicitly formulates a creed: the theme of the forbidden garden harkens back to the Bible (35), while Dickon's and Mary's "exaltation" (102, 156) and Colin's suggestion that spring is like a great procession (196–197) all utilize religious imagery. The most pointed treatment of the theme, however, takes place with the mystic sessions in the garden, where the characters evoke the power of Magic by chanting in a circle (225–226, 238). Here, even though he reminds Ben that they are "not in church" (227), Colin appears like a solemn priest, he likens the setting to a temple while the gardener sees it as a "prayer meeting," and Dickon's pets take part in it as "'creatures'" (225–226). Burnett

herself experimented with various cults including Christian Science and spiritualism, and infused her novel with a concept of a "Life Force" (66). Again, the author makes sure that her characters return to conventional Christianity by singing the Doxology (255) – even though Mrs. Sowerby reminds them that what matters is not the language but the expression of praise to God, "th' Joy Maker" (259).

"I am your guardian," Mr. Archibald Craven tells Mary when they meet for the first time (112), conjuring the image of a colonizer adult man asserting control over a passive female child. By the end of the novel, the figure of the *guardian*, this icon of hierarchical and gendered power gives way to a new, more egalitarian and independent understanding of the role of the *gardener*. "When you see a bit of earth you want, take it, child, and make it come alive" (113) is Mary's metaphorical mission, which consists in *reviving*, not *conquering*, the Secret Garden, and through it her own self. But before she can complete this mission, she has to face the Gothic secret of Misselthwaite Manor.

Frances Hodgson Burnett's book abounds in secrets. The author is constantly presenting, reinterpreting and re-presenting the Gothic theme of mystery. From portraying Mary Lennox as a neglected child hidden away not to bother her parents, the novel moves to showing the parallel secrets of the long lost garden and the mysterious crying from some far corner of the house, and the appearance of Colin's character brings a new twist to the reader's understanding of what a secret may consist in.

Colin, it is revealed, has been sequestered at the order of his father, who cannot stand seeing him, because he reminds him of his late wife (120) – the same motivation that served as a reason for the closing of the rose garden (35). The son of a hunchback father (19), Colin is widely believed to be a cripple who will not live to grow up, and the knowledge of this lack of faith in his vitality is *his* terrible secret (125), as is a curtained portrait of his late mother in his room (128). The cripple hidden in some dark nook of a stately house and the likeness of an ancestor are certainly Gothic elements, and here they are complemented with the image of the tree with the broken branch in the blooming garden (203–204). Reminding the characters of the departed Mrs. Craven, the latter can be interpreted as Poe's combination of beauty and death,[100] while Colin's contradictory views on his own fate constitute the theme of premature death.

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100. Quoted in Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature.* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 141.

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Laureen Tedesco in her review of Lois Keith's *Take Up Thy Bed & Walk: Death, Disability, and Cure in Classic Fiction for Girls* agrees that Late Victorian views routinely located the cause as well as the cure of illnesses and disabilities *within* the patient. A symbol of passage from infancy to adulthood for girls, disability was seen as a punishment for behaving badly, having evil thoughts or not being good enough, and it could be cured by self-respect and faith in one's self and God. [101] Accordingly, Colin needs to believe that he can become healthy, he needs to have the *will* to live. [102] Once the boy's thirst and curiosity for life is restored, he feels that he will live forever (199). Interestingly, Burnett decides to keep the children's healing process clandestine as well: Colin first abandons his own dark secret for the mystery of the garden (125); then he chooses to make Mary's visits a secret (128); and finally he forbids others to let on to the servants anything about his convalescence (210, 214, 228). Such a delay of gratification is rather uncharacteristic of children, therefore it is likely an authorial device used to prolong the special experience of seemingly forbidden, but nevertheless righteous pleasure.

It is precisely this transformation of a dark enigma to the secret of joy that makes Burnett's novel so enduring in its popularity. After Mary re-enacts her own culture shock on Colin by examining his back for non-existing lumps (166–167) "by almost brutal methods," [103] the children spend more and more time in the hidden garden, and Colin's will to live is restored. Confronted with the view that he is an invalid unable to walk, the boy stands up (209), which makes it evident that his health is returning. Burnett nevertheless makes her characters continue their clandestine activities, now keeping a *secret* that is the *sacred* Magic of life. Although she presents several morals to the story including Mrs. Sowerby's common sense pedagogy "th' two worst things as can happen to a child is never to have his own way – or always to have it" (171), and the narrator's rather lengthy sermon on the power of thoughts and will (261–266), what is more in accordance with her streak of ambiguous social criticism is Dickon's depiction of the central characters: "Us'd be just two children watchin' a garden

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101. Laureen Tedesco, Review of *Take Up Thy Bed & Walk: Death, Disability, and Cure in Classic Fiction for Girls* by Lois Keith, *Victorian Studies Journal* 395–396; <http://iupjournals.org/victorian/> (Date of access: 4 March 2003).

102. Tedesco, p. 396.

103. Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard, *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 473.

grow, an' he'd be another. Two lads an' a little lass just lookin' on at the springtime. I warrant it'd be better than doctor's stuff" (153).

Dickon's message is that of a child consciously trying to be a child, and it reflects on many of the contemporary models of infants and child-rearing. The Rousseauistic image of children playing in and looking at untroubled nature shows the long forgotten real self behind the Empire's Gothic secret, its troubled façade and its crippled and bile-infected power structure. The Secret Garden is England's wild, beautiful youth, full of life, living free and in equality, and healing the wounds of a choleric imperialism. Seen by some scholars as a reaffirmation of contemporary views on man's power over nature,[104] Colin's subsequent personae of "the Athlete, the Lecturer, [and] the Scientific Discoverer" (275) are but the hopes and dreams of a *healthy* child lured by the romance of the adult world. The least a critical appraisal of Burnett's work can say is that it makes a case for a sheltered and carefree childhood, in which children should be allowed to follow Voltaire's advice from *Candide*: "il faut cultiver notre jardin."[105] The most *The Secret Garden* could give to contemporary readers is a pause to think about the fate of their children – the children of the Empire.

5 Conclusion

By drawing on disciplines as diverse as British social and intellectual history, postcolonial literary theory, the history of epidemiology, landscape architecture and gardening, and general Victorian Studies, this paper attempted to give an anti-imperialist reading of Frances Hodgson Burnett's children's classic *The Secret Garden*. A book with ambiguous and sometimes contradictory messages, Burnett's 1911 novel remains a reservoir of Victorian and imperialist notions about power structures in society and politics, coding the symptoms of, and offering possible cures for, the anxieties of Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain.

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104. Darcy, p. 217.
105. Hunt, p. 168.

Tamás Juhász

"A Pinch of Romance in the Commercial Kitchen"

Tropes of transformation in *Lord Jim*

This paper argues that the theme of colonial trade has been both suppressed and used as narratologically vital material in Conrad's story. The analysis focuses mainly on the second, for many aesthetically flawed part of the novel, and demonstrates that the "free and wandering" Patusan tale is a logical and inevitable reproduction of the commercial dynamics from where Jim departed with the cancellation of his certificate. This reproductive process is shown to have an impact on both the plot and the language of the novel. Jim's behaviour in Patusan is determined by various exchange mechanisms, during which his objective is to be recognized as a blameless man in return for his political services to the local native community. Languagewise, the tropes of the conversion and transformation (implicit in any process of trade), psychological renewal, or ethical improvement, are identified as symbol and allegory. It is through the interplay between these two rhetorical figures that Conrad exposes colonial dominance, forced trade and the limitations of personal reformation.

The theme of contractuality receives a representation in Conrad's fourth novel, *Lord Jim*, only comparable to *Nostromo* in its complexity. In the latter, the exploration of deals and exchanges is carried out with regard to community formation, and marks, in its historical scope, a transition from archetypal forms of giving and taking to modern trade. Jim's story progresses in the reverse direction and returns, through the young hero's seeming abandonment of contemporary Western values and attitudes, to a mixture of tribal and piratical transactual practices. By mediating the main events through Marlow and attaching much narrative interest to the figures of Stein and several native characters, the text maintains a large, interculturally based scope of investigation. At the same time, Jim as a character is not as fleeting a phenomenon as Nostromo. Though his

figure is systematically distanced and hardly any direct psychological details are given, the narrative focus hardly ever departs from him. This combination of broad social mapping and a consistent, close concentration on the central figure allows the author to treat the issue of contractuality on a variety of levels which include the possibility of an ethical approach (Jim has violated a moral code when he abandoned the sleeping pilgrims on board the *Patna*), an institutional aspect (this act has also violated the code of conduct specifically established for members of the British merchant marine), a racial problematic (Jim turns out to be unfaithful both to his white and to his aboriginal communities) and a sexual subplot (as predicted, he eventually abandons Jewel).

These are, of course, not the only contexts in which the text can be read. Conrad's narrative language and a proliferation of thematic issues with their respective imageries lead to a certain obliteration of the otherwise powerful substructure of exchange. Many critical works demonstrate how the novel's moral, psychological or stylistic concerns are strategically orchestrated at the expense of a clandestine, and by definition commerce-oriented colonial theme. For their authors, the presentations of capitalism take place in an "impressionistic," [1] those of imperialism in a "romantic," [2] and those of racism in a "latent" [3] manner. Whereas most of these authors discuss the effects of colonization in more general terms of linguistic and ideological incongruities, their attention consistently reverts to direct or indirect representations of trade. Mark Conroy, for example, appropriately claims that the "[The] commercial skein is . . . woven in *Lord Jim*, but in a peculiar way: as something to be defined, ignored, willed out of existence." [4] Jameson's statement that certain "strategies of containment" transform the underlying realities of the story into style and therefore "narrative commodity" [5] stems from the assumption that the ultimate reality to form the text was the processes of commodification and industrialization Conrad experienced. In an essay on dialogism, Gail Fincham suggests the means by which the "commercial skein" is exorcised. His statement that "the 'real' world of the Brit-

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1. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 208.

2. Padmini Mongia, "Narrative Strategy and Imperialism in Conrad's *Lord Jim*," *Studies in the Novel* 24 (1992), p. 179.

3. Gail Fincham, "The Dialogism of *Lord Jim*," *The Conradian* 22:1 (1997), p. 77.

4. Mark Conroy, *Modernism and Authority: Strategies of Legitimation in Flaubert and Conrad* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. 107.

5. Jameson, p. 213.

ish merchant marine and of trade and commerce on the one hand, and the fictional or dream-world of heroic self-fulfillment on the other" establish "narratologically incompatible but socially supporting contexts" [6] treats, if briefly, the relevance of a romantic plot and rhetoric for the suppressed presence of colonial trade. In the following paper, I will continue to examine the co-existence of the two paradigms and discuss the role of exchange in *Lord Jim* as formative narrative dynamism in the text.

One of the first things the reader can observe about the textual coexistence of the two "socially supporting" paradigms is their rhetorical complementarity. The figures of "romance" and "commerce" are consistently placed within the same context, and as a result, both the first narrator and Marlow's most romantic propositions are pervaded by a business-oriented vocabulary. Jim's problems arise with his failure to receive his "*reward*" (50) for his competent work. Being physically as well as mentally elevated by the foretop, he often "looked down with the contempt of a man destined to shine in the midst of dangers," but what he sees is the sobering reality of "factory chimneys . . . against a grimy sky" (47). His "inner *worth*" (50) remains an open question, and the hours just before the catastrophe on board the *Patna* give him the deceptive sense of "everlasting *security*," where even the beaming moon reminds him of "a bar of *gold*" (55). Logically, it will be a board of "*assessors*" (84) who find him guilty after his desertion. His new identity as water-clerk continues to feed upon the same duality of uniqueness and repeatability: he is simultaneously described as "beautiful" and "scarce," and as a model work force who is "*worth* to his employer a lot of *money*" (46). Though his occupation is "[in]capable of being *invested* with a spark of glamour" (153), his "fidelity" and "unselfish devotion" raise him to the level of a romantic businessman, who will enter the secluded world of Patusan via a "*transaction* perfectly valid and regular" (225). Having solidified his position in the new territory, he relates the moments when he felt he was "capable of anything" to the ones when he realized he was "equal to his fortune" (248). Even when surveying the "peace of the evening" and the "everlasting life of the forests" (225–26) in moments of "immobility" (224), Jim will look "with an *owner's* eye," (225) and consider "the fabulous *value* of the *bargain*" (226). For the defiant hero, to overcome fear is a form of "*enterprise* you rush into while you dream" (276). His love for Cornelius's daughter has led him call her "Jewel," "in the sense of a precious *gem*" (248), and as he is aware how much he "*owe*[s] to her"

6. Fincham, p. 74.

(248), the couple is reported to "*exchange* vows" (273) about the impossibility of Jim's return. [7]

The close co-existence of the two imageries and their occurrence in practically all registers of the text assigns a special significance to Marlow and Jim's simultaneous characterization as "romantic[s]" and traders. It suggests that the economic dimension involves much more than the high number of explicit transactional motifs. The fact that the "commercial skein" is transcoded into the realm of language shows that it is to be "defined" exactly at the points where it is (thematically or otherwise) "ignored" or "willed out of existence." As the following examples will reveal, the combination of the two textual aspects is usually associated with an almost cannibalistic need for incorporation and containment. When, exactly at the beginning of his transition to the Patusan section, Marlow talks about Stein's use of "a pinch of romance [in the] commercial kitchen" (204), he finds a metaphor of seasoning, admixing and altering to aptly express the coalescence of two, fundamentally different imageries and substructures. The spice motif is appropriate. It is this condiment, rather than anything else, which has the capacity of changing the overall nature of a given dish. A pinch of romance will make Stein's "fattening dishes" more acceptable, and the combination suggests a difference between unseasoned food as representing forceful acquisition, and dishes of some of culinary sophistication as representing a similarly imperial intrusion with a civilizatory pretext behind it. The narrative positioning of the cooking metaphor gives support to this distinction. The sentence is preceded by an image of butterfly-hunting which, just like the colonial presence, is just as much derivable from a form of idealism as from the then unrestricted exploitation of natural resources. Correspondingly, the sentence after the "pinch of romance" part reverts to the worlds of *Heart of Darkness* and *Nostromo* to claim, ironically, that artificial light was carried into the wilderness "for the sake of better morality and – and – well – the greater profit too." This is Marlow's hesitation, but only one paragraph later, his listeners are also encouraged to be wary of any, suspiciously harmonious tasting colonial dish. In a famous, often-discussed passage, Patusan is described as a place of "fissure," "cleavage," as a "ravine," and a "chasm" (205). Although the narrative figure of unrelatedness has, convincingly, been shown to stand for Jim's split personal-

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7. All italics in this paragraph are mine.

ity, [8] its proximity to the corresponding tension between the surprising ingredients of Stein's recipe invites attention to the way romance and commerce shape the text of *Lord Jim* in concert.

Symbolism and colonial presence

Buttressed by more references to actual trading than any other Conradian narrative, the novel is also rich in business-related words with hardly any relevance for directly represented commerce. Such items belong as much to Jim as to Marlow, who, for example, compares the return to the "disembodied, eternal, and unchangeable spirit" of his native England to the act of "going to render an account" (206). Here and elsewhere, romantic phraseology is filtered through Conrad's special vision on giving, taking, and being entangled in some ubiquitous financial metaphor. The significance of the vision may be dismissed by simply putting it down to the author's predilection for tropes that inhibited both the English language and his own lived experiences, yet it is precisely the interpretive act of identifying these words and phrases as metaphors that will result in a better understanding of *Lord Jim*. In other words, the high number of metaphorical constructions that bind the worlds of "romance" and "commerce" is more meaningful if approached through their internal logic. This is the logic of interchangeability, which I will try to demonstrate through the following passage about Jim, fresh owner of Patusan.

> And there I was with him, high in the sunshine on the top of that historical hill of his. He dominated the forest, the secular gloom, the old mankind. He was like a figure set up on a pedestal, to represent in his persistent youth the power, and perhaps the virtues, of races that never grow old, that have emerged from the gloom. I don't know why he should always have appeared to me symbolic. Perhaps this is the real cause of my interest in his fate. (238)

The concept of interchangeability has formed this passage in a variety of ways. First, it presents and discusses instances of identification which involves a flow of presence between two positions. Marlow resorts to a diction that exercises its appeal for identification through its rhythmic syntax and avoidance of proper

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8. Dorothy Van Ghent, "On Lord Jim," in Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*. A Norton Critical Edition, ed. Norman Sherry and Thomas Moser (New York: W. W. Norton and Company), p. 383.

names. It is dictated partly by Marlow's own nostalgia, partly by his familiarity with the "light holiday literature" (47) that nurtured Jim's imagination. The effect of such narratives on the youth is obvious inasmuch as it provides the attractively deceptive, Lacanian dimension of his self-perception. Second, Jim is a figure of interchangeability because he stands for the values and organization of a given community. Notwithstanding all the strength associated with him, power is clearly not his personal attribute. His domineering figure is passively "set up on a pedestal" simply to "represent" the might of his native civilization, and even his virtues are alluded to, ironically but appropriately, only as a possibility in the word "perhaps." Third, the pronounced replaceability or interchangeability of his figure is supported by a statement about how such representations can come into being. Marlow identifies the "symbolic" aspect of Jim's existence as the "real cause of [his] *interest*" (my italics), and where the word "symbolic" – itself a form of "poetic interchange" [9] that consists in the equivalence of "image" and "concept" [10] – refers to the way the hero encapsulates the essence of Western civilization, the financial connotation of the term "interest" provides the heroic dimension with its motivating background. Therefore Jim is at his most romantic when he is at his most colonial. His figure is associated not only with a sense of replaceability inherent in exotic "holiday literature," but with the sense of interchangeability that is implicit in any process of commodification, sales or financial conversion.

The relevance of this conceptual background is that it presents linguistic representations and commercial presence as natural, unproblematic events and attempts, at the same time, to express colonial superiority with an equally straight face. As the passage just quoted and most other symbolical-metaphorical utterances are indicative of white man's intrusion into non-white societies, they exemplify what Abdul R. JanMohamed calls "imaginary" [11] or "manichean" [12] texts. Such narratives tend to achieve, in the true symbolist fash-

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9. Anna Balakian, *The Symbolist Movement: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: New York University Press, 1977), p. 10.

10. J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 941.

11. Abdul R. JanMohamed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," in *"Race," Writing and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 84.

12. JanMohamed, p. 90.

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ion, a sense of homogeneity by "coalesc[ing] the signifier with the signified," [13] but not for the sake of a Baudelairean poetic-spiritual adventure in hidden correspondences. Even at its most profound form, the portrayal of the "magical essence" of a given region is supposed to declare that "there can be no meeting ground, no identity, between the social, historical creatures of Europe and the metaphysical alterity" of a given exotic territory, because the "opposition between the self and the native" is "non-dialectical, fixed." [14] Hence the particular immobility of the above passage. The lure of territorial conquest and appealing subject positions is offered, but only for the colonizer, only on the special ground of a "pedestal." The writer of this text is, of course, not Conrad – or not entirely. It is Marlow and Jim who co-author the "imaginary," i.e. colonial texture of the overall narrative, and the further the narration drifts from what may be conceived as the taciturn young hero's primary text (a flattering narrative about himself, or, in Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan's words, his "identifiction" [15]), the more ironically and critically exposed this body of representations become. So when Marlow claims that Jim appeared to him "symbolic," the word can designate not only the fact that he saw him as standing for something else, but also that he sees him as someone absorbed in a particular self-centred and narcissistic vision.

The earlier cited passage about Jim's proud presence on "that historical hill of his" reveals two more characteristics of the narrators' symbolizing tendency. Both have implications for the interaction of romance and commerce. Here as elsewhere in the novel, Conrad associates metaphorical equations with a spatial organization that is hardly balanced or all-encompassing, but carries a suppressive quality. Symbolization happens in an oppressive space. First, a consistent spatial interest is maintained, because the "miracles of co-presence" [16] result in "non-temporal, non-sectarian, non-geographic and non-material" [17] expression which can therefore serve as isolated Jim's remedy for an event that took place in a given location, at a definite point of time and was then condemned by a specific community. In harmony with the official inquiry's need for "some essen-

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13. JanMohamed, p. 84.

14. JanMohamed, p. 84.

15. Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan, *Joseph Conrad and the Modern Temper* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 40.

16. Murray Krieger, " 'A Waking Dream': The Symbolic Alternative to Allegory," in *Allegory, Myth and Symbol*, ed. Morton W. Bloomfield (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 4.

17. Balakian, p. 10.

tial disclosure" (111), he can expect the "root of the matter" (268) to acquit him. As Paul de Man puts it, in the "world of the symbol" the "relationship [between substance and its representation] is one of simultaneity"[18] and this is precisely what he needs. "[T]he deceptive spatialization of elements" offer him "the romantic reassertion of his (momentary) power to overwhelm his temporal destiny." Through the articulation of his moral crisis in spatial terms he, Marlow and Marlow's listeners can continue to believe in the permanence and unity of his self. "I jumped; but . . . [i]t was their doing" (134), goes the errant white man's defensive utterances, whose purpose is to suggest a still unblemished layer of his self, which even the deepest rift between action and intention will not shake. Though admittedly influenced by fellow officers with whom he originally refused to associate, this segment of his self is presumed to be still intact, temporarily invisible, and capable of carrying the potentials for the recuperation of the whole personality. Correspondingly, much of early definitive Conrad criticism has attempted to establish Jim's real self. Dorothy Van Ghent's[19] association of the latent features of Jim's personality with its natural ambiance is the discursive reinforcement of the narrators' postulation of facades that simultaneously intimate and distort hidden essences. Albert J. Guerard elaborates on representations of the "*real* Jim"[20] through a traditional metaphor of self-identity, the hero's hatlessness, to embrace a similar concept of the text. So does Gustav Morf who, seeing Jim as a projection of Conrad himself, emphasizes the link between what is "eminently autobiographical and symbolical"[21] in the novel.

   This rhetorical tendency is supplemented by Conrad's preference for figural elements to express vertical repression and forceful penetration. This is the movement that Marlow elects to land his protégé in Patusan: "Neither Stein nor I had a clear conception of what might be on the other side when we, *metaphorically speaking*, took him up and *hove him over the wall* with scant ceremony" (212, my italics). With the initial difficulties overcome on the other side, Jim "was received, *in a manner of speaking, into the heart of community*" (233, my italics). Such explicit statements communicate with less metaphorical, neverthe-

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18. Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 207.

19. Van Ghent, pp. 376–389.

20. Albert J. Guerard, "*Lord Jim*," in Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*, A Norton Critical Edition, ed. Norman Sherry and Thomas Moser (New York: W.W. Norton and Company), p. 397.

21. Gustav Morf, "*Lord Jim*," in Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*, A Norton Critical Edition, ed. Norman Sherry and Thomas Moser (New York: W.W. Norton and Company), p. 365.

less equally potent images of weight, dominance and suppression. They include mentions of Jim's physical strength ("he looked generally fit to demolish a wall" 95), his invulnerability ("the image of his safety" 172), and the exposure of his defiant whiteness to darkness ("white from head to foot . . . persistently visible in the stronghold of the night at his back, the sea at his feet" 291), or conversely, to the tropical sun ("in a strong light, dominating" 172). To compensate for his jump off the ship and thereby for the loss of his professional worth in the Western world, Jim daringly jumps off the stockade in Patusan to successfully, if only provisionally, recreate his social standing. Accordingly, the beginning and the ending of the Patusan story are framed by images of penetration and descent. Having been received (as Conrad warns, strictly metaphorically) "into the heart of community," Jim will depart from his hosts with a "shot . . . through the chest" (351).

Such instances of the relatedness of symbolic phrases to asymmetrical and oppressive configurations support JanMohamed's claim that "the 'imaginary' text[s] are structured by . . . aggression." [22] Though these examples were not, on an immediate sentence level, related to the world of trade, they – together with the earlier cited instances of the complementarity between romance and commerce – suggest that symbolism in Conrad's colonial romance is deployed for reasons of its ideological congeniality with a particular, forceful form of commerce. The basic communicative process in the novel centres on the expected subjugation of the natives and the colonizer's personal reward, and for this reason, its rhetorical representation tends to operate through words and tropes that achieve, on an aesthetic level, the comparable effect of suppression and dominance. In his discussion of the manichean character of colonial texts, JanMohamed himself uses the economic concept of "exchange-value" to explain that the "imperialist is not fixated on specific images or stereotypes of the Other but rather on the affective benefits proffered by the manichean" trope which, "with its highly efficient exchange mechanism, permits various kinds of rapid transformations." [23] In view of the strong symbolism of *Lord Jim*, it is no accident that the text is, both thematically and structurally, heavily shaped by practices of forced trade.

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22. JanMohamed, p. 84.
23. JanMohamed, p. 87.

Jim as trader

A typical "romancing" passage from Chapter 22 positions, through its anticipatory function, the romantic character of Jim as a trading figure.

> The conquest of love, honour, men's confidence – the pride of it, the power of it, are fit materials for a heroic tale; only our minds are struck by the externals of such a success, and to Jim's successes there were no externals. Thirty miles of forest shut it off from the sight of an indifferent world, and the noise of the white surf along the coast overpowered the voice of fame. The stream of civilisation, as if divided on a headland a hundred miles north of Patusan, branches east and south-east, leaving its plains and valleys, its old trees and its old mankind, neglected and isolated, such as an insignificant and crumbling islet between the two branches of a mighty, devouring stream. You find the name of the country pretty often in collections of old voyages. The seventeenth-century traders went there for pepper, because the passion for pepper seemed to burn like a flame of love in the breast of Dutch and English adventurers about the time of James the First. Where wouldn't they go for pepper! For a bag of pepper they would cut each other's throats without hesitation, and would forswear their souls, of which they were so careful otherwise: the bizarre obstinacy of that desire made them defy death in a thousand shapes – the unknown seas, the loathsome and strange diseases; wounds, captivity, hunger, pestilence, and despair. It made them great! By heavens! It made them heroic; and it made them pathetic too in their craving for trade with the inflexible death levying its toll on young and old. It seems impossible to believe that mere greed could hold men to such a steadfastness of purpose, to such a blind persistence in endeavour and sacrifice. And indeed those who adventured their persons and lives risked all they had for a slender reward. They left their bones to lie bleaching on distant shores, so that wealth might flow to the living at home. To us, their less tried successors, they appear magnified, not as agents of trade, but as instruments of recorded destiny, pushing out into the unknown in obedience to an inward voice, to an impulse beating in the blood, to a dream of the future. They were wonderful; and it must be owned they were ready for the wonderful. They recorded it complacently in their sufferings, in the aspect of the seas, in the customs of strange nations, in the glory of splendid rulers. (209–10)

Though retrospective in historical terms, the wording as well as the position of the passage is in accordance with the urgency and relevance of the commercial theme in the novel's present time. It supports, in a romantic and generalizing

sweep, what Marlow suspected, adequately, about the lost innocence of the seemingly paradisiacal Patusan: "once before" it "had been used as a grave for some sin, transgression, or misfortune" (204). Although the immediate context of the statement appears to refer to Stein's private life, the German collector's identity as a "merchant," and the earlier claim that the place was known only to very few "in the mercantile world" makes it clear that this transgression in question is not limited to personal affairs, rather, it has to do with the transactions conducted in the area.

But the real interest of the above passage is not so much the positioning of Patusan in the arena of imperial commerce, but the intimate attaching of Jim himself to the same realm. Conrad's designation of him as a character embodying and enacting the institution of forced trade may not be immediately available, for his general gentility, lack of financial interest, and his occupation of a "trading post where there was no trade" (216) are difficult to equate with the savagery and greed of the seventeenth-century traders. Yet, as earlier, a sense of equivalence is suggested through tropical correspondences between the imperial pirates and Tuan Jim. The likeness is first intimated by the underlying similarity of the two situations. Both are distanced as raw materials for their respective representations, where Jim, "as unflinching as a hero in a book" is still under the spell of his youthful readings and the old traders also appear by now as characters from certain "heroic tales." Though the former's life is initially "barren of adventure" (50), he and the real "adventurer" of earlier times conduct and end their lives under comparable circumstances. There is no change, for example, in the dangers inherent in their missions. Patusan, where "utter insecurity for life and property was the normal condition" (210) is metaphorically the same location as where "inflexible death [was] levying its toll on young and old." As Jim's main complaint is that the "reward [of the daily task] eluded him" (50), so his predecessors had to be content with but a "slender reward." The question of compensation is mooted, but only indirectly in both cases. As the "magnificent vagueness in . . . expectations," a "beautiful greed of [mere] adventures" and the "subjugation" to an "illusion . . . wide of reality" (137) are the real motors of such mercantile enterprises in the fictional present, it seems "impossible to believe that mere greed could hold" Jim's professional ancestors " to such a steadfastness of purpose, to such a blind persistence in endeavour and sacrifice."

Whereas these correspondences are limited to the congeniality of trade now and then in general, several verbs and adjectives indicate that the agent in the

modern version is, on a metaphorical level, Jim himself. In the claims that the first explorers of Patusan were "great," that their calling made them "appear magnified" for posterity, the reader can easily recognize the young ruler's repeatedly stated height, physical strength, and desired greatness of soul. His colonial intrusion into the jungle is a matter of "impulsive unreflective desertion [to] the unknown" (212), and the same quality of obsessed spontaneity is recognized in the description of how the first white intruders were "pushing out into the unknown in obedience to an inward voice, to an impulse beating in the blood, to a dream of the future" (210). Yet in both cases, it is a dream governed by Thanatos. The dreamers leave their "bleaching" bones behind, therefore their condensed whiteness will anticipate all the light, the "white speck" (291) that often stands for Jim's figure in the novel. Moreover, Marlow claims the two parties to have been equally unaware of the limitations of their projects. Where Jim believed he could start with a "clean slate" (179) because his "destiny [was] not graven in imperishable characters upon the face of a rock" (179), his predecessors also failed to recognize that one day they would appear to their "less tried successors . . . as instruments of a recorded destiny."

How the "chequered intercourse" (210) between the early traders and the local population went exactly is not related, but the images of passion and throat-cutting suggest a precise enough idea. The colonial savagery is, as usual, distanced and transposed into a romance told by Marlow. But even his refined sensibilities reveal – against his own bias, as it were – that forceful interaction continues. Although he registers that "glory has departed" and "the country seems to drop gradually out of the trade" (210), his projection of Jim into those bygone days reinforces the sense of colonial domination. With the ensuing mention of an "uncertain and beggarly revenue extorted from a miserable population" by the "imbecile youth" of a Sultan, Jim's figure assumes even more of the ever-present trader's qualities. For his new position as Tuan Jim is in fact a replica of the poor ruler's. It emerges as the result of his toppling of the Sultan's satellites, the incomprehensibility of many of his actions is congenial with the monarch's mental isolation, and finally, in Jim's self-appointed relative Gentleman Brown one can recognize a structural analogy of the many uncles so eager to appropriate their nephew's acquisitions.

But what is Jim's version of an "uncertain and beggarly revenue" in a place where, once again, "there was no trade" (212)? Obviously it is nothing as substantial as pepper. In accordance with the other parts of the novel, the recurring

business terminology and the featuring of diverse social services and awards cast, quite unmistakably, idealist Jim in the classical merchant role. He becomes a trader not only as Stein's agent or a former representative of the British merchant marine, but also as a private individual who is desperate to *redeem* his one-time folly of jumping ship. When explaining why he opted to face all legal consequences of his desertion of the *Patna*, he claims that the "proper thing" was to "wait for another chance" (140) and "something in the nature of an opportunity" (190). Marlow defines this as a possibility superior to "mere . . . opportunities to earn his bread" (190), yet the difference between material and immaterial, financial and non-financial collapses, because the opportunity which haunts Jim's imagination is one where he is acknowledged as a blameless man in return for quite real, practical and political services to the native Patusan community. The successful and cultivated Stein sends his protégé to Patusan because he himself "had a notion of paying off . . . [an] old debt he had never forgotten" (212). The young adventurer himself realizes that his descent into the non-white world was just the "chance he had been dreaming of" (212), even though the new location was first but a "refuge at the cost of danger" (212). His obsession with the concept of opportunity will attend on all his actions. In pre-capitalist Patusan, "a magnificent chance" (220) "ran by his side" (228), but the very figurality of the statement evokes, undesirably, the time when he worked as "runner" (181) with the piratical purpose of "nab[bing] a ship for the firm" (185) of Egström & Blake. Alternately and in accordance with an ancient transactional model, opportunity sat "veiled by his side like an Eastern bride waiting to be uncovered by the hand of the master" (222–23).

The imbalance inherent in this last image is informative of what kind of trader Jim, product of the "mercantile marine" (47), eventually becomes. A seemingly natural ally of the Bugis who "had been extremely anxious to pay off old scores" (244) themselves, he will unwittingly but not accidentally abuse this people's "unbounded confidence" (245) in him and end up, instead of "mastering his fate" (245), mastering the Bugis. The location appears to have been prepared for the process. The Malay population, where the "majority" were "slaves and humble dependents" (211), fails to recognize that the white warlord is in fact a more refined and exotic version of the Rajah Allang who has forced them into slavery. The Rajah, whose cultivation of commerce was "indistinguishable from the commonest forms of robbery" (233), "pretended to be the only trader in his country" (232) and had people "killed or tortured for the crime of trading with

anybody else but himself" (232). The idea of monopoly as well as its particular articulation will be echoed when Marlow's conservative listener identifies Jim as someone who had "no dealings but with himself" (293). But the Rajah is not the only corresponding figure of abusive power to place the newcomer in an unflattering context. On Jim's first appearance, the instincts of the Patusan natives serves them right even if they are technically inaccurate about the white adventurer's national identity. "Were the Dutch coming to take the country?" (229), they ask, and the "revolver of the Navy pattern" (211) resting in Jim's lap renders their error insignificant. He has the gun, he will seize control of the locals' lives and, eventually, embrace a job of armed supervisor analogous to the indignantly refused position on Chester's guano island. [24] Favourable as his initial economic and political achievements are, his ultimate goal is not the natives' welfare, but what he has irretrievably lost in his European ambience, the "recognition from the Other." [25] The exotic, non-white territory of Patusan is a particularly apt field for this restoration process. Jim's skills and power enable him to "compel the Other's recognition" (85), a fact that JanMohamed appropriately sees as "amount[ing] to the European's narcissistic self-recognition." [26]

There are now sufficient examples to claim that the novel's symbolism and the depicted practices of forced colonial trade are structurally congenial, and both are to be conceived of in terms of "fullness." In a rhetorical sense, "fullness" means a "full utterance" (208), which has the linguistic power to seamlessly and exclusively signify some hidden essence, whereas the commercial sense of the word designates the forceful imposition of economic monopolies on a non-Western population. Conrad's narrative is characterized by a singularly high degree of interplay between the two aspects of plenitude. Whether reflecting on how the story can be related or how political-commercial positions can be established, Marlow's and Jim's discourses are informed by a ready blurring of boundaries between disparate entities. But this eradication of limits is not the result of a successful cultural synthesis or complete embracement of the myth of primitivism. Rather, it is produced by a conscious mental and ideological effort. In Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan's words, "Jim cannot fully surrender himself to the terms of his own fiction" in the exotic land where the "poetic or metaphoric is the

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24. Conroy, p. 109.
25. JanMohamed, p. 85.
26. JanMohamed, p. 85.

culturally ascendant language," as a result of which his "heroic virtues" cannot become "immanent and immutable qualities." [27] The same is true for Marlow. As another combined storyteller and trader, he alternately reduces and safeguards the distance between elements that originally stand apart in his inventory of literary materials. Apart from his consistent reliance on rhetorical figures to achieve effects of homogeneity and coalescence, he imposes himself, with a notably long narrative, on a non-questioning audience [28] and forcefully incorporates Jim into his own ranks and files as being "one of us."

The disparity between formal figures of penetration, oneness and homogeneous inclusion on the one hand, and ideological difference between whites and non-whites on the other, has decisive bearing on the result of Jim's enterprise. Although his "proud and unflinching glance" in the moment of dying makes Marlow conclude that perhaps "he had beheld the face of that opportunity which, like an Eastern bride, had come veiled to his side," the wording is strictly hypothetical, where Jim's "extraordinary success" (351) with the communal disaster in the background is, if not charged with much irony, at most sadly private. In the eyes of the Patusan natives Jim has certainly failed, and the reasons for his failure are inherent in the linguistic aspect of his essentially colonial project.

For it is remarkable that Jim, not particularly harassed by legal or material consequences, is bent upon offering his political services to eliminate a case which has by then no other existence than verbal. Powerless in the situation where water was leaking into the *Patna*, he does now his utmost to prevent the story of his desertion from leaking out. The monopolistic manner in which the Tuan acts among his subjects is in fact a replica of the seamlessness with which he tries to repress the verbal dissemination of an "irrepressible" (154) story. Yet the "demon . . . whispering advice" (329) to Brown reveals all but poorly concealed points of leakage, and a "profound and terrifying logic" in the "last events" (295) discloses Jim's paradoxical ideal of linguistic and political services.

This ideal is paradoxical because it is governed by two contradictory impulses. Driven by a Lacanian, masterful fixation on his self-image, Jim can only create an alternative world by transposing his narcissism into the realm of political and economic institutions. His redistribution of the market and establishment of colonial supremacy are imperialistic variants of his need to extort

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27. Erdinast-Vulcan, p. 43.

28. Aaron Fogel, *Coercion To Speak: Conrad's Poetics of Dialogue* (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 19.

personal acknowledgment from the Other. But by expecting "unbounded confidence" (245) and admiration for all the benefits that issue from his rule, the logic in Jim's self-saving and self-transforming strategy reaches a point of impasse. For it is through the intended suppression of repetition that he, against his own will and interest, invites repetition. This unwanted situation arises in three distinct phases. First, the white visitor is presented as a remarkably silent man in his new environment. His silence stands for his reluctance to reveal his true identity, and Doramin's shrewd wife quickly diagnoses that he is running away from something. A man of actions rather than words, he launches his partly real, partly fictional commercial project with great efficiency. Remorseful, he is interested in the structural setup for a spiritual reform and conversion, but only to the extent to which an economic-secular system of convertibility allows him to improve. Though the scheme actually liberates the Bugis, the breaking of the Rajah's trading monopoly is only a spin-off, for the ultimately sought-for acquisition is the native's trust. In the second phase, the silent man develops into an initiator and sustainer of what Aaron Fogel calls a typical Conradian "forced dialogue." [29] His Western "democratic vision" (112) makes him offer favourable enough rates of exchange to the local population, yet it soon turns out that his interest in the interchangeability and free interaction of words and acts is limited. Having placed himself outside Western discourses, he is eager to ward off the intrusion of the spontaneous verbal interaction (or free exchange of words) that would logically accompany his project of a free market. In other words, he is interested in the concept of interchangeability, but only on his own terms.

As this process of exclusion and suppression becomes more than a mere wish and results in turmoil of political activity to have his own personal debt "paid off," his political and commercial practice will inevitably recoil on him. Upon the pressing invitation implicitly issued by Jim's personal reproduction of imperial domination, the appearance of Gentleman Brown & Co. is hardly an accident. Brown was "distinguished . . . from his brother ruffians" (303) by the scale and the support of his operations. His aristocratic family background, his crew of runaway whalers and the casual mention of how, in his heyday, his murderous enterprises were "financed on the quiet by a most respectable firm of copra merchants" (303) render him a nightmarish visitation from colonizing countries in power. Having suggested the likeness of Jim and the ancient traders of romantic tales at an earlier point, Conrad adds Brown to the same pedigree:

29. Aaron Fogel, p. 12.

where the first white adventurers "would cut each other's throats without hesitation" "[f]or a bag of pepper" (209), the "latter-day buccaneer" (303) will bully the world (304) for a "bag of silver dollars" (305).

Allegory and the limitations of the symbolic-colonial vision

A closer look at Jim's idea of interchangeability may be helpful in the understanding of his ultimate failure. As argued, his and Marlow's concept of transposable equals was grounded in two fields, that of symbolic correspondences and that of commercial activities. Both models were placed in the service of suppressing free interaction. In terms of trade it meant the establishment of colonial monopolies, whereas in terms of narrative discourse it meant the dominance of an essentially immobile, spatially organized imagery that was supposed to freeze in linguistic subversion, irony and unwanted correspondences or repetition. It seems only appropriate then to discuss the final disaster in terms of the disintegration or untenability of these linguistic and economic models. To do so, one must identify those points of "leakage," both in the text and in Jim's attitude, which allowed the fearfully reminding, i.e. repetitive aspect of Gentleman Brown's psychological welfare to go into action.

Such an episode is to be found at an early stage of the narrative. Marlow owes his acquaintance with Jim to the yellow dog scene, an epitome of the uncontrollable slippage and repetitiveness in meaning which will later spoil the much-awaited compensatory opportunities in Patusan. Having heard the exclamation "Look at that wretched cur" (94) in the crowd coming out of the courtroom, both Jim and Marlow try to remain in control of the situation in a mistaken manner. Just as the basic misunderstanding stems from a confusion of a denotative utterance with a metaphorical one, the two men's angry exchange exceeds, against their will, the limits of their intended meanings. Marlow's protest "Some mistake" (95) and his eventual pointing out the adequacy of the objected sentence provide an unintentional reminder of Jim's own mistake on board the *Patna* and the rightness of those Malay seamen (colloquially as yellow as the dog) who stayed. Jim's response to the situation too has echoes for the rest of the story. With his verbal and behavioural violence, he conducts an ironic interrogation of the same tropical quality that was characterized, as demonstrated earlier, by dominance and towering imposition of symbolic representations in the novel. This time it is he on whom a figural equation is ostensibly

imposed, and when he counters the insult by using comparable force, he, to all intents and purposes, demonstrates the close links that the symbolizing-monopolizing perspective in the Patusan section has been shown to have with colonial aggression.

This is a process that none of the parties involved deliberately meant. For this reason, the scene becomes an implicit self-reflexive gesture on a mode of expression determined by the impossibility to stay not only within an intended meaning, but also within the set of signs that have been used up to that point. Laverne Nishihara's appropriate structural insight according to which "Conrad's art is grounded in the choice of limits" [30] also holds true for the semantic ranges of words and sentences as used by the characters. While the two men are repeating, reminding and anticipating each other and themselves, the narrator places a seemingly unrelated conversation in the background of the courtroom, and makes the newly acquainted figures unwittingly borrow elements from what they overhear. Marlow catches the words "Well – buffalo – stick – in the greatness of my fear" (95), and the incoherent fragments make curious sense and address several elements of both the ongoing debate and Jim's quandary. The word "well" communicates with Jim's hesitation before the planned assault on Marlow and with his professional competence; "buffalo" recalls his description only a few lines earlier as someone who "looked generally fit to demolish a wall"; a "stick" is something over which the *Patna* went "crawling" like a snake (63), and "the greatness of fear" phrase designates, from a most unexpected corner, why Jim jumped the ship. Where conscious linguistic efforts failed, an almost uncanny sense of repetition [31] prevails and casts Jim, seemingly so unique, as a product of repetition himself. Throughout the novel, the intended and the actually emerging meanings will remain in a problematic relationship. A constant overflow of signification destabilizes the autonomy of the two speaking subjects and creates a parody of the forcefulness that elsewhere in the novel appears as – and is intended to be – a guarantee of sufficiently contained meaning. Marlow's conclusion that "The power of sentences has nothing to do with their sense or logic of construction" (98–99) will hold true for the rest of the unfolding story, since in its total effect, the Patusan section reads as another ill-advised response to a preceding situation.

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30. Laverne Nishihara, " 'The fetters of that strange freedom': Boundary as Regulating Technique in *Lord Jim*," *Conradiana* 28:1 (1996), p. 63.

31. Nishihara's article offers a detailed list of examples of unwanted repetition.

For all these reasons, the yellow-dog episode turns into the opposite of the later predominant symbolic perspective, and becomes, by its anticipatory character, an epitome of the novel's allegorical strain. The comically radical separation of the word "cur" from its denotation will be repeated when Jim, whose competence is widely recognized, will continue, compulsively, to measure the value of his current actions against the eternal background of the desertion incident. The same, strictly private matching of disparate, only structurally analogous elements is taking place in the sense that Jim's social world – whose esteem is so vital for him – is either unaware of the model ship clerk's former disgrace, or does not find it relevant. Egström from Blake & Egström, for instance, is long ignorant of his employee's identity with that of the *Patna*'s ill-famed former mate, only to exclaim upon the discovery: "And who the devil cares about that?" (186). The truth will out, but in a most unpredictable way. One of the proleptic functions of the yellow dog scene is the exposition of the clash between intended, controllable meaning ("You spoke to him, but you meant me to hear," 96), and a degree of overflowing and irresistible signification ("an oriental voice . . . expostulating . . . against a charge of falsehood," 97). The uncontrollable chain of linguistic effects that is launched by this episode is best termed allegorical. For in accordance with the etymology of the word, it is this trope that relates the concept of speech in the "assembly or market" (*agoreuein*) and its inversion by the prefix "other" (*allos*). [32] Therefore the accidental first encounter that enables Marlow to tell Jim's story at all is reported as punctuated by exclamations about a moneylender's case from the assembly in the courtroom. Moreover, part of Jim's confusion about the social esteem accorded to him is rooted in his troubled sense of space and directions. Whereas the belief in interchangeability and replaceability makes him rely on a concept of the (real as well as figural) *market as a place* (i.e. a self-contained, limited and controllable area), the passage anticipates the finally triumphant concept of *market as an institution* [33] which, unlimited to a particular place, accommodates a "murmur of voices" (94), feeds on past utterances and has the capacity of flashing through various narrative levels.

The pivotal position of the scene is suggested by the fact the final disaster in the novel is in fact an emblematic return to the theme of control over linguistic

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32. Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1964), p. 2.

33. For this distinction, see Karl Polanyi's *Primitive, Archaic and Modern Economies: Essays of Karl Polanyi.*

and spatial processes. Influenced by manipulative words, Jim enters a pact with Brown because the trader in him still believes that the terms of exchange he can dictate will, in an idealistic way, reify and thereby re-establish "common blood" (329) with the distant community of white Westerners. Though he never puts it in actual words, he envisages, i.e. specifies the departing route of the other party. It is a restrictive act, which corresponds both to his imposing political presence in Patusan and to his policy of delimiting and controlling possible meanings, as seen in the "cur" episode. Brown's vengeance could only be carried out by his deviation from the prescribed route, and this transgression, in all its unpredictability, corresponds to the deviating, aleatory character of human interaction in general in the novel. In other words, Dain's party is ambushed on account of a certain overflow of information and non-coincidence of intended meanings (Cornelius too is killed) that is first unfolded by the yellow dog episode, and extends to several other examples, such as Jim's mistaken answer to the call "George" (124) or Jewel's mistaken identity as an actual gem.

Throughout the novel, Jim's eagerness to match word, authority, meaning and signification will continue to be systematically countered by an elastic and resistant interplay of meaning-generating elements. The arising misconceptions follow a rough pattern of asymmetry. The first false suggestion is issued by some unidentified member of the local community ("the [cur-calling] stranger managed to get down the steps and disappeared" 94–95), then it solidifies into a temporarily unshakable belief ("people had trusted [Tuan Jim] implicitly" 241), and when the ironies to expose its absurdity begin to work in Marlow's free indirect discourse ("The white man had obtained [the jewel] partly by the exercise of his wonderful strength and partly by cunning" 249), the fundamental dialogism of the novel and Marlow's self-admitted uncertainties and ideological biases question the attainability of any conclusion. The significance of the repeated pattern of semantic slippage lies not so much in its comedy, but rather, in the fact that it encapsulates the rift between meaning and intention that characterizes the novel as a whole. In a strictly technical sense, the separation corresponds to Quintilian's definition of allegory which "says one thing and means another." [34] In addition to the basic rift in the trope, the emphatic uncontrollability of the rhetorical process calls for a more recent perspective to locate the allegorical strain of the text. Paul de Man's definition has forceful and accurate structural reverberations for the texture of *Lord Jim*:

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34. Fletcher, p. 2.

> it remains necessary, if there is to be allegory, that the allegorical sign refer to another sign that precedes it. The meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can then consist only in the *repetition* (in the Kierkegaardian sense of the term) of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is of the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority. [35]

For all the sensory plenitude and narrative immediacy of its description, the indispensable and plot-generating *Patna* episode never really exists in any other mode than as a previous sign. It poses a hermeneutical challenge to the assessing board, Marlow and his audience, and it becomes a code and a horizon against which Jim will measure the value of all his subsequent actions. The meaning of these acts lies in their proximity to the remembered original, where repetition is indeed, as Kierkegaard suggested, a matter of recreating not so much a past situation, but the possibility inherent in it. Jim acts in accordance with general techniques of atonement. He believes his final success to be dependent on how accurately he is able to restore the original situation of erring, and how adequately he is able to respond to the old-new challenges for a second time. Therefore Conrad proceeds to set the reparation attempts in contexts where the desired second chance offers itself in essentially the same forms that brought along the original blunder.

The first step is the recreation of a maritime hierarchy. Jim is once again first mate, and a large number of people are as dependent on him as the "human cargo" (55) was on board the *Patna*. Once the societal division is established, the unprofessional cast in Jim's large-scale theatre must make sure they stick to their roles. For there are times when they are tempted to act otherwise. They nearly mess up their roles – and save many local lives – when the possibility of Dain Waris's dealing with the threat posed by Brown's visit arises. He could "settle the business off-hand" (310), but he must wait until Tuan Jim, the professional problem-solver of the Patusan social unit returns – by that time, chances for an easy solution are gone. This division of labour follows from what Jameson alternately identifies as the Weberian "rationalization" [36] or the Frankfurt School concept of "instrumentalization." [37] Barred from action and a liberating capacity, Dain Waris is reduced to the function of a cogwheel in Jim's self-redemptive machinery, which explains why his name "Waris" sounds like "wares." Even

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35. De Man, p. 207.
36. Jameson, p. 220.
37. Jameson, p. 250.

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Jim's final suicidal gesture of absolution carries a parody of Dain's instrumentality, because the walk back to Doramin's throne suggests, at least in structural terms, the replaceability of the dead son. Beyond the name and the plot associated with the young native, other specifics in his portrayal have a similar message. Dain is comparable to Nostromo. The representation of both "noble" characters lacks a degree of individual life, but that exactly serves Conrad's purpose. Brilliant as the two figures are, their intelligent collaboration render them subservient figures in ongoing business operations of colonial magnitude. Both are used, separated from their human self or "reified," and for this reason, they cannot but carry a purposefully sketchy allegorical aspect because "reification," as suggested by Sara Danius, "is always already an allegory." [38]

But as the Patusan section too is already a repetition, the presence of commerce as activity and allegorical interplay between disparate signs leaves its ineffaceable mark on language, action and characterization from the very beginning of the novel. At the onset of the crisis, Jim jumped ship partly because the sleeping pilgrims meant to him no more than "a full cargo of old rags in bales" (93). Brierly's phrase choice is an apt reference to the human waste and sacrifice that accompanied the rise of early capitalism in the textile industry, so it is not without significance that one of the many synonyms for the young hero's "inner worth" (50) is "the fibre of his stuff" (50). Soon afterwards further, business-related images of transformation continue to punctuate the text. When the people boarding are referred to as "cattle" (54) by a German officer Jim does not like, a famous description of the passengers above the roaring furnace also designates the pilgrims as hardly human entities in the line of reproduction, transportation and transformation. Jim's sense of romantic superiority and dreamy self-absorption in the passage render him, nevertheless, a co-author to the remark, but as he himself was compared to a "charging bull" in the very first sentence of the narrative, his acceptance of the word "cattle" is ironic. The assault on the defenceless sleepers is in fact an assault on his own kind, but without the assailant's realizing it. Conrad's subsequent use of the buffalo imagery continues to present Jim as someone whose desired mastery over certain entities or meanings is regularly subverted by his involvement in commerce. For example soon after the derogatory "cattle" remark, the yellow dog episode is taking place

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38. Sara Danius, "In search of totality: On narrative and history in Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious*," in *Redirections in Critical Theory: Truth, Self, Action, History*, ed. Bernard McGuirk (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 252.

against the background of a sporadically overheard law suit, where, as cited earlier, a woman (herself cattle-like because of her nose-ring) mentions a "buffalo" (95) when explaining her role in an assault on a *money-lender*. As cattle, bullocks and buffalo are turned either into food, transporting energy or an object of exchange, the same association of such animals and money will introduce Brown's appearance. He visits Patusan because he hopes to "get . . . bullocks" and "some real ringing coined money" (307). Jim does promise him a bullock right before the robbers float out of Patusan. In Conrad's artistic vision, it is the metaphoricality superimposed on the ordinary term "bullock" that explains why "[n]ot one of the many attentive listeners understood what the words meant" (338). Cornelius is exceptionally right when he claims Jim "always speaks the truth" (339). Abhorring from any sense of finality and clinging to a hope of renewability, the young ruler ultimately gives, as promised, his own *bullish* (i.e. trade-wise optimistic) self up to the aftermath of Brown's ruthlessness.

But more important than this is that he, after jeopardizing the lives of all the "cattle" on board the *Patna*, allows his fellow beings to perish for a second time. Knowing that the desperate pirate wants a bullock, Jim, who is as eager to change and revitalize himself as his adversary, will metaphorically realize Brown's project, and turn the victimized Doramin into a "wounded bull" (347). With his choice of this particular animal imagery, Marlow ironically adds to Jim's "secret knowledge" which suggests that there is a "bond of . . . minds and of . . . hearts" (329) between him and Brown. As the latter needed food to regenerate himself at any price, so the young ruler had been politically possessing the chieftain as a strategically important, yet individually unregarded person for his own self-transformational project. The degradation from a romantic, "charging bull" of Doramin's type into the freely transferable commodity of a killer "bullock" by spiritually destroying the real bull of a noble tribesman relates Jim, on a symbolic and parodistic level, to the cannibalistic forcefulness of Chester's partner, Captain Robinson. As the old man tries to lure Jim into an unrivalled and exploitative enterprise, his suggested man-eating is placed in the same context as the motif of commercial monopoly. Several facts about the captain render him a hellish parody of Jim himself. Not only has he destroyed his peers, fell into a sort of limbo to emerge again, but he also became a legend, assumed a new name, came to be dominated by the colour white, and finally, to make the analogy even

more unmistakable, he finished the interview with Marlow with a "submissive little jump"(167). [39]

Hence "the fattening dishes" in Stein's "commercial kitchen." Whether denoting actual eating or other instances of spatial, incorporative transformation, "the corrosive effects of market relations"[40] establish a cannibalistic world where the desired but unavoidably illusory effacement of the self's isolation turns into the similar limitlessness of the onslaught pulled off by the arch-colonial Gentleman Brown. Jim cannot but meet his fate because "fate" and "destiny," two frequently used words in the novel, designate that "internal element which delimits the character's possibilities."[41] Paradoxically, this highly restrictive element is also the one to offer unlimited acts of escape and conversion: commerce. In other words, Jim's attempts to find another "opportunity" will remain doomed because he, though obsessed with his uniqueness, will endeavour to assert his ultimate adequacy by the compensatory acts of creating a second trading monopoly and its concomitant colonial supremacy – both are already known from the profile of the merchant marine. Thus Jim, who needs another leaking ship, finds that the very notion of repeatability will prevent the gap from closing.

Moreover, the ideological collapse of the Patusan project is intimately linked to the survival of those modes of representation that have characterized the first part of the story. In a novel where imperialistically "fixed standard[s] of conduct" (80) were identified as never-changing cornerstones of social existence to be articulated in the discourse of symbolism, treachery and colonial aggression are best intimated in the allegorical language of misunderstandings and semantic overflow. Jim established his own colonial regime with characters to simultaneously fulfil economic roles and supply the missing figures for a re-enactment of his personal drama, and by doing this he has coded failure into the same mechanisms of commercial excellence that effected his rise. He continued to insist on a romantic-symbolic perspective and sense of closure. At the same time, his fondness of turning people into functions and services into fees preserved him as an unromantic figure of trader, and made him, on the brink of

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39. The title character of the short-story "Falk" is yet another example of the link Conrad saw between cannibalism and forced trade. Falk's terrible secret is revealed because he has abused his towing monopoly.

40. Jameson, p. 220.

41. Nishihara, p. 59.

victory, vulnerable to market players more ruthless that himself. If the novel, and particularly its second part is indeed a "free and wandering tale" ("Author's Note," 43), then its circuity is produced by the always intruding allegorical and commercial strain that culminates in the final massacre. If the second part is indeed a "plague spot," then the spot image can only be the emblem of "some real ringing coined money" (307) to roll into the novel and contaminate, as befitting plague, the deepest recesses of the narrative fibre. It is in vain that Jim claims "nothing can touch [him]" (289) – the plague he cannot be immune to. As in his other fiction, Conrad memorably suggests in *Lord Jim* that coercive transactional situations be only provisionally countered by the central character's illusions about his personal integrity.

Boldizsár Fejérvári

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Meet Edward II

A study in intertextuality

It is a common fashion in literary criticism, or 'Lit Crit,' to treat reality, human behaviour, communication, and everything else as though they were 'texts to be read.' This paper proposes to go the other way: it interprets literature (or, more precisely, one literary text, Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*) as a part of reality in which several other layers of the *real* combine, such as linguistics, science, or other literary texts, most notably *Hamlet*. While *Edward II* is not generally considered a direct source for Stoppard's play, this paper shows how, in the wider perspective of 'interreality,' Marlowe's tragedy might interact with *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*. At the same time it is proved that *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, contrary to the critical conception of many, is not a *parasitic* work 'feeding off' Elizabethan playwrights, but a play that enters a *symbiotic* relationship with its *host* (as defined by Hillis Miller).

Pretext

It is an interesting new trend in literary criticism to begin research papers with "Pretexts" instead of "Introductions." This is probably not just a case of shifting terminology; a *pretext* reflects a different attitude to the topic addressed than an *introduction*. Though both are textual passages that establish what the whole paper is going to be about (and in this respect an introduction is just as well a 'pre-text'), a pretext does so in a less direct way and with less commitment to the issue. Instead of defining the case, as an *introduction* should do (similarly to a Baroque French overture), it serves as a Romantic opera overture that enumerates the themes to be touched upon. My paper is not so much *about* either Stop-

pard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* or Marlowe's *Edward II* as about the relationship between them and hence can be considered a study in intertextuality, evidently starting with a "Pretext." At the same time this "Pretext," true to the term's semantic nature, makes no attempt at structurally introducing the main argument; the latter unfolds merely *on this pretext*. The double meaning of such critical terms as "pretext" will play a crucial role in the discussion of the intertextuality of Marlowe's and Stoppard's pieces.

What this intertextuality consists in, however, is a question that needs some definition. Mark Turner, in the "Pretext" to his *Reading Minds* sums up the present state of literary criticism in the following mildly provocative and ironic way:

> The world of contemporary literary criticism . . . has no equal as an uncanny marvel of self-sustaining institutional and human ingenuity. It is to the humanities what the self-sustaining fission reaction in a critical mass of mutually exciting unstable heavy molecules is to the natural sciences. It generates ever more subtle and masterful readings of ever more texts for an ever more specialized group of readers. Fuel is found not only in writing . . . but also in nontextual representations, mute artifacts, and ultimately human behavior itself, treated as if they were texts to be read. Finally criticism has become its own fuel, susceptible of a higher-order critical analysis that is not merely self-sustaining but, beyond fission, self-feeding, its output continuous with its input, a perpetual breeder reactor, unrestrained by laws of entropy. . . . It is like chess about chess. . .[1]

Apart from the fact that Turner's pointed remarks, for all his efforts to mock the present notion of academic and literary research, actually reaffirm the system in which they are uttered, it must also be noted that he proposes a possible way out from this 'self-sustaining,' 'self-feeding' system.[2] As far as the general

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1. Mark Turner, "Pretext," *Reading Minds: The Study of English in the Age of Cognitive Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) 3–24, p. 3.

2. The excusable logical pit into which Turner falls by claiming that contemporary literary criticism is "to the humanities what the self-sustaining fission reaction . . . is to the natural sciences" can be fit into a long tradition of scholarly essays (ab)using scientific imagery in the field of humanities, beginning perhaps with T. S. Eliot, who, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (in *20th Century Literary Criticism: A Reader*, ed. David Lodge [London: Longman, 1972] 71–77), uses a blatantly nonsensical chemical equation to make his point that the poet's achievement is like that of a catalyst in a reaction. Contemporary literary criticism simply cannot have exactly the same relation to the humanities as the fission reaction has to the natural sciences, since literary criticism is part of the humanities, while the given reaction is merely the object of scientific research. Such inconsistencies, however, should not be permit-

proposal goes, this would mean a reconciliation of linguistics and literature, which for a long time have formed two rather hostile parties in what Turner understands as 'the study of English.'[3] Nevertheless, there are others, who have conceived of the present *status quo* as something less negative and would even invest literary criticism with real literary value. Jonathan Culler, for instance, quoting a substantial passage from J. Hillis Miller, puts the emphasis on the contrast between the 'canny' and the 'uncanny' type of criticism. These are not merely opposites, he argues, for *uncanny* criticism is superior to *canny* (or clear) criticism. Though at first sight the uncanny (or suspicious) critic may seem to give up order in favour of chaos, their findings contribute to order on a higher level, adding more depth to our understanding not only of literature but also of ourselves and our environment.[4] Thus this becomes a fascinating case where the same word (*uncanny*) is used in its pejorative meaning (bizarre, eerie, weird) by one critic (Turner) and as a positive adjective by another (Hillis Miller).

What I propose is to turn things upside down. If Turner claims "nontextual representations . . . artifacts . . . and . . . human behavior [are] treated as if they were texts to be read," I shall try to interpret textual representations as well as all other fields of the literary and non-literary world as *realities*, which can possibly serve as a basis of reference in works of literature.[5] My aim is to show how Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* feeds off this reality, which has a set of well-definable layers. This, on the other hand, means that it is more appropriate to talk about a kind of *interreality* than "intertextuality" here.[6]

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ted here. "Consistency is all I ask," Rosencrantz exclaims in Act I of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*; if he cannot get it within the theatrical world of the play, let the play get it, at least, from the literary critics active in the ortho-, para-, or meta-theatrical world dubbed 'reality.'

3. Cf. Turner, pp. 3–24.

4. J. Hillis Miller quoted in Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 23.

5. This idea is actually suggested by Stoppard himself, who flirted with the question of who was the king of England when Rosencrantz and Guildenstern got there, an idea that is retained in Act III of the final version of the play, in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's confused discussion of whether England actually exists (Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* [London: Faber and Faber, 1967], pp. 89ff.; all parenthesised references are to this edition).

6. After a certain point, of course, the two things might collapse: once *everything* is treated as a text *or* a layer of reality, such a distinction no longer makes sense. To treat reality, or history, as a text(ure) – however much in a metaphorical sense – can be seen in the finishing,

The technique of intertextuality, as Turner asserts, has developed to such perfection that a critic with sufficient practice can choose two literary (or even non-literary) texts more or less at random and still unravel their (real or supposed) textual correspondences with ease. Not having the amount of reading experience necessary for doing so, I have chosen a tragedy that can at least be chronologically related to *Hamlet*, the obvious source for Stoppard's play: Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*. Indeed, Marlowe's work was born in the same sizzling cultural environment as Shakespeare's masterpiece, described by Géza Kállay as "that unrepeatable, fortunate age when all layers of society were interested in the theatre."[7] Moreover, one of the major elements in *Edward II*, that of parasitism, is something that can be redefined in connection with Stoppard's play as well. These links, as we shall see, are enough to establish a context for the comparison of *Edward II* and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, while they also have important consequences with regard to literary criticism.

Host and parasite *vs.* host and symbiont

Though he specifies several possible sources for Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Hayman[8] does not mention Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* as one of them. Picking the, according to him, two major influences, he concludes: "Clearly, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have been wooed out from the shadow of *Godot* by 'The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock.' "[9] Brassell goes even further in stating that Eliot's poem as a source is far more important in

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incomplete paragraph of Thornton Wilder's *The Eighth Day*: "History is *one* tapestry. No eye can venture to compass more than a hand's-breadth. . . . There is much talk of a design in the arras. Some are certain they see it. Some see what they have been told to see. Some remember that they saw it once but have lost it. Some are strengthened by seeing a pattern wherein the oppressed and exploited of the earth are gradually emerging from their bondage. Some find strength in the conviction that there is nothing to see. Some" (Thornton Wilder, *The Eighth Day* [Toronto: Popular Library, 1967], p. 381).

7. Géza Kállay, " 'Ha megful a fuldokló rend. . .': a rend fogalma Shakespeare drámáiban" [The concept of order in Shakespeare's plays], in *Nem puszta tett* (Budapest: Liget, 1999) 19–45, p. 28 (my translation).

8. Ronald Hayman, *Tom Stoppard*, Contemporary Playwrights Series (London: Heinemann, 1979).

9. Hayman, p. 33.

Stoppard's play than either *Hamlet* itself, or Beckett's influence. [10] In order to show this, both sources quote an important passage from Eliot's poem:

> No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
> Am an attendant lord, one that will do
> To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
> Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
> Deferential, glad to be of use,
> Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
> Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
> At times, indeed, almost ridiculous –
> Almost, at times, the Fool. [11]

Just as Brassell's judgement may have been intended as over-provocative, I shall not claim that Marlowe's history was or even could have been an important direct influence on *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Nevertheless, much of the 'original' imagery in Stoppard's work derives from Marlowe and the Elizabethan playwrights.

One reason why *Edward II* may be useful is the way in which it explains the Elizabethan concept of a *parasite*. [12] At the beginning of Act II Scene ii, waiting

10. Tim Brassell, *Tom Stoppard: An Assessment* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p. 67.

11. Though many of these statements could be applied to Polonius more easily than to Stoppard's protagonists (e.g., he *does* start 'a scene or two,' as opposed to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern – cf. Act II Scene i, or Act III Scene iv), a relevant description of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is found in the words 'easy tool,' or 'glad to be of use.' This reinforces that they are *used* rather unlike parasites, who would use their *hosts* instead; this point will have some relevance when we compare the question of their parasitism with the parasites in *Edward II*.

12. The relevant definition for this type of *parasite* is the following: "2a. *Biol.* An animal or plant with [sic!] lives in or upon another organism (technically called its *host*) and draws its nutriment directly from it. Also extended to animals or plants that live as tenants of others, but not at their expense (strictly called *commensal* or *symbiotic*); also to those which depend on others in various ways of sustenance, as the cuckoo, the skua-gull, etc. . . .; and (inaccurately) to plants which grow upon others, deriving support but no nourishment from them (*epiphytes*), or which live on decaying organic matter (*saprophytes*). 2b. Applied, loosely or poetically, to a plant that creeps or climbs about another plant or a wall, trellis-work, etc., by which it is supported. 2c. *fig* A person whose part or action resembles that of an animal parasite" (*OED, The Oxford English Dictionary*, 20 vols., ed. J. A. Simpson & E. S. C. Weiner, 2nd edition [Oxford: Oxford University Press & Clarendon Press, 1989], Vol. XI, p. 207). Of all these definitions, (2c) applies to the case in *Edward II*; however, definition (2c) is related to

for the feast to celebrate the return of Gaveston to the court, King Edward inquires about the 'devices,' i.e. coats-of-arms prepared by Younger Mortimer and Lancaster. The latter brings in his shield depicting the fate of a fish that will be caught and killed, no matter whether in the sea or 'taking the air.' The design of Younger Mortimer is more to our point:

> YOUNGER MORTIMER   A lofty cedar tree, fair flourishing,
>   On whose top branches kingly eagles perch,
>   And by the bark a canker creeps me up,
>   And gets unto the highest bough of all;
>   The motto, *Æque tandem* [equally at length]. (II.ii.16–20)[13]

What this means is easy enough to decipher, but if any doubt should arise, that well-known parasite, the footnote comes to one's rescue: "the parasite is as high as the tree itself."[14] The plain fact remains that Younger Mortimer is to Queen Isabella what Gaveston is to King Edward; a mere parasite, someone who is always out for some opportunity to climb higher and higher until he reaches that point from which there is no return, as described above, in the image of falling 'headlong' down. It is a question of luck which of them gets higher. As it turns out to be, Mortimer outlives Gaveston – but his fall is just as inevitable. As a point of comparison, it might be noted here that Richard III succeeds in climbing highest of all such parasites; no doubt, he is aided in this by his royal descent – his fall, however, is equally necessary, no matter how much 'in style' he takes it. And Shakespeare used the selfsame simile himself elsewhere: in Act I Sc ii of *The Tempest* Prospero tells Miranda the story of their banishment, he refers to his false brother as a parasite: he was "[t]he ivy which had hid my princely trunk."

Should Rosencrantz and Guildenstern be considered parasites in this sense? This is a reasonable question, which has been used in attempts to prove their irrelevance in *Hamlet*; their relationship to the Danish court is certainly doubtful. Still, the answer is that they are probably not parasites in this sense. At least this is not the image we receive of them when addressed by the King ("being of

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(2a). Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* has often been called a 'parasitic' play in the same, rather disapproving sense; this term, however, is completely misleading, as I shall show with regard to both textual and metatextual considerations.

13. All parenthesised references are to this edition: Christopher Marlowe, *The Complete Plays*, ed. J. B. Steane (London: Penguin, 1969).

14. Marlowe, p. 465.

so young days brought up with him, / And sith so neighbour'd to his youth and haviour," II.ii.11–2),[15] the Queen ("Good gentlemen, he hath much talk'd of you, / And sure I am, two men there is not living / To whom he more adheres," II.ii.19–21), and Hamlet himself ("My excellent good friends. . . . Good lads, how do you both?" II.ii.224–6). This sounds more like friendship, however dubious it is from the start. For the audience have already gathered that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are merely used by the King and Queen (a fact Hamlet soon discovers as well, after which they cannot carry on with their roles), not to mention the fact that there is at least one man (Horatio) to whom Hamlet 'adheres' more than to them. This is far too little for them to be considered parasites with Hamlet as their host, and even from the royal couple they do not seem to receive any reward, whether moral, or financial. And as Rosencrantz remarks (this time in Stoppard's text): "I think we can say he [Hamlet] made us look ridiculous. . . . He murdered us" (41). If conceived in the way Marlowe's interpretation of parasitism warrants, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern should be considered rather inefficient parasites, who have not even managed to climb as high as "the secret parts of Fortune" (II.ii.235), as Hamlet asserts.

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

If we want to have a fuller understanding of the origin of *parasitism*, however, we are faced with yet another available definition of *parasite*: "1a. One who eats at the table or at the expense of another; always with opprobrious application: 'One that frequents rich tables and earns his welcome by flattery' (J[ohnson]); one who obtains the hospitality, patronage, or favour of the wealthy or powerful by obsequiousness and flattery; a hanger-on from interested motives; a 'toady.' "[16] The expression comes from Greek, the etymology of *parasite* being "παράσιτος lit. one who eats at the table of another, hence one who lives at an-

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15. All references to *Hamlet* are to this edition: William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. Harold Jenkins (London & New York: Routledge, 1982).

16. *OED*, Vol. XI, p. 207. This is an interesting case of double metaphorisation: the term *parasite* first refers to people, is then transferred to animals and plants and eventually falls back upon human beings whose behaviour resembles that of 'animal parasites.' An even more exhaustive enumeration of the possible readings of the *parasite* can be found in J. Hillis Miller's "The critic as host," in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. David Lodge (London & New York: Longman, 1988) 278–85, which I shall shortly discuss in more detail in the context of alleged parasitism present in literary criticism. Hillis Miller specifies this sense of the *parasite* in the following way: "a professional dinner guest, someone expert at cadging invitations without ever giving dinners in return" (Hillis Miller, p. 280).

other's expense and repays him with flattery, etc.; orig. an adj. = feeding beside; f. *παρά*- beside + *σιτος* food." [17] In its social context it is closely related to *symbiosis*,[18] *commensalism* ("sharing one's table," a Latin synonym for *symbiosis*)[19] as well as *symposium*: "*συμπόσιον*, fr. *συμπότης* fellow-drinker (cf. *συμπίνειν* to drink together), f. *σύν*- SYM- + *πότης* drinker (cf. *πότιμος* drinkable, *ποτόν* drink)." [20] This is the point where the pejorative and ameliorative meanings of all these terms become irreversibly confused, for even Plato's transmission of the famous *Symposium* is presented as handed down to us by a most meritorious parasite, Aristodemus.[21] Similarly, Gaveston, for all his negative traits, is still perhaps the most appealing of all characters in *Edward II*, which does not seem to contradict the fact that he is also the most obvious parasite.

Are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern parasites in the same sense? Not on Hamlet, to be sure – from him they never receive more than suspicious looks, tricky questions, i.e. some less than rewarding exchanges. And though the royal couple could still be considered hosts for the two attendant lords, another stichomythia between Rosencrantz and Guildenstern leaves little to hope for in this respect:

> GUIL   We have been briefed. Hamlet's transformation. . . .
> ROS   We cheer him up – find out what's the matter –

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17. *OED*, Vol. XI, p. 207.

18. "1. Living together, social life. 2a. *Biol*. Association of two different organisms (usually two plants, or an animal and a plant) which live attached to each other, or one as a tenant of the other, and contribute to each other's support. Also more widely, any intimate association of two or more different organisms, whether mutually beneficial or not. 2b. *transf* and *fig*" (*OED*, Vol. XVII, pp. 450–1). Note the inherently positive overtones of *symbiosis*, as opposed to the negative implications of the colloquial use of *parasitism*.

19. *OED*, Vol. III, p. 549.

20. *OED*, Vol. XVII, p. 464.

21. Actually, there is a whole chain of story-tellers before the narrative reaches its eventual reader: Plato tells us the story as recited by Apollodorus to a friend; Apollodorus, in turn, having heard it from Aristodemus himself, who was present at the feast as a parasite of Socrates, and, indirectly, of the ultimate *host*, Agathon. Two points in this argumentation pertain to Hillis Miller's discussion of the critic as host: (a) gift as a chain of things, semantically related to the French expression *cadeau*; and (b) the equivocal nature of the words "host" and "gift" in general (cf. Hillis Miller, p. 283, and pp. 281ff., respectively). If we add to all this the fact that *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Meet King Lear*, the embryo of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* was completed by Stoppard in the course of a *symposium* in (West) Berlin, where he spent several months on a scholarship from the Ford Foundation (cf. Brassell, p. 5), we might reasonably say that the context of terminology has more or less been circumscribed.

GUIL   Exactly, it's a matter of asking the right questions and giving away as
    little as we can. It's a game.
ROS   And then we can go?
GUIL   And receive such thanks as fits a king's remembrance. [Cf. *Hamlet*,
    II.ii.25–6]
ROS   I like the sound of that. What do you think he means by remem-
    brance?
GUIL   He doesn't forget his friends.
ROS   Would you care to estimate?
GUIL   Difficult to say, really – some kings tend to be amnesiac, others I
    suppose – the opposite, whatever that is...
ROS   Yes – but –
GUIL   Elephantine...?
ROS   Not how long – how much?
GUIL   *Retentive* – he is a very retentive king, a royal retainer...
ROS   What are you playing at?
GUIL   Words, words. They're all we have to go on. (30–1)

Thus we are forced to abandon the idea of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern being parasites on Hamlet, or the royal family, either in the figurative, or in the physical meaning of the word. They have little hope for success. Thus, at least in Stoppard's interpretation, which, in this respect at least, seems to be reconcilable with Shakespeare's original, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern cannot be seen as real parasites. At best, they are incompetent investigators, who lose their heads all too easily in any direct encounter with Hamlet or other members of the court (and then they lose them even more easily at the end of both plays in a physical sense). "Toadies," however, they cannot be called within a reasonable framework. [22]

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22. I have consciously avoided the assessment of the role of comic parasites. In fact, the 'parasite,' who exaggerates the boasts of his patron, or *host*, had been an almost indispensable character in comedies since Plautus, to whom many Renaissance playwrights were indebted for their use of comic elements. The investigation of this, however, is beyond the scope of this paper. Similarly, the term 'parasitic comedy,' as applied to *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (cf. Michael Scott, "Parasitic Comedy: Tom Stoppard," in *Shakespeare and the Modern Dramatist* [Basingstoke & London: Macmillan, 1989] 13–27), cannot be interpreted in this way, as there are no clear (i.e. 'full-time, professional') *parasites* appearing in Stoppard's play. Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, a *par excellence* 'parasitic' comedy insofar as it is based on the theme of various characters trying to become the most obsequious parasites, establishes an intriguing connection between *parricide* and *parasite*, whose pronunciations are more or less identical. (The same parallel is touched on by the motto in Hillis Miller, p. 278.) Though the murdering of the father can have some relevance with regard to *Hamlet*, and the killing of the

We have just seen that apparently Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are no para-
sites living at the expense of Hamlet. Before we can put things in a wider critical
context and prove that *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* is not a parasite feeding
off *Hamlet*, however, it is important to make one last distinction and discuss
whether Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are parasites in *Hamlet*.

This seemingly wild idea was reflected in a production of *Hamlet* by Laurence
Olivier, who simply eliminated the characters of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. [23]
There is a strange kind of tension between these characters and Voltemand and
Cornelius, respectively. The latter, as ambassadors to Norway, must be kept, since
they mean one of the few tangible links with the outside world and without them
Fortinbras can hardly be brought on stage. Thus the paradoxical situation arises
that Voltemand and Cornelius, who play a rather irrelevant role as regards the
development of the plot, are more indispensable, as it were, than Rosencrantz and
Guildenstern, who do not have a formal part in *Hamlet*, yet function as catalysts to
help Hamlet expound philosophical notions which he cannot or simply does not
touch on in his soliloquies. Thus the presence of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
provides Hamlet with the opportunity to feign madness, which Shakespeare does
not make him do when soliloquising on various profound matters, the most fa-
mous one of which is cited by Stoppard in a parodistic way in a S.D. as "(HAMLET
*enters upstage, and pauses, weighing up the pros and cons of making his quie-
tus*)" (54). [24] Thus Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Hamlet's audience as he de-
livers the stunning speech on his own situation and the nature of man:

> I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all cus-
> tom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that
> this goodly frame the earth seems to me a sterile promontory, this most

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host is a frequent consequence of parasitism (as in *Edward II*), the comparison does not work
in the case of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, for which reason I shall not discuss it
in more detail here.

23. Though this is not mentioned as frequently as many other sources for Stoppard's play,
the removal of the 'attendant lords' from Olivier's production may have triggered the coming
into existence of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Indeed, in such a production of
Hamlet they would be dead even before the beginning – or, rather, they would not even have
been born.

24. The same scene is mocked in W. S. Gilbert's burlesque *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern:
a Tragic Episode*, where Rosencrantz and Guildenstern keep interrupting Hamlet's soliloquy
with their silly remarks. (Cf. quotations in Thomas R. Whitaker, *Tom Stoppard* [Basingstoke
& London: Macmillan, 1983], pp. 48ff. and Brassell, pp. 36ff.)

excellent canopy the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals – and yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me – nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

(II.ii.295–310)

Who could these words be addressed to, if not to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? Certainly not to Polonius, since the sincerity of Hamlet's locution exceeds the mockery the 'old fool' constantly receives from him. A possible choice could be Horatio, but then Hamlet never talks prose to him (i.e., he never appears to be mad, or joking, when conversing with Horatio). Thus Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, for all their alleged irrelevance to the unfolding of the tragedy, serve as the ideal witnesses to Hamlet's brief presentation of ontological theses about mankind. At the same time this means that the idea of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern serving as *audience* to Hamlet is, at least in an embryonic form, present in *Hamlet*, too. This role is reinforced again and again in Stoppard's play as well.

To make another, sombre but true remark: the pointless deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern add to the tragic element in both plays, though Stoppard's work emphasises the ironic side of this: "A slaughterhouse – eight corpses all told. It brings out the best in us," the Player explains (61). This is made even 'funnier' (as long, that is, as the audience do not realise that they are on the same side[line] as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern) by the fact that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern do not grasp the fact that they are included in the roll call until the very end of the play. In the first, Edinburgh version, the point was made even clearer (and for that reason rather disillusioning and weak) by the dialogue of the two ambassadors from England:

2ND AMB   Tragic. . . (he looks in the direction of the departing corpses) . . .
        four – just like that.
1ST AMB   Six in all.
2ND AMB   Seven.
1ST AMB   No – six.

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> 2ND AMB   The King, the Queen, Hamlet, Laertes, Rosencrantz, Guilden-
> stern and Polonius. Seven.
> 1ST AMB   Ophelia. Eight.
> 2ND AMB   King, Queen, Hamlet, Laertes, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, Polo-
> nius, Ophelia. Eight. [25]

Moreover, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are two possible candidates to step into the empty role of the Fool – a character seldom missing from Elizabethan tragedies, *Hamlet* being one such – as they willingly let Hamlet 'fool' them. In this way, they synthesise the excessively tragic (through their unmotivated execution) and the utterly ridiculous (in their foolish incapability to spy Hamlet's true condition and motives). It is therefore quite evident that their role, though obviously not a major one, adds to the rich texture of *Hamlet*, and one is justified in considering their relationship to the play symbiotic rather than parasitic.

<div align="center">* * *</div>

The final consideration of the alleged parasitism of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* has important theoretical implications. It is not all too demanding a task to show that for all of its quotations from *Hamlet* (and a 'host' of other literary precursors) this play is not parasitical. Even critics like Scott, who refer to Stoppard's work as a "parasitic comedy," tend to admit that it is a "technically brilliant extravaganza in its own right, a play indebted to others but *existing in itself*." [26] Such criticism disproves itself, for it is a contradiction in terms: a parasite can never be considered in its own right, existing in itself – it must always relate to some host.

The notion of the *host*, however, is very problematic in itself, as J. Hillis Miller proves, discussing the etymology of the word. His argument boils down to the conclusion that "the host is both eater and eaten" and as such "he also contains in himself the double antithetical relation of host and guest, guest in the bifold sense of friendly presence and alien invader." [27] On the literary level, this is the position Gaveston finds himself in: he is a friendly presence to the king and an alien invader in the eyes of the members of the court. On the level of literary criticism, the statement implies that there is an irresolvable tension inherent in the notion of host and parasite. They call up each other; " 'Parasite' . . .

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25. See Brassell, p. 271.
26. Scott, p. 25 (my emphasis).
27. Hillis Miller, pp. 280–1.

calls up its apparent 'opposite.' It has no meaning without that counterpart." [28] So, if criticism becomes "uncanny," if literary criticism becomes "its own fuel," it is not the fault of the critics – nor, indeed, a fault of anyone – but a consequence of the nature of language. For, if we say that *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* is a parasite feeding off *Hamlet*, we might at once go on and claim that Shakespeare's play is, in turn, a parasite feeding off an *Ur-Hamlet*, or Saxo's *Amloði*, or Belleforest's narrative based on Saxo's account – that is, a chain, or *cadeau* of precursors. This question has been thoroughly investigated [29] and is doubtlessly an important aspect of *Hamlet* as we know it, but still nobody would dispute Shakespeare's own authority and dramatic achievement today.

We have seen how *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* pays tribute to poems by T. S. Eliot. In exchange, Eliot's essay on "Tradition and the Individual Talent" lends itself quite readily as an apologetic text that can be applied to Stoppard's play. Eliot claims we tend "to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles anyone else." [30] To this cult of originality, Eliot would prefer the "historical sense," which in his view is equally indispensable as a touch of originality in any type of creative work. He demands that one show perception "not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence." [31] And Stoppard has an ear open to these claims – too much so, as some of his critics would claim.

Ultimately, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* can also be read in terms of a statement in Hillis Miller's essay:

> 'Para' [as the prefix in 'parasite'] is an 'uncanny' double antithetical prefix signifying at once proximity and distance, similarity and difference, interiority and exteriority .... A thing in 'para' is, moreover, not only simultaneously on both sides of the boundary line between inside and outside. It is also the boundary itself, the screen which is at once a permeable membrane connecting inside and outside, confusing them with one another, allowing the outside in, making the inside out, dividing them but also forming an ambiguous transition between one and the other. [32]

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28. Hillis Miller, p. 279.
29. For a comprehensive overview of these efforts see Harold Jenkins, "Introduction," in William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. Harold Jenkins (London & New York: Routledge) 1–159, pp. 82–112.
30. Eliot, p. 71.
31. Eliot, p. 72.
32. Hillis Miller, p. 280.

It is hard not to see the relationship between this passage, Gaveston's simultaneously being inside and outside the royal court, and the Player's remark in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*: "We keep to our usual stuff, more or less, only inside out" (22). One must also consider whether it would not be more fruitful to use the figure of *symbiosis* for a relationship so advantageous for all parties: the 'communion' or 'symposium' of canny and uncanny critics at the table of the given poem or play. [33] Due to the language of any human discourse, levels of primary literature and literary criticism become profoundly intertwined at this point. For, as J. Hillis Miller asserts, "[l]anguage . . . thinks man and his world," and

> [t]o speak of the 'deconstructive' reading of a poem as 'parasitical' on the 'obvious or univocal reading' is to enter, perhaps unwittingly, into the strange logic of the parasite, to make the univocal equivocal in spite of oneself, according to the law that language is not an instrument or tool in man's hands, a submissive means of thinking. [34]

No matter what critics of 'uncanny' criticism say, this is something that is bound ever to compromise any attempt at an exclusive, univocal interpretation of any text, or event for that matter. "What are you playing at?" Rosencrantz asks Guildenstern in Stoppard's play. The critic *reading* has no other reply to this question than Guildenstern's: "Words, words. They're all we have to go on" (31). And not even our words are unproblematic. For "what thought is not figurative?" [35] This issue, the figurative nature of language, with special regard to the bodily turns of speech, will now lead us on to the evaluation of further points of connection between *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Edward II*, in a wider critical context.

A game of life – a play of death

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead is full of references to the parts of the human body. This kind of word-play could well be described as a game of life, of

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33. "Both readings, the 'univocal' one and the 'deconstructive' one, are fellow guests 'beside the grain,' host and guest, host and host, host and parasite, parasite and parasite. The relation is a triangle, not a polar opposition" (Hillis Miller, p. 282).
34. Hillis Miller, p. 282.
35. Hillis Miller, p. 282.

living organs or organisms. The play begins in the famous coin-tossing scene, with an unusually long series of 'heads' coming up. [36] The link between this and the fact that the two main characters are about to lose their heads is quite evident (whether they are hanged or beheaded at the end is rather unimportant in this respect). But the imagery used here is far from original, if 'original' should signify something that has not occurred before. In Marlowe's *Edward II*, where an unnaturally great percentage of heads fall (mainly off but sometimes also) on the stage, the metaphoric use of 'heads' becomes almost, at times, nauseating. It should be enough to quote two notable cases of this.

When Gaveston is summoned for the second time, King Edward defies the lords of his court with the following words: "The *headstrong* barons shall not limit me; / He that I list to favour shall be great" (II.ii.263–4, my emphasis). In what way the barons are headstrong and, more importantly, where this 'head-strongness' inevitably leads, is specified by Mortimer's assessment of his situation soon after Queen Isabella has commented on how their common tragedy has begun: "Base Fortune, now I see, that in thy wheel / There is a point, to which when men aspire, / They tumble headlong down: that point I touched. . ." (V.vi.59–61). The fall – in a figurative meaning as well as in the very physical fall of heads – is necessary, then, and this is confirmed by the consistent use of 'head' as a metaphor and a compound. And *Edward II* may, in this respect, actually prove a rather arbitrary choice of source if one considers how many other Elizabethan tragedies played on the same reference to parts of the body. To take just another example: in *Titus Andronicus*, attributed now to George Peele, now to Shakespeare, [37] the lexeme 'hand' appears no less than 78 times. What strange

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36. Stoppard retained this scene from the original script for the unsuccessful *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Meet King Lear*. "Stoppard's agent, Kenneth Ewing . . . had often wondered who was the King of England when Rosencrantz and Guildenstern arrived with Hamlet. If the choice had to be based on Shakespeare's other plays, it would be between King Lear and Cymbeline. What if the boat from Denmark docked at Dover while Lear was careering madly about the heath?" (Hayman, p. 32). What if not; what if we search the answer in Marlowe and suppose Edward II was reigning? (However much *historical* facts falsify this assumption, one must note that Marlowe's play itself also pays little attention to historical fact as put down in his major source, Holinshed's *Chronicles*; cf. J. B. Steane, "Additional Notes," in Marlowe, pp. 598–9.) Even if such *real* readings of texts may be deemed far-fetched, it is an interesting idea to make *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* meet *Edward II* on a textual level.

37. Not to mention some other contemporary playwrights, cf. John Dover Wilson, "Introduction: An Essay in Literary Detection," in William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, The New Shakespeare, ed. John Dover Wilson (Cambridge: CUP, 1948), pp. xix–xxxiv.

significance this fact bears to Lavinia's or Titus's mutilation, among other things, hardly needs explication. At the same time Guildenstern also refers to the tongue threatening the Player who has irritated him: "Now mind your tongue, or we'll have it out and throw the rest of you away, like a nightingale at a Roman feast" (45). What Stoppard does masterfully is to apply these metaphors to entirely new fields of human cognition. The metaphor of 'head' is, through the tossing of coins, applied to chance, betting, and on a higher, perhaps ethical level, it is connected to "faith, if in nothing else at least in the law of probability" (10).

The question arises how this scene can be acted out plausibly; in other words, who would believe that spun ninety-two consecutive times, coins would come down heads every time? Moreover, that this should happen each and every time the play is performed? This goes opposite to the normal view of how things work in the world and it is beyond doubt that no one in the audience would actually believe that the coins show heads each time they are tossed, no matter what Rosencrantz and Guildenstern say. Although this is not altogether impossible, it is implausible. Though the Player believes "There's nothing more unconvincing than an unconvincing death" (56), there still may be this one thing that is more unconvincing than even *real* death on stage, for, as the Player explains, "Audiences know what to expect, and that is all that they are prepared to believe in" (62). How could the audience believe, then, that coins have come down heads ninety-two consecutive times (or even more, if one takes into account the times Rosencrantz and Guildenstern play against the Player)?

The situation here is similar to a Concept-Art piece by the Dutch artist Johan van der Veen. One of his works bears the title "Two sets of thirty-six dice rolls" and is nothing more than two 6×6 matrices, the one showing the numbers between 1 and 6 in an apparently random distribution, and the other showing 36 occurrences of a throw of 6. The viewer willingly believes that the first series of throws reflects a real experiment, while they certainly doubt that the artist should have thrown a 6 thirty-six consecutive times. Nevertheless, the first set is not an atom more probable than the second. Similarly, who would believe that the set 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 is as likely to come up winning in the English lottery, as, say, 9, 25, 28, 37, 41, and 48 – or, indeed, any other combination picked at 'random'? And yet this is so. [38] Thus, the coin-tossing scene is at least doubtful, if

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38. In this respect, probability has no 'memory' – but humans interpreting it do. This is what makes the difference. This is why a lottery player who always bets on the numbers drawn the previous week is looked upon as a harmless lunatic – and yet, his numbers have the same

not completely incredible and implausible; on the other hand, it masterfully signifies the 'bracketing,' or suspension of time ("There is an art to the building up of suspense," as Guildenstern states at the very beginning [9]; could this be the suspension of time itself?) up to the point where Ophelia and Hamlet, i.e. two major characters in *Hamlet*, both in a distraught state, storm the stage, and thereby move the action. [39] This is also the time when a coin comes down tails for the very first time (cf. Hayman 38). At this very early stage it is thus established that whenever action takes place, it has to do with the appearance of central characters from *Hamlet*: Claudius, Ophelia, Hamlet, Gertrude, or Polonius. At other 'times,' the time of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is suspended in the sense that they (as well as the players) are simply incapable of acting on their own. But of all characters, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are surely at the bottom of this scale of activity; the Player can at least claim: "I can come and go as I please" (48), which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern cannot. They are the manifest *Dasein* – "Sie sind doch immer *da*," one could say in a vulgar-Heideggerian sense.

But the tossing of coins has a scientific relevance as well. Not that this is not mentioned by Guildenstern (the more metaphysically-inclined of the two, perhaps a variant of Beckett's Vladimir, while Rosencrantz is more of the Estragon-type empiricist) in his long speech on probability theory (13–14). But the game of tossing coins can itself be linked to a famous logical trap, the so-called St. Petersburg paradox, which, however, is no real paradox, "merely quite surprising – to some." [40] Assume there are two players, A and B, tossing coins. If the coin comes down heads, B pays two pieces of silver to A. If it is tails, A throws again. If it is heads this time, B pays four pieces of silver. But if it is tails, A repeats the throw yet again. If he throws heads now, his reward is eight pieces of silver. And they carry on in this manner until A throws heads *for the first time*. B pays him 2^n pieces of silver, where n is the number of throws necessary for the *first* throw of heads. The question is, then: if B wants to pay A 'beforehand,' how many pieces of silver should he give him to make a reasonable balance? The answer is

chance to be drawn (again) as any other combination would. This memory is, incidentally, also the reason why Edward's personality disintegrates after he has abdicated; remembering his previous state as king he has no chance to cope with the new situation any more. Whether this fact bears any significance to the loss of memory on the part of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is an intriguing question that should be addressed elsewhere.

39. This is the moment where outside and stage *reality* clash for the first time.

40. Raymond Smullyan, *The Riddle of Scheherezade, and Other Amazing Puzzles, Ancient and Modern* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), p. 191.

that there is no limit, unless the number of total possible throws be restricted. For the probability of *A*'s throwing heads at the first attempt is 1/2, at the second 1/4, at the third 1/8, and so on. If he throws heads at the first attempt, his average win is 2×1/2, i.e. one piece of silver; if he throws heads at the second attempt, his average win is 4×1/4, i.e. another piece of silver, and so forth, *ad infinitum*. (This is because there is no guarantee that he should not continue throwing tails for ever, in which case the game will never end.) If, however, the number of throws is limited, *B* should pay him as many pieces of silver beforehand as there are throws. [41] Surprising as this reasoning may sound at first, it is nonetheless impeccable. [42]

No wonder that the unexpectedly long series of heads confuses and threatens Guildenstern. As he remarks at the beginning of his philosophical speech, "The scientific approach to the examination of phenomena is a defence against the pure emotion of fear" (13). His reasoning suggests both he and Rosencrantz have somehow 'fallen out of time.' He claims:

> We have been spinning coins together since I don't know when, and in all that time (if it *is* all that time) I don't suppose either of us was more than a couple of gold pieces up or down. ... The equanimity of your average tosser of coins depends upon the law, or rather a tendency, or let us say a probability, or at any rate a mathematically calculable chance, which ensures that he will not upset himself by losing too much nor upset his opponent by winning too often. This made for a kind of harmony and a kind of confidence. (14)

This 'harmony and confidence' is lost if the 'law of probability' is suspended together with time. Rosencrantz's reply to Guildenstern's reasoning is a total anticlimax: it concerns his experience of the growth of the beard as well as finger- and toenails. Rosencrantz's biology is contrasted with Guildenstern's philosophy of science.

Here 'hand' is, on the one hand, referred to in a strictly biological sense, but on the other hand, it is applied in a meta-linguistic way (an effect not foreign to Marlowe's or other Elizabethan playwrights' practices); most notably in the main protagonists' conversation about the growth of finger- and toenails, right after Guildenstern's lecture on the law of probability:

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41. Smullyan, pp. 33 and 191.

42. This is why betting on the *infinite*, that is, God, is favourable in Blaise Pascal's system; a connection for which I am indebted to Géza Kállay.

> ROS   (*Cutting his fingernails*) Another curious scientific phenomenon is
> the fact that the fingernails grow after death, as does the beard.
> GUIL   What?
> ROS   (*Loud*) Beard!
> GUIL   But you're not dead.
> ROS   (*Irritated*) I didn't say they *started* to grow after death! (*Pause,*
> *calmer.*) The fingernails also grow before birth, though *not* the beard.
> GUIL   *What?*
> ROS   (*Shouts*) Beard! What's the matter with you? (*Reflectively*) The toe-
> nails, on the other hand, never grow at all.
> GUIL   (*Bemused*) The toenails on the other hand never grow at all? (14–15)

Biology or, in a more general sense, natural science, is at the heart of these metaphors, and from the first moment it is patent that the way the parts of the human body are referred to is fairly different from the methods the Elizabethan precursors followed. Rosencrantz, of course, comes to a false conclusion as regards the growth of toenails; they grow as well, only at a speed far slower than that of the growth of fingernails. Why his 'empirical' result is false[43] is one of the key elements in the entire play: memory is deficient with both main characters. They have nothing to relate to, they have lost their bearings altogether. But the other way, that of thinking and deduction, is equally inapplicable for them, as another attempt shows; when Claudius commissions them to find out what plagues Hamlet, they role-play the conversation with the prince ("Question and answer. Old ways are the best ways," as Guildenstern asserts with a platitude [35]), only to realise that although they have all the necessary background information, they cannot decipher the strange behaviour on Hamlet's part:

> ROS   To sum up: your father, whom you love, dies, you are his heir, you
> come back to find that hardly was the corpse cold before his young
> brother popped on to his throne and into his sheets, thereby offending
> both legal and natural practice. Now why exactly are you behaving in
> this extraordinary manner?
> GUIL   I can't imagine! (38)

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43. Unless, of course, one would take the literal meaning of the statement "The toenails on the other hand never grow at all," which is by definition true. This interpretation, however, can be neither the intention of Rosencrantz, nor the conclusion of the "bemused" Guildenstern and should therefore be dismissed.

This exchange follows closely upon another, rather different instance of 'head' used in a meta-linguistic way; after they take their leave from Claudius and Gertrude (or, rather, they are left to their own devices), they are dumbfounded as to the proper use of the idioms 'to be home and safe,' 'out of one's depth,' 'over one's dead body,' and 'to be high and dry':

ROS   I want to go home.
GUIL   Don't let them confuse you.
ROS   I'm out of my step here –
GUIL   We'll soon be home and high – dry and home – I'll –
ROS   It's all over my *depth* –
GUIL   – I'll hie you home and –
ROS   – out of my head –
GUIL   – dry you high and –
ROS   (*Cracking, high*) – over my step over my head body! – I tell you it's
     all stopping to a death, it's boding to a depth, stepping to a head, it's all
     heading to a dead stop – (29)

Never a less overwhelming case of prose stichomythia! What is happening here is that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who have just found something to relate to, soon realise once again that they are 'out of their depth': the entry of Polonius, who claims to have discovered the reason of Hamlet's 'lunacy,' makes their mission quite pointless: why should they find out about it again? Their renewed confusion leads to the obsessive repetition of fixed verbal expressions about drowning, death, heads, and the like. It may not be completely 'out of joint' to link this passage to the last lines of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock":

> We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
> By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
> Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

* * *

Just as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have nothing to relate to, since they have lost their bearings altogether, Marlowe's play also reveals a desperate search for identity on the part of the main characters. In both cases the problem arises from a lack of fixed points, though obviously for different reasons. In Stoppard, all memory, or point of reference is missing as to the self-definitions of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; moreover, this is so from the very beginning. In Marlowe, however, Edward II is robbed of his identity as he is forced to abdicate and

sent to prison eventually to be murdered in the most heinous way (by means of a cruel use for a "table," rather different from the jovial setting of any *symposium*), whereas Mortimer undergoes an opposite but equally destructive change: his rise is quicker than he could get used to his new position. For this reason, he cannot remain king, or regent, for long.

Seeing how troubled a situation he has come to, Mortimer makes efforts to establish himself as the ruler of the country. This surfaces most clearly in the scene when he decides that Kent be executed (beheaded, in style). To Kent's question, "Art thou king? Must I die at thy command?" he answers: "At our command" (V.iv.102–3). The subtle play on the words "thy" and "our" reveals much about the struggle that takes place between the two noblemen. Kent, who is the brother of the dethroned king and thus more justified to be the infant king's guardian than Mortimer, addresses the self-styled monarch in the informal, to which Mortimer's answer comes in the royal plural. Here, indeed, time is out of joint, and as soon as Kent is taken away to be killed, Edward III understands that he (and even the monarchy itself) is in danger: "What safety may I look for at his hands, / If that my uncle shall be murder's thus?" (V.iv.108–9).

At almost the same time, King Edward, or no longer king, not even 'lord,' as he exclaims to the Bishop of Winchester right after his abdication (V.i.113), is force-shaved and utterly humiliated near 'Killingworth,' a conscious (?) misspelling of Kenilworth, only to endure further humiliations and physical afflictions before he is killed by Lightborn. Even after being imprisoned he cannot come to terms with his loss of the throne – and the loss of his identity with that. In this, he is reinforced by Kent, who has also been repudiated by Younger Mortimer.

> KENT   Where is the court but here? Here is the king
>   And I will visit him: why stay you [the guards] me?
> MATREVIS   The court is where Lord Mortimer remains:
>   Thither shall your honour go; and so, farewell. . . .
> KENT   O, miserable is that common-weal,
>   Where lords keep courts, and kings are lock'd in prison!
> <div align="right">(V.iii.59–64)</div>

Shortly before he is murdered, Edward II asks "Where is my crown?" (V.v.92); the crown is the only way he could still redeem his existence. But he knows the answer, too: "Gone, gone! And do I remain alive?" (V.v.93) – thus he confirms his loss of identity and basically this is the point from which there is no return for him any more.

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To be sure, Younger Mortimer and Queen Isabella are punished in a just manner, and their fall is introduced by the Queen's apparently calm statement: "Now, Mortimer, begins our tragedy" (V.vi.23). And so it happens, too, due to the initiative the young King Edward III takes and enforces with the help of *his* attendant lords (parasites).

In the case of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, however, though there may be loss of *life*, there is obviously no *loss* of identity, since they do not seem to have any particular identity at the beginning of the play either (in this, they clearly resemble Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon). Moreover, they cannot exclaim at any point that it would be the beginning of their 'tragedy,' since the audience knows from the very start of the play that they are (or will soon be) dead – if not because the viewers are familiar with *Hamlet* then because the title of the play itself suggests this. [44] Therefore, there is no real *peripeteia* to be sought in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*; if the execution of Kent was such in *Edward II*, it would evidently be in vain to look for the like in Stoppard's work. In an even more abstract interpretation of the play, there is no death at all, inasmuch as there is no real time represented on stage. As Scott puts it: "such deaths are as phoney as the murder of The Player by Guildenstern. . . . The truth of death is beyond the dramatic classifications of tragedy or comedy." [45] This is an uncanny paradox in itself; the strange deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern speak for themselves – at the end of the play they simply 'disappear.'

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One last thing that needs to be mentioned in connection with the 'play of death' is Stoppard's fascinating though not too 'original' use of the metatheatre. [46] Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are involved in tossing coins, speaking nonsense ("a lot of academic twaddle," in the words of the presumably less than unbiased Charles Marowitz [47]), and other kinds of pseudo-actions, in order to have at least the impression of being alive. This we could call the 'game of life.'

The 'play of death,' on the other hand, manifests itself in the theatre the players represent. As the Player explains:

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44. Cf. Scott, p. 24.

45. Scott, pp. 24–5.

46. If theatre can be about theatre, why should chess not be about chess, or "Lit Crit" (Stoppard's own abbr. quoted in Brassell, p. 2) about "Lit Crit" (cf. Turner, p. 3)?

47. Cited in Hayman, p. 32.

> I can do you blood and love without the rhetoric, and I can do you blood and rhetoric without the love, and I can do you all three concurrent or consecutive, but I can't do you love and rhetoric without the blood. Blood is compulsory... (25)

But the Player's comment also serves as a self-definition on Stoppard's part. Just as (according to Beckett's strivings) the venomous 'crrritics' cannot say anything about *Waiting for Godot* that should not be expounded or mocked in the play itself as a meta-text, Stoppard leaves little space for commentators to find external wisdom regarding *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. The most prominent example is given by the Player in the following words: "We keep to our usual stuff, more or less, only inside out. We do on stage the things that are supposed to happen off. Which is a kind of integrity, if you look on every exit being an entrance somewhere else" (22). This trite assertion in itself calls for an ironic interpretation of the Player's words. But the dark irony is not lost on Guildenstern, who shortly before his death eventually understands what the players are talking about. He replies in an Eliot-like manner:[48]

> No... no... not for *us*, not like that. Dying is not romantic, and death is not a game which will soon be over... Death is not anything... It's the absence of presence, nothing more... the endless time of never coming back... a gap you can't see, and when the wind blows through it, it makes no sound. ... Our names shouted in a certain dawn... a message... a summons... there must have been a moment, at the beginning, where we could have said – no. But somehow we missed it. (91–92)[49]

For all the comic elements, the ending of the play is thus rather tragic. Death is no game, yet it is an integral part of the *play*, something that is quite impossible to avoid. As the Player explains: "In our experience, most things end in death" (90). So, in the midst of farce Stoppard's play still manages to re-

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48. The reference, for instance, to the wind blowing through the gap caused by the 'absence of presence' is reminiscent of Eliot's "Gerontion" (cf. Zsuzsa Angela Láng, " 'After such knowledge, what forgiveness?' The quest for spiritual integrity in 'Gerontion' and the *Book of Job*," *The AnaChronisT* [2000] 229–249, pp. 233ff.).

49. As soon as Guildenstern understands his fate, he disappears from the stage (we only know how he ends from *Hamlet* – or, alternatively, we can conjecture on the basis of the Players' performance); however, the understanding of his tragedy relates him to Edward II. Without a kind of anagnorisis it is pointless to talk about full tragedy. Thus, though there is no peripeteia in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, anagnorisis is a term that can be interpreted in this play as well.

tain a touch of that sublime pathos which characterises Eliot's Simeon, whose words are echoed in the first words Guildenstern utters on finding out about his fate.

> Not for me the martyrdom, the ecstasy of thought and prayer,
> Not for me the ultimate vision. ("A Song for Simeon")

Non-conclusion

This paper might not have provided an "ultimate vision" even as to the tragic elements in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, or all the parallels between Stoppard's play and Marlowe's *Edward II*, and their relevance for literary theory. Nevertheless, it may have thrown some light on how various (seemingly unrelated) literary and critical texts can be linked to one another as an attempt of intertextuality. It has also questioned whether such 'ultimate,' or 'univocal' readings are at all possible. However limited this perspective may seem, it can be used for further research, possible directions for which have been pointed out during the evaluation of certain theatrical and theoretical elements above. If history (and literature, too) may be conceived of as a tapestry, even though one does not see more of it than a "hand's-breadth," [50] such analyses of one single thread may actually extend our understanding of the whole. Whether it be a tapestry, a literary text, an intertext, or history itself.

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50. Wilder, p. 381.

Stef Craps

"As if history could be circumvented"

Undying memories in Graham Swift's *The Sweet Shop Owner*

Graham Swift's debut novel *The Sweet Shop Owner* recounts the final day in the life of an ageing shopkeeper whose wife has died and who is estranged from his daughter. It diagnoses the demise of a way of life based on the principles of predictability, immobility and economic circularity. This paper shows how the impasse in the narrative present is accounted for by the characters' failure seriously to engage with trauma. The mechanisms of denial to which they take recourse prove inimical to life, and yet remain in place right until the end of the novel. Tantalizing flashes of an alternative *modus vivendi* are offered through the rebellion of the protagonist's daughter against the oppressive regime imposed by her parents, but the suggestion that there is no possibility of achieving real change is at least equally prominent in the text. Envisaging the possibility of genuine renewal appears to be a deeply problematic undertaking. In exposing the ravages wreaked by a determined evasion of a catastrophic history, *The Sweet Shop Owner* inaugurates Swift's search for a way of coming to terms with trauma that would create the conditions for the invention of a more humane, just and less destructive future, a quest which is taken up and doggedly pursued in the author's later novels.

In a 1993 interview with Marc Porée, the contemporary British author Graham Swift speaks of his dedication to the business of debunking the "glorious myths" which dominated his childhood years: "Je suis né peu de temps après la fin de la deuxième guerre mondiale, et mes romans portent la marque de ces glorieux mythes que l'on agitait beaucoup autour de moi, dans les années 50 qui furent celles de mon enfance. Il nous est revenu, à nous romanciers, de faire exploser

ces mythes."[1] Indeed, in novel after novel, Swift presents us with contemporary characters – mostly small, unheroic elderly men – who feel the foundations slipping away upon which they, and the society to which they belong, have built their existence. This process is generally triggered by a crisis situation in the protagonists' personal lives, forcing them to face up to an often traumatic individual and collective past which their way of life had been specifically designed to repress or deny. In one way or another, all of Swift's novels diagnose the failure of a mythical conception of the individual and the world in which he or she moves and explore the possibility of inventing a viable way out of the impasse in the narrative present, which usually involves a renewed and sustained engagement with the demands of a catastrophic history.

This novelistic programme finds its first articulation in *The Sweet Shop Owner*,[2] Swift's debut novel and in many ways the founding text of his oeuvre. Paying quiet homage to Joyce's *Ulysses* and Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*,[3] *The Sweet Shop Owner* depicts the final day in the life of Willy Chapman, the owner of a sweet shop in South London, interspersed with flashbacks to earlier events from his schoolboy days in 1931 to the fictional present, a sunny Friday in June 1974. As he goes about his daily routine in the usual manner (albeit with some variations), Willy's mind is cast back to his courtship of and marriage to Irene Harrison, a beautiful and wealthy woman who bought him his shop and bore him a daughter on condition that he would never seek nor offer love. About a year after Irene's death from a heart disorder, Willy receives a letter from Dorothy, his estranged daughter, thanking him for sending her £15,000 from her mother's estate and apparently ruling out any prospect of a reunion. Four days later, lonely and deserted, he commits suicide by bringing on a fatal angina attack through undue physical exertion during the day.

While *The Sweet Shop Owner* establishes many of the themes and techniques that will dominate Swift's later fictions, it is unique among his novels for several reasons. To begin with, unlike Swift's other protagonists, Willy is singu-

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1. Marc Porée, "Entretien avec Graham Swift," *La Quinzaine Littéraire* 621 (1993) 10–11, p. 10.

2. Graham Swift, *The Sweet Shop Owner* (London: Picador, 1997). All parenthetical references in the text are to this edition. The original edition was published by Allen Lane in 1980.

3. For a fairly comprehensive overview of formal and thematic similarities between *The Sweet Shop Owner* and these two modernist classics, see: John Lloyd Marsden, *After Modernism: Representations of the Past in the Novels of Graham Swift*, Diss. Ohio U, 1996 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 2000), pp. 52–58.

larly unaware of the source of all – or most of – his troubles. Right until the end, the traumatic sexual assault which his wife suffered as a teenager at the hands of a family friend remains hidden from him. This crucial incident, which Irene struggled to repress as best she could, has left an indelible mark on every aspect of their married life. It is related in a brief portion of the narrative given over to a deposition from Irene, a ghost testimony which serves to acquaint the reader with relevant facts of Irene's life before she met Willy. Whereas Swift's later protagonists are all in a position which allows them to account for the mess they are in and to find a measure of redemption, Willy has no idea as to what has hit him. Unable to figure out where things went wrong, he appears unable also to do anything about his predicament.

Moreover, whereas *Waterland*'s [4] Tom Crick and *Ever After*'s [5] Bill Unwin, for instance, achieve some form of relief by actively recalling the past and recounting their experiences, no such commitment is apparent on the part of the protagonist of *The Sweet Shop Owner*. Indeed, Willy's paralysis and passivity are reflected by the text's peculiar narrative situation: unlike Swift's other novels, all of which employ first-person narrators, *The Sweet Shop Owner* is primarily related in the third person, with the protagonist acting as the main focalizer. [6] While his prominence as a focalizer does of course imply that some form of men-

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4. Graham Swift, *Waterland* (London: Picador, 1992). Originally published by Heinemann in 1983.

5. Graham Swift, *Ever After* (London: Picador, 1992).

6. This particularity is also remarked upon by David Leon Higdon, who yet insists that the protagonist manages to arrive at "minimal enlightenment" by an alternative route (David Leon Higdon, " 'Unconfessed Confessions': The Narrators of Graham Swift and Julian Barnes," in *The British and Irish Novel since 1960*, ed. James Acheson [Houndmills: Macmillan, 1991], p. 184): "In most retrospective fiction, the act of looking back and telling the story in some way transforms the person doing the telling. Because he is not consciously telling his story, Willy Chapman's case is more problematic and open, depending as it does on the reader's comprehension of symbolic connections" (Higdon, p. 183). The one example of this procedure which he adduces is the juxtaposition, towards the end of the novel, of scenes from Willy's walk across the Common, which is instrumental in precipitating his death, and the 1931 mile run for his school, which Willy either narrowly won from or lost to Irene's brother Jack. It is not at all clear, however, how the connection suggested between these two events is indicative of Willy "finally understand[ing] the grotesque joke Irene has played upon him and on her family" and "wish[ing] to escape from the patterns she and life have imposed upon him" (Higdon, p. 183). What is clear, though, is that, for all the "heart trouble" (19) which his marriage has given him, Willy remains very assertive throughout the novel about the essential rightness of Irene's and his views and reproachful of Dorothy for having failed them.

tal activity is going on in Willy's mind, it is hardly the same level of engagement which could have been expected of a narrative agent. [7] Rather than critically reassessing the way of life responsible for his current state of desolation and abandonment, Willy continues to uphold the values and beliefs by which he has always been guided. [8] The notion of transformation or renewal is quite beyond him; in fact, the only possibility of genuine change which he can conceive lies in ending it all. [9] In *The Sweet Shop Owner*, it falls on Willy's daughter – who, born in 1949, is the author's exact contemporary – to unravel the glorious myths proliferated by her parents' generation and to envisage a different future. The odds, however, are stacked against her in this, Swift's most despairing novel.

7. Though third-person narration clearly predominates, first-person narration is not completely absent from the novel. Passages in which the third-person narrator uses Willy as a focalizer often alternate with first-person passages in which Willy directly addresses his absent daughter. Another first-person narrator who puts in a brief appearance is Irene, in the passage referred to above. Nor is it the case that the extradiegetic narrator focalizes exclusively through Willy: some passages are focalized through Mrs Cooper and Sandra, his employees at the sweet shop.

8. The assumption which I make here, namely that Willy's way of life is in need of some critical reassessment, is not shared by Alan Hickman, who concludes his otherwise incisive close reading of the novel with the curious assertion that Willy's way of life is vindicated in the end: "The third part of the novel . . . vindicates him for both his treatment of Dorry and his subservience to Irene" (Alan Forrest Hickman, *"Wedded to the World": Natural and Artificial History in the Novels of Graham Swift*, Diss. U of Arkansas, 1990 [Ann Arbor: UMI, 2000], p. 49). Hickman maintains that "the picture" is "complete" for Willy, the only character in the novel to "[stand] in a correct relation to the past," and that "salvation" awaits him (despite "the many ways he may be judged to have failed his obligations to others") – though why this should be so is not quite made clear (Hickman, p. 52).

9. It can be argued that, in some ways, *Ever After* begins where *The Sweet Shop Owner* leaves off. Telling the story of a failed suicide, *Ever After* can be read as a prolonged, tortuous attempt by the narrator to break free from the unreflective, narcissistic way of life which led up to his desperate act and to move towards a more viable and sustainable ethos. The protagonist of *The Sweet Shop Owner*, however, appears to be stuck in a state of incomprehension and frustration with no possibility of redemption this side of the grave. The relationship between the two texts is construed in a similar fashion by Wendy Jayne Wheeler in *From the Sublime to the Domestic: Postmodernism and the Novels of Graham Swift and Peter Ackroyd*, Diss. U of Sussex, 1994 (Boston Spa: British Library Document Supply Centre [British Thesis Service], 2002). Having argued that *The Sweet Shop Owner* offers a diagnosis of "Romantic 'failure' " (Wheeler, p. 114), Wheeler goes on to suggest that "the question which *Ever After* will ask is what forms of symbolization are appropriate, or can be formulated, in order to acknowledge the impossibility of the Romantic notion of fully, transcendentally, seizing hold of reality" (Wheeler, p. 116).

My reading of this text will address some of the interpretative difficulties which the novel's critics have encountered. In particular, I will attempt to clear some of the confusion surrounding Irene's and Dorothy's motivation for behaving the way they do. Michael Gorra, in his review for *The New York Times Book Review*, identifies "the novel's main weakness" as "its defective analysis of the emotional web within Willy's family, which leaves Irene and Dorry's motives obscure." [10] It seems to me that we may be able to lift at least some of the fog by reading the text against a background of trauma, both personal and national, which, in one way or another, has affected the lives of all the characters. Irene's maniacal obsession with stasis, control and predictability, for example, can be explained as a reaction formation to the trauma of her rape by Frank Hancock, a brash young estate agent whose attentions were encouraged by her parents and brothers, and – insofar as these preoccupations are shared by the wider community – as a response to the collective trauma of the First World War, which left an entire nation reeling.

Born in 1915, Irene remembers being told as a young girl about her three maternal uncles who got killed in the Great War. In her mind, she pictured them like "skittles" which had been "suddenly knocked down (it said in the Book of Remembrance they were 'fallen')" (50). Only later did she become aware of the full scale of the disaster: "And later I learnt – it was a common fact so nobody mentioned it – that everywhere there had been knocking down, great gaps and holes everywhere, families with only one or two skittles left standing" (50). Nobody mentioned it – possibly because loss was indeed a very common experience at the time, but more likely, perhaps, because the nation was actively engaged in a process of collective denial. Indeed, Irene goes on: "But that was in the past. They talked of Trade and Opportunity, Recovery, the Fruits of Peace. They wanted to forget history. They wanted new life" (50). New life – a recurring concern in Swift's work – is not to be bought, however, by covering over the disquieting reality of a death-ridden past. This attitude is epitomized by the Harrison family, who established a laundry business with the fortune Irene's mother inherited, her brothers all having died during the war. Anxious to put the past behind them, they devote themselves to the task of whitewashing history. Irene's beauty is used by her family as evidence vindicating their way of life: "They set me up into a little emblem, carried me before them like a banner, so they could

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10. Michael Gorra, "When Life Closes In," review of *The Sweet Shop Owner* by Graham Swift, *New York Times Book Review* (23 June 1985) 11.

say, Look, even beauty is on our side" (50). Irene makes the picture complete for them – literally, during a family photo shoot in Aunt Madeleine's garden, but figuratively as well. However, the viability of this collective cover-up operation is put into question by the unpunished rape suffered by Irene, which may be seen as symptomatic of the contradictions embedded in the social order, which, in the aftermath of the First World War, no one has had the courage to challenge.

Indeed, the senseless death of hundreds of thousands of young men in the trenches of the First World War revealed that a political system which promises safety, security and meaning can actually produce the worst forms of abuse, control and coercion. If the violence inherent in the system which the war has exposed is deliberately ignored rather than confronted head-on, this can only lead to a resumption or continuation of practices of oppression, subjection and victimization – as evidenced in the novel by the sexual assault upon Irene. [11] Irene finds that what has happened to her is beyond the possibility of communication, in the sense that there is no language for it. Trying to talk about the rape, all Irene manages to bring out is that Hancock "was not good to [her]" (52), a statement which is immediately dismissed as "nonsense" by her family, who are anxious to strengthen their ties with an up-and-coming estate agent who could help further their business interests (52, 53). No infusion of non-sense is allowed to disturb the carefully orchestrated patterns of meaning by means of which the Harrisons have resolved to keep history at bay. When Irene smashes her bedroom mirror to signal her rejection of the fraudulent notion which she has been made to represent – namely, that all is well with the post-war world of denial – she is carted off to a mental institution, as if to be disabused of this scandalous suggestion.

When Willy appears upon the scene, Irene's family are relieved to see her go: "She has let us down once, she may let us down again; we cannot afford that embarrassment" (55). Though under normal circumstances they might have

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11. Or, to quote Jenny Edkins: "States abuse citizens on the battlefield, in captivity, in concentration camps. The modern state cannot be assumed to be a place of safety, any more than the patriarchal family can. Political abuse in one parallels sexual abuse in the other. Both give rise to what we call symptoms of trauma" (Jenny Edkins, "Trauma, Memory and Sovereign Power," paper presented on the panel "Mediating Internationals" at the International Studies Association 42nd Annual Convention, Chicago, Illinois, 20–24 February 2001; 15 December 2002 <http://www.isanet.org/archive/edkins1.doc>). The connection between militarism and sexual oppression is of course familiar from Virginia Woolf's famous essay "Three Guineas."

been expected to object to the marriage on account of Willy's lowly background, they now jump at this opportunity to wash their hands of a renegade scioness. Willy is said to be "as simple as she's cracked," which makes their union seem "the perfect solution" (55). Indeed, the Harrisons are quick to turn their back when they see "cracks" appear in their symbolic universe which threaten to expose its claim to being a closed, self-contained structure as a sham. After all, the glorious myth of Trade and Opportunity sustaining their sense of reality was designed precisely to cover up the "great gaps and holes everywhere" which the war had left. The fatal cracks in the system which the war had brought to light were repressed rather than acknowledged.

In 1945, however, plenty of new gaps and holes are in evidence, leading Willy to suspect that the appearance of fixity and security produced by the pre-war social order had always been just that: an appearance. Surveying the damage done to shops and other buildings during the Second World War, Willy reflects that "you seemed to walk (but perhaps you always had) through a world in which holes might open, surfaces prove unsolid – like the paving-stones over which the children picked their way, returning to re-opened classrooms, dodging the fatal cracks" (96–97). However, Willy also notices that, along the bomb-scarred High Street, his fellow shopkeepers are "resuming their old ploys as if history could be circumvented and the war (what war?) veiled by the allurements of their windows" (98). In fact, he had already sensed that another cover-up was under way while witnessing the victory celebrations. The cathartic message which the bonfire around which people were dancing was meant to convey was neatly captured in a comment by Hancock: "Well – there goes the war. . . . There it goes, there it goes. All over. Forgive and forget, eh?" (86). Willy's thoughts, however, were drawn to the dead soldiers, whose memory could not simply be consumed by the fire:

> Burn it all. Burn away the memories of five years, the 'sacrifice' and 'endeavour,' the headlines, the photographs, the odour of barrack huts, the names of foreign battlefields, the 39,000 helmets, the 81,000 packs. But it wouldn't burn. For, look, behind the flames, objects immune to fire, heroes of bronze and stone, too rigid and fixed ever to dance, and black names on marble, gold names on bronze, 'undying memory,' 'their name liveth'; and one of the names under the chestnut trees by the railings, on the white school memorial, where boys born after the war would be herded on Remembrance Day, was Harrison. No, it doesn't burn, it doesn't perish. Undying memories. (85–86)

The "undying memories" at the centre of *The Sweet Shop Owner* can be re-described as instances of trauma, involving "the direct imposition on the mind of the unavoidable reality of horrific events, the taking over of the mind . . . by an event that it cannot control." [12] The reason why traumatic memories cannot die or be forgotten is that they were never fully known in the first place. Constituted, in part, by their lack of integration into consciousness, traumatic memories are not a possessed knowledge, but themselves repeatedly possess the one they inhabit.

The haunting nature of trauma is clearly evinced by another undying memory – besides the massive loss of life inflicted by the two world wars – which will turn out to play a crucial role in the novel, namely that of Irene's rape. Irene recalls the incident in the following way:

> And when he pulled me into the hedge on the way back from a drive to Brighton (how sickly the grass smelt and the stems of cow-parsley) I did not assume it was wickedness at first. He looked at me as if I should have expected this. He pulled up my clothes like a man unwrapping a parcel. 'All right,' he said, 'all right, now,' as if we had both been anticipating. I struggled. The sun was in my face. This was like a performance in which people were really stabbed and wounded. He needed his victory. . . . I only knew I wasn't prepared. Life, life. (52)

Throughout her life, Irene suffers severe and frequent asthma attacks during which she seems to relive the assault, which, in its unexpectedness and horror, she could not fully assimilate as it occurred. [13] These attacks are triggered by

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12. Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996), p. 58.

13. The traumatic event is designated by the words "all right, now," which are frequently invoked in the novel to mark key climactic moments, such as the instant of Willy's death (222), the decisive moment in the mile race (198) and the taking of a picture during the Harrison family's photo shoot (74). In each case, someone is struck, in one way or another, by the overwhelming force of the present; he or she is either "stabbed," "wounded," killed or "captured by the moment." It is tempting, of course, to read the phrase "all right, now" as a prefiguration of *Waterland*'s more fully theorized notion of the "Here and Now," which is defined as "that which we seldom glimpse unscathed – for it appears more often . . . dressed in terror" (Swift, *Waterland*, p. 51); a "knife blade" which punctures the "thin garment" of history (Swift, *Waterland*, p. 36) and whose "surprise attacks" announce that "time has taken us prisoner" (Swift, *Waterland*, p. 61). Indeed, according to Wheeler, "The 'Now' in *The Sweet Shop Owner* is clearly, like the 'Here and Now' in *Waterland*, the moment of danger in which the Real erupts" (Wheeler, p. 115). The relationship between photography and trauma cau-

stimuli such as grass and blazing sunlight which recall the original event: "I couldn't go near the grass or lounge in the sunlight without suffering" (52). The element of struggle is apparent in a vision which Willy has of his wife on their honeymoon in Dorset. During an evening walk along the cliff tops, Willy suddenly sees Irene "flailing in the current," "struggling in the gold water, beating her arms to be free of it, though her face was as golden as the waves" (31). This vision becomes reality (or just about) later the same evening, when Irene is seized with a fit of asthma, brought on, it seems, by the fatal combination of grass, cow-parsley and sunlight: "her chest was heaving, long jagged breaths came from her throat, and she tore at the stem he held out to her, as if she were really drowning, clutching the straw, as if it were closing in to suffocate her, that golden summer-time" (32–33). Willy will never be able to shake off the vision of "arms lifted in a golden sea" (39), his wife's "drowning expression" and "the silent cry on her lips – Save me, save me" (102), which, many years later, he realizes "[he]'d never stopped hearing" (183). At some point, he is struck by the possibility that, contrary to what he had initially assumed to be the case, Irene is not so much drowning and reaching out for help during her asthma attacks as frantically fending off some forcible intrusion from without: "Was it to be saved she gasped and clawed, or to be left alone? For sometimes she clutched with those flailing hands, sometimes fended. And it was never, it seemed, against the illness she struggled but against something else" (128).[14] This "something else" is the closest Willy will ever come to understanding his wife's predicament. Unlike the reader, he has hardly any knowledge of Irene's past: "She never did say much about the time before we met" (150).[15] Deprived of this vital information, he remains in the dark as to the exact nature of her symptoms, which the

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tiously suggested in *The Sweet Shop Owner* is pursued at some length in *Out of this World* (Graham Swift, *Out of this World* [London: Picador, 1997; originally published by Viking in 1988]). As "an instant which occurs once and once only" and yet "remains permanently visible" (Swift, *Out of this World*, p. 205), the photograph can be seen to condense the particular temporality of trauma, which is described in the following terms: "what is over in an instant just goes on happening" (Swift, *Out of this World*, p. 109).

14. The same ambivalence is apparent in another comment Willy makes on the nature of his wife's illness. Having posited that "She could never get enough air," he goes on to voice a suspicion that the opposite was the case: "Or was it that air assailed her?" (218).

15. In fact, Willy specifies later on that the only thing Irene ever divulged to him about her past was where the money which had allowed her family to start up the laundry business came from: "She never talked about the past, but she told me about the money . . ." (222).

reader, however, has no difficulty recognizing as traumatic re-enactments of the rape incident which Irene experienced as a young woman.

Irene's way of handling the trauma of her rape closely resembles the survival strategy which her family adopted in the face of the terrible losses sustained during the First World War. At the home in Surrey to which her parents had sent her, Irene devises a coping mechanism – "I had found my balance, struck my bargain" – which bows to the family tradition of evasion and denial: "I was a skittle, Willy, but I wouldn't fall" (54). The plan for stabilizing her life which she conceives there, and which she will never veer from, invests heavily in a fictitious sense of fixity and security. Irene dedicates herself to the pursuit of peace – or, at least, a particular version thereof: "That was Irene's word: Peace" (88). The novel presents Irene's conception of peace by setting it in opposition to notions such as "action," "excitement," "change," "newness," "things happening," "nonsense," "falling," "touching," encountering "the real thing" and, ultimately, to life itself. As Willy points out, peace, for Irene, amounts to "a kind of not acting" (77). She seeks to bring life to a halt, to achieve an ideal steady state in which everything would be fixed so that a skittle would run no risk of falling. What seems to have given her this idea is a scene at the home in which she imagined, sitting in an easy chair by the window, that by "concentrating hard" she could somehow ensure that "the orderly wouldn't sink through his shiny floor and the gardener wouldn't slip from his ladder. I was responsible" (54). Just as she was made to feel responsible for upholding her family's mythical vision of the world after the First World War, so Irene, after her rape, assumes responsibility for maintaining all things in a perpetual state of balance. The ambition to create a zero-risk environment, in which the self would be immune to anything that might adversely affect its supposed integrity, inspires the various pieces of advice which Irene dispenses to Willy, and which resonate throughout the text: "Don't move, keep still" (72); "Nothing must be touched, nothing must be changed" (55); "Let nothing happen" (43).[16] Unsurprisingly, Irene sets great

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16. It may be noted that the meaning of this notion of "nothing happening" undergoes a radical change in the transition from *The Sweet Shop Owner* to *Waterland*. Whereas in the former it is used to characterize a life of routine and habit at a deliberate remove from the chaos of the outside world, in the latter it functions as a figure for the intrusive traumatic reality which both invites and defies such forms of evasion. *The Light of Day* again reverts to the earlier model (Graham Swift, *The Light of Day* [London: Hamish Hamilton, 2003]). As in *The Sweet Shop Owner*, the notion of nothing happening is invoked there to describe the ostensibly safe, peaceful and unexciting world of affluent suburbia: "This home-and-garden

store by "unmoving objects," filling her house with "frozen items of stock" (220), mostly crystal and porcelain. After all, such "lifeless, lasting things" (221), which not only "remain" (218) or "endure" (83) but also "keep their value" (148), fully exemplify the ideal of immobility and permanent stasis to which she aspires.

If the world cannot be brought to a standstill altogether, its movement must at least be seen to conform to general rules or predictable patterns. Irene's yearning for pattern [17] manifests itself both in the way in which she organizes her domestic life and in the attitude which she adopts towards world-historical events. In both areas, she can rely on the support of her husband, who has always been attracted to the notion of "regularity and order" (24). As a printer's apprentice, Willy "liked the daily routine, the taking of orders" (25). His predisposition to docility and passivity goes hand in hand with a deterministic conception of history, leading him to believe that history is "only a pattern" which leaves no room for individual agency or "action" (197). He remembers thinking, as a schoolboy sitting in a history class, that "Henry VIII and his wives were like characters in costume. They weren't real, but they didn't know it. History fitted them into patterns" (44). In the same vein, he once wrote a contentious essay arguing that "Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries because he'd have done so anyway" (190). History, for Willy, is something that "came to meet you" (32): "things would come to you anyway, and when they did they would already be turned into history" (189). The course of his own life he believes to have been similarly predetermined, "set out like a map" (189), so that as a young man he might in principle already have known his older self: "Perhaps I knew him then, perhaps I was already his memory . . ." (189). Seen from this perspective, making

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land, this never-never land where nothing much is ever meant to happen. These Wimbledons and Chislehursts" (Swift, *The Light of Day*, p. 19); "The lights of houses through trees, quiet streets where nothing happens" (Swift, *The Light of Day*, p. 215). Like Swift's debut novel, *The Light of Day* highlights the discomforting fact that this peace, however carefully maintained, can suddenly be disturbed by an eruption of violence: "Something happens" (Swift, *The Light of Day*, p. 3); "It happened here" (Swift, *The Light of Day*, p. 203). Irrespective of the terminology in which it is couched, however, the basic tension between the forces of order and disorder, of trauma and post-traumatic defence, is a constant concern in all of Swift's novels.

17. The notion of pattern-making in *The Sweet Shop Owner* anticipates that of storytelling in *Waterland*, which serves roughly the same purpose, namely "making sense of madness" (Swift, *Waterland*, p. 225) and thus throwing up a bulwark against an essentially unbearable reality: "As long as there's a story, it's all right" (Swift, *Waterland*, p. 63). Moreover, in both texts a naive investment in the redemptive power of pattern-making or story-telling is exposed as a recipe for personal and historical disaster.

plans for the future appears as a rather pointless occupation: "He had planned nothing. Not for himself. And yet he knew: plans emerged. You stepped into them" (24). This outlook on life makes him an ideal partner for Irene, who, "meant to command, not obey" (25), is eager enough to give him new patterns, first the predictable formulas of courtship, then the routine of the shopkeeper: "Yes, that was pattern. That was not adventuring. She had said, Why don't you? And he did. And afterwards it was precisely the predictable formula that pleased him" (28). Life becomes a series of patterns for Irene and Willy; patterns, moreover, which are perfectly in line with social norms and expectations. A shopkeeper in a nation of shopkeepers, Willy easily blends in with the crowd, as does his wife, who "sheltered behind that same disguise" (99). Always and only doing "the thing to do" (47), and doing it "properly" (12), Irene and Willy conspire to lead a neatly arranged life of respectable conventionality.

The sheer uneventfulness and predictability of their own lives they expect to see reflected in the world at large. One way in which grand history enters the novel is through the medium of newspapers, which both Willy and Irene have a peculiar fascination with. Willy only ever scans the headlines of the papers which he sells at his shop, so as not to appear totally ignorant in front of his customers, but he does take genuine pleasure in them: "He didn't read them, but he liked them. Their columns, captions and neat gradations of print. The world's events were gathered into those patterns" (17). What appeals to Willy, then, is not so much the actual "content" of the newspapers, which he dismisses as "unimportant," but the reassuring sense of order and direction which their particular "layout" creates (24). Irene, who, unlike her husband, is a voracious newspaper reader, is interested ultimately in the same effect. Keeping up with the papers is a way for her to "keep abreast of the facts" (31), to "tak[e] note of the facts, as if the course of things was predictable and she had only to observe its fulfilment" (60). It even seems to Willy that Irene has a way of speaking "as if she'd already arranged for what she said to happen" (78). More than her husband, however, Irene is aware that adherence to pattern and form does not come naturally to the world but has to be forcefully imposed upon it. Indeed, by reading the papers she attempts to "hold sway over the array of facts and regard them all with cold passivity. And sometimes, indeed, it was as if she didn't read at all, her head hidden behind the outspread page, but peered through it, as through a veil, at a world which might default or run amok if it once suspected her gaze was not upon it" (17). Irene's self-assumed responsibility for establishing stability thus appears to

extend far beyond the bounds of her domestic life to include the world of public affairs and international politics.

The precarious balance of the interbellum period is thoroughly upset, however, by the onset of the Second World War. While the entire world runs amok, Irene and Willy manage to remain essentially untouched by the upheaval. Having incurred an injury in trying to fix a sign above his shop, Willy is exempted from active service, and works instead in the Royal Engineer Stores. The duty which he is required to perform as a quartermaster's clerk, namely the issue of equipment to new recruits who will face combat overseas, is merely an extension of his work at the sweet shop. Indeed, his new job actually allows him to carry on in much the same manner as before. Just as he used to keep track of the stock in his own shop, so he now keeps a running count of the helmets and side-packs he hands out. These numbers he duly records in his letters to Irene, who, having found employment at the Food Office, replies by quoting the number of ration books that she has counted. Willy is struck, for the very first time, by the discrepancy which he perceives to exist between the soothing routine which thus establishes itself and the rampant chaos of the war to which it is supposed to bear some relationship: "And here suddenly was the real thing. And yet how did it express itself? In barrack huts and wire fencing, in numbers, inventories, lists? 360 capes, 360 helmets, 720 side-packs. What was the connection?" (59). Willy is haunted by this question as he ponders the strictly regulated environment of the camp in Hampshire where he carries out his counting and accounting tasks. There appears to yawn a gulf between the reality of war and the careless "pattern making" (57) in which both he and the soldiers whom he sees marching in drill formation are engaged: "Left, right. The patterns shifted, the figures grouped, regrouped over the gravel. '42, '43, '44: while the headlines spoke (what was the connection?) of faraway action" (78). Once taken for granted, the connection between reality and the various patterns in which it is framed comes under some strain during the war.

There is a clear suggestion, at this point, that the practice of pattern-making amounts to a strategy of reality-denial which works to keep the self in a state of aloofness and disengagement. For one thing, the obsessive phrase "What was the connection?" becomes associated with the words "What war?" (79), which are repeatedly used in regard of people's attempts, in the wake of the Second World War, to turn their back on a traumatic past by reverting to business as usual. Not only do they crop up in the description of the shopkeepers "resuming their old

ploys as if history could be circumvented and the war (what war?) veiled by the allurements of their windows" (98), but they are also invoked to denounce the anaesthetization of society through the commodification of history as entertainment: "John Mills and Kenneth More in cheerful re-enactments of the war. History enshrined in make-believe. Like the lurid stories in the boys' comics he sold in the shop: grim-jawed fighter-pilots and ogreish Germans. What war? A packet of gum please, and another card in the series 'Great Battles of World War Two'" (131). That fitting the world into patterns carries similar connotations of detachment and disinvolvement is implied, also, by Willy's reflection that the drive to absorb an unsettling event into an existing scheme, such as the annals of history, can be linked to an underlying desire not to become implicated in it: "So Private Rees said, smacking his lips over a newspaper bearing the news of the occupation of Paris: 'History, that's what it is.' As if the statement would save him, immune as a rock, from an invasion of Germans and all the outrages of war" (59). The immunity of a rock is, of course, exactly the condition aspired to by Irene, the master pattern-maker.

Willy's awareness of cracks in the system is never of such a kind, though, as to pose any real threat to the hard-fought stability of his married life. Whenever he has any doubts or misgivings concerning the viability of the principles by which he and his wife have chosen to live their lives, Irene's commanding gaze stops him from putting these into words, let alone acting upon them and disturbing the balance: "But such mutinies could never have occurred, for her glance would have caught him before he slipped and fell: 'Play your part.'" (136). The power of Irene's gaze is mobilized, then, not only to prevent an impetuous world from running amok, but also – and more successfully – to hold an occasionally unruly husband in check. Another aspect of their marital arrangement which Willy sometimes seems to want to reconsider – though again to no avail – is its lovelessness. Besides reducing the outside world to a set of predictable patterns, Irene also conceives human relationships according to a strictly controllable economic model within which there is no place for any kind of emotional involvement. Intersubjectivity is reduced to a simple trade-off in this novel, crammed as it is with references to exchange, deals, bargains, agreements, prices, investments, return, debts, forfeits, rewards and bribes. Irene's marriage to Willy in particular is presented throughout the text as a bargain whose terms Irene established right from the beginning. It is a contractual agreement which excludes conjugal love from the marital equation for the "gifts" of the shop and a

daughter: "And all I ask in return for this is that there be no question of love" (22); "No, that was not included, not part of the bargain. Wasn't the rest enough?" (31). A fairly typical example of the economic dynamic on which their marriage is based can be found in the following passage, which shows Irene and Willy striving to pay off the respective debts they owe each other: "Her face showed only the pinched look of someone labouring to pay a debt. So that he felt, through that lean winter of '48, while her womb swelled, that he'd inflicted some penalty upon her for which he, in turn, must make amends by never showing gladness; taking her hint, leaving the house at six, standing obediently behind his counter: counting, counting the endless change so as to pay his own debt" (101). The reason why Irene is so anxious to keep love out of the picture is that such an uncontrollable force would disrupt the strict economy of exchange, of give and take and of settling scores. Indeed, in Willy's mind, love is closely associated with the notion of "action," which is, of course, complete anathema to Irene: "But he didn't add – perhaps that was only for the heroes, writing from the field of action – 'I love you'" (62). Willy realizes all too well that a declaration of love "would alarm her, more than war, more than bombs and blackness. No, she would say, that wouldn't be a good plan" (65).

Despite occasional reservations about the businesslike nature of his marriage, Willy ends up conducting his relations with other people according to the same economic logic. "They were paid" is his silent farewell to his shop assistants and paper boys as he slips them generous bonuses on the last day of his life (16). Even his relationship with Smithy the barber, the closest thing he has to a friend, Willy fails to conceive as anything other than some sort of commercial transaction: "It was a bargain: he got his shave, Smithy got a pinch of tobacco and free magazines for his customers" (36). In fact, almost all forms of interaction between any two characters in the novel turn out to be governed by economic principles. The friendship between Irene's brother Paul and Hancock, which leads the latter to offer the former a job, is ultimately a matter of business interests: "the two friends struck their terms, made their bargain" (150). Mrs Cooper secretly hopes that her attempts to ingratiate herself with Willy will earn her the "reward" of a life of leisure (93). She wants Willy to marry her, not (primarily) because she loves him, but in order that "[she] will no longer have to work" (33). [18] Yet another character who lives by the principle of "[s]ervice ren-

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18. Though this sentence is taken from a passage focalized through Willy, Mrs Cooper herself later confirms the accuracy of Willy's assessment of her. Daydreaming about marrying her

dered; reward given" is Sandra Pearce, an attractive sixteen-year-old whose dealings with the other sex are described in starkly economic terms: "she had something to offer. And she'd calculate in return *his* assets and give, or not give (though, usually, she gave) the appropriate favour. But all this had become a kind of business. All predictable; nothing new" (105).

The novel subtly but unmistakably intimates that the rigid immobility and monotonous predictability of the characters' lives amounts to a kind of death-in-life, a condition of sterile stagnation but little removed from death. An adherence to a strictly regulated economy of exchange which reduces all relations to questions of barter appears to turn people into lifeless objects. Reading *The Sweet Shop Owner*, one is struck by the frequency with which the novel's characters – and especially its protagonist – get compared to toys, puppets, pins, skittles, statues, machines and dummies. Willy's body even seems to undergo a literal stiffening process over the course of the narrative. The accident with the ladder leaves him with a stiff leg, and in the following years and decades the stiffness gradually spreads to the rest of his body: "And in the shop I felt my face, over the counter, go hard like a shell. I thought, this is what happens: you harden, you set in your mould" (187). The climax of this development is reached when Willy is finally transfixed into "a cold, stone statue" by death (10). In fact, his marriage had already been placed under the sign of death by the remarkable simile in the following sentence: "The sun shone at both their funerals, making the white graves in the cemetery sparkle like wedding cakes" (46). The novel also sets up a revealing parallel between Willy and the lilac tree in the garden which he is repeatedly said to be watching intently from the chair by the living-room window. While Willy sits waiting for life to end and death to come, the lilac tree, the only part of the garden to catch some sun, is gradually enveloped in shade: "The shadow had crept further up the lilac tree" (220). Significantly, however, the lilac's sunlit crown, with which Willy's life becomes identified, is described as being dead already: "The lilac was half within the shadow of the house, but its upper leaves, where the mauve cones had already bloomed and died, fluttered in the sunshine" (218). The implication is that Willy has been in a state of lifelessness all along: death caught up with him long before his heart actually stops beating.

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employer, she imagines that "they'd sell the shop. They wouldn't need it anyway, with all the money (she'd find out how much it really was) *Mrs* Chapman had left. They'd simply stop work. And they'd take, at last, that holiday. That long, long holiday . . ." (157–158).

Physical death occurs when Willy is forced to confront the illusory nature of the fantasy of a reunion with his daughter which has sustained him ever since his wife died. The realization that Dorothy will not return home despite the money which he has sent her – "She will not come" (222) – disrupts the symbolic universe in which he lives. The old economic logic of exchange, according to which a gift is always expected to be reciprocated (in this case, by the daughter's return), appears to have lost its validity. Seeing his long-held beliefs contradicted, Willy hastens towards death. [19] In fact, the situation in which Willy finds himself at the end of his life is structurally analogous to that of Irene's father, who dies on the eve of victory in the Second World War. A workaholic like Willy, who also came into money through marriage, suffers from a heart condition [20] and ignores doctor's orders to take it easy, Mr Harrison is crushed by the death of his son Jack – or, more likely, by the realization that "Money won't bring Jack back" (81). Money always having been his guiding principle (81), Mr Harrison breaks down when faced with the incontrovertible fact of a loss which no amount of money can compensate. Like Willy, who becomes aware that money will not bring Dorothy back, Mr Harrison can no longer connect his mythical, utilitarian way of life with the distressing reality at hand: "His face was grey and dumb and held in suspense as if he couldn't make some connection" (80). For Willy, too, the purportedly self-evident connection between pattern and reality, whose precariousness he had already sensed during the Second World War, has become altogether untenable.

Even so, his death appears to be specifically intended as a punishment to his daughter for violating the terms of the agreement which he believes her to be inescapably bound by. As such, it constitutes an attempt posthumously to reinstate the rules of exchange which Dorothy has transgressed by accepting his money and yet refusing to honour the obligation that came with it. Indeed, the circumstances of Willy's suicide are carefully orchestrated to inflict maximum devastation on his daughter's life. For one thing, he has planned his death day to coincide with Dorothy's twenty-fifth birthday: "And today, Dorry, is your birth-

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19. As the narrator of *Ever After*, another suicide (albeit failed), well knows: "People die when their world will no longer sustain them" (Swift, *Ever After*, p. 24).

20. The fact that Mr Harrison, Willy and Irene all die from a heart condition is of course highly significant. Often disavowed by their owners – Mr Harrison, for instance, "swears there's nothing wrong with him" (82) – defective hearts can be seen to function as a metaphor for the sheer heartlessness of the characters' utilitarian way of life, i.e. its failure to create a healthy sense of self and community.

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day. He could almost smile at the neatness of it" (11). What is more, Willy makes sure that he will be found sitting in the chair by the window in exactly the same pose in which his daughter last saw him when, two months earlier, she had come back unannounced to rob her parents' house. As Catherine Miquel points out, "En faisant en sorte que sa fille le trouve mort dans l'exacte position où elle l'avait quitté et 'trahi,' deux mois auparavant, Chapman l'accuse implicitement de l'avoir tué, et la condamne à rester hantée par le souvenir du Père symboliquement assassiné, transformé en 'cold statue,' c'est-à-dire en Commandeur accusateur, plein de reproches amers envers l'Ingrate, sinon l'Impie." [21] Willy's apparent vindictiveness towards his daughter finds a counterpart in Mr Harrison's fanaticism about the war, which boils down to a perverse attempt to reinstall a compensatory mechanism allowing him to make at least some sense of the loss of his son. Though he realizes all too well that "money won't bring Jack back," Mr Harrison yet insists on the need to make the enemy pay for his son's death: "Jack's killed, we must win and wipe all the Germans off the map" (82). Defeated by a situation of irredeemable loss which gives the lie to their utilitarian principles, both Willy and Mr Harrison in the final stage of their life resort to a vicious fantasy of retribution which only reiterates the discredited logic of exchange.

The only character in the novel to show a serious determination to challenge the pervasive economy of exchange governing the world of the text is Dorothy, whose very name connotes resistance to the hegemony of economic idolatry. Whereas names such as "Chapman" and "Irene," meaning "merchant" and "peace" respectively, have an obvious relationship to their respective bearers, Dorothy's name cannot be so readily explained from inside the novelistic universe. Yet it is the only name whose meaning is made explicit in the text: " 'Dorothy': we called you 'Dorothy.' . . . But it was only years later that you yourself, coming home from school (how quick you were to learn things) explained what it meant. Dorothea: God's gift" (112). In her parents' scheme of things, however, Dorothy is Irene's "gift" to Willy, i.e. "[her] side of the bargain" (10): "You were her gift" (186). Like all other gifts in the novel, Dorothy is made to serve a function in a narrowly contractual relationship governed by a principle of self-

21. Catherine Miquel, "Immortal Longings: La mort en représentation dans l'oeuvre de Graham Swift," *Etudes Britanniques Contemporaines* 17 (1999) 131–148, p. 143.

interest. [22] Indeed, the only type of gift thinkable within the utilitarian discourse prevalent in the novel reduces to a form of calculation: it obligates the recipient to offer some counter-gift in return. [23] However, apparently unbeknownst to her parents, Dorothy's name exceeds this limited and limiting vision by introducing a transcendent principle into the text which interrupts the immanent logic of reciprocal and symmetrical exchange.

Interestingly, the notion of "God's gift" is central to Derrida's recent inquiry into the nature of responsibility and justice, which presents itself as a deliberate attempt to formulate an alternative to dominant conceptualizations steeped in an economy of exchange. Derrida finds inspiration in the Christian tradition, which, in his reading, announces a new way of acceding to responsibility that "comes from a gift received from the other, from the one who, in absolute transcendence, sees me without my seeing, holds me in his hands while remaining inaccessible." [24] The *mysterium tremendum*, as this experience is called, rouses one to the responsibility of making a gift of death, i.e. of sacrificing oneself for the wholly other – which Christianity represents by the name of God – without any hope of return: "The gift made to me by God as he holds me in his gaze and in his hand while remaining inaccessible to me, the terribly dissymmetrical gift of the *mysterium tremendum* only allows me to respond and only rouses me to the responsibility it gives me by making a gift of death [*en me donnant la mort*], giving the secret of death, a new experience of death." [25] Such a sacrificial self-offering, which expects no benefit in return, would be a true, "*aneconomic*" gift, i.e. a gift which "interrupts economy" in that it "suspend[s] economic calcula-

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22. In a way, Irene's traumatic experience of being reduced to a sexual object by Hancock is mirrored by the objectification suffered by Dorothy, who is treated as a commodity in an essentially economic exchange between her parents. Both characters are perceived as presents waiting to be unwrapped: in assaulting Irene, Hancock acts like "a man unwrapping a parcel" (52), and as a newborn baby, Dorothy strikes Willy as "a little thing, wrapped like a gift" when he comes to visit his wife in hospital (10).

23. On her wedding night, for example, Irene undresses "as if she were unwrapping a gift, as much as to say: 'There, see the reward you have got. And do you think such a reward will not ask certain things in return?' " (30). Even her smiles she only ever gives to her husband as a form of payment for services rendered: "She only took and squeezed his hand now and then and gave him those short, quick smiles that were like small coins thrown without fuss to someone who has done a service" (29).

24. Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995), p. 40.

25. Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, p. 33.

tion" and thus "no longer gives rise to exchange." [26] It would lead me too far to enter further into the details of this argument; for my purposes, the important point is that, in Derrida's thinking, the notion of "God's gift" is closely associated with a conception of ethics as radical non-reciprocal generosity which represents a decisive break with the hegemonic system of economic circularity.

Dorothy is a dissenter not only in name but also in character and in deed. In many respects, she is the exact antithesis of her parents, especially her mother. Whereas Irene is frequently depicted as being in a state of drowning, Dorothy surprises Willy by not being afraid of water (119). As a young child, she does not "flail [her] arms" while being baptized (108), nor does she "scream and struggle" when her father gives her a bath (114) – all this in marked contrast to her mother, who does of course display such behaviour during her asthma attacks. Later, Dorothy even becomes "a good swimmer," with a particular talent for back-stroke, diving and – significantly – life-saving (119). While her parents "don't dance" (75, 87), preferring to remain static and immobile, Dorothy "had that lightness and deftness of step as if [she]'d have liked to dance – if only someone had let [her]" (117). She challenges the status quo maintained by her parents on the family holidays, which are invariably spent in Dorset, in a town Irene and Willy are familiar with from their honeymoon: "We might have gone elsewhere, to Wales, to Norfolk, but (since we had to go) she was against anywhere new. Nothing new" (117). However, Dorothy makes Willy realize that Irene's stipulation cannot possibly be fulfilled: "Yet (how could you defy her?) everything was eternally new; the old cry of the sea-gulls, the old tingle of the breeze, the old mystery of the rock-pools – how you loved to squat and explore those delicate little worlds" (117). From Irene's point of view, the choice of Dorset as holiday destination is particularly apt. Very set in her ways herself, Irene hopes to impose the same fate upon her daughter: "Dor-set," i.e. Dorothy set in her mother's ways. Willy appears to confirm this derivation when he wonders: "And did you sense how that scene in which you stood for the first time had already been encountered before and its limits fixed?" (117). [27] However, Dorothy

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27. A similar sentiment informs another question which Willy puts to his absent daughter: "And did you feel: whatever I do, she will have predicted it; whatever I do, it will not be my own?" (116). Having first given birth to Dorothy in fulfilment of a contractual obligation, Irene now seems to expect her daughter's life to unfold according to a predictable pattern.

refuses to be boxed in by her mother's expectations. [28] One such summer, knowing her parents' eyes to be upon her and her head "set in defiance," she walks along the top of the breakwater, not on the horizontal planks, but on the narrow, seven or eight feet high uprights, leaping from one to the next (191). Her willingness to take risks – "how you needed to run risks," Willy muses – scares her mother witless but is secretly admired by her father, who watches her progress with open mouth (119).

Dorothy has little patience with the patterns established by her parents. After school, she sometimes drops in on Willy at the shop, disrupting his daily routine and rekindling his long-suppressed desire for excitement rather than peace: "Why did you have to come into the shop? To disturb those patterns? To see my look of disguised excitement, faint apology, as I greeted you from behind the counter?" (138). Moreover, she defies her parents' motto "Nothing touches you, you touch nothing" (44) not only with her adolescent determination to "make [her] mark" (140) but even with her sleeping pose: "Hair tumbled, one arm raised on the pillow, as though to touch someone" (13). Irene's yearning for uneventfulness – "Let nothing happen" (43) – is also completely alien to Dorothy, who takes a keen interest in things happening in the world around her, both locally and globally. Sitting at the dinner table with her parents, she insists on bringing up for discussion momentous events which upset some long-maintained balance, much to the consternation of her mother. For example, Dorothy announces, with an offence-giving "note of adventure" in her voice, that her uncle Paul has run off with Hancock's wife: "Something has happened" (152). On another occasion, having read the papers, she provokes Irene's anger by raising the subject of the Cuban missile crisis, then in full swing: "Doesn't it bother you – that there might be a war?" (140). However, Irene "refused to be

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28. Images of imprisonment and confinement abound in *The Sweet Shop Owner*, underlining the characters' immobility and isolation. As a teenager, Irene "cowered inside [her] looks like a captive" (50), a simile which recurs in the description of a picture which Mr Harrison took of his three children: "The developed photograph would show her like some captive between two vigilant sentinels" (69). Many years later, Irene strikes Phil the paper boy as "someone trapped in a glass case" the one time he sees her, standing behind the window of her house as he comes round to deliver her papers (185). Irene's brothers, for their part, are said to "have the looks of statues, trapped in immovable poses" (51), and Mrs Cooper is pictured as "an animal in a cage" (158), as is Willy (214). Moreover, lying in bed, Willy is compared to "a toy in its box" (11), and going out of his shop, he only walks into "the hot envelope of the street" (160).

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drawn": "All this excitement, this nonsense. I won't have it. I won't suffer it" (17). [29] The 1962 missile crisis, the climax of the Cold War and the closest the world ever came to nuclear Armageddon, represents an eruption of non-sense which exposes the fragility of the equilibrium established by Irene and Willy's generation. Dorothy accuses her parents of irresponsibly repressing this unsettling event, which not only threatens to disturb the meaningful patterns into which Irene habitually fits world events, but might well spell the end of the world as such: "Neither of you care! What do you read the papers for if you don't care what happens? It's not something you can just ignore –" (141). [30]

Her desire to break with the stifling and oppressive milieu of her family is apparent from her ominous decision, against her teachers' wishes, to play the part of Shylock's daughter Jessica rather than that of Portia in her school's staging of *The Merchant of Venice*. [31] Jessica has, of course, a very different relationship with her father than Portia with hers. Whereas the latter obeys her father's commands to the letter, the former runs away from her father's house with her lover, taking some bags of ducats and precious stones, and converts to Christianity. The Shakespearean intertext thus anticipates both Dorothy's desertion of Willy and the brief return visit on which she loots her father's house. [32] Moreover, *The Merchant of Venice* is commonly seen to celebrate the triumph of the Christian concepts of mercy, love and self-sacrifice over the narrowly materialist worldview and the unyielding, legalistic conception of justice associated with Jewishness. The reference to Shakespeare thus seems to afford further proof of

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29. It may be noted that Irene's out-of-hand dismissal of Dorothy's attempt to discuss this explosive topic with her parents recalls the reaction of Irene's family to her suggestion that Hancock "was not good to [her]" (52): "What nonsense" (52, 53).

30. Clearly, this scene contains the germs of the obsession with the prospect of nuclear annihilation which haunts Tom Crick's students in *Waterland*.

31. William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, in *The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988).

32. Though Willy might have smelt a rat after seeing the play, he comes away from it none the wiser, as he "didn't understand" the lines spoken by the actors (145). Nor does he recognize his own predicament in a line from Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," which he reads over Dorothy's shoulder: "Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss . . ." (147). Though the connection between Keats's "cold pastoral" – or, for that matter, the china shepherd and shepherdess on the dressing-table who, being "for ever on the point of flying into each other's arms" (10), faithfully re-enact this Keatsian scene – and his own loveless marriage is fairly obvious, Willy is totally bewildered by these "lines of verse . . . which I didn't understand" (147).

the aspiration to a different, aneconomic ethics implicit in Dorothy's name. [33] Modern accounts of the play, however, tend to focus on the issue of anti-Semitism and draw attention to the way in which values like mercy and charity are abused by the play's Christian characters, who are exposed as power-hungry, unscrupulous and vengeful hypocrites. [34] Jessica's position is thus rendered deeply ambiguous, the apparent success of her escape from the restrictive parental regime of relentless commercialism, self-interest and vindictiveness being compromised by the duplicity and expedience of her fellow Christians, who are revealed to be no strangers to these supposedly Jewish vices.

In *The Sweet Shop Owner*, too, the daughter's escape is surrounded by question marks. Like Jessica, Dorothy clearly succeeds in physically transcending the "narrow bounds" (184) of her parents' humdrum existence. Her decision to move to Bristol with her boyfriend even manages to catch her mother off guard: "She raised her face and said – she who'd always seemed able to predict things – 'What now? What happens now?'" (183). However, there are several indications in the text that Dorothy has absorbed her parents' values more thoroughly than she would presumably care to admit, so that mentally,

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33. As a matter of interest, Jessica's rejection of parental control, like Dorothy's, is inscribed in her name. "Jessica" has been traced back to Hebrew *Iscah*, which Elizabethan commentators glossed as meaning "she that looketh out" (Austin C. Dobbins and Roy W. Battenhouse, "Jessica's Morals: A Theological View," *Shakespeare Studies* 9 [1976] 107–120, p. 108). This meaning is reflected in Jessica's looking "out at window" (Shakespeare, II.v.40) for her lover's coming. In doing so, she disobeys her father's repressive decree that she stay inside the house and close the shutters on the outside world (Shakespeare, II.v.28–36). In a similar fashion, Dorothy attempts to look beyond the predictable bounds of immobility and economic exchange in which her parents seek to enclose her.

34. According to Gary Rosenshield, criticism of *The Merchant of Venice* has taken "three basic paths" in the last century (Gary Rosenshield, "Deconstructing the Christian Merchant: Antonio and *The Merchant of Venice*," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 20.2 [Winter 2002] 28–51, p. 38n31). The first interprets the play as a "romantic comedy," seeing the Venetians as embodiments of "love, friendship, joy, and sacrifice." The second is "ironist" in that it interprets the values which the characters ostensibly embody as "superficial, more often than not the means to disguise more selfish motives." The third, finally, understands *The Merchant of Venice* as "a hybrid, combining significant romantic and ironic elements," which create the play's "many problems for interpretation." It seems to me that *The Sweet Shop Owner* allows for a similar variety of interpretations, due to the unresolved tension between economic/static and aneconomic/dynamic forces at play in the text.

at least, she has not quite broken free from the world of her upbringing. [35] For example, the double-edged letter of thanks with which the novel opens is so steeped in Irene's trademark rhetoric that it subtly belies its stated aim of establishing a definitive break with the past: "I should have thought you'd be glad to be finished with me at last" (9). In the same way as her mother, Dorothy reduces her relationship with Willy to a business transaction, which, to her mind, has been successfully concluded with his payment of £15,000: "I think we can call everything settled now" (9). This phrase recalls Irene's obsession with the settling of accounts: "Good. Then it's settled" (21); "I want things to be settled" (182). Dorothy also asserts her superior vision in her letter to Willy: "I'm sure this is for the best and how Mother would have wanted it. You will see in the end" (9). Again, she is only echoing a claim made by Irene: "And you will see, you will see it is for the best in the end" (103). [36] Dorothy's insistence on predictability and exchange thus shows the extent to which her thinking is still implicated in her parents' discourse.

Dorothy's letter thus seems to bear out Willy's assessment that his daughter's struggle "to escape history, to put it all behind you – me, her, those twenty-odd years in that house" is doomed to failure: "And have you escaped history, down there in Bristol? Found new life? Encumbered with all those things of hers, encumbered with the money I sent you (that money which was only converted history). Don't you see, you're no freer than before, no freer than I am?" (216–217). Throughout the narrative, Willy is at pains to stress that Dorothy is subject to the utter inevitability of historical patterns just like everyone else. In his view, the "new life" which awaits her as she leaves school to go to university – "Did you step away from it all, as you stepped out of your uniform, as if a new life beckoned?" (161) – is nothing but a continuation of her old life: "And why did it seem to me . . . that you wore your student's outfit as if it were only another uniform?" (161). Moreover,

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35. In this respect, Dorothy is the first in a line of characters in Swift's work who vainly try to get "away from it all" (Swift, *Out of this World*, p. 15) by putting geographical distance between their new and their old life. In particular, she seems to prefigure Sophie Beech, one of the protagonists in *Out of this World* who has moved to the New World but remains haunted by the traumas of her youth in England: "There isn't a point in the world where you can get away from the world, not any more, is there?" (Swift, *Out of this World*, p. 15).

36. In his silent address to his daughter, Willy confirms his faith in the validity of Irene's – as opposed to Dorothy's – foresight: "But you never looked closely at that face, into those blue-grey eyes, because if you had you would have seen how much more she knew than you" (116).

by continually drawing attention to the physical likeness which he observes be-
tween Dorothy and Irene, Willy seems to suggest that Dorothy has no choice but to
become her mother. Among other things, she is said to "[have] her looks" (116), to
move her hands "just like her" (139) and to be equally uncomfortable with her own
beauty: "Dorry, at seventeen, had not known what to do with her beauty – she'd
buried herself in books, as though to disown it" (95); "Other people noticed her
[Irene], other people admired. Though she'd never known how to deal with their
glances except by lowering her own eyes" (118).

Dorothy's chances of escape hardly improve when we consider the anal-
ogy which the text sets up between Willy's home life and his life at the sweet
shop, where, as John Marsden points out, Mrs Cooper and Sandra are "ironic
doubles" of Irene and Dorothy.[37] Though in physical appearance Mrs Cooper
could not be more unlike Irene – having "never been beautiful, with that bird's
face" (35) –, she turns out to share the latter's outlook on life: "she didn't want
action any more, only peace" (81). A similar relationship exists between Sandra
and Dorothy. Whereas Dorothy, as we have just seen, did not know how to deal
with her own beauty, Sandra "traded so much on her attractions . . . that they
sometimes seemed to him [Willy] not to belong to her" (95). On a more fun-
damental level, however, Sandra, like Dorothy, is desperate to escape the eco-
nomic logic in which she has become caught up. Bored with trading sex for
cheap thrills, "[s]he'd give anything for something new" (105, 107). However,
the text gives us no reason to believe that Sandra will ever find the newness
she craves. On the contrary, we are told that "[s]he'd try anything. . . . But it
seemed she'd already tried everything" (105). Moreover, the formulation of
her desire for release from the economic order in which she is stuck bespeaks
its sheer inescapability, depending as it does on the very notion of exchange
which is supposed to be transcended: as the proper payment which Sandra
hopes to receive in return for the "anything" she is willing to offer, "some-
thing new" has already been reduced to just another moment in the old eco-
nomic cycle.

Bearing all this in mind, I think it is fair to conclude that envisaging the
possibility of genuine renewal appears as a deeply problematic undertaking in
The Sweet Shop Owner. The novel diagnoses the demise of a way of life based on
the principles of predictability, arrested motion and economic circularity, but is
extremely wary of endorsing a viable alternative. Though tantalizing flashes of a

37. Marsden, p. 72.

future which would be truly otherwise are offered through the character of Dorothy, the suggestion that there is no possibility of achieving real change is at least equally prominent in the text. In my reading, the apparent impasse in the narrative present is largely accounted for by the succession of traumas with which the characters have failed seriously to engage, taking recourse instead to coping mechanisms which, in the long run, prove inimical to life and whose pernicious effects threaten to be transmitted across the generations. In exposing the ravages wreaked by a determined evasion of a catastrophic history, *The Sweet Shop Owner* inaugurates Swift's search for a way of coming to terms with trauma which would create the conditions for the construction of a more humane, just and less destructive future. Merely hinted at in this text, this crucial quest will be taken up and doggedly pursued in the author's later novels.

Attila Kiss

Cloud 9, Metadrama, and the Post-semiotics of the Subject

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate, through the example of Caryl Churchill's *Cloud 9*, the way dramatic literature can address central problems of contemporary culture and cultural identity with metadramatic techniques. The interpretation relies on the critical apparatus of the postsemiotics of the subject. The *metatheatrical framework* of the play focuses on the question of subjectivity as cultural, ideological product. The metadramatic markers break the mimetic illusion on the stage, and the dislocated spectator gains a metaperspective on his or her ideological positionality.

> "How could one tolerate a foreigner if one did not know one was a stranger to oneself?" [1]

1 Drama studies and cultural studies

In this paper I am going to address problems of cultural identity and dramatic representation in order to demonstrate that dramatic literature is one of the most sensitive laboratories of cultural imagery, and I would like to show how a semiotic metaperspective can help us understand the logic of contemporary culture and the representation of cultural imageries in post-war drama. At the outset I will refer to my experiences in the teaching of drama and *theater* semiotics at the University of Szeged in Hungary.

Six years ago at the University of Sussex in Brighton I was pleasantly surprised to see that the course *Introduction to English Studies* included two lectures on the theories of the subject and their importance in cultural studies. In Hungary at that time we were just starting to work out our British Cultural

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1. Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 182.

Studies curriculum which, by now, inevitably includes terms that the Hungarian students of English had been exposed to only in graduate courses before: interdisciplinarity, multiculturalism, postcolonialism, canon formation, decanonization, subjectivity. Indeed, an important change in the structure of new curricula will be the introduction of such terms right at the beginning of the program. It is impossible to approach the study of cultural practices without an understanding of the status of the subject in the semiotic mechanism of culture, and this naturally applies to literary texts as well. Literature as a social discursive practice participates in the simultaneous circulation and subversion of identity patterns that social subjects are compelled to internalize. From the perspective of genre theory, I think it is arguable that it is in dramatic literature and theatrical practice that the questions of the constitution of the subject and the cultural imagery of specific establishments surface most often with extraordinary intensity. Performance oriented semiotic approaches to dramatic literature have recently focused on how the dramatic text, because of the very nature of the genre, addresses the fundamental questions of subjectivity and representation. Through the performance of the actor, a dialectic is established between surface and depth, theatrical illusion and actual reality, role-playing and original identity, and this dialectic inevitably foregrounds the problems of subjectivity. At the same time, the theater as a thick semiotic context semioticizes every element of the stage, and the idea of representation is brought into the focus of attention by the ostension of the sign and the thematization of presence. From a semiotic point of view, this results in a *representational insufficiency* because it is impossible to establish the total presence of things that are absent, and for which the theatrical representation stands on the stage. When it is staged in the actual theatrical context of reception, or the imaginative staging of the reader, drama can either thematize and foreground, or ignore and conceal the representational insufficiency which is in its center. This idea of presence and this representational insufficiency have been the primary concern of drama and theater from the earliest mimetic theories up to the poststructuralist deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence.

The unbridgeable gap between the role and the actor, representation and reality, have been handled in two basically different ways in theatrical history. It is generally thematized by experimental drama or metadrama, while it tends to be suppressed by the photographic tradition of the bourgeois, "classic realist"

theater. [2] Drama can aim at turning the spectator in the theater into a passive consumer of an 'authentic representation' of reality, or it can deprive the receiver of the expected, comfortable identity positions, in order for the theater-goers to obtain a metaperspective on their positionality in the cultural imagery. [3] It follows that the actual theater or drama model of a cultural period is always in close relation with the *world model* of the era, since the representational awareness, the 'high semioticity' of the theatrical space operates as a laboratory to test the most intriguing epistemological dilemmas of the specific culture. [4]

2 The postsemiotics of the subject

The aim of the present paper is to demonstrate on the example of Caryl Churchill's *Cloud 9* the way dramatic literature can address central problems of contemporary culture and cultural identity with metadramatic techniques. I will rely on the critical apparatus of the postsemiotics of the subject.

Ever since the 'linguistic turn' and the fusion of psychoanalytical and semiotic approaches, the central realization of poststructuralist critical thinking has been that a theory of identity and subjectivity must be based on an understanding of the constitution of the speaking subject. [5] Developments in critical theory since the 1970s have shared the common objective to theorize the subject, working to establish a complex account of the material *and* psychological constitution of the human speaking subject as positioned in a socio-historical context. Mov-

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2. I employ here Catherine Belsey's term, which she primarily applies to the narratives that disseminate the ideologically conceived representability of reality, a basic tenet of bourgeois ideology. As opposed to this, the interrogative text deprives the receiver of safe identity positions. I maintain that the typology also holds for the history of the theater, and one marker in this typology is the agency of the metaperspective. See *Critical Practice* (London and New York: Routledge, Kegan & Paul, 1990).

3. I think it possible to work out a typology of theaters on the basis of the representational techniques in the theater that either create a comfortable identity position for the spectator, or try to unsettle this subject position, bringing the identity of the spectator-subject into crisis. Employing Kristeva's typology of signifying practices, I will call the first type *pheno-theater*, and the second type *geno-theater*. Cf. Julia Kristeva, "Genotext and phenotext," in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), I.12, pp. 86–89.

4. Epistemology being in the closest relationship with the question of the representability of reality.

5. Cf. Julia Kristeva, "The system and the speaking subject," in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 24–31.

ing beyond the Cartesian and phenomenological limitations of structuralist semiotics, the *postsemiotics of the subject* aims at *decentering* the concept of the unified, self-sufficient subject of liberal humanism, the Cartesian ego of Western metaphysics. It should be noted here that it is this concept of the unified, homogeneous subject which served as a basis for the 'project of modernism' and its belief in universal, institutionalized neutral knowledge and truth, which, in turn, resulted in the *intellectual imperialism of colonialism*, a central theme in *Cloud 9*.

The postsemiotic critique of Western metaphysics investigates the social-historical *macrodynamics*, and the psychoanalytically informed *microdynamics* of the constitution of the subject. Socio-historical theories of the subject map out the technologies of power which establish an economy of power in society, operating with a specific *cultural imagery* that circulates identity patterns for the subjects to internalize. Psychoanalytical approaches conceive of the subject not as a homogeneous and abstract entity, but rather as one element among the unstable productions of a heterogeneous signifying *process*. This subject-in-process is a heterogeneous structure in conscious and unconscious modalities simultaneously informing and determining the process of signification. Since subjectivity is the reflection upon the experience of being separate from the exteriority of the Real, the constitutive element of this subjectivity is the signifier that works as the mirror, the medium for this reflexivity. The signifier enters the subject's psycho-somatic structure as a stand-in between the subject and the lost objects of primary demand, articulating that desire for the lost real, the Mother, the Other which will serve as the battery, the propelling force of signification. The experience of losses is stored in the unconscious through primary and secondary repression, and the signifier emerges in the site of the Other as the only guarantee for its re-capturing. That inaccessible Other, in relation to which the subject is always defined, will be the energy supplier of our unconscious modality, that lack and absence which our consciousness will never be able to account for. This is he dark, mysterious and never-subdued *colony* of our subjectivity.

3 The colonial Other

The above concepts of the postsemiotics of the subject can be related to the semiotic typology of cultures and cultural identities. In terms of the constitution of the subject, the history of Western civilization moves from the Medieval world model of high semioticity through the Enlightenment paradigm of modernism,

rationalism and reduced semioticity, up to our current age of postmodernism, which, in many aspects, corresponds chronologically to the beginning of *post-colonialism*. I argue that the theoretical questions revolving around the post-modern subject are greatly parallel with the issue of the *postcolonial subject*: a subject which can no longer define itself in opposition to the separated, abjected Other, that is, the colony.

I would like to repeat the metaphor I introduced earlier: the unconscious is the mysterious, uncanny colony of our psychic apparatus. How can we translate this psychoanalytical formula into the semiotics of postcolonialism and postmodernism, the subject of which finds itself without that Other which has always served as a comfortable basis in opposition to which the Western identity could be secured?

If we interpret culture as a semiotic mechanism which defines itself in opposition to non-culture, that is, the non-signified, the non-signifiable or that which mustn't be signified, we find that the logic of the Symbolic Order always separates out a territory that is coded by taboos and is considered to be untouchable, unpenetrable: *abject*. The abject is the radically other, the opposite of that symbolization within the structural borders of which the subject can predicate a seemingly solid and homogeneous, fixated identity for itself. [6] Yet, it is the abject which has a lot to do with the unconscious modality of the subject and of signification, and it is this unconscious disposition which contains the motilities, fluctuations and drives which provide the psychosomatic energy for the desire to signify. The subject separates itself from the abject, but at the same time secretly, unconsciously feeds on it. Structuralist anthropology showed a long time ago how the abject, let it be sacred or despised, serves to mark out the borders of culture. In a political sense, this becomes most visible in totalitarian systems, such as fascism or communism, which are strongly grounded in defining themselves as the opposite of the abject Other (be it the homosexual, the gipsy, the Jew or the capitalist).

As the postmodern subject finds itself to be a heterogeneous system without a core around which it could center itself, it perhaps learns to respect Otherness, since the subject itself is other, non-identical to itself, and cannot define an identity expect in interpersonal and intercultural, historically specific social interac-

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6. For the concept of the abject I rely on Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982). For an interpretation of the abject as a representational technique see Attila Kiss, *The Semiotics of Revenge: Subjectivity and Abjection in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Szeged: JATE English Department, 1995).

tions. Similarly, postcolonial society needs to redefine itself, without relying on the abjected colony, against which the Empire engaged in brave missionary work to expand the borders of the one and only unified homogeneous Western culture. But this is not as easy as it seems. What happens to a society if it loses its unconscious, its 'uncanny colony'? What will be the borders within which it can mark out its identity? The answer is difficult to find, especially if we consider that postcolonialism in no way means the end of colonizing practices. The ideological colonization of minds through the massive binarisms and the commercialism of mass media, or the capitalist colonization of new international markets indicate that this logic of exclusion is still constitutive of current politics.

4 Colonized subjectivities

I would now like to turn to a literary example from my experience in teaching Post-War British and American drama at the university. The example is Caryl Churchill's *Cloud 9*, which equally brings up questions of subjectivity, postcolonialism and postmodernism.

On the surface, the first part of *Cloud 9* is an almost didactic representation of the way identity is constituted according to the logic of the colonial mission. The Victorian family lives in the African colony according to the rules of cultural binarisms, and these rules define the native African as the abjected Other, the supplement of the big white Father, in opposition to which the privileged pole of the binarism, the white colonizer receives its heroic and 'civilized' quality. "I am father to the natives here," says Clive (2), [7] the Victorian patriarch, who brings the Union Jack into the jungle to save the aboriginals from the darkness of heathen ignorance. However, as Churchill herself says in the introduction, it is not only the imperial politics of exclusion that we find working here. Besides the socio-political aspects of the macrodymanics of the colonizing/colonial subject, a perhaps even more important sexual politics is also at work. This articulates the colonial establishment as a patriarchal system in which the phallic position is wielded by the male, a representative of virile health, honesty, and intellect. This cultural image of the male finds its grounds of definition, its abjected Other in the figure of woman, representative of disease, lust, corruption, and threat.

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7. All parenthesized references are to this edition: Caryl Churchill, *Cloud 9* (revised American edition, New York: Routledge, 1988).

Churchill is careful to interrelate the concept of the colony and the concept of the feminine through a systematic imagery of darkness, fluidity, and mystery. The natives, the colony are to white culture as woman is to man. It follows that, on the level of the microdynamics of the subject, the cultural imagery of the modernist, colonial mission invites the subject to define itself through the suppression, the colonization of the feminine, the heterogeneous Other. "You are dark like this continent. Mysterious. Treacherous," says Clive to Mrs. Saunders (23). "Women can be treacherous and evil," he says to Betty, his wife. "They are darker and more dangerous than men. The family protects us from that . . . we must resist this dark female lust, Betty, or it will swallow us up" (45). The family protects the subject from the female just like the Empire protects the nation from the colony. Even better, the white nation sets out to eat up, to contain the dark territory in order to prevent any dangerous attack.

I think, however, that the real point of the first part is on an even more subtle, linguistic level. *Cloud 9* shows how the identity patterns in this cultural paradigm are enforced and circulated in discursive practices, in linguistic norms and clichés that we unconsciously internalize. The entire language of Act I is patriarchal, male dominated. "Come gather, *sons* of England . . . . The Forge of war shall weld the chains of *brotherhood secure*" (3, 5, my emphasis), goes the song at the very beginning of Act I, setting up the discursive *technology of gender* which aims at desexualizing the human being and engendering it as a male subject. All the cultural values are defined in terms of the male as well (Betty to Edward): "You must never let the boys at school know you like dolls. Never, never. No one will talk to you, you won't be on the cricket team, you won't grow up to be a man like your papa" (40).

Only homosexuality is considered a perversion greater than being girlish. "I feel contaminated . . . A disease more dangerous than diphtheria" (52), says Clive to Harry, enveloping the unnamable, the unutterable in an imagery of sickness and deviation from the norm, the 'original,' supposedly healthy state of being. We find a similar occurrence when Betty is asked by Clive to give an account of the vulgar joke Joshua played upon her. She is unable to verbalize the event, because she just cannot violate the linguistic norms she is subject to. The words Joshua used should not form part of her vocabulary. In the world of the drama, just like in the cultural establishment of modernism, sexuality is something to be taken care of; it is the most important topic for the constant self-hermeneutics

we need to exercise in the regime that Foucault called our Western 'society of confession.' [8]

Identities are constituted here in an environment of incessant surveillance and self-surveillance, and this is especially manifest in the puppet show atmosphere of the first scene which can be felt if we stage the lines of the drama in our imagination. Clive, the patriarch presents the characters of the drama as if he was the director and the presenter of a theatrical performance. The *metatheatrical framework* of the play even more strongly focuses our attention on the question of subjectivity as cultural, ideological product. Betty and Edward are played by a person of the opposite sex: the submissive wife is played by a man, the doll-minding son is played by a woman. [9] The self-reflexivity of the drama is perhaps even more powerful in the cross-racial structure than in the cross-gendering: the black servant Joshua is played by a white man. [10] These metadramatic markers become really obvious to the spectators in the theater, who will see that these characters are totally blind to their identity, since they do not see, they have no metaperspective from which they could see that ideology has already turned them into the thing they would so much like to be. This inversion breaks the mimetic illusion on the stage, the spectator clearly becomes aware that the theatrical representation does not simply want to be the replica of an absent reality, and the concentration on the theme of identity is created and maintained right

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8. Cf. Jane Thomas, "The Plays of Caryl Churchill: Essays in Refusal," in *The Death of the Playwright? Modern British Drama and Literary Theory*, ed. Adrian Page (London: Macmillan, 1992), 160–185. "Seen from a Foucauldian point of view, Act I becomes a series of confessions couched in both monologic and duologic form which interweave to form the network of power relations which constitute Victorian colonial society" (p. 172).

9. Cf. Frances Gray, "Mirrors of Utopia: Caryl Churchill and Joint Stock," in *British and Irish Drama since 1960*, ed. James Acheson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 47–59. "Churchill refuses to permit the 'male gaze' which renders man the subject and woman the (sexual) object. Betty is played by a man. He makes no attempt to disguise his maleness, nor does he make any parodic gestures of femininity; rather he incarnates the idea that 'Betty' does not exist in her own right. She is a male construct defined by male need" (p. 53).

10. Cf. Joseph Marohl, "De-realized Women: Performance and Identity in Churchill's *Top Girls*," in *Contemporary British Drama, 1970–90*, ed. Hersh Zeifman & Cynthia Zimmerman (London: Macmillan, 1993), 307–322. "Multiple casting and transvestite role-playing . . . reflect the many possibilities inherent in the real world and conventional ideas about the individuality or integrity of character. The theatrical inventiveness of Churchill's comedies suggests, in particular, that the individual self, as the audience recognizes it, is an ideological construct" (p. 308).

from the beginning. The drama becomes a representation of how subjects subject themselves to the roles of the dominant cultural imagery. From a theoretical point of view, Churchill's play thus functions as *geno-theater*, which dislocates the spectator from the conventional identity-position in order to gain greater metaperspective on his or her ideological positionality. [11]

This metadramatic perspective is present throughout the entire drama. In the second part it is only Cathy who is played by a man, but the mimetic illusion is again broken by lines such as those of Lin to Cathy when the girl tries on her beads: "It is the necklace from Act I" (72). Later on the Edward from Act I comes in (99). The defamiliarizing effects encourage the spectator to approach the world of the play from a metaperspective. This self-reflexivity, which is encoded in the dramatic text, might not challenge the reader so much. When reading the play, we continuously need to make an effort to create the *representational logic* and the semiotic space of a potential staging, since the available textual information is not sufficient to build up a possible world. It is only the staging that fills in the gaps of indeterminacies and information shortage, of which drama has much more than narrative fiction. [12]

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Early, predominantly feminist readings of the play celebrated *Cloud 9* as an allegory of (female) sexual liberation. Act II takes place in the postmodern English society of the late 1970s, but the characters are only 25 years older. This cultural establishment seemingly does away with the taboos and codes of suppressed sexuality, and it may appear that the play becomes a celebration of the freedom of the postcolonial, postmodern subject.

This is, however, only the appearance. Homosexuality and bisexuality become accepted or tolerated practices in the London of the 1980s, but only on the

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11. In the concept of the *geno-theater* I bring together Kristeva's typology of genotext and phenotext and Belsey's typology of the interrogative and the classic realist text. The self-reflexive geno-theater interrogates the receiver through the problematization or deconstruction of presence, and through the foregrounding of the nature of representation by metatheatrical perspectives. Cf. note 3.

12. For a summary of the idea of theatrical metaperspective see Marie Lovrod, "The Rise of Metadrama and the Fall of the Omniscient Observer," *Modern Drama* 37.3 (1994) 497–508. For the performance-oriented interpretation of dramatic texts see: Alan Dessen, *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

surface.[13] Homosexuals are still afraid of losing their jobs, bisexuals practice their sexuality as a political program, and masturbation towards the end of the play appears in Betty's monologue as the only authentic strategy of self-discovery and of becoming a 'separate person.' However, these practices, under the cover of liberalism, are still enveloped in a general discursive technology of power, which disseminates the idea of sexuality as the central issue of our subjectivity, and through this they tie subjectivity to culturally articulated patterns of sexuality. The metaphysical binarisms seem to disappear, polymorphous sexualities and identity types replace the antagonism of the white culture and the colonial supplement of Act I. At the same time, these new identities are more instable than authentic, more fragmented than self-defined. The image of the Colony, the abjected Other is no longer present in opposition to which they could define themselves, but without this they become desubstantiated, hollow. These characters think they are freer than they were in Act One, but a more subtle cultural imagery infiltrates them even more completely than before. "Paint a car crash and blood everywhere," says Lin to Cathy. Images of violence, immobility, mental stagnation dominate the consumerist world of Act II. The play does not grant us a happy vision of the 'postcolonial subject': the two Cathies embrace at the end of the drama, turning into a *metadramatic allegory of the subject* which is no longer a mere supplement, but will never become self-identical either in the network of cultural images of identity. Nevertheless, the subversive and critical capacity of the drama comes to light through a postsemiotic approach when we disclose how the self-reflexivity of the play explicates the representational technologies of ideology and their operation in the constitution of the subject.

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13. "Churchill's stage practice strongly resists the reading 'one woman triumphs,' and she rejected alterations in the first American production which put Betty's monologue at the end precisely because it encouraged this" (Gray, p. 52).

The World and Work of Brian Friel

An interview with Richard Pine [1]

What inspired you, what made you first think of writing a book about Friel, and then re-edit, update, and expand it almost ten years later?

I realized that I wanted – needed – to write a book about Brian Friel [2] while I was attending a performance of *Translations* (1980) at the Abbey in the early 1980s. I was not very familiar with the work of Brian Friel then – I knew about *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (1964) and *Aristocrats* (1979) and *The Freedom of the City* (1973) as almost everyone did, as a matter of course – but I had read *After Babel* by George Steiner (1975), and during the performance I realized that parts of *After Babel* were being used in the text of *Translations*, the characters were actually speaking sentences from *After Babel*. I found this very exciting intellectually, but I also found that what the playwright was doing with Steiner's text and, as I later discovered with Heidegger also, was something which was emotionally exciting as well. All the books that I have written were written out of an inner need of my own to explore something in myself which is also present in the work, the subject of my book. This is particularly true of the book on Friel and that on Lawrence Durrell. [3] And in this case the initial momentum came from this experience which was a very real one for me at the time because I was exploring the difficulties of translation and the difficulties of communication, as part of my consultancy work with the Council of Europe on cultural development in a post-imperial society. My book was published in 1990, and therefore when Friel had written several more plays during the following eight years or so, it seemed necessary to produce a new edition which has a very substantial extra chapter on the more recent plays and a much more extensive Introduction. [4]

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1. Brian Friel does not give interviews any more, but he consented to the idea that an interview is conducted about his work with Richard Pine.

2. Richard Pine, *Brian Friel and Ireland's Drama* (London: Routledge, 1990).

3. Richard Pine, *Lawrence Durrell: the Mindscape* (London: Macmillan, 1994; new edition, Corfu: Durrell School of Corfu, 2003).

4. Richard Pine, *The Diviner: the Art of Brian Friel* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1999).

When the book originally came out *Making History* (1988), and *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990) were still very new, and I did not really have enough time to give due attention to them, so they receive much more attention in the 1999 edition, along with the subsequent plays.

> *Did you introduce a new viewpoint as well, for instance the postcolonial critical approach?*

Although the original edition addressed the postcolonial topic, the appearance of Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* in 1994 gave me the encouragement I needed to look more discursively at this theme, and Bhabha's ideas about hybridity and the "gap," which is so important in *Making History*, were very persuasive in writing the new edition. Also, as I experienced the more recent (post-1990) plays, I became more deeply conscious of the private music within those plays, and I addressed this in the final two parts of the "Music" section, "Plays of Beyond" and "Magic."

> *The back cover of the new edition says that you have written it with the full co-operation of the playwright himself. How would you characterize this co-operation?*

It is well known that Brian Friel is very reluctant to give interviews or to assist would-be students of his work, and when I started writing the book I was quite certain that I would need to meet him and talk with him and get his confidence if I was going to really understand what was happening in his work. I approached Seamus Deane who is a very close associate of his, not least because of their involvement with the Field Day Company, and he recommended to Brian Friel that he should see me. Then I went to Derry where we met, and we had a very long meeting. And since that time I have been very lucky that Brian Friel is always very courteous and honest in answering questions that I may have for him. He has never, as far as I am aware, tried to conceal or hold back anything. I think that as the co-operation is a friendship now (and I would be happy to call it that) it has deepened very considerably over the years as we got to know each other much better and to trust each other, and I think we are very fond of each other on a personal level. On a professional level I have been very honoured to be asked to write the programme notes for three of his plays now, including the most recent at the Gate Theatre in March 2002, a two-part production – an adaptation of Chekhov's *The Bear*, and a very important original one-act called *Afterplay*. And besides Deane, another close associate of Friel, Seamus Heaney,

wrote an endorsement which appears on both editions of the book, which means a great deal to me because it goes to the heart of my interest in Friel and accords with my personal style as a critic: he said that the book contributed "to an understanding of how Friel's plays transmit meaning within the acoustic of the Irish cultural and political scene" and that my "readings" of Friel "deepen the sense of [his] complexity and modernity."

> *The title of this second edition is* The Diviner, *which is also the title of one of his short stories. Why did you find it appropriate for your book?*

In my book I give considerable attention to the characteristic of the diviner, the person who can look down into the ground and see what is hidden there. Seamus Heaney also speaks about this in relation to Friel, and it was the title I originally wanted for the first edition but the publishers of that edition, Routledge, simply refused to allow me to use that title. It is to me a most important thing that an artist looks at his environment and can see another environment which is its shadow image if you like, it is a buried image. Greeks believe for example that for every village there is an identical village down beneath the surface of the earth, somewhere towards the middle of the earth, and they would never think of the one real village on the surface without remembering the buried village, and there is a great deal running throughout Friel as there is throughout Chekhov of people digging within themselves for their buried selves and to me that seems to be most important. The picture of Friel by Bobbie Hanvey, which appears on the cover of my book and has been used in several other places too, seems to me absolutely symbolic of the diviner in that short story, an extraordinary, priestly figure looking down into a lake, and being able to tell what is there within. It is an extraordinary photograph of clairvoyance, literally.

> *The main chapters of your book are "Private Conversation," "Public Address," "Politics," "Music." Three of these titles refer to themes and approaches primarily, but the fourth one, "Music," seems to introduce a different plane. Could you explain this choice?*

The original three sections were designed, first of all, to distinguish private conversation from public address, to use that very common cliché, to distinguish between the short stories and the radio plays on the one hand and the more open, political approach of the stage plays. It is in public address that Friel later becomes much more outspoken, and outwardspeaking about the matters that have been presented on the stage. The third section, "Politics," was intended to

show that Friel, if you like militantly, moves with Field Day and *Translations* into an arena which is not merely public but is political, that it is trying to engage with governments – he says at one point "why should not writers rule the country"? The final section of the new edition, "Music," is there because it seems to me that Friel, partly because of his resignation from Field Day, partly or more so because of his moving as a writer into a very much more private sphere, is not writing so much nowadays about public and political matters, he is exploring once again the inner chambers of the heart and the imagination. And he is asking that we respect his privacy in this, and there seems to me to be a much stronger sense, in inverted commas, of "music" being able to reach or to open up areas where language fails. He says this at the end of *Dancing at Lughnasa*, and he says it in the programme note for his seventieth birthday: "Music can get to the uncharted areas where most of our lives are lived." And this musicality seems to me to be the overriding characteristic of what he is writing at the moment. In *Wonderful Tennessee* (1993), in *Give Me Your Answer, Do!* (1997), and in his new rewriting of Chekhov, in *The Yalta Game* (2002) and in *Afterplay*, the musicality of what he writes is very evident. It is not just that he writes musical prose, its important effect is the music which is transmitted, and transferred from the stage to the audience. It may also be the case that "music," as a powerful medium which, at the end of *Lughnasa*, takes over from language, is the medium needed by people in a postcolonial context where in a sense language has failed them and has failed itself. Friel himself has suggested this, most famously in the concluding lines, or "bars," of *Lughnasa*, that music can empower a "ritual," a "wordless ceremony" which supersedes language and puts us "in touch with some otherness." [5] He has said that "music can provide . . . another way of talking, a language without words. Because it is wordless it can hit straight and unmediated into the vein of deep emotion." [6] So I mean that our modern society, which is more rightly called "post-imperial" if we are looking at it from the perspective of the Western European experience as a whole, has exhausted our traditional strategies of speaking to ourselves, and that some kind of "music" is necessary, even if only to give language a rest and an opportunity to reformulate itself, to find translations between its ancient cultures and rituals and the new

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5. Brian Friel, *Dancing at Lughnasa* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 71.

6. Brian Friel, "Seven Notes for a Festival Programme," in *Brian Friel: Essays, Diaries, Interviews 1964–1999,* ed. Christopher Murray (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), p. 177.

cultures and rituals that are shaping, and being shaped by, the world into which we appear to be entering. But all that is very tentative, of course.

> *The section "Music" concerns itself with images of the child, and child characters in Friel's drama. Do you think this element is unique in his work, or can you think of his deploying the child as part of the general importance of the child in Irish drama?*

This may sound flippant, but all Irish dramatists, all Irish writers, perhaps all writers everywhere suffered from some kind of impaired childhood. I mean that in the sense that very very few people have what you could call an idyllic childhood and people who do not have it tend to set out to find a compensation for that in their lives and are always striving to replace the unhappiness or the neglect or whatever it was that impaired their childhood with something else: they become businessmen, politicians or racing drivers or something the like. Those who become writers, as Georges Simenon said, often write out of a sense of unhappiness. In Brian Friel's case the short story, the *very* short story *The Child*, which he refuses to allow to be reprinted, is very indicative of what may have been his own childhood insecurity. I do not for a moment suggest that he had a very distorted childhood, he speaks very fondly of musical evenings spent with his parents and his two sisters at the piano, and it was obviously not entirely a disturbed childhood. But I cannot believe that when he writes of children as he does in the case of the silent, what I would call an autistic, child in *Give me Your Answer, Do!* at the beginning and at the very end of the play, that he is not at least able to emphathize with that kind of experience, even if he is not drawing on his own experience. A very specific instance which he has talked about is the fishing expedition with his father, becoming an important question in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, a kind of experience which I suppose a lot of people would have shared in Ireland, because of the until recently prevailing difficulty of talking about emotions, talking about relationships, inhibitions which are there partly from the school system, partly from the religious environment. People do not open up and talk about things and, therefore, when an audience is presented in a play with an experience with which they can identify, even though they cannot talk about it, they go home very moved and it will strike chords which many people cannot talk about. It's something that is familiar to the Irish Catholic mindset, because it has to do with the "confessional" method of communicating and gaining some level of absolution from that silent experience or exorcising oneself from it. A further point that I would mention about this is that the nos-

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talgia play has its roots in the trying to get back inside childhood, inside the original "home." There was an English critic who said when he heard the words "when I cast my mind back to that summer" etc. at the opening of *Dancing at Lughnasa*[7] that his heart sank, as he thought it was going to be "yet another nostalgia play." It is possible that non-Irish audiences, let us say English audiences, would have less sympathy with this kind of harking back or casting one's mind back, which suggests that a vignette of some kind of heaven, some sunny summer's day is going to be the substance of the play. Friel, Tom Murphy, and Sebastian Barry are harking back in many of their plays, and we always have to remember that nostalgia literally means *the pain of the homeward journey*. And that painful experience of the homeward journey or the attempted homeward journey is what a lot of memory is about, it is a journey which asks the audience to accompany the characters in order to try and tease out some aspect of childhood, and of growing. In another, much wider sense the analogy can be made with postcolonial societies where the "old certainties" are no longer reliable, where the reaching back of our memory into the past is no longer sufficient to connect with the household gods or the communal home truths which command our affections and empower our daily lives and our political actions – in that sense, the need to "touch base," to undertake the homeward journey, is bedevilled by that inability to establish adequate lines of communication between son and father, pupil and teacher, servant and master, between our blank ignorance of today and the funds of wisdom that existed *in illo tempore*, and that can be very painful in situations where parent and child, or junior people and figures of authority, are at loggerheads – again, I address this rather extensively in the new Introduction to my book.

Is growing up a seminal issue for Irish as opposed to English writers?

The *Bildungsroman* or, as I call it in the book, *Bildungsdrama* is quite different depending on the context and the wider society in which one did the growing up – or of course failed to grow up. Again, Murphy would be very close to Friel in his intentions here. The Irish experience – again, I would stress the confessional aspect to society, which is so closely related to the "whisper-in-your-ear" of betrayal – is far removed from that of other societies, such as Britain or America, which have been infused with a different kind of religious awareness. It may be that it strikes much stronger chords with societies in which mystery and magic

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7. Friel, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, p. 1.

have a greater role, such as those studied by Victor Turner which I refer to quite extensively in my book. Of course, the problem of growing up in Irish society is one which is constantly being revisited by Irish writers both on and off the stage – in many ways it can be seen as parallel to, if not symptomatic of, the wider societal experience of growing a newly emergent state into adulthood, maturity and world stature; a frequent subject for debate in Irish schools for decades was: "That Emmet's epitaph can now be written" – in other words, that Ireland had taken her place among the nations of the world. And it's the haunting backdrop to Friel's early play *The Mundy Scheme* (1970). It remains a vitally important issue for the Irish writer.

> *By far the internationally best known contemporary Irish playwright, Friel remains a very national author, in accordance with Yeats's one-time claim that great art and nationality are interdependent. The presence of national concerns in his work is fairly obvious, but what aspects of its form and technique qualify as unmistakably Irish?*

I think the most straightforward answer to that is that the traditional form of a kitchen is something which is explored over and over again. Of course there was a "kitchen-sink" phase in British drama in the 1950s and 60s, but there is a much bigger proportion of Irish plays just set in a household and usually in a kitchen. Again Tom Murphy would be a very obvious parallel to Friel in this respect. The play which has been regarded as the father of modern Irish drama is Friel's *Philadelphia*, and yet it did not entirely "break the mould" of Irish playwriting as it was still set in a kitchen. And although there were certain technical novelties, I do not think that they are as important as the fact that what Friel managed to do in that play was to set people in a kitchen and yet transcend the limitations which we had seen in many other plays. When we get to *Translations*, it is ostensibly someone's home, the home of the schoolmaster and his two sons, and yet it very obviously is not a home in the sense that most people would expect. There is no comfort in it, and there is in fact no focus, there is no hearth, not in any productions that I have seen. And in *Lughnasa*, again, you have got a household under threat – it is Kate who is trying to hold it together while all other forces seem to be pulling it apart. *Living Quarters* (1977) would be another example – the title is a terrible pun of course, it is not a home, it is something provided by the army for its officers to occupy, and yet, as long as they can remember, it has been their home – as for the three sisters in Chekhov's play. In other words, in a large number of his plays Friel has stuck to the traditional

venue and forum of Irish drama, and yet he has been providing incisive commentaries, such as the fact that the place is not a home. In *Lughnasa* the whole home is threatened and eventually disintegrates, under the weight partly of modernization, and partly ostracization. I suppose the other thing which is invisible, quite distinct from the question of where he locates his plays, is of course speech. Friel's speech is quite unmistakably Irish. And yet, and this is partly responding to the question of his being an internationally well known author, and yet despite the fact that everyone is quite clearly Irish and is located in Ireland, these plays travel extremely well: you would know that from your experience of Hungarian productions of Brian Friel. [8] *Molly Sweeney* (1994) is currently in the repertory of the Maly Theatre of St. Petersburg. *Translations*, because of its appeal to any postcolonial society, has played in a vast range of countries including Estonia, Catalonia, Nigeria. This is partly because the emotions which have been expressed find a resonance within the audiences in other countries, and partly because there is an international vogue for the Irish theatre, and it is partly, I think, because the sheer music through the voices of his characters is so emotionally appealing to audiences everywhere.

> *What are the most important connections of his dramatic work with international theatre, classical and contemporary?*

Apart from what I have just said about postcolonial themes, I am not sure that there are many playwrights with whom his work connects, and I cannot think of many playwrights with whom you can compare his work. I would be very tempted to say that he is one of the greatest living playwrights: the reason for that is because so few people elsewhere are writing what I would call challenging drama. Athol Fugard and Wole Soyinka would be cognate authors in this respect, and perhaps because they are close to the same postcolonial experience, and to an African reality that accords somewhat to the Irish reality. There are few plays on in the Broadway theatres apart from musicals, or resurrections of old stuff, and no one in England is writing much – Tom Stoppard, for instance, has been relatively silent for a time. Stoppard, I think, is a wonderful writer but he is not quite in the same league as Friel, and if British theatre is applauded because of facile writers like Alan Ayckbourn, then it is a theatre in serious trouble. I think the reason that Friel's importance has not been recognized as widely as it should

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8. So far *Dancing at Lughnasa, Translations, Philadelphia, Here I Come!* and *The Communication Cord* have been produced by Hungarian theatres.

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is because, in Britain obviously, with a much larger market, someone like Stoppard has a success immediately, and because of that success he becomes internationally well known, whereas it took a very long time for Friel to become known, accepted, recognized, and celebrated outside Ireland, and it is a difficulty which Tom Murphy is still experiencing in getting his plays outside the British Isles.

> *The* Yalta Game *is another adaptation of Chekhov after his 1998 version of* Uncle Vanya, *preceded by* Three Sisters *in 1981. Why do you think Chekhov is so important for Friel that he comes back to him the third time?*

Friel's new version of *The Bear* and his own "Russian" play called *Afterplay* are also works that represent this coming back. The basic reason is that Friel empathises very deeply with, let us call it, the spirit, and the themes of Chekhov and Turgenev which are paradigmatic of the Russian soul or spirit. People who spend their entire lives waiting, hoping for something, people who are quite convinced that real life is elsewhere – these I think Friel recognizes as being also very Irish themes, because of the nineteenth-century experiences of emancipation and of famine, and he loves reading the Russian writers. I think it is very easy for him, comes naturally to him, to write versions of Russian plays and stories, and I think it has been quite an exciting thing for him to write *Afterplay*, which consists of two characters, one of whom is Sonya Serebrjakova from *Uncle Vanya*, and the other is Andrej Prozorov from *Three Sisters,* because of the challenge he set himself of "marrying" them into some kind of intimacy which would illuminate both precedent plays while creating new lives in a new play.

> *What are Friel's main thematic preoccupations?*

Questioning the concept of home. He said to me that he resists the concept of community, and is not sure that he can accept the idea of home, and that is a massive preoccupation. Within that preoccupation is the whole question of what constitutes the home. Obviously, it means family. Both within family and outside, in relation to the rest of the society is the question of trust, the question of understanding, the question of faith, not only faith in the religious sense but faith in oneself, faith in others. These obsessions come out for example in *Give Me Your Answer, Do!*, in which two marriages are under very great tension, and a home certainly under very severe threat of collapse (I mean emotional collapse), and while the whole idea of faith, trust and understanding is being explored in most intimate and painful detail, there is also this idea of the miracle

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and magic, which is there in *Wonderful Tennessee* together with storytelling which Friel described as a *"Canterbury Tales"* type of play, where reaching out for the invisible island, the Island of Magic, has the central character Terry so excited, and the rest of them revolving around him telling their tales. The idea, and the whole question of storytelling which I think is absolutely fundamental to the Irish theatre, is something which I should add to what I said about the form and technique of Irish theatre being present in Friel's plays. Well, not just storytelling in the sense of spinning out a yarn, but reaching the point at which, during a play, during one's own life, a story has to be told, which releases a secret and the telling of the secret releases some emotional *angst*. To move briefly away from Friel, the most telling, the most piercing example of that in my experience, and I was lucky to see it with Siobhan McKenna in the role, was Tom Murphy's *Bailegangaire* (1984).

> *Why is getting nearer to telling the truth through his characters so important for Friel?*

Someone has to tell a story or admit to having told an untruth. It is going all the way through *Molly Sweeney*, the three stories being told there – three interrelated stories – and it is in *Afterplay* too, where Sonya and Andrey have to keep apologizing and admitting that what they just said is not quite true, it is a little bit of fiction. So they are getting nearer and nearer to telling the truth all the time, and I think that is a very strong element running through Friel's plays. Going right back to say *Philadelphia*, and to *The Loves of Cass McGuire* (1967) – a play I have not mentioned yet. Establishing a truth is like providing oneself with a benchmark which *ought to* have been there for one from the outset, but which *wasn't* there: if we can find it, or a satisfactory substitute, even at this late stage, it will assist us in completing the essential journey which began with this "outset" – i.e. the leaving home which has to be fulfilled by the journey back home, the *nostalgia*.

> *The portrayal of failure and loss are often mentioned in comments on Friel's plays, yet they do not lack comic scenes or characters. How do these two features go together?*

A case of that of course would be *The Gentle Island* (1971) which is a terribly serious play about the collapse of a community and the stories told within it, but it has some extremely funny lines in it. I think the point is that the telling of a truth is much more piercing and effective when tears are accompanied by laugh-

ter. At the end of the first edition of my book I said something which I actually brought to the front of the second edition, and that is my own view that ultimate freedom equals a self-deriding laughter, that is something in which I still believe – that the ultimate freedom is to go wherever I go at my own risk and at my own pace, and under my own direction, the Greek word for freedom, "eleutheria" means literally, etymologically, to go where I will. One's inclination for self-destruction, which we see in Fox in *Crystal and Fox* (1970), is that kind of freedom. I think a black comedy is something that Friel would see happening within a great deal of his own work. Look at Teddy in *Faith Healer* (1979) and his commentary on the world of make-believe, with which he has been associated all his life. And look at the extraordinarily funny ways in which he comments on that.

Which of Friel's plays mark artistic turning points in the development of his work?

I already mentioned *Philadelphia*. I wouldn't say just an artistic turn, because I think that what happens in a play in terms of themes, and the way the author deals with them in terms of artistic technique, are interrelated. I would say quite simply that it is the major plays, and I would list those as *Philadelphia*, *The Freedom of the City*, then we move on to that extraordinary two-year period where he had *Faith Healer*, *Aristocrats*, and *Translations*, from 1979 to 1980. And those two years or so saw Friel's work moving onto a plane immeasurably higher than it had been before. Then, as we know, there was an extraordinary silence from 1982 to 1988, and that *Making History* has been put down as not a great play is I think due to the fact that it did not have a very good first production. It had a quite fantastic production in the late 1990s at the Peacock Theatre with Gerard McSorley as Hugh, and I think that production restored the play's reputation as a very important turning point. Obviously, so was *Dancing at Lughnasa* with its openly autobiographical stance, although I do not give quite as much reverence or admiration to that play as most people do. Then we move on to *Molly Sweeney*, and here I find myself absolutely in awe of what he achieved in that play. Friel himself, jokingly, said that it was like *Faith Healer* – but I do not see that there is any real connection here, because the structure of the later play is quite different. Instead of the monologues of three characters you have monologues which are interspersed so effectively in the course of the play, that it is almost as if, *but not quite*, that they were meeting, and exchanging on stage. I think it is his most transparent play, his most beautiful play, and I

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think when the time comes to take a look at his entire output, *Molly Sweeney* will rank as one of the few best plays by Brian Friel. As I say, "but not quite" – that nearness without touching is so potent in emphasizing how very distant they are from each other in terms of being able to understand or even cherish one another.

> *How far, in your view, did the Field Day connection, in my under-standing Friel's taking part in Northern Irish cultural politics, enrich his dramatic art; would it have, perhaps, taken a different route with-out this connection? What is Friel's "road not taken"?*

In a sense I do not think Field Day enriched his dramatic art, it diverted his dramatic art into the service of politics, cultural politics perhaps, but politics nonetheless, and Field Day is not only a company producing and travelling their plays, but is a publishing house in which Friel took enormous personal interest, and huge personal commitment travelling frequently from his home into Derry to do office work. Field Day was a very necessary interruption to the way his work was going. What we have seen in the last, say, ten years is the direction, in other words the road not taken *then*, the road he is *now* taking with *Lughnasa*, *Wonderful Tennessee*, *Molly Sweeney*. In other words, attending to the inner man, the inner anxiety, the inner strength and weaknesses rather than, let us call it doing military service in the cause of his, in inverted commas, "community," an extremely dangerous term to use but shorthand for what one would under-stand as an intellectual response to politics in the North of Ireland in the com-pany of people such as John Hume, the politician, and Seamus Deane the intellectual – some people say the ideologue – and Seamus Heaney the poet, and Stephen Rea on the stage side. In another sense, there is always a "road not taken," in that the chosen road, or the road one is compelled to take, prevents one from travelling other roads. In terms of homecoming, the chosen road is the road towards self-discovery, and if that road proves to be the wrong road, then of course there are other possible roads which one may regret not having taken. In Friel's case, the world and his wife perceive *Lughnasa* as the right road, the road of homecoming, and I don't argue with that; *Translations*, too, as it has been described as "a national epic," has a sense of bringing both the playwright and his "community" home to a certain set of truths, a point of arrival. But at a deeper level I think we can see that Friel has "come home" in much more pro-found ways – especially in the sense that *Give me Your Answer, Do!* is an equally autobiographical play, not about *nostalgia* but about *hindsight* – the

"reckoning" of a seventy-year-old writer. And in *Molly Sweeney* – I don't apologise for coming back to the excellence of that play – there is a very definite sense of achievement which says, to me at least, that a homecoming has taken place in the locus that is of most concern to the writer – his own imagination and its connection with the world, both the intimate world and the more public world. So I would say that if Friel had continued producing plays in the "Field Day formula" there might well have been a "road not taken," but the road taken since Field Day has represented a much more satisfying route in the sense that the playwright has found a more effective way home to that personal hearth *and* a new way of communicating with an audience which is a new kind of "community."

> *Would you call Friel an experimental playwright? Which plays qualify*
> *as most experimental in the Friel canon?*

I do not think he is very experimental, and much less so today than in the earlier plays, when he was still finding his way in the business of stagecraft, because today he is not interested in anything other than getting the voices across from the stage to the audience. And I do not think there is a single play by Friel which is totally original in any experimental way, even in *Philadelphia*, in the Gar divided into Private, and Public: there are instances of previous playwrights dividing a character in one way or another. How he does it is what makes the work so fascinating, by the strategy that he uses which is expressed in the stage directions in front of the play. If I may digress, the writer who has taken what I referred to earlier as the Russian themes of waiting, hope deferred, wasteland etc., and made them Irish and has done it in a very experimental way was, of course, Samuel Beckett. Athough I understood when I first met Friel that he really did not have much interest in Beckett, he was not terribly excited by Beckett, I found him more recently referring to Beckett, and if he does that there is perhaps some excitement derived from Beckett. Maybe it is Beckett who does hurry forward in a very advanced way some of those what I called "Russian" themes that are so important to Friel.

> *You call Molly Sweeney a "risky" play in your book. In what sense is it*
> *risky? Does it, perhaps, share an aspect of Beckett's late theatre, in*
> *that it affects the nerves of the audience, rather than their intellect?*

Obviously one would think that there might be some link with Beckett, but it is not that at all. It is the fact that there is such emotional honesty, such transpar-

ency in the play. I think it is extremely demanding on the three characters, on the three actors, it is extremely demanding if you believe those actors just actually *are* those three characters, it is extremely risky for them to be coming to us in the same way as *Faith Healer*, and telling us their stories. And it is terribly risky for the audience because there are such huge questions being raised which must make people in the audience look into their own hearts and be very disturbed by what they find there – questions about the accuracy of vision, of memory, the ability to express oneself clearly, to understand what another is saying, to appreciate their standpoint and their perspective.

> *Memory scenes have such a marked presence in Friel's drama: is this phenomenon related to his interest in the importance of the past as an author from Northern Ireland, and the meaning of the past for various individuals?*

Although the North has obviously had a huge presence in his writing life and in his writing consciousness, I think that Friel is just doing what anybody would do who is fascinated with the past, with that business of trying to make the journey home. It is not a Northern fascination, just a human one, which is more evident in Ireland, a country for which the past is so problematic. The whole question of how the Irish came to be a dominated people, and how they began to deal with their freedom when they got it. Of course this is the subject of *The Mundy Scheme*, a play that has only been produced once and I should love to see.

> *Can you identify character types in Friel's work, who keep on returning in different guises? What establishes the importance of his outsiders, and commentators, for instance?*

The fact that in most of his plays there is someone called O'Donnell, it is the O'Donnell family, and they are always living in Ballybeg. In my book I refer to a piece that he wrote, "A Fair Day at Glenties." Glenties is the town in the background of *Lughnasa*, his mother's town. And I say that these are the archetypal people who make up a whole microcosm, which of course is very Chekhovian too. And they are the people who keep cropping up, he lists them and they are all there in his plays. Let us call them an organic group of people, otherwise known by that awful word "family." When I say "awful" I do share with so many people a fear of the term "family," it is something that when I am talking to Brendan Kennelly for example we revert to again and again, this problem of intimate blood relations within that other four letter word "home." The outsiders and

commentators are part of his experimentation if you like, each of them coming from some theoretical source, like Dodds, the sociologist in *The Freedom of the City*, or Sir in *Living Quarters*. These are devices, experiments again, but I do not think the plays that include them are more important than the plays that do not have them.

> *The books and articles about Friel's art so far would make a small lib-rary. Do you notice some main directions in this growing bulk of the "Friel industry" as one might call it?*

Apart from the fact that people write books on Friel to promote their career, I think people are attracted to his work for two reasons, which may seem contradict-ory. One is the transparency that I already mentioned. When you pick up the copy of a play, you hold a whole world in your hand. And the contradictory thing is the difficulty of actually trying to describe it, it is a tremendous challenge, as I say it is partly what drew me to Friel in the first place. Most people who have written about Friel have a very strong reason, inner or personal reason for doing so. On the other hand, one wonders whether it is really justifiable to keep on producing books which in many ways reproduce the same material, I am thinking particularly of volumes of essays rather than monographs. I do not think that there are many main directions, not many people have tried to follow my sense of direction in looking at the spiritual side of Friel's work, the emotional side, the depth of that work. There has been more written about him from the political side and then of course there was a book quite recently, the one by F. C. McGrath about Friel as a postcolonial writer, [9] which is typical of so many academics' work who pick a sub-ject to try and fit it into a thesis rather than trying to make a thesis out of the sub-ject. I have never been persuaded by any kind of -isms, all I know is how I personally describe a subject that I am passionately interested in, and if that fits in with something someone else has written about some other writer, and it can be conveniently labelled with an -ism, then that is fine by me. I had recently a case of it in relation to my work on Lawrence Durrell, where somebody wrote about Dur-rell's *Avignon Quintet* (1974) with such a weight of ideological luggage that he succeeded in completely reversing my argument and still managed to quote me with approval; it is very frustrating to find this happening but it is entirely due to the way in which literature is taught nowadays in universities, that theory is more

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9. F. C. McGrath, *Brian Friel's (Post)colonial Drama: Language, Illusion and Politics*. Re-viewed by Richard Pine, *Irish University Review* 30.2 (Autumn/Winter 2000) 373–376.

important than the plays which are taken to be illustrative of theory. So as far as the "Friel industry" is concerned, I hope it stays immune as far as possible from that kind of treatment because it is not the sort of attention which Friel deserves.

> *Philadelphia, an allegedly early masterpiece of Friel is strangely downgraded in McGrath's post-colonial study of Friel, while* The Loves of Cass McGuire *is highly thought of and is given a very substantial subchapter. How do you see this unusual repositioning of the two works? I also wonder if you have a similar appreciation for a less known play of the author.*

There are plays McGrath simply ignores completely, because they do not fit in with his thesis. I felt that although *Wonderful Tennessee* is not in the front line of Friel's plays, it did not deserve, nor did *Give Me Your Answer, Do!*, quite the rejection which it got from the critics and which I think seriously disappointed Friel himself. *Give Me Your answer, Do!* is autobiographical again, and I think the critics got that all wrong. The essence of that play is faith, understanding, communication, and self-regard, and of course, we can quite rightly say it depicts a writer approaching a certain landmark in his life, the age of 70, who wants to find out if his work is of any value, meaning, and significance. That is a perfectly reasonable inference to draw and, again, it is a play which has not yet found its right niche. I have already mentioned *The Mundy Scheme* as being a play I suppose out of just curiosity that I would like to see. It might need a little bit of rewriting because it is very much of its time and place, but I think it is so relevant. Beginning with the words "Ladies and Gentlemen, what happens to an emerging country when it has emerged?"[10] which of course is the question mark standing over the entire literature on the issue of postcolonialism.

> *What were the most memorable Friel productions that you have seen in or outside Ireland?*

I have mentioned the *Translations* production which sparked off my entire interest in Friel's work. The premiere of *Dancing at Lughnasa* at the Abbey in 1990, the premiere of *Molly Sweeney* at the Gate in 1994, were immensely gripping, exciting, challenging and, of course, Donal McCann in *Faith Healer* during an Abbey revival in the mid-1980s. A production of *Aristocrats* some time in the late mid-1990s with Sean McGinley and Frank McCusker was very exciting. To

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10. Brian Friel, *The Mundy Scheme* (New York: Farrar Straus, 1970), p. 6.

come to a personal thing, I saw a student production of *Translations* in Montgomery, Alabama, in which the director had the very interesting device which no one had thought of before, of having Owen speaking in an Irish accent when he spoke to his own people and an English accent when he spoke to the English soldiers. And I told Friel about this, and I think this is why in *Making History* he specifically says it in the stage directions that Hugh is to speak in a Tyrone accent when talking to his own people and in an English accent when talking to Mabel, his wife, and Mary, her sister. I am very pleased, indeed, if I did have any partial responsibility for that. The most gripping effect when you witness any Friel play is that it appears that he is directly addressing *you*, and he is engaging your emotional response, he is demanding an emotional response, and he is getting it very easily because he is almost picking you up by the collar, and dragging you on the stage. It is that immediate effect that makes you realize he wrote the play for *you*. And that is what I find extremely moving, emotionally speaking, and also amazingly challenging, stimulating, and obviously very difficult as the emotional charge is like being put in the emotional chair and having fifteen million volts put through you, that is the highest point available to you in a Friel play, and *Molly Sweeney* is probably the play that had that effect on me most.

> *What is Friel's relationship with the younger Irish playwrights? Do they respond to each other in any meaningful way? Can you see developments in Irish drama that open new paths leading away from the Frielian achievement?*

I called Friel the Irish Chekhov – I was astonished a couple of years ago to find someone writing in the English *Sunday Times* "which is the new Irish Chekhov, Conor McPherson or Martin McDonagh"?[11] Now I do not want to talk very much about those playwrights except to say that I feel far too much adulation has been directed at them, for far too little in terms of artistic quality. I cannot see any justification at all for writing of people who are so young and untested in many ways, to be regarded as anywhere near the work of Chekhov, or anywhere near the work of the man who has been called the Irish Chekhov — Brian Friel. The premiere of *The Yalta Game* – Friel's version of Chekhov's short story "Lady with Lapdog" – was presented in tandem with new plays by Conor McPherson and Neil Jordan; after their plays, and after the interval, the audience was presented with the Friel work, and there was a palpable sense of relief that here was a work of real theatricality –

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11. *Sunday Times*, 12 July 1998.

and I intend that oxymoron, of *real* makebelieve – a work so well written, so well conceived, that the other presentations were in a quite definitely lesser league. I don't mean to disparage those other writers, merely to insist that there is very little "competition" for the laureate position among the newer writers. I do not think that Friel is terribly interested in anybody else's work, I am sure he has read and he may have seen some of McPherson, or McDonagh, or Marina Carr's work, or perhaps Sebastian Barry's. What I do worry about is that I see these younger writers, with few exceptions – and Carr and Barry would be two of these exceptions – that the writing is not of great quality. Carr is a very poetic writer, and I enjoy her work very much, but what I call it is "the reinvention of the wheel," we are continually getting the same themes, related to the rural experience, the rural-urban divide, loneliness, faith, and mystery – I write about this in the Conclusion of my book. One young writer said that he had written a play which is the first one to have ever depicted young people going mad in the Irish countryside. He is writing out of a very high level of ignorance. He is not aware of Tom Murphy's early work, he is not aware of *Philadelphia*, he is not aware of M. J. Molloy's *The Wood of the Whispering* (1953). There is an extraordinary arrogance in the ability of a young playwright to think that he is writing the most original plays that have ever been written, and on subjects which have never been addressed before. I am afraid "what goes round comes round," and I would like to see much more new work being done on themes which are not necessarily Irish themes. There was great hope back in the 1980s for the work of Paul Mercier. I went to see a couple of his plays because I was led to believe that they were about the urban situation, and the working classes, and that at last we were getting plays which would address this section of the population – like Heno Magee's *Hatchet* (1972) or Peter Sheridan's and Jean Doyle's *Shades of the Jelly Woman*. And I found that they were all about middle class suburbia and about football teams. This to me is a waste of energy. A middle aged playwright I have not mentioned so far, Frank McGuinness, is someone with whom Friel does have a relationship in the sense that Frank directed the revival of *The Gentle Island* at the Peacock back in the early or mid 1980s, and there is a certain amount of, I believe, warmth of affection there. Certainly it is not just one-sided, Frank McGuinness acknowledges that seeing *Faith Healer* was the experience which enabled him to become a playwright, it gave him the courage to do that, and that in itself is an extraordinary achievement. And I think Friel likes the work of Frank McGuinness. After all, it was Frank who adapted *Dancing at Lughnasa* for the film screenplay – very sensitively, I thought. It is not from a Frielean perspective that I say this, but I am just very disappointed by the fact that Irish

drama does not seem to have a development. The starting-off point is the same all the time, because of this awful urge to go back and examine origins, so you are always standing and waiting at the same bus-stop. You never actually let the bus take you to another country – tomorrow you will be back standing at the same bus-stop, wondering if the same bus will come.

> *Do you think Friel will become, or is already a classic? What makes him one according to your understanding the word?*

Yes, in the sense that he is one of the absolutely top writers of plays in the English language in the world today. What makes him a classic is that he has universal appeal, because he writes hugely compelling work and because of the sheer quality of the language that he uses. It is of course Irish, it is not an inflection of Irish, it is Irish through and through, which of course immediately makes people realize that it is not standard English playwriting, but the quality of it is something which has gained him universal recognition. As he himself has made clear, writing about Ireland in the English language is an alien experience with which one cannot be comfortable until one feels at home in the "new" language, until one has made it "one's own" – and while that may be an arduous and painful journey for the writer, it is an extraordinarily fruitful and rewarding experience for the reader or listener who is meeting an extremely expressive and beautiful form of "English" which is lyrical, or pointed, or abrasive or beguiling by turns, but which has, above all, a strangeness about it that is sometimes mocking, sometimes appealing, sometimes confessional, but comes to you in an oblique voice that *should* be familiar and *should* sound like one's own, but doesn't – and this is an attraction that one cannot explain – that's why we keep going back to it.

> *Which of his work would you like to write about again, because it still mystifies you even after having analyzed it in your book?*

All of it. That is the answer, all of it.

<div align="right">**Mária Kurdi**</div>

"The love of letters half preserves the past" [1]

Jerome McGann,
Byron and Romanticism (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002)

Jerome McGann, with his two early books, *Fiery Dust: Byron's Poetic Development* (1968), *Don Juan in Context* (1976), and a number of independent articles, has been undoubtedly the most important force behind the renewal of critical interest in Byron. In 1971, with McGann's important contribution, the Byron Society was re-founded (it had operated between 1868 and 1936) which launched *The Byron Journal* in 1973. *Byron's Letters and Journals* were re-edited by Leslie A. Marchand (1973–1982, in 13 volumes), and from 1980 to 1992 McGann's own edition of *The Complete Poetical Works* (7 volumes) was published. These publications speak eloquently for the authority with which McGann can pronounce on issues concerning Byron and Romanticism. His most recent collection of critical essays, *Byron and Romanticism*, contains papers which were published originally between 1974 and 2001, and promises thus to be a reflection of the greatest part of his carrier.

What had been the problem with Byron, why did he disappear from the field of studies for the better half of the twentieth century? McGann quotes Wellek's classic (1949) definition of Romanticism: "Imagination for the view of poetry, nature for the view of the world, and symbol and myth for poetic style" (236). Not one of these criteria seems applicable to Byron. " 'Imagination' is *not* Byron's view of the sources of poetry, 'nature' is hardly his 'view of the world' (Byron is a distinctly cosmopolitan writer), and his style is predominantly rhetorical and conversational rather than symbolic or mythic" (238). Most studies in this book revolve around these problems, trying to describe Byron's relation to the authors we still regard, in McGann's judgement, as the centre of Romanticism, i.e. Wordsworth and Coleridge.

The most important study in this respect seems to be the comparative analysis of "Byron and Wordsworth." Byron's attitude to Wordsworth can, it turns out, be summarised as a (mostly) respectful refusal. McGann examines in detail how Byron keeps evoking typically Wordsworthian themes (a wanderer alone in nature, meeting one of those simple people who live close to nature, the soul's attempt to overcome its losses, etc.) and reinterpreting or parodying

them. Where Wordsworth is "meditative and conceptual," Byron is "energetic and existential" (176). For Wordsworth nature has "ample power / To chasten and subdue," and the soul can be totally absorbed in that "something far more deeply interfused," for Byron, however, (as he writes in his "Alpine Journal") "the crashing of the Avalanche – nor the torrent – the mountain – the Glacier – the Forest – nor the Cloud – have for one moment – lightened the weight upon my heart – nor enabled me to lose my own wretched identity in the Majesty & the Power and the Glory – around – above – & beneath me" (179).

From the many connections and differences that McGann discusses, the most important, to which many other essays in the collection return, is Byron's relation to Wordsworthian "sincerity." Critics from Byron's first publications have registered an un-easiness about his "efforts to control and manipulate his audience" (118). Which means that his writing is openly rhetorical, it directly addresses its audience, and it also engages with the particularities of, for instance, current political issues or his own (not in the least) private life. These are the problems that McGann finds most interesting both theoretically and with regard to the practice

of criticism, editing or teaching of this kind of poetry.

First, to say that Byron's writing is rhetorical is not to say that the poetics of "sincerity" could in any way transcend rhetoric. On the contrary, it is a convention, involving more or less clearly definable rhetorical strategies: "(1) a detailed presentation of a concrete immediate context for the poetical text (epitomized in the famous subtitle of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey"); (2) the construction of a poetic reverie, as if the reader were 'overhearing' the poet musing . . . aloud." (287) In other words, "Byron's poetry argued that 'sincerity' *for the poet* has to be a convention, an artifice of language" (96). Moreover, in his own work he manages to be both personal ("sincere") and rhetorical. The advantages are twofold. On the one hand, "Byron agrees to use himself up – to . . . treat himself as a thing to be coldly anatomized and observed. The reward? Simply increased self-awareness" (99). On the other hand, Byron, who "placed himself at the centre of his work and made a Brechtian theatre of his Romantic self-expression and sincerity" (97), can hinder his readers from willingly suspending their disbeliefs, and achieve the same "psychic coldness" and "indifference of consciousness" that "Baudelaire,

Nietzsche, and Flaubert valued in Byron's writing" (161).

The second problem has to do with McGann's overall relationship to poetry. In his view, poetry stands (using the Aristotelian terminology) halfway between history and philosophy, which, for McGann, is to say that it cannot and must not be separated from those facts, material, social, biographical and bibliographical, that are active in the shaping of the work (227). "The [historical] method . . . attempts to specify the concrete and particular forms in which certain human events [one of which is poetry] constituted themselves" (211). It is this attempt to unchain the work of literature from these "concrete and particular forms" that McGann called *The Romantic Ideology* (1983). The theoretical representatives of this ideology he calls variously Kant, Coleridge, New Criticism, and even Gadamer.

"Poems are first of all acts of representation; as such, they can only be read when the *entire* facticity of those acts is raised into consciousness. The acts are begun and carried forward in specific socio-historical circumstances, and the poetical investments in those circumstances – what poems give and receive back – are not merely recorded in the poems, they are executed in them." Thus McGann

argued in his 1989 *Towards a Literature of Knowledge* (131). The final aim of this methodology is very clear: McGann is trying to regain the critical potential in literary works, in the social, political sense of the word. He quotes Adorno to point out that "We move towards a literature of knowledge when we understand that 'Truth is the antithesis of existing society' " (*Towards a Literature of Knowledge*, 130).

The element of the reconstruction of a poem's "facticities" that McGann puts most elaborately forward is the treatment of bibliographical information. To the question "What difference do the circumstances of publication make to the interpretation of a literary work?" (the title of a 1991 essay in *Byron and Romanticism*) McGann has already given a lot of attention. The project (in which he naturally relies on his own editorial experience [2]) can be summarized as an attempt at eliminating the distance between the practices of textual and literary criticism. The literary critic, on the one hand, must not regard a book, a text (not even the best critical edition) as something fixed, or final. On the contrary, it is to be seen as the product of specific people, working under specific circumstances, that is, the interpretation of the work has to entail a reconstruc-

tion of all the details of its bibliography; "textual history" and "reception history" are very strongly interrelated (232). Textual critics, on the other hand, have to discard the supposition that they are working only with "positive" data; textual studies and editorial work always involve an interpretative element as well. He discusses, as an example, a plate from Blake's *Jerusalem*, which Blake himself mutilated very severely; it is not enough, McGann claims, to try to recover the erased passages, "we will want to ground our readings in the mutilated text, rather than the editorially corrected text" (80).

To recover the "facticities" concerned in the literary work is important for McGann from another respect as well. "The historical particularit[ies] . . . have to be clearly specified in the act of criticism if that act is to proceed dialectically, i.e., if that act is not simply to project upon 'the work' its own conceptual interests" (213). In these essays, the emphasis on this issue is somewhat diminished, but from, for instance, *The Romantic Ideology* it is very clear that for McGann the "conceptual interests" are ideological in nature. There he elaborated a dialectical framework, in which the critic should attempt to reconstruct the original context of the work ("I make myself a

picture of great detail" he quotes from one of his favourites, Milman Parry) to be able to leave behind the prejudices of his own age as much as possible, but also to cast a critical eye on his own age from the perspective of the work of the past. In other words, the critic achieves his/her relative freedom from ideological prejudices by a constant mental movement between past and present.

The most important aim of *The Romantic Ideology* was first, to attack "Wellek's position" which "flattens out the rough terrain of the cultural formation(s) we call Romanticism; and second [to prove], that Wellek's position fails to map the phenomena comprehensively because it is a specialized theoretical view derived from a Kantian/Coleridgean line of thought" (237). From the critical reception of *The Romantic Ideology* he has come (by 1992) to accept an important objection. "The charge is that *The Romantic Ideology* at times simply replaces Wellek's tripartite structural representation with a dialectical view that is, finally, no less conceptual, for all its appeal to dynamic forms" (241). [3]

Now, if McGann did not succeed in redefining Romanticism (or to work himself free of all conceptualisations of it) in that book, the question arises whether he has managed to do so

since then? All the more so, since he claims that it was "to study why Byron who, for nearly a hundred years . . . defined . . . the meaning of Romanticism, had all but disappeared from the most serious forms of academic and professional attention" that induced him to start research on Byron originally (1). As often with McGann, this is just as much a practical issue as a theoretical one, since he edited *The New Oxford Book of Romantic Period Verse* (1993), and one of the essays touches upon his principles of selection. This is the way McGann describes the concept of the anthology that differentiates it from "Wellek's synthetic view of Romanticism." "First, it includes a good deal of poetry – some of it, like Crabbe's, among the best writing of the period – that is not Romantic. Second, it gives a prominent place to work that was famous in its time but that later fell from sight. 4 Third, it represents two key transitional moments of the Romantic period – the decades (roughly speaking of the 1790s and the 1820s) – more completely, and hence more problematically, than is done in narrative literary histories or anthologies of the period" (246–7).

In his introduction to the *New Oxford Book* he states that "[w]hen we speak of romantic writing, even within its periodic context, we refer to a body of extremely diverse materials. The historic impossibility of defining the term 'romantic' reflects its diversity" (xx). He speaks, instead, of various parallel, competing traditions very much alive in the age, but largely forgotten since. Such "critical point[s] of departure" include "the so-called Della Cruscan poetry of sentiment" (*The Florance Miscellany*, 1785), Sir William Jones' translations from the Vedic hymns (1785), Burns' influential *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (1786).

The overall aim of the method is very clear. McGann attempts to diminish (as much as possible) the narrative aspect in the anthology, to avoid making a distinction between central and peripheral works, or to present the period in terms of rise and fall. "One gets a very different view from a tighter focus" (247) he claims, and argues that it is the critic's task "to display the constructed and non-natural status of historical information" (244). This explains more or less his unwillingness to construct a new definition of Romanticism. "We do not, after all, *have* to think in such terms" (241) – this seems to be his final word on the subject.

In opposition to the largely familiar theoretical and methodological

statements of the collection, there are a number of novelties in the essays. The most important among these is the attention they give to Byron's lyric poetry. Both *Fiery Dust* and *Don Juan in Context* focused on Byron's major narratives (although the first did contain analyses of pieces from nearly all the genres of Byron's poetry). Here, however, he seems to reject the traditional view that Byron' best work does not belong to the lyrical mode. He argues that the reason these pieces receive too little attention is, on the one hand, a too rigid framework of definition (he refers repeatedly to M. H. Abrams's "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric," 1965), and on the other, because they rely on the forgotten tradition of Della Cruscan poetry. [5] This legacy, present in the writings of all major Romantics, can be characterised as a "distinctly urban project ... committed to extreme displays of stylistic artifice" (*Romantic Period Verse*, xx), a love poetry based on the "idea that true love had to involve a total intensity of the total person – mind, heart and (here was the sticking point) body," and which carries, thus, "the stylistic index of ... self-conscious fleshliness" (*Byron and Romanticism*, 57–8).

Another novelty is in McGann's general attitude. After the distinctly

combatant position of some of his earlier writings, it is very pleasant to hear him speak in a much more relaxed tone of voice. He refers very openly to his New Critical upbringing and his adherence (to a certain extent) to the practice of close reading. He also acknowledges the (historical) importance of deconstruction ("all those deconstructive moves [of Paul de Man] on the text seem to me exactly the right thing to have made at that time," 258). [6] He even goes as far as to claim at one point that "I regard all readings of poetry as correct" (292). This, however, must not be taken at face value. This statement amounts to saying that every reaction to poetry contains useful insights *for the historically minded critic*, who is the only recipient who can formulate an opinion in a truly reflexive and critical vein. What is more significant about McGann's less rigid theoretical position is the fundamental importance he attributes to poetry. In his view, the world we are living in is a world of simulacra, in which poetry is one of the few remaining sources of "immediate experience" (263). Consequently, for all his concern about poetry's facticities, he is not very likely to dissolve poetry in other forms of discourse, or simply among historical sources (he applies the traditional formalist definition: "poetry

is language calling attention to itself," 261).

The most problematic issue is, obviously, McGann's relation to the notion of Romanticism. The problem appears largely tactical in nature. If one maintains that the classical definitions of Romanticism (Wellek's or Abrams's definitions) are wrong because they leave no room for a major Romantic poet, i.e. Byron, then one simply has to give a new meaning to the word, which can endorse both, say, Wordsworth and Byron. The other way is to abandon the usage of the term altogether. However, McGann does neither of these. The consequence is that his arguments and his terminology remain dependent on the "synthetic" views of Romanticism. McGann's has to admit that "Byron's relation to Romanticism is secondary and critical," which is, after all, exactly what M. H. Abrams said more than thirty years ago: "Byron I omit altogether; not because I think him a lesser poet than the others but because in his greatest work he speaks with an ironic counter-voice and deliberately opens a satirical perspective on the vatic stance of his Romantic contemporaries" (*Natural Supernaturalism*, 13).

A word has to be said about McGann's individual style of writing. The reader is likely to be struck by the scale of voices in which he can speak, even within a single paper, some of which are written in a dialogic form. The experimental forms can probably be attributed to his cautiousness about formulating rigid "scientific" definitions, and even to what he calls the immediacy of the experience of poetry. More light seems to be shed on the question, however, if his style is regarded as Byronic in itself (according to McGann's own descriptions of the Byronic), and as a reflection of his "essaying a Byronic, oppositional life" (290). In fact, the composition of the whole book can be characterised by a dialectic of sincerity and mask-plays. It begins and ends by pieces of a very intimate tone of voice: a general introduction reflecting on his own carrier, an interview, and a dialogue. But even within the seemingly more conventional articles, his style varies between that of the meticulous philologist and the pamphlet-writer. He explicitly reflects on his work as a series of role-plays, and indeed he proves that he can speak from the position of a respectable lecturer, but also from that of someone making jokes (even practical jokes) in a pub. The cover illustration of *Byron and Romanticism* is given as "anonymous (previously attributed to Géricault), *Portrait of a Man* (also known as

Portrait of Lord Byron)," not much more can be said about the identity of the book's "speaker" or, as a matter of fact, about its hero.

By way of summary, it might be fair to say that if McGann's general theoretical or methodological statements can be debated (are meant for debate); one thing, however, is beyond doubt: his masterful knowledge of the philological and textological facts he is working with. He claims (in 2001) to have collected the essays as an antidote to "the relative neglect of the minute particulars of literary works as they are literary and aesthetic. The New Critical origins of much of my work, which has been noticed and sometimes attacked throughout our New Historicist years, may perhaps gain a new salience at this moment" (289). It certainly may.

Bálint Gárdos

Notes

1. Byron: *Hints from Horace*, 100.

2. "Editing Byron brought a nearly complete deconstruction of my thinking about literature, art, and culture generally. . . . [T]he editorial work threw me down to where all our literary ladders start: in the

concrete circumstances of those material and ideological histories that engage the production and transmission of 'texts' " (3).

3. The charge was formulated first by Marjorie Levinson (a student of McGann), but similar arguments have been brought up by Clifford Siskin and Frances Ferguson as well.

4. The most important among these seems the inclusion of women authors such as F. D. Hemans, or L. Barbauld.

5. The topic of a monograph by McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility* (1996).

6. He claims that the reason of the "return of the Byronic repressed" has been, apart from the editorial scholarship, the post-modern turn "with its Derridean concern for free play and instability and its Foucaultian pressure to recover salient but neglected historicalities" (238).

"Unsettling Con-sequence"

John J. Joughin & Simon Malpas
(ed.), *The New Aestheticism*
(Manchester & New York: Manchester
University Press, 2003)

Instead of a complacent discourse
about so far accepted aesthetic veri-
ties, new aestheticism presents a fun-
damental challenge to old-style aes-
thetics, that is, the politically
impregnated, grossly reductive, elitist
modes of committed theoretical criti-
cism. As the introductory passage by
the editors, John J. Joughin and
Simon Malpas, says, the attribute
"new" implies that the former aes-
thetic theories have no longer validly
registered the tensions and alterations
in contemporary society and have
failed to exploit aesthetics' essential
critical potential concerning culture,
since the notion of art has been mis-
takenly simplified as an "apolitically
humanist," "benign" activity. During
the mid-1990s, though, coinciding
with the emergence of a 'post-
theoretical' approach, new aestheti-
cism already marked the end of the
initial cycle of critical theorization and
the aggrandizement of a more re-
flective aesthetics could finally begin.

The present collection of thirteen
essays, divided into the three main
parts "Positions," "Readings" and
"Reflections," however different que-
ries they might address, unanimously
wish to restore what has been over-
looked in the analysing process: the
fact that art, despite being under-
pinned by popular rather than high
culture, and being contaminated by
politics and a priori localized schemes
of judgement, has an inalienable in-
trinsic spiritual value existing sepa-
rately from the knowledge we only
think to possess concerning art.

The new aesthetes want to see the
act of decoding art as "pure potential-
ity" or as spontaneous "dance": mo-
bile, playful, "unchoreographed"
(Thomas Doherty, "Aesthetic Educa-
tion and the Demise of Experience")
and not as if art was a mere cultural
commodity that feeds on the dicta of
a fragmentary world torn apart by
plurality and where it can only be one
among the numerous needs of the
spirit of the age (Simon Malpas,
"Touching Art: Aesthetics, Fragmen-
tation and Community"). Therefore,
the main wave of argument running
through the essays relies exactly on
the wish to liberate the ready-made
theoretical perspective and meta-
phoric ability with which we conceive
of art before the individual's actual
encounter with it.

The dispute for the inheritance of
the Western philosophical tradition
and within it for the role of aesthetics,

is rekindled by Joanna Hodge's essay, "Aesthetics and Politics: between Adorno and Heidegger" on two critically polar philosophers' notion of historicality, conceived of as "elliptically oscillating" between aesthetics, politics, artworks and political history. It follows that art, being the artist's response to reality, is seen as 'making' or as a form of cultivating the specific culture it is embedded in. Art, concerning both its birth and afterlife, involves reflective critical judgement uncovering the law of the work of art and relating it to the thought of responsibility, morality and law on a larger scale. Thus, the ultimate end of new aesthetic criticism is the purpose of connecting the work of art to the formation of culture, which requires the involvement of the artist with history (Gary Banham, "Kant and the Ends of Criticism").

Contemporary works of art, engaged with the contemporary politics of art, can be also approached through the notion of "inclusion," mostly considered to be an ineliminable possibility of interpretations, a "reiteration of sameness" in spite of every artefact being different. Inclusion also entails "negotiation" concerning art's reception and "has the structure of a decision." The opposite of inclusion is "transforma-

tion," which identifies a socio-political possibility, hence art seen in the light of transformation is either "utopian or outmoded," therefore transformation is "replaced by strategies either of adaptation or of denial." Due to the contrast of the two terms and their connotations, the work of art becomes and remains the site of incessant contestation depending on interpretation and the politics of criticism (Andrew Benjamin, "Including Transformation: Notes on the Art of the Contemporary").

Clearly seeing the historical and cultural advancements of contemporary society, Part I of the compilation, entitled simply as "Positions," encourages the reader to re-construe the critic's essential role in the act of determining the reception of art, and thus we are confronted with the legitimate question whether our appropriation of art is mere self-justifying "knowingness" instead of "nonconceptual" openness ready to accept a plethora of possible interpretations.

The overarching essay "What Comes after Art?" by Professor Andrew Bowie presents a most genuine and brave attack on the aesthetic imperative. Bowie does not let us settle in the comfortable position that art cannot possibly exist without our philosophy and pronouncements. Accordingly, new aestheticism wel-

comes the phenomenon that contemporary aesthetics is aware of, and reflective on, oppositional (e.g. feminist or racialised) art. Oppositional art, in order to compensate for the "disembodied forms of political power" and subversion, performs a "slippage of identification" or "masquerade" and hides its forgotten "prehistorical and libidinal" vein that might easily be suffocated, simply because "art in opposition" is always a potential threat or an unusual attraction of a yet uncomprehended sphere (Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, "Mimesis in Black and White: Feminist Aesthetics, Negativity and Semblance").

To faithfully represent the theoretical path clearly set by "Positions" and its organic continuum, "Reflections," the five essays of "Readings" help us to successfully test the new aesthetic tool of interpreting a unique literary text. Howard Caygill's "The Alexandrian Aesthetics," for instance, analyses the experience of allegory in the Alexandrian diaspora, which was hospitable towards cultural differences, and thus became the paradoxical scene of aesthetic pleasure and ascetic reason in the poetics of Giuseppe Ungaretti and C. P. Cavafy. The author of the second essay, Mark Robinson, in his "Defending Poetry, or, Is There an Early Modern Aesthetic?" is dissatisfied precisely with the characterisation of the English Renaissance and the Tudor period as 'early modern,' and dissects the ambivalence by pointing out that the connotations of the concept 'modern' are 'instrumental,' 'rational,' 'powerful' and 'autonomously subjective,' which are meanings the word 'modern' gained rather in the 18th century. Robson shows that the term 'early modern,' from the 16th–17th-century point of view, thus reveals itself as an indefinable, semantically empty phrase without a firm critical or aesthetic value and it is unable to indicate that art in 'the Renaissance' was not alienated from truth and morality and was not a mere parasitic imitation of reality. As far as the word 'early' is concerned, Robson suggests that it is also unsuitable, since it implies that art then had no connection with the narrative of history upon which cultural poetics and historicism depend.

The Renaissance and its contemporary treatment in adaptations is a popular and fascinating topic today. In line with that, J. J. Joughin's "Shakespeare's Genius: Hamlet, Adaptation and the Work of Following" is another interesting attempt to bring us closer to Shakespearean drama. Joughin derives the definition of 'genius' from the Kantian paradigm

and shows that the term, which played a significant role in setting the criteria for modern aesthetics, carries the primary semantic weight of "exemplary" and "originary." Paradoxically enough, Joughin argues, the art of a genius "reveals" both "compliance with and deviation from" the standard measures of formal aesthetics, and this is the source of the artist prodigy's "indeterminacy" and "proto-political and ethical nature." Joughin believes that Hamlet possesses the features of such a genius; Hamlet "ad-justs himself, i.e. moves towards justice" to reveal truth via the Mousetrap scene. The play within the play thus presents the critical event, the hermeneutic encounter and responsible ethical reflection upon the 'other' that can only be imagined but never accurately known. Such an event is adaptation itself, allowing for the creation of alterity (be it a phantom, an apparition, or a ghost) through the conscious displacement of the reader's own conceptual context, and never through a simple comparison.

In the trenchantly sensitive essay, "Melancholy as Form: Towards an Archeology of Modernism," Jay Bernstein analyses melancholy as the form of the secular-transcendental modernist novel, where a "roman without Bildung," the dialectic of spleen and ideal, the entanglement of beauty and decomposition unfolds, repels or attracts in equal measure. The philosophy behind the modernist work of art is to integrate dissonance, pain and suffering simultaneously with their contrastive values. The author's excellent demonstrative example thereof is Philip Roth's "American Pastoral," which marks both the evaporation of the myth of American beauty and the all-devouring beginning of urban decay.

"Critical Knowledge, Scientific Knowledge and the Truth of Literature" by Robert Eaglestone expertly describes art's inevitable connection to the most important ethical questions, demonstrating that art knows an "untaxonomized" truth or aletheia – 'uncovering,' 'disclosure' – that constantly "defamiliarises" the world in our eyes and (re-)teaches who and how we are. Placed on this moral ground, the new aesthetic reading of Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" purports to show the method of closely attending to the 'rhythms' of art, which is the most primary intention of the eloquent essays in the whole book.

"The New Aestheticism" refuses to be another theoretical authority unshakably confident of the righteousness of its interpretative means, since it is far too aware of the fact that for-

mer theories, like cultural criticism for instance, also "threatened the firm distinction between the theory per se and their particular textual articulation." What it wants, however, is both to encourage critical discourse and to open a more reflective phase in criticism, irreducible to the exclusive political, historical and ideological commitments of contemporary society and to understand the truth-potential of art in its unique "artness." Thus, it is a major challenge, among the contemporary trends of literary interpretation, to 'new historicism' and 'cultural materialism.' How will these two paradigms respond, similar also in being equally powerful both in Britain and the United States? Will they respond at all, or will they try to allow new aestheticism to 'slip by' (as perhaps they did with 'ethical criticism')? Will they offer inclusive 'negotiations,' trying to show that they have 'always' wanted the 'same thing?' Will the openness, the flexibility and the adaptability of the new aestheticism expedite its 'blending' with other paradigms, perhaps precisely with new historicism and cultural materialism? The next few years will undoubtedly decide these questions and the reviewer is surely not alone in wishing for a genuine and substantial debate, and in hoping for a 'Copernican turn' in literary criticism.

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