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CONTENTS

HUMAN CULTURE AND A CULTURE FOR THE HUMANITIES

The Humanities and War R. S. WHITE	1
The Humanities and Knowledge Creation LUKE STRONGMAN	13
Horace as Post-Modern COLIN ANDERSON	25
Wodewoses: the (In)humanity of Medieval Wild Men HELEN YOUNG	37
Man as Machine?: the Mechanical-Human Metaphor SABINE ROSSBACH	50
Girls Taking Over the Humanities in Japan? TOMOKO AOYAMA	65

HUMANITY, LANGUAGE AND RHETORIC

To Spur a Dull Revenge: the Rhetoric of Self-Exhortation in Revenge Tragedy PETER GIBBARD	79
Speaking to Slaves: the Rhetoric of Command in Swift and Plato THOMAS H. FORD	91

When Good Clichés Go Bad: Developing a Poetics of Malapropism in the Field of Contemporary Public Rhetoric TOM CLARK	103
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LITERATURE, THE HUMAN AND THE HUMANITIES

The Giants of Tristrams Saga GERALDINE BARNES	115
“A Good Length with My Short Thread”: Hubris and Anxiety in the Petrarchan Sonnet Sequence DANIJELA KAMBASKOVIĆ-SAWERS	123
“Nobler in the Mind”: the Emergence of Early Modern Anxiety LAURENCE JOHNSON	141
Milton’s Aliens: the Human and the Humanoid RONALD BEDFORD	157
Daphne du Maurier’s <i>My Cousin Rachel</i> : In the Looking Glass TERESA PETERSEN	167
More Human than Human: the Ethics of Alienation in Octavia E. Butler and Gilles Deleuze TIM LAURIE	177
Coyote Meets Moby Dick: the Productive Non-Human in Thomas King’s Fiction CLARE ARCHER-LEAN	191
The Banality of Evil: Arno Surminski’s <i>Die Vogelwelt von Auschwitz</i> HERMAN BEYERSDORF	205
Technology, the Human and the Sublime in Contemporary Literary Fiction TULLY BARNETT	219

Humorous Subversion in Women Writers from
Latin America

MARCIA ESPINOZA-VERA

231

Living and Partly Living:
Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *Amélie*

JENNIFER HATTE

241

Performing the Human between Arts and Science
in Contemporary Drama

BIRTE GIESLER

253

THE HUMANITIES AND WAR

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The tone of this paper may mark it as a contribution to journalism rather than scholarship, but I believe it belongs in a collection such as this one which contemplates the position of the Humanities in the modern world. It is at least the fruit of scholarship, since the ideas were developed when I was researching and writing a recent book which was supported by the Australian Research Council and published by an academic press,¹ and it is focused on issues relating to our scholarly activities. My argument is that the most direct threat to both the material and intellectual core of our disciplines is war, and that if this is conceded then we should think about using our claims to expertise and policy by contributing to debate and changing perceptions on the radically fundamental issue of avoiding war as the extension of politics or as the solution to international and inter-ethnic disputes. Doing so allows us collectively to find fundamental points of agreement about what constitutes “the Humanities” in universities. If war threatens not just the Humanities but our very subject of enquiry in our research and teaching, then formulating a strategy to interrogate, analyse and counter it is presumably of prime importance. Conflict is an inescapable part of human society and often even a creative part leading to new developments, but war as state-sanctioned and institutionalised mass murder, is not natural human behaviour and never creative. Such a devastating enemy of humanity is equally a threat to the Humanities.

The point is not as self-evident as perhaps it should be. If each of us should be invited to address the question “what are the greatest threats to the Humanities?” we would probably first respond with considerations like lack of adequate funding,

marginalisation of our subjects in planning the future of universities, an overshadowing priority in public policy given to science and medicine, populist attacks on the apparent lack of utilitarian relevance of our disciplines, and in Australia at least an ingrained anti-intellectualism that equates the Humanities with elitism and obscurantism, and so on. However, if we lift our eyes from such reasoning to see implacable and direct threats to our very existence in more ways than one, then the apparently constant answer is war. Undoubtedly wars have stimulated creativity, as witnessed by the existence of war memorials, Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Verdi's *Requiem*, Picasso's *Guernica*, the works of the English war poets, and so on, yet at the same time these works themselves generally express outrage or resistance to war, and the larger point is that amongst the casualties are our very corpus for study. Books are burned, museums, libraries, galleries and archaeological sites are bombed, musical scores are lost forever, and the environment offered by universities and other institutions devoted to dispassionate free enquiry through research and learning are compromised. Academics themselves from departments of philosophy and political science mysteriously disappear. Apparently for the whole history of mankind living in societies there has always been war, and at least from the beginning of the twentieth century down to the present day without excepting even a single year, several wars have been waged at any one moment. Not only is everything the Humanities can be taken to stand for threatened by war, but also it is perhaps only the Humanities subjects which are equipped to analyse and refute the causes of such destruction.

That we have been slow to take up the challenge even when an opportunity is offered, finds unexpected, recent proof. Whereas the journal *The British Academy Review* in 2009 contains articles on war and peace (issue 13, for example, has a section devoted to "The Politics of Peace"²), this journal's sponsoring body seems not to link the Humanities with peace. The British Academy itself recently issued a wide-ranging report on the utility of the Humanities in the modern world. It makes recommendations that suggest "ways that UK policy makers are able to make use of all that humanities and social science research has to offer."³ It cites the need in public policy-making for the "more sophisticated understanding of human behaviour" which it is argued the Humanities and social sciences can offer. The recommendations predictably focus on more funding and research opportunities, but at the heart of the report there is a section offering to "briefly discuss some of the ways in which knowledge and expertise arising from HSS research benefits

society.” These are both general and specific: “quality of life and social well-being” have been enhanced by, for example, moral philosophers who have influenced policy on reproductive technology and bio-ethics; classicists have fed the entertainment industry with plots from ancient Greco-Roman literature; the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Dictionary of National Biography* conserve heritage and culture. “Happiness” has been understood and developed by “various disciplines across the Humanities and social sciences,” as has ‘studying human beings as creative individuals and as social creatures.’ The process of making choices and taking risks researched in the social sciences has filtered into the business and economic life of the nation in such topical areas as globalisation and climate change. Research in European and Asian languages and cultures provides not only understanding of other societies, but also can have direct implications for policy makers in Britain and all multi-lingual and culturally heterogeneous societies. Humanities scholars can offer “historical perspectives on contemporary policy problems” which enable societies to learn from the past. Our research can also influence public policy by “challenging current paradigms, helping to identify new approaches, concepts and principles.” Social capital should be seen as giving policy makers useful insights into the importance of community, the social fabric and social relations at the individual, community and societal level.

However, what strikes me as absent from this admirable statement is any reference to that simple word, “PEACE.” Indeed, the only reference to even the context is in praising an academic study of “the relationship between formal language policy and military strategy and outcomes ‘on the ground’ in territories under military occupation” (does this include Abu Ghraib, one wonders?), and “the Ministry of Defence uses the expertise of staff in the War Studies Department at Kings College London, to develop and train its officers.” Their training covers “topics in political science, public policy studies, international relations, along with philosophical and historical perspectives of relevance to military issues.” Hurray for that, we might uneasily applaud, but rather than having educated army officers, some of us might think the world safer if we had no need for armies at all. Surely—or at least arguably—here is the single most central, important and appropriate area in which the Humanities can advise nations about how to sort out their manifest and destructive problems without resorting to something so primitive and barbarous as war. In short, we can teach *how to be human*.

My premise is that war is always a direct threat not only to human beings themselves but also to the Humanities since its function is to undermine the human values and rational methodologies that are at the centre of our disciplines. Bombs also have a nasty habit of destroying forever our data, the repositories of our heritage as human beings, the more positive footprints we have left on the planet. War incites racial hatred rather than fostering tolerance of other cultures and language-users. War permanently and self-evidently damages for its victims their “happiness and quality of life,” which the Humanities are said to take as their subject. Meanwhile, it is no use complaining about globalisation, climate change or economic meltdowns if there is not likely to be an inhabitable earth left to live on, after the kinds of destruction that the technology of modern weapons offer are used. It is no use extolling the value of music to still the savage breast, if the only sounds being heard by a civilian population are massive explosions that destroy their homes, schools, universities, farms, and hospitals. The wastage is not confined to property and objects, since in every war it includes the loss of lives of many young men and women—a whole generation of young men in 1914–18—many of whom would have been students, promising writers and performers, and future scholars. Enhancing “cultural understanding” and analysing “historical perspectives on contemporary policy problems” (in the British Academy’s words) are not especially noticeable in the present context of our own recent Australian relations with Afghanistan and Iraq, nor indeed the whole Muslim world, except within specialised academic circles.

As an academic I may be able to understand and analyse with some humane sympathy *why* individuals and nations have been aggressive or bigoted and why conflict is inevitable in societies, but the point of such understanding would not be to condone or perpetuate such attitudes but to see them as a failure of education, to refute them with analysis instead of pretending a misplaced impartiality, and in the long term to make them irrelevant to the way we conduct our disciplines and run our lives. After all, a certain degree of conflict, often of quite a high order, can emerge within departments and families, but even the most heated antagonist would not accept that murder is a satisfactory resolution, or anything other than a criminal action, and it is not self-evident why international relations should be any different.

All around the world, Peace Studies Centres have become established either as independent units or within universities, and often in faculties of Arts and Humanities [see Appendix for a

selection]. Their existence as full teaching and research groups gives them an admirable prominence and is a welcome and important sign, but it may paradoxically not do full justice to the subject as a whole. For example, students must positively choose to study in such a Centre and those who do not so choose may not routinely encounter concepts of peace and conflict resolution in other courses. Interdisciplinary Peace Studies majors usually include some relevant subjects from other discipline areas, but again my argument would be that *all* disciplines and even all subjects may be appropriate vehicles for material involving the analysis of war as an avoidable, man-made condition. My immediate proposal is that it is now time to go beyond Centres and to incorporate appropriate aspects of peace studies into the detail of all our disciplines at curricular, pedagogical and research levels.

An instructive analogy might lie in the way that gender has become an almost universal ingredient in courses in the Arts and Social Sciences, in a relatively short time. From a position in about 1980, when feminism was considered a threat *within* Humanities disciplines (like other approaches under the sobriquets of “theory” and “cultural studies”) to the embattled establishment of dedicated Women’s Studies Centres, we have now moved in just 20 years to a position where all academic subjects include a perspective from that field, whether it should lie in recuperating neglected female writers, artists, theorists, musicians, patrons and performers, applying a feminist critique to each discipline, exposing and resisting unacknowledged male biases, demonstrating that most public and social problems have been caused by masculine attitudes and structures, and so on. At the level of school as well as university teaching, it would nowadays be impossible not to build into courses consideration of these issues—and racial and class issues as well—all as part of the inclusive curriculum. I see no reason why the study of peace and war cannot be pursued in similar fashion, at levels of curricula and pedagogical practice in the classroom. I suggest that all humanities courses can easily include a “peace component,” an undisguised consideration of how each discipline as part of its *raison d’être* depends upon and can contribute to non-violent, co-operative values and new ways of settling problems in social and international contexts, without violence and with diplomatic cooperation and mutual respect. Rather intrepidly and very briefly I suggest some possible directions for the various disciplines.

ANTHROPOLOGY: If most wars are fought over territorial boundaries, when historically ethnic communities are separated by political imposition, or when hostile ones are forced into proximity,

then anthropologists are best placed to supply evidence of patterns emerging from invasions dating back to prehistoric times. Anthropologists, whose field is the study of human beings in society, can tell us more about how communities evolve and where their legitimate limits should lie. The title of Margaret Mead's essay, "Warfare is Only an Invention—not a Biological Necessity," is memorable and suggestive.

HISTORY: Historians are best placed to show evidentially that the end of one war is inevitably the beginning of the next, as defeated nations rearm or resort to terrorism, or winners fragment and divide over the spoils as at Versailles in 1918, Yalta and Potsdam in 1945, and the United Nations' partition of Palestine to create Israel in 1948—the whole cycle of nationalistic revenge comes inevitably into play. The Berlin Wall was not built in order to allow people to develop and co-exist as they had a legitimate right to do—quite the opposite. War makes history of course, but it is also the enemy of history since it destroys historical continuity as well as historical records, falsifies official records and in significant ways the politics of war offend against any belief in historical truth.

ART analyses objects of expressiveness and beauty, which are surely never created with the express intention of being incinerated by a fire bomb or looted with commercial intent from a damaged gallery or museum in the chaos after war. Concurrently, works like Goya's *The Horrors of War* and Picasso's *Guernica* stand as powerful and explicit indictments of war, while even officially appointed war artists often implicitly reveal a subtextual repugnance which is revealed by analysis.

ARCHITECTS would be just as dismayed as artists to see the results of war on their own buildings and on centuries of built environment.

CLASSICAL CIVILIZATIONS in their histories and mythologies established western, intellectual paradigms for understanding the roots of war and of peace, revenge and forgiveness, in ways that are open to critical deconstruction rather than being presented as natural and universal. As in all mythologies, Mars and Venus are more than just god and goddess, they represent world views and value systems.

LANGUAGES are the most manifest markers of difference and community amongst groups, and teaching languages and cultures is surely at heart the teaching of both national humility and mutual tolerance. It is tempting to suggest that nobody who learns a foreign language to any depth can be racist in more general views, while novels like Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western*

Front (1929) and films like Jean Renoir's *La Grande Illusion* (1937), *La Règle du Jeu* (1939) and *Vivre Libre* (1943) provide a powerful cultural repository of anti-war sentiment.

LITERATURE represents in memorable ways a culture's stories, attitudes, and emotions, allowing readers to apprehend for themselves through the imagination the horrors of war faced by individuals and communities, to acknowledge and respect the sanctity of human life.

MUSIC at its heart provides a non-verbal discipline where principles of harmony operate in ways that can collectively move and unite human beings, a fact which has philosophical and ideological as well as aesthetic implications. Like all the arts, it has been used as propaganda for war, in which case academic study can analyse how and why—and it has also galvanised popular resistance in anti-war movements. All these seem moral aspects to a subject so often seen as subsuming moral considerations beneath technical and emotional ones.

PHILOSOPHY is well placed as the road to methodically dismantling the “logic” of war offered by apologists, politicians and media, as well as interrogating its dubiously ethical bases.

THEOLOGY is a rich field since so many wars have been justified in the name of a deity, yet, equally, each religion has at its core some ethic of forgiveness, turning the other cheek, and martyrdom.

WOMEN'S STUDIES virtually by definition have always contributed to redefining war as unnecessary and against human instincts, since it has generally been women who carry and nurture children, activities which would be useless if the effects of war are foreseen and averted.

GENDER STUDIES, which developed from Women's Studies, again by definition, rests on principles of equality between people, which if applied consistently would make war impossible.

INDIGENOUS STUDIES in countries like Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA hold within themselves the kinds of potential for analysis mentioned above in areas of history, art, language, philosophy, theology, and mythology.

If this has been more like a sermon than is customary for an academic paper, it seems appropriate to end with a homely tale, a homily even. After this rather ambitiously “global” paper, I want to conclude on a local note. When the United States and its allies declared their intention to go to war first against Afghanistan in

2001 in a spirit of enraged revenge, and then against Iraq in 2003 for transparently imperialistic and economic motives, the students at the local primary school, which my children attended, did what seemed an inspiring and remarkable thing. They scoured the neighbourhood, tying white ribbons to telephone poles and fences. This may well have been in response to a world-wide peace initiative, but their own world was their locality and they accepted responsibility for it. I was not alone among adults in feeling proud of our children and admiring their teachers who had succeeded in putting into practice “values education” at least to the extent that their students were seeing the connection between their school-ground rule, “no war toys, no war games,” and the real world beyond their playground. And like many parents I also felt ashamed that adults in this country and in many others were setting such a disastrous and inconsistent example of grown-ups’ behaviour in solving problems by looking for somebody to blow up. Or that even enlightened humanities scholars were reduced to sullen protest and signing petitions rather than full intellectual engagement. These children were not the fictional monsters created by William Golding in his influential novel *Lord of the Flies*. These were real children with real feelings, behaving in the way that to them was most natural. What I am suggesting in this paper is not only that at tertiary level we duplicate the efforts of primary school teachers in implementing values education wherever the Humanities are themselves threatened by war—which, let’s face it, means everywhere—but that also, put more simply, we should ourselves take a position of moral leadership and emphasise the human values enshrined in the Humanities. We can, in short, learn from the children.

APPENDIX: SOME PEACE STUDIES CENTRES AND DEGREES (WEBSITES ATTACHED)⁴

Centre for Conflict and Post-Conflict Studies, ANU, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies:

<http://rspas.anu.edu.au/conflict/>

Peace Studies, University of New England – Arts and Humanities degree major: <http://www.une.edu.au/study/peace-studies/>

The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney

Institute for Economics and Peace Sydney

Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, The University of Queensland (Australia)

International Conflict Resolution Centre, the University of Melbourne

European University Center for Peace Studies (Austria):
<http://www.epu.ac.at/epu/>
Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University
Uppsala, Sweden
World Peace Academy - Swiss Centre for Peace Studies Basel,
Switzerland
Peacebuilding, Development and Security Program, Centre for
Military and Security Studies, University of Calgary
International Christian University, Tokyo, Japan
Peace Research Institute, International Christian University, Tokyo,
Japan
Peace and Conflict Studies, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies,
Japan
Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford
Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR) at George
Mason University
Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIK)
Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center
International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO)
Centre for Peace Studies, University of Tromsø, Norway
TRANSCEND Peace University (TPU online), founded by Johan
GALTUNG
Center for Justice and Peacebuilding of Eastern Mennonite
University
University of Toronto, Trudeau Centre for Peace and Conflict
Studies.
The Centre for Peace Studies at McMaster University in Hamilton,
Ontario, Canada
Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies at Fresno Pacific
University
Soka University of America's Pacific Basin Research Center
Justice and Peace Studies at the University of St. Thomas,
Minnesota
Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution at Bethel
College
Instituto Universitario Gutierrez Mellado
Archbishop Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies at
Liverpool Hope University
Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
Centre for Peace and Reconciliation Studies at Coventry University
EPU in Stadtschlaining Austria.
Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of
Notre Dame

Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (India):
<http://www.ipcs.org/>
 Centre for Conflict and Peace Studies in Afghanistan (Kabul):
<http://www.caps.af/caps.asp>
 Centre for Conflict Studies, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands
 Institute for Peace Science, Hiroshima University
 Hiroshima City University, Hiroshima Peace Institute
 Hiroshima Institute for Peace Education
 NAGASAKI PEACE INSTITUTE
 Nagasaki Institute Of Applied Science, Nagasaki Institute for Peace Culture
 International Peace Research Institute, Meiji Gakuin University
 MA Program in Peace, Development, Security and International Conflict Transformation, University of Innsbruck
 INCORE (International Conflict Research), University of Ulster
 University for Peace, Costa Rica
 International Peace and Conflict Resolution, School of International Service, American University
 Peace and Conflict Studies, Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo, Canada
 Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice, University of San Diego
 Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of St Andrews, UK
 Peace Studies at Naropa University
 Interdisciplinary Center ‘sciences for Peace’ (CISP), University of Pisa, Italy
 National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Otago, NZ
 Center for Peace and Governance, King Prajadhipok’s Institute (Thailand)
 Center for Security and Peace Studies, Gadjah Mada University (Indonesia)
 Conciliation Resources (England)
 European Centre for Conflict Prevention (The Netherlands)
 International Peace Academy (USA)
 Japan Center for Conflict Prevention (JCCP) (Japan)
 Notre Dame University, Cotabato (The Philippines)
 US Institute of Peace (USIP) (USA)

NOTES

- ¹ The ideas in this essay were generated in researching towards my book, *Pacifism and English Literature: Minstrels of Peace* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), which was supported by the Australian Research Council.
- ² See <http://www.britac.ac.uk/review/index.cfm> accessed on 19 December 2009.
- ³ <http://www.britac.ac.uk/reports/wilson/contents.cfm> accessed on 19 December, 2009.
- ⁴ The websites have been collected from Links to some of the Centres listed. I cannot safely vouch for the authenticity or credentials of each.

THE HUMANITIES AND KNOWLEDGE CREATION¹

LUKE STRONGMAN
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Definitions and contexts

Humanism is the underlying concept that gives human meaning and interpretation to the world, to selves situated in society; and it is the term for the set of disciplines which provide the common understanding that unites the different areas of study and their methods. The humanities are inherently anti-reductionist in methodology and interdisciplinary in the kinds of knowledge they intend to produce. A survey of the disciplinary scope of the national academies representing humanism in the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand suggests the multidisciplinary span of the humanities, and their interdisciplinary focus, and delineates similarities and differences between the pedagogical concerns of the national groups. Not only are there as many ideas of humanism as there are humanists, humanism is pluralist and interdisciplinary in its conception and apparently malleable to national criteria.

The United States Government national endowment for the humanities defines the humanities as spanning “[T]he study of languages modern and classical, linguistics, literature, history, jurisprudence, philosophy, archaeology, comparative religion, ethics, history, criticism, theory of arts and those aspects of the social sciences that employ historical or philosophical approaches.”¹

¹ I am grateful to Dr Michael Grimshaw of The University of Canterbury, School of Philosophy and Religious Studies for commenting on an earlier version of this paper and Dr Colin Anderson of Massey University for refocusing my argumentation on the topic of humanism and science.

One of the first things to be noticed about this multi-disciplinary involvement is that there are at least twelve subjects represented. The emphasis on the use of the plural, “approaches,” suggests the interdisciplinary focus of the American humanities, the concern to seek knowledge which is shared between subjects.

The Australian Academy of the Humanities has a more anthropological approach, encompassing prehistory and archaeology, Asian studies, classical studies, English; European languages and cultures, history, linguistics and philology, philosophy, religion and the history of ideas, cultural and communication studies; the arts. Here, there is an emphasis on culture and communication, and the performative aspects of humanism.

The United Kingdom Arts and Humanities Research Council focuses, by comparison, on the “creative industries” and includes visual art and media, librarianship and information and museum studies, and music and the performing arts. The practice of humanist activities and contribution to the cultural economy are accentuated by this Council, whilst a separate research body in the United Kingdom, the Modern Humanities Research Association, will consider membership from any University graduate.

The New Zealand Council for the Humanities includes arts, law, architecture, science and economics within its multidisciplinary scope. It maintains a more philosophically rigorous *modus operandi* in the New Zealand context, combining elements of biculturalism with a differentiation between humanist ontologies and epistemologies. According to the New Zealand Council for the Humanities, humanism encompasses “bodies of knowledge and modes of enquiry and reflection concerning what it is to be human” and the relationship of “value laden knowledge” with civil society.² Jurisprudence is absent from the disciplinary remit of the Australian Academy but included in the American, New Zealand and the United Kingdom academies.

As Steve Birkerts has suggested, “humanistic knowledge [is] ... about the creation and expansion of meaningful contexts.”³ Amongst other formulations, then, humanism provides a web of shared belief, which may contain the isolated facts prevalent in the conventional scientific view. This web of belief may also be value laden. One could claim that if science is essentially about the formation of facts, then humanism provides a context for these facts, as distributed cognitions occurring within belief systems across physical culture.

The social contract of civil society is premised on the shared understandings of equitable humanist goals, to quote from philosopher of science, Paul Feyerabend, “[T]he idea of a fixed method, or of a fixed theory of rationality, rests on too naïve a view of man and his social surroundings.”⁴ Other views of humanism may be value laden, such that humanism is defined by critical failure; for example, the social injustice of racist, sexist or bigoted beliefs calls on contrary human values to be proved false. A rejection of political conditions, for example those of colonisation, may also entail ethical objections, begging the question: on what rational human basis are these made? How are culturally relativistic concepts to be grounded in universally recognised human values?

This paper will attempt to explore the following consequents: is humanism a way of engaging with the world that involves a type of personality, a set of beliefs that may be taught, or a series of positions and principles, which follow naturally from culturally situated experience? How are evolving definitions of humanism related to the way in which humanists create knowledge about the world, and are there responsibilities that follow from experiential engagement with the world that are particular to the humanities disciplines, aside from their relationship with other disciplines?

Given the aim of science is to maintain objectivity and to produce specific facts about the world and the cosmos, then the humanities help to contextualise these findings and interpret what they mean for the human person. Furthermore, if science is wholly concerned with the objective production of specific facts, the humanities have a special responsibility for the integrity of the human above and beyond the capacity to contextualise the findings of science, by reducing bias and improving aspects of contextual understanding. As Australian Senator Kim Carr put it in “The Art of Innovation—Address to the National Press Club,” the humanities play at least four roles in the innovation process of knowledge creation and knowledge transfer. First, they drive innovation in an incremental fashion; second, they contribute to the service sector; third, they “raise the standard of scientific and technical innovation by shining an inquiring and sometimes critical light on its ethical, historical, cultural and social consequences”; and fourth, they drive skill usage, and they empower individuals and communities to deal with change—by adapting to it or guiding and providing frames of reference for it for others.⁵

Senator Carr’s identification of the humanities as contributing to the service sector needs some qualification. The humanities play a role in the creative industries, with fiction writers, analysts and

report writers, speech writers, and screenplay writers all contributing to a creative service economy. Senator Carr presumably does not have in mind the reifying tendencies of industrial process to objectify knowledge creators in the service of their profession.

Furthermore, the humanities have an intrinsic value in their recognition of human existential pleasure. The usefulness of this value is often questioned. Yale law professor, Stanley Fish, has gone so far as to say that, in terms of their usefulness, the humanities have “none whatsoever. And it is an answer that brings honor to its subject.” Here, Fish concurs with Senator Carr’s belief that the “pleasure principle” requires no further justification, the point being that study of the humanities is of intrinsic worth and this is a transcendent value. However, the people who contemplate such values are themselves frequently bound up in a network of vocational and economic relations, which may compromise their experience of the transcendent pleasure principle—despite the fact that arts rooted in physical culture can be seen as revitalising communities. Acknowledging this tends to detract from the idea of the pleasure principle.

One important way in which humanist methodologies differ from those employed by the physical sciences is that the former frequently involve the indwelling or inhabitation of the researcher with phenomena, or with the topic under examination.⁶ Many people have a view of their experience as a continuous series of qualitative judgements or experiences, which fall inside or outside the realms of scientific objectivity or personal subjectivity. This may be the common view held in Western society. These qualitative judgements form the very basis of the collective and individual narratives of human orientation and exploration in the world. This shared construction comprises an important part of humanist approaches to knowledge. Scientific opinion may hold that the Popperian principles of conjecture and falsification, as expressed in *Conjectures and Refutations* (1963) operate best for the establishment of facts about the physical and objective world, but what can they tell us about the qualities of human experience? They can tell us very little in isolation.⁷

In humanistic enquiry, researcher understanding arises from direct personal experience of the subject matter. This enables the researcher to form qualitative conclusions about the area of study, rather than needing to rely on the manipulation of external variables to form abstracted conclusions, specific only to an isolated or conditional premise. In the humanities, the researcher

himself partially or wholly serves as the measuring instrument for the phenomena under question. Personal experience and the knowledge gained from it take the place of scientific data. Rather than setting himself apart from the topic of study, the researcher becomes immersed in it. Two forms of enquiry are available in humanistic methodologies, the intrasubjective and the intersubjective. Intrasubjective reality involves the interaction between the researcher and the phenomenon, whereas intersubjective reality has interpretative consistencies common across multiple observers.

Valsiner makes a distinction between the actual, perceived and uncertain qualities of a phenomenon.⁸ Determining the actual quality involved is the purpose of most enquiries or experiments, but it is inherently difficult to come to valid conclusions in the sciences because the observer is external to the phenomenon and at times has no direct access to it. Secondly, discoveries in quantum physics have confirmed that the act of observation changes the thing observed. Perceived qualities depend on the knowledge the observer brings to the process of investigation. Thus the quality that emerges in the process of research is uncertain as far as the phenomenon is concerned. Research methodologies in the humanities, as Valsiner suggests, are inherently connected with the making of the quality they are supposed to reveal, and as such are more than just symptoms of a chronic distraction (Valsiner 108). The humanities are necessary if we are to understand how to use technologies to enhance our states of being rather than to provide only short-term benefits with possibly detrimental long-term biases. One has only to think of climate change and globalisation to see how an uncontextualised economy, operating (from a sustainability perspective) in the free-market system may jeopardise long-term social and environmental well-being—and how the humanities may enable us to understand these myriad phenomena better. Improving health through cultural understanding, building better cities with a more sympathetic understanding of how people live and of how their lives fit together in communities, and of the politics of displacement, the silenced, the overlooked, and the rights of the person, are also within the domain of the humanities. In this way, the humanities may perform a “function in culture as a kind of corrective or regulative mechanism,” in recognising human complexity in reductionist environments.⁹ Engineers have a responsibility to sustain the biosphere, whilst the humanities have a responsibility to make that culturally worthwhile.

Practising humanities: the basis of humanities methodologies

At their root, both science and religion are based on a set of beliefs about the nature of reality, which are accepted on faith; however, the beliefs themselves are rarely subject to the empirical test that went into forming them. Furthermore, as Paul Feyerabend suggests, given that “[T]he events, procedures and results that constitute the sciences have no common structure...,” then, “[S]cientific successes cannot be explained in a simple way.”¹⁰

Where particular facts are produced from an experiment, science as a body of knowledge recedes into the background. In humanistic methodology, each investigator may have a different conceptualisation of the phenomena investigated, as attention is paid to the foreground or topic of interest against a background of known probability or comparative belief system. The fabric of society, comprising the ideas and concepts, feelings and intuitions, emotions and beliefs that bind people together, is just as important for the humanist researcher as is the separation of knowledge into discrete units for the scientific researcher. In the humanities, according to Hirschman, meaning can be viewed as having “emergent and interactive qualities (242).”

Most often, such beliefs are accepted or rejected *a priori* without recourse to conclusive empirical argument. But how does this sharing of beliefs bring us closer to defining the humanities? As Hirschman puts it, “Humanistic inquiry may be in part based on a set of fundamental beliefs the scientist has about the nature of reality, but this does not constitute humanist study in itself (238).” For example, although humanism may provide a context for defining, more clearly or more generally, the phenomena the scientist believes knowable, the *way* they may become known, and the criteria for evaluating what is known, come through philosophical explication. At the basis of humanistic knowledge is the view that human beings construct multiple realities. Not only does the observer influence the phenomena of the observed, but also there are multiple observations.

For the humanist, knowledge is context-embedded, people themselves constitute the context of knowledge, and furthermore, people determine the contexts in which knowledge is understood, transferred, communicated, used and stored. Humanities’ methodology acknowledges that the researcher and the phenomenon under study are mutually interactive. In humanistic enquiry, the researcher cannot distance himself from the phenomenon under question; nor can the phenomenon be understood without the personal involvement of the researcher.

Thus humanism can provide a body of knowledge that is not confined to causes and effects, but embraces statements and findings to provide a “thick” description of phenomena in continuous creation, to use anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s term.¹¹ This “thick” description may involve subjective and contingent knowledge. Humanities are thus more fully engaged in the context-dependent world than are the sciences, which tend to treat knowledge as a series of discrete facts. Studies in the humanities are inherently value-laden, in a qualitative sense, and the researcher’s values inevitably influence the choice of phenomena, methodology and the data used.

The individual, particularly in Western society, enjoys a scientific heritage that informs the cultural habitus. It comes with a plethora of sensory stimulation. Human behaviour and action will follow from a combination of these things. For Willard Quine, both scientific and humanistic inquiries are based on the establishment of primary assumptions that are accepted on faith, beliefs about the nature of reality whose truth or falsity is not subject to empirical test.¹² Humanism does not necessarily refute the claim that science makes to manufacturing isolated facts; in fact it may offer no judgment one way or the other on these facts whilst highlighting their utility, value or inherent and emergent qualities. Rather, humanism may emphasise and contextualise the complexity of the web of beliefs that compromise reality. If there are stereotypes about the nature and utility of humanistic methods, they are usually expressed along the lines that the humanities are good at generating ideas but less good at rigorous theory testing. However, this view is tempered by the fact that humanist knowledge is in a constantly evolving state and is not reducible to a series of unchanging ideas. What this dynamism suggests is, according to Pederson’s view that humanism engages in a form of alethic pluralism (the belief that the nature of truth is not uniform across domains), an acknowledgement that truth is many rather than one.¹³

Knowledge practices in the humanities can be both idiographic (relating to or concerned with unique or discrete facts) and nomothetic (a science of general or universal laws). Idiographic knowledge involves the study of the individual or contingent idea, the accidental and the subjective. Idiographic knowledge may produce tentative statements and help construct a “thick” description of cultural interaction. For example, much of an anthropologist’s field-work may be comprised of constructing idiographic data. It also may involve the belief that phenomena are in continuous creation. The phenomena occur in a context that is

not simply one of cause and effect but that is also inherently value-laden. Nomothetic knowledge involves producing generalisable laws or values to explain objective phenomena. Nomothetic knowledge may build on and provide meaning to, idiographic knowledge.

In the humanist approach, the *a priori* mental schema is a semiotic field whose texture and nature are discerned through direct personal experience. Verbal interpretation is often preceded by conceptual breakthrough or gestalts in which a researcher achieves understanding of the phenomenon from a variety of perspectives. The humanities are less prone to the fallacy error, in which the rules for the conduct of research are mistakenly seen as rules of justification, to be used in the evaluation of knowledge. As Morgan suggests, the outcomes of positivist research themselves have no claim to serve as standards for the evaluation of knowledge.¹⁴

The humanities involve sets of criteria that acknowledge that there is not one true world but multiple-constructed worlds, in which each person may have a different perspective of the common phenomena that comprise individual or shared understanding. As Hirschman points out, these criteria may be based on credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (244–46). For Hirschman, credibility involves consensus that a particular belief or set of beliefs is correct. Credibility is thus a matter of consensus and consistency across a range of descriptions from a range of viewpoints. Transferability in the humanities is, for Hirschman, analogous to assessing external validity in positivist science. It does not equate with objectivity or generalisation. Knowledge may be communicated or transferred between contexts. No two contexts are identical and knowledge may be tested or refined in the process. Furthermore, according to Hirschman's criteria, dependability is analogous to reliability. In science, the temporal stability and internal consistency of measures demand that research instruments and methodologies exhibit the same qualities under the same conditions to produce reliable but limited knowledge.

Whereas modern humanistic accounts promote reflection, critical analysis, and the development of interpretations that challenge received assumptions (such as the Keatsian term “negative capability,” understood as the ability to hold more than one position at a time, to be a part of wider ambiguity) the earlier Renaissance model of *liberalis* education was concerned with freedom only if attuned to producing free people. Freedom was not

seen as dependent only on wealth or birth and the negotiation of labour and physical space, but as devolving from attainments of the human mind, with the notion that the human self might be autonomously fashioned.

Humanitas meant to acquire humanness through contemplation of “eternal and divine” values and forms. This view of classical culture has a strong transcendentalist theme. Humanity was to be seen as something that was cultivated prior to the utilitarian view of growing industrialisation. As Nussbaum points out, Petrarch sought healing in the sound of words. In *De remedies utriusque fortunae* Petrarch says that words “do not heal the body” but do heal the “maladies of the souls.” For Cicero in classical times, knowledge was equated with calmness. The wise person was by mental disposition able to free the soul from perturbations. Four Ciceronean perturbations were *libido* (desire), *laetitia* (exuberant joy), *metus* (fear), and *aegritudo* (mental anguish).¹⁵

Furthermore, the humanities provide models of attitudinal disposition, values of character formation as well as intellectual constructs, ideas and orientation to worldly contexts. The humanities teach important emotional skills such as empathy; cognitive skills such as imagination; and enhance the contexts in which people live their lives. They teach us to value aspects of life and experience beyond economic success or failure; they allow us to believe that there is a complex array of values to be experienced in the world.

Ethical modes of humanist experience

Traditionally, the humanities utilise the capacity to accommodate change, imbuing the individual’s consciousness with necessary awareness and willingness to engage with issues of personal freedom and social reform. Secular humanism also has the function of alerting people to areas of society that seek to reduce meaning in life, or the tendency of society to treat people as objects. The scientific industrial revolution had its historical origins in the kinds of technical productivity that followed philosophical adjustments brought about by the empiricism derived from secular Renaissance humanism and the enlightenment. Studying the humanities seeks to promote awareness of people within a cultural environment, educating them to be empathetic, innovative, to accommodate change and to be alert to social issues that arise as functions of social and industrial organisation. The humanities may play a role in enhancing individual, social and cultural values, deepening our knowledge of human abilities, creativity, and in the

contextualisation of knowledge and experience, celebrating human achievement.

The traditional aims of the humanities, following from the Renaissance, are to equip people for social and political life as informed, impartial, tolerant individuals. As well as imparting interdisciplinary breadth, the humanities need to aim at establishing a society whose concerns are above the survival level, encompassing intellectual, moral, aesthetic qualities of mind, interpersonal understanding, tolerance, capacity to reason, and cognitive moral development. In this respect, as Wachtler suggests, the humanities may have associative applications to other disciplines; for example, medicine, the environment, business, and science, and yet the humanities should not be reduced to a service industry.¹⁶

There are four main ethical modes of humanist experience and orientation: critical humanism, utilitarianism, deontological considerations, and self-fashioning and character formation. It is simplistic to presume that for the vast number of vocations in the modern marketplace, each vocation requires the minimum of skills alone. Increasingly, the globalised markets of industries transformed by technology require people in their workforces who are multi-skilled and who can move between vocational contexts, those practitioners who are open to training and retraining, with work skills able to fit with life skills. Such an approach implies a degree of robustness in human interaction and, arguably, interest in societal concerns that are beyond the individual's immediate focus of attention or cultural habitus. However, the transition from the ideas of Renaissance humanism, which were based on educating the elite, towards the focus of many contemporary Western governments on mass education and training has arguably led to an erosion of humanistic values, expressed by the difference between *sophia* (wisdom) and *techné* (craft). The flip side is the broadening of the democratic context in the virtual sphere. Post-industrial culture has extended the arts and humanities (along with other kinds of discourse) into the technical virtual or digital domains. Communication is faster and easier but quality checks are fewer. Issues of qualifications aside, surely it is better that the many have some humanities education than the few have it all?

Humanities discourse may also contain valuable cultural codes that allow people to negotiate ethically satisfying lives; they contain protocols of living and examine, in literature for example, consequences that may follow when these are broken. Given that language mediates positions or interprets our thinking, the

humanities offer an interdisciplinary perspective for disciplines that are reductively prescribed and that can be seen as abstractions of a larger whole. Even the most utilitarian and instrumental of disciplines may be enhanced by non-instrumentalist and holistic thinking, leading to conceptual innovations or aspects of general education and personal development. For example, the visual arts may help in training in skills of empathy and in handling ambiguity, yet there is no single defined path to becoming more humane. Similarly narrowly focussed disciplines need to be able to inter-relate to produce new knowledge.

The humanities are involved in other professional spheres through the application of techniques of reporting, interpreting, and theorising. These facilities, developed by traditional humanities' fields, may be extended to the interpretation of phenomena within the medical or engineering fields, for example. Since language mediates interpretative positions in discourse and allows us to modify our social environment, knowledge of the implicit culture of language allows aspects of applied disciplines to contextualise problems and practices into a larger whole. Even traditionally instrumental disciplines can be enhanced by non-instrumentalist and holistic thinking, which may lead to new disciplinary conceptualisations, innovations, awareness of values, and personal development. The humanities should be recognised for their intrinsic worth.

NOTES

- ¹ United States National Endowment for the Humanities, accessed 11 November 2009, <http://www.neh.gov/whoweare/overview.html>. (The definition is based on the 1965 National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act, paragraph 7.)
- ² Te Whaingā Aronui, The Council for the Humanities, accessed 11 November 2009, http://www.humanities.org.nz/humanities/about_us#scope, paragraph 4.
- ³ Sven Birkett, "The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age" (Boston, London: Faber and Faber, 1994), accessed 12 January 2008, <http://archives.obs-us.com/obs/english/books/nn/bdbirk.htm/>, 16–17.
- ⁴ Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method*. (London, New York: Verso, 2001), 18.
- ⁵ Kim Carr, "Innovation, Industry, Science and Research: Ministers and Parliamentary Secretary: 'The Art of Innovation'—Address to the National Press Club," (Paper presented at the National Press Club: Canberra Australia, 2008), accessed 22 September 2008,

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- http://minister.innovation.gov.au/Carr/Pages/HEARTOFINNOVATION-ADDRESSTOTHE NATIONAL PRESSCLUB.aspx, 4.
- ⁶ Elizabeth C. Hirschman, "Humanistic Inquiry in Marketing Research: Philosophy Method and Criteria," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 23 (1986): 238.
 - ⁷ Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations* (London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1963), 33–39.
 - ⁸ Jaan Valsiner, "Data as Representations: Contextualising Qualitative and Quantitative Research Strategies," *Social Science Information* (London: Sage, 2000), 108.
 - ⁹ Wilfred M. McClay, "The Burden of the Humanities," *The Wilson Quarterly*, accessed 11 November 2008, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=wq.essayessayed=452772>, 4.
 - ¹⁰ Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London, New York: Verso, 2001), 1.
 - ¹¹ Clifford Geertz, "Blurred Genres: The Reconfiguration of Social thought," in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).
 - ¹² W. Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 69–90.
 - ¹³ N. J. L. Pederson, "What Can the Problem of Mixed Inferences Teach us about Alethic Pluralism?," *Monist*, 19 (2006), 115.
 - ¹⁴ Gareth Morgan, "The Significance of Assumptions," in *Beyond Method: Strategies for Social Research* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1983), 377–82.
 - ¹⁵ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 106.
 - ¹⁶ C. Wachtler, C. Lundin and M. Troein, "Humanities for Medical Students? A Qualitative Study of a Medical Humanities Curriculum in a Medical School Program," *BMC Medical Education*, 6:16 (2006), 1–10.

HORACE AS POSTMODERN

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How can Horace be considered Postmodern? Surely the proposition itself is contradictory—a poet of classical antiquity associated with a philosophical and cultural concept that saw the light of day only forty or so years ago? The answer of course depends on what is meant by “Postmodern”? And that is a question which seems to have a myriad answers.

In a very entertaining and accessible “Beginner’s guide” to Postmodernism published in 2004, the American poet and academic Kevin Hart¹ describes the multiple variety of Postmodern landscapes as a kind of fairground, to which guided tours may be taken, depending on the particular field of philosophical, cultural, social, political, religious, literary or aesthetic thought that takes the visitor’s interest. So, if we are to venture on to the fairground of the post-modern, we are almost obliged to follow one of the tour guides. Just so others can see where you are going.

In that context, let me affix to my lapel the tour-label marked “Postmodern Epistemology.” The guide for this particular tour is named Jean-François Lyotard. Lyotard is regarded as one of the originators of the Postmodernist conceptual movement as it evolved in the 1970s. His particular interest was in the process by which we as human beings try to determine how we can know things, and whether any absolute knowledge of the universe, and how we relate to it, is in fact possible. Lyotard asserts that humans try to make sense of the universe, and their place in it, by constructing what he calls “grand narratives.” Such narratives, to carry conviction, however, need to embody within themselves some form of *legitimation*. The earliest such narratives, in terms of human cultural development, are those of origins, where we come from,

and how and why we are here. Such narratives ground their legitimisation in collective myth and tradition, which is handed down as cultural capital within a particular society. And where these myths are reinforced by an appeal to a numinous dimension, such grand narratives take on the form of a religion.

Now, narratives that are legitimated through faith and collective acceptance of tradition are generally considered characteristic of so-called “pre-modern” societies. And their collective nature means they are not subject to confirmation by individuals. But grand narratives, being human constructs, Lyotard asserts, are not permanent. They tend to break down with time. Such a breakdown of the grand originating narratives of Western culture reached, in his view, its critical point of rupture in the “first person narrative chosen by Descartes to explain his method.”² Through the rigorous application of rational doubt and logic, Descartes showed that legitimisation of knowledge was now accessible to the individual consciousness, and was no longer dependent on tradition. This Cartesian method, grounded in rationalism and empiricist observation, became the essence of the Enlightenment project of the eighteenth century, and so ushered in the era of Modernity. With a new grand narrative to underpin it.

For Lyotard, the grand narrative of Modernity expressed itself through two facets: the *speculative* and the *emancipatory*. Simon Malpas (2005) summarises the speculative narrative as that which

charts the progress and development of knowledge towards a systematic truth, a grand unified theory in which our place in the universe will be understood. The grand narrative of emancipation, on the other hand, sees the development of knowledge as driving human freedom as it emancipates humanity from mysticism and dogma through education.”³

The grand narrative of the modern then became multiplied, says Lyotard, through a plethora of “meta-narratives” diffracting its fundamental principle across a broad spectrum of fields of human experience, among which were

the Enlightenment narrative of emancipation from ignorance and servitude through knowledge and egalitarianism, [...] the Marxist narrative of emancipation from exploitation and alienation through the socialisation of work, the capitalist narrative of emancipation from poverty through techno-industrial development. (36)

to name but three of its multiple strands. It is this grand modernist narrative which has dominated intellectual, political, economic and social thought, at least in the West, for the last two centuries.

But as with the pre-modernist narrative, the narrative of the Modern also, in Lyotard's view carried with it the seeds of its collapse under the weight of its own internal contradictions. He dates the collapse of the modernist narrative of enlightened progress to the Second World War and the subsequent two decades. In *The Post-Modern Explained to Children*, he declared:

In the course of the past 50 years, each grand narrative of emancipation has had its principle invalidated: the speculative doctrine that *all that is real is rational and all that is rational is real* finds its horrific refutation in Auschwitz. [...] the Marxist narrative of proletarian emancipation is refuted by Berlin 1953, Budapest 1956, Prague 1968 [and he might have subsequently added the fall of communism in 1989]. "May 1968" refutes the doctrines of parliamentary liberalism. The doctrine of economic liberalism as productive of general prosperity is refuted by the crises of 1929, the oil shocks of the 70s. (40)

To this latter list might well be added the crash of 1987, to say nothing of the global recession of 2008–2009.

Such crises therefore mark the beginning of what for Lyotard is the stage of post-modernity. "I define the post-modern, he declared in *The Post-Modern Condition*, as incredulity towards meta-narratives."⁴ It is an environment in which the legitimating power of the narrative has been broken down by circumstances which it has generated from within its own imperative. For Lyotard, however, the Postmodern is not a new age that has displaced the modern, but rather a process which "performs a continual rereading and critique of modern values and projects" (Malpas 44). The Postmodern does not refute the Modern, but transmutes its absolutist aspirations to the contingent. As the post-Marxist theoretician Ernesto Laclau also observes, "Postmodernity does not imply a *change* in the values of Enlightenment modernity, but a particular weakening of their absolutist character" (Malpas 129)."

The Postmodern, thus perceived, sees the world in terms of its discontinuity, its fragmentation, its pure contingency, a state that constantly escapes imposition of any organising principle. It involves acknowledgment of implicit paradox, of incipient chaos, of epistemological fracture. "It is changing the meaning of the word *knowledge*," declares Lyotard, "while expressing how such a change

can take place" (144). How might then we respond to such a Postmodern condition? Not with nihilist despair or anarchist destruction of social value systems, as some opponents of the postmodernist analysis have accused its protagonists of doing. But with a clear-eyed pragmatism that promotes actions based on collectively derived values, yet leavened by the knowledge that these are contingent rather than absolute, and do not necessarily have any universal truth value.

My purpose here, however, is not to expound Lyotard, but rather to provide a framework within which to judge whether my initial association of Horace with a Postmodern way of thinking can be validated or not. So let us now turn to Horace to see in what sense he might be labelled as Postmodern, at least, from a Lyotardian point of view.

In the First Book of Horace's *Odes*, composed somewhere between 35 and 23 BCE, are two consecutive poems, numbers 34 and 35, in which the poet evokes the influence of Fortune, which we may interpret as the notion of unpredictable contingency, in the lives of both individuals and societies. The juxtaposition of these two poems in Horace's collection has been unequivocally established since ancient times, leading to the conclusion that the poet intended them to be read together. Just how they should be interpreted, though, has led to considerable critical speculation over the centuries. Let us look at the two of them in order, then. The translations are mine, but I have included the original Latin texts in the appendix.

Carmen XXXIV, *Parcus deorum*

I never gave much time to the gods, from whom
 I'd drifted, quoting sage Epicurus's
 absurdist wisdom; now I'm forced to
 turn full about and to chart a course in
 direction counter. For indeed Jupiter,
 whose flashing bolt rends thunderclouds typically,
 one day through virgin blue his drumming
 steeds and his swift-winged car sent rumbling:
 so great the boom that rivers, the stolid earth,
 the meres of Styx and Taenaris' ghastly cave,
 even the far-flung slopes of Atlas,
 shook with the shock: a sign God has power to
 invert the cosmic edifice, able to
 bring down the great yet elevate humbleness;
 from one has Fortune wrest the sceptre,
 shrieking with glee, to enthrone another.

In the first few lines of Ode 34, Horace appears to be commenting on his own personal intellectual and philosophical development, before relating a sudden epiphany moment which caused him to adopt an entirely new way of thinking. In the first line he reports he had moved away from traditional religious practice, following the increasing trend towards religious scepticism which, in the view of many commentators, characterised the late period of the Roman Republic.⁵ As one declares, “the gods had ceased to be such vivid and distinct personalities as could command the poet’s unwavering loyalty.”⁶ For many of Horace’s contemporaries, the Roman myth of origins had ceased to be intellectually credible.

Instead, many had become interested in the various forms of Hellenistic philosophy that had developed over the last three centuries of the ancient era. Horace in particular, as Ode 34 reveals, had been attracted to the doctrines of Epicurus, almost certainly from reading the great didactic poem of Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* [On the Nature of Things], published c. 55 BCE.⁷ In this hugely influential work, Lucretius describes a universe constructed according to the laws of Epicurean atomist physics, but one whose order may be apprehended through sense perception and the application by individual human beings of *ratio*, or reason, one of the key recurring terms in the text. While Lucretius did not deny the existence of the gods, following Epicurus himself he believed that they dwelt in a detached state of bliss, completely indifferent to the world and to the affairs of men. In view of this divine indifference, Epicurus taught that the supreme value in life was the pursuit of *Hedone*, the cultivation by human beings of a state of individual harmony with the universe which brought spiritual Pleasure.

The mythic narrative of origins was thus replaced for Epicureans by that of knowledge and self-fulfilment accessible through the application of the human reason. But then, Horace describes an experience that seems to contradict this secure conclusion. It comes literally as a “bolt from the blue,” a bolt of lightning from out of a clear blue sky. As a result of which, he says, he was forced to “turn full about and to chart a course in direction counter” in his ideas on the nature of things. Why? Because this event seemed to provide incontrovertible proof of the error of the Epicurean doctrine. The reference to the “bolt from the blue” clearly recalls Lucretius’s rhetorical question in *De Rerum Natura* VI, 400, where the poet asks, if thunderbolts are missiles sent by Jupiter to chastise men,

“why does Jupiter never cast a bolt on the earth and sound his thunder when the heaven is clear on all sides?” (trans. Rouse 1924). The answer, according to Lucretius, is because thunder and lightning are natural phenomena, generated within stormclouds, and therefore never occur within a clear sky. Hence nothing at all to do with Jupiter, who remains indifferent to the world and human affairs.

But now, Horace finds that what Epicurus’s doctrine claimed was impossible has indeed happened. Its rationalist basis had thus been severely shaken. But what did his comment about being forced to turn full-about in his thinking as a result of this experience mean? Does it imply that Horace returned thereupon to an uncritical acceptance of the old religion? Most commentators think not, though tend not to pursue the question much further.

I would like to suggest, however, that a much more radical change in Horace’s thinking may have taken place. For how else can one explain the otherwise highly exaggerated series of images he includes on the effect of the “bolt from the blue”:

so great the boom that rivers, the stolid earth,
the meres of Styx and Taenaris’ ghastly cave,
even the far-flung slopes of Atlas,
shook with the shock:

For this was no mere sonic boom, but an earth-shaking realisation that the whole rationalist explanation of the order of the universe was built on insecure foundations—that the structure of the universe was not absolute, but contingent. For Ode 34 then ends with the image of a world governed by chaotic unpredictability, whose structures and systems can be turned upside down at any moment for no explicable reason, both on the cosmic as on the human level. The agency responsible for such changes Horace calls “God” (*deus*) in line 12 and “Fortune” in line 15. But this “God” is not identified with the Olympian Jupiter. It is perceived rather as a fundamental principle of immanent change that is beyond the grasp of human intelligence. One might claim, therefore, that the cosmic environment thus described has passed from the modern to the post-modern.

Having once evoked this contingent role of Fortune in Ode 34, Horace then goes on to consider the consequences of this contingency for human societies in Ode 35:

Carmen XXXV, *O diva, gratum*

Blest Lady Fortune, favour of Antium, your immanence may raise up from low degree mere nobodies, while turning triumphs arrogance vaunts into dismal funerals.	
Stern queen of oceans, queen of the harvest too, poor peasants court you, earnest in prayer, as do sailors who vex wild Cretan seas in roughly hewn barks from Bithynian shipyards.	5
Hard-fighting Dacians, Scythians in armed retreat, proud city-states, wild tribes and the mothers of barbarian kings, tough Latium even, hold you in dread, while the crimson tyrant takes fright lest you bring down with a brutal kick his sham constructions, or the plebeian mass take up the shout: “ <i>aux armes!</i> to weapons!” stirring the sluggish to smash his power.	10
Before you always marches Exigency, grim-faced, and clutching dowel-rams and timber-spikes in brazen hand, with grips to clamp the marble, and lead to bind tight the courses.	15
In close attendance, Hope, and uncommon Trust (her hand enwrapped in white); they in loyalty quit not your side when, coat reversed and kindly no more, you depart great houses; unlike the faithless mob, or the courtesan who turns perfidious, or fickle friends who will drink dry the dregs one’s kegs supply, then craftily slip out of sharing burdens.	20
Pray smile on Caesar’s planned expedition to remotest Britain, as on the newly-raised cadet battalions heading East to ravage the Gulf and affright the tribesmen.	25
Ah me, what shame, what scars of iniquity we brothers traded. Did our abrasive age recoil from aught? What stayed untainted by our unspeakable acts? Did fear of the gods dissuade young men from depravity? What shrines remain unsullied? Oh, would that you reforge on anvil new our blunted swords and direct them against the Turkmen.	30
	35
	40

Ode 35 takes the form of a hymn to goddess Fortuna, acknowledging her power to bring about unforeseen change, and the thrall that she exerts over great and small alike. Particularly

intriguing, however, are lines 17–24, where the goddess is represented as moving in procession through a city, attended by her acolytes, suggesting, in the words of one commentary, “a grim squad of Roman lictors, carrying the fearsome symbols of *imperium*, subservient to their arrogant master and implacable to everyone else.”⁸

The interpretation of the function of these acolytes and their relation to Fortune has caused considerable critical debate. Line 17 shows Fortune as preceded by Exigency [L. *Necessitas*]. The primordial sense of the Latin word is “that which is unavoidable, inevitable, a compelling force.” It is linked to the Greek *Ανάγκη*, which has a similar sense of “coercion, compulsion, constraint, law of nature.” Yet how should the implements carried by Exigency be interpreted? Some commentators, David West, for example,⁹ see these as instruments of torture or execution, instead of as tools of construction, arguing that the Latin terms used are not otherwise specifically found in this latter sense. The majority, however, tend to favour the construction metaphor, based on associations with other Greek and Latin texts. In favour of the building metaphor, also, is the preceding image of the tyrant’s “sham constructions” (l. 14) being kicked down by Fortune, and her general attribution as a reverser of circumstance—but not a destroyer. Hence, necessity requires that, if one structure is overthrown, another must needs rise in its place. Such indeed has been the experience of revolutions of all kinds, be they political or intellectual.

The other problem that has perplexed commentators is why Trust (*Fides*) and Hope (*Spes*) remain loyal to Fortune when she capriciously abandons a “great house” she has hitherto favoured. But if contingent Fortune is interpreted as a neutral, i.e. neither benevolent nor malevolent, force of change, of accident in the true sense, she can naturally be accompanied by Trust and Hope at all times, whether she bestows or withdraws her favours. For, given that unpredictable change is her essential aspect, circumstances that have changed once can change again.

The last three stanzas of the ode modify its form from that of a hymn to a prayer, accompanied by a lamentation. Fortune is beseeched to look favourably on planned military expeditions to Britain and the Middle East. But in the midst of this pious entreaty, Horace graphically evokes the horrors that the recent civil wars have wrought upon the Roman state, a rhetorical outburst that some critics have seen as excessive and discordant in this context. Yet this lament is not a prayer of confession that seeks forgiveness. Fortune, as a goddess, does not forgive, as she has no moral

dimension. Rather might we interpret this as a warning by Horace of the dangers of believing in the absolute validity of any social or political narrative. For it was the inherent internal contradictions of the narrative of the Roman Republic that had brought about the disastrous century of civil strife that culminated in the fabric of that Republic being torn apart.

The only way forward, Horace suggests at the end of the poem, is through a policy of enlightened pragmatism—enlightened in the intellectual sense rather than the moral sense. The state desperately needs to divert its energies from self-destruction, he is implying. And if this can be best done through diffusing the pressure in some foreign wars on the far frontiers, then this is wise policy. Just as long as you don't think you are bringing liberation to the Britons, or the Turkmen, while you are doing so. In other words, do not believe too absolutely in any new Imperialist narrative that Exigency was constructing to replace the fallen structures of the Republic. To whom would this admonition have been intended, if not to Augustus himself, of whose inner circle Horace was by then an intimate.

On 11 September 2001, out of a caerulean blue New York sky, two aircraft slammed into the Twin Towers, causing a collapse that to most would have been unthinkable up till that time, and creating

so great a boom that Europe, the USA,
the Middle East and Pakistan's lonely hills,
even the plains of far Australia,
shook with the shock:

The Towers were not random targets, but symbols of the grand narrative of liberal capitalism that the West believed in so fervently as to construe it as the only viable economic system suitable for the world. But instead of pondering what this challenge to their value system might mean, George W. Bush, Tony Blair and their allies moved to reassert "grand narrative politics,"¹⁰ prosecuting a "War on Terrorism" by sending their own "cadet battalions" to "scour the Gulf and affright the tribesmen." The names given to the Second Gulf War operations are eloquent of this obsession with absolutist narratives: "Operation Infinite Justice," "Operation Enduring Freedom." The realities on the ground since that time suggest that such justice will not be infinite, nor will such freedoms be enduring.

What makes great literature great is that it transcends the centuries and is able to speak with equal power to new ages of

readers. The fracturing social and political world of Horace's time bore a great deal in common with that of the contemporary world. His perception of how the grand narratives of his day were breaking down offers his readers in the twenty-first century an opportunity to appreciate how similar processes may be occurring in our present. Postmodernity, his poems reveal, is not a process that is exclusive to one time.

NOTES

- ¹ Kevin Hart, *Postmodernism, a Beginner's Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2004), 179.
- ² Jean-François Lyotard, *The Post-Modern Explained to Children* (1984), trans. Don Berry et al., ed. Julian Pefanis & Morgan Thomas (Sydney: Power Publications, 1992), 36.
- ³ Simon Malpas, *The Post-Modern* (London: Routledge, 2005), 38.
- ⁴ Lyotard, "The Post-Modern Condition" in *The Postmodernism Reader*, ed. Michael Drolet, (London: Routledge 2004), 123.
- ⁵ Beard, North & Price, *Religions of Rome Volume 1: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 125.
- ⁶ J. F. d'Alton, *Horace and his Age* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1917), 109.
- ⁷ This contention of Lucretian influence on Horace is supported by the evidence of several near quotations from *De Rerum Natura* in Horace's *Satires*.
- ⁸ R. G. M. Nisbet & Margaret Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace Odes I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 393.
- ⁹ David West, *Horace Odes I, Carpe Diem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 173.
- ¹⁰ I am following here the analysis of Simon Malpas in his *The Postmodern*, cited above, 41.

Appendices: The original Latin texts of Horace, Odes I, 34 and 35.

XXXIV

Parcus deorum cultor et infrequens,
 insanientis dum sapientiae
 consultus erro, nunc retrorsum
 vela dare atque iterare cursus
 cogor relictos: namque Diespiter,
 igni corusco nubila dividens
 plerumque, per purum tonantes

egit equos volucremque currum;
quo bruta tellus et vaga flumina,
quo Styx et invisi horrida Taenari
sedes Atlanteusque finis
concutitur. Valet ima summis
mutare et insignem attenuat deus,
obscura promens; hinc apicem rapax
Fortuna cum stridore acuto
sustulit, hic posuisse gaudet.

XXXV

O diua, gratum quae regis Antium,
praesens vel imo tollere de gradu
mortale corpus vel superbos
vertere funeribus triumphos,
te pauper ambit sollicita prece
ruris colonus, te dominam aequoris
quicumque Bythyna lacessit
Carpathium pelagus carina.
Te Dacus asper, te profugi Scythae,
urbesque gentesque et Latium ferox
regumque matres barbarorum et
purpurei metuunt tyranni,
iniurioso ne pede proruas
stantem columnam, neu populus frequens
ad arma cessantis, ad arma
concitet imperiumque frangat.
Te semper anteit serva Necessitas,
clavos trabalis et cuneos manu
gestans aena nec severus
uncus abest liquidumque plumbum;
te Spes et albo rara Fides colit
velata panno nec comitem abnegat,
utcumque mutata potentis
veste domos inimica linquis;
at volgus infidum et meretrix retro
periura cedit, diffugiunt cadis
cum faece siccatis amici,
ferre iugum pariter dolosi.
Serves iturum Caesarem in ultimos
orbis Britannos et iuvenum recens
examen Eois timendum
partibus Oceanoque rubro.

Heu heu, cicatricum et sceleris pudet
fratrumque. Quid nos dura refugimus
aetas, quid intactum nefasti
liquimus? Unde manum iuventus
metu deorum continuit? Quibus
pepercit aris? O utinam nova
incude diffingas retusum in
Massagetis Arabasque ferrum!

WODEWOSES: THE (IN)HUMANITY OF MEDIEVAL WILD MEN

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The wild man that roamed the forests of medieval European culture inhabited not only a literal but also a metaphorical wilderness. Although commonly read as an Other, the antithesis of humanity with its savagery and uncontrolled passions,¹ close examination of how it was represented in textual and visual culture reveals its place to be a porous one on the borders of humanity. Exploration of the uses of the Middle English word for wild man, “wodewose,” and of the visual images that can be linked to the word locates a being that is sometimes purely animal yet which on other occasions takes on markedly human characteristics. This liminality calls into question any fixity of medieval and early modern conceptualisations of humanity not only by making delineations of human and inhuman dependent on textual representation, but also by at times combining animal and human attributes in one being.

In Book 8 chapter 16 of his *City of God*, St Augustine discusses the humanity, or otherwise, of various humanoid races. He states that as long as a being is rational, mortal, and descends from Adam, physical shape is not a factor to be considered in deciding whether it is human or not. Races as diverse as dog-headed people or Cynocephali or dog-headed people, pigmies, and Cyclops—all reported in classical and medieval travel texts—can be thought of as human according to Augustine, although he does caution against excessive credulity. If Cyclops, pigmies and Cynocephali were considered to be at least potentially human by the medieval mind, then surely wodewoses,² commonly portrayed as hairier than

average, but otherwise physically humanoid might share this possibility.

Rationality is the key aspect of Augustine's definition as it applies to wodewoses, as they were commonly thought to have none and to be, as a result, nonhuman. Hayden White argues that the wodewose represented "a projection of repressed desires and anxieties," and "almost always presents the image of the man released from social control" (White 7). Timothy Husband makes a similar argument, asserting that "the wild man served to counterpoise the accepted standards of conduct of society in general," and was the "dialectical antithesis of humanity" (Husband 5). It is their lack of rational control that rendered them inhuman, as Dorothy Yamamoto shows in her analysis of an episode from the Middle English prose *Alexander*. Alexander and his knights encounter a wild man who, when presented with a young girl, cannot control his lust. It is this, rather than his wilderness home, lack of speech and so on that prove his inhumanity;³ mortality was a given, a soul could not be tested for easily, so rationality was the obvious starting point for a line to be drawn in this case. White, Husband and others suggest that as social and economic conditions changed and life became increasingly urbanised, the forest dwelling wild man went from being reviled to idealised and was "brought into the fold of human society."⁴ This, while partially true, is an oversimplified trajectory as the border between human and wodewose permeable through the Middle Ages.

Visual representations generally give a limited amount of information about the animality, or otherwise, of wodewoses, but offer an overview of some of their essential characteristics. They demonstrate a basically human shape, which appears with a more or less fierce expression, at times they are holding clubs, and are covered in hair, leaves, or a combination of the two. A number of extant misericordes, such as one in Carlisle Cathedral, depict a wodewose fighting with beasts; a dragon at Carlisle, but elsewhere lions. Conflicts with dragons place wodewoses in roles that have something in common with the knights who populated medieval romance, such as Lancelot, Guy of Warwick, and Bevis of Hampton, all of whom are dragon-slayers.⁵ Furthermore, dragons conventionally symbolised demons, or even Satan himself; a multitude of saints, including Margaret of Antioch, Pope Silvester, and St George, vanquished them. Images of wodewoses locked in combat with serpentine embodiments of evil, like these knights and saints, suggest that they are representative of good in such struggles, and thus hint at a degree of humanity, possibly even a

soul⁶ Visual representations, however, are not the focus of this paper, and at this point such ideas remain in the realm of speculation.

The earliest extant usage of wodewose is dated to c.1100 and appears as part of a Latin-Old English glossary on the vocabulary of Archbishop Aelfric. It has “unfaele men, wuduwasan, unfaele wihtu” as the Old English counterpart of “Satiri, uel fauni, uel sahani, uel fauni ficarii.”⁷ This clearly invokes classical mythology of satyrs and fauns; these were seen as synonymous with wild men by Isidore of Seville (Bernheimer 97–8), whose work was influential in Anglo-Saxon England.⁸ Satyrs and fauns were not strictly human, having goat’s legs, but the words that surround “wuduwasan” in this glossary strongly suggest that it was, or at least had significantly human qualities. “Unfaele” meant wicked, corrupt, unfortunate, unnatural or monstrous,⁹ but even the latter two do not completely erase the humanity of the “men” and “withu” the word is coupled with. The way that the Latin for satyrs and fauns is glossed here suggests that in the Anglo-Saxon vocabulary there was no word for a nonhuman forest creature with a semi-human shape, and that a subsection of humanity had to be used instead. From the earliest usage then, it can be seen that the ground between human and nonhuman is treacherous underfoot for wodewoses.

The next extant occurrences are found in texts from around three hundred years later, in the late stages of the fourteenth century, although given the paucity of writing in English during those intervening years this is not particularly surprising. The significant number of late fourteenth-century works in which the word is present suggests that its usage continued during those centuries, even if written attestations can not now be found. The c.1382 Wycliffite translation of the Bible offers a straightforward use of wodewose in its version of Isaiah 13. 21:

ne shepperdis shul resten there/ but shul resten there bestis: &
shul ben fulfild the houses of hem with dragouns/ & ther
shuln dwelle there ostrighes & wodewoosis shuln lepen there
& ther shul answern there ghelling foulis in the houses of it.¹⁰
[No shepherds will live there, beasts will lie there instead. And
their houses shall be filled with serpents, and there shall dwell
there ostriches and wodewoses shall leap there, and there shall
answer there cackling birds in the houses of the city.]¹¹

The passage is concerned with the city of Babylon which is to be laid waste by God, and with emphasising how deserted it will be

after that destruction. The passage constructs a clear opposition between humanity and inhumanity, and the wodewoses fall into the latter category in this text. Such a reading is reinforced by the terminology of the 1425 version, which has “hairy beasts” instead, and by modern translations which list owls, ostriches and goats, animals but no humans.

The approximately contemporary *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (c. 1382), which is probably the most well-known medieval work to refer to wodewoses, includes them in a list of the enemies the hero must fight as he travels through the Welsh wilderness:

Sumwhyle with wormez he werrez, and with wolues als,
 Sumwhyle with wodwos, that woned in the knarrez,
 Bothe with bullez an berez, and borez otherquyle,
 And etaynez, that hym aneledede of the heghe felle.¹²
 [Sometimes he fights with dragons, and with wolves also,
 sometimes with wild men, that lived among the crags, Both
 with bulls and bears, and boars at other times, and giants that
 pursued him on the high fells.]

Here they are part of a group of decidedly inhuman creatures. Furthermore, there is a previous mention of human inhabitants of this wilderness; they are unfriendly to Gawain but are nonetheless clearly different from wodewoses. This then, like the c.1382 Wycliffite Bible, sets up an opposition between animals and human, with wodewoses firmly on the side of the former.

The *Northern Homily Cycle* (c. 1390) however, contains a different construction. Homily Fifteen contains the story of a brewer's daughter who, having fallen pregnant without being married, “talde the folk als wodewise wylde / Wha gate on hir this forsaide chylde.”¹³ Although the woman is lying and is beaten for it by the villagers she tried to fool, the very idea that a wodewose could father her child strongly suggests that it was thought of as having an element of humanity. The paucity of detail in this reference makes it impossible to garner any further details, but there is certainly no oppositional construct here, the wodewose may not be fully human, but nor is it entirely animal.

Household inventories, wills and other household lists commonly include descriptions of goods decorated with wodewoses. The majority of such entries offer no description of how it is represented and are thus of little, if any use to the present discussion. For example, among the possessions of Edward III is listed a silver cup with two wodewoses.¹⁴ The inventory of the

goods belonging to Sir John Fastolf (1378–1459) however, contains a brief yet telling description of the image:

Item, j Clothe for the nether hall, or arras, with a geyaunt in the mydell beryng a legge of a bere in his honed. Item, j Clothe of arras for the dese in the same halle, with j wodewose and j chylde in his armys.¹⁵

The two tapestries were hung in the same hall, as the text makes clear, so it is no accident that the juxtaposition of the giant and the wodewose is made in the list of goods. The language suggests that the giant and the wodewose hold their burdens very differently. The only other description of a child being held in this inventory is “image of oure Lady, and hir childe in his armes” (Amyot 15). The wodewose, we can reasonably safely conclude, is caring for the child; a clear contrast to the giant who holds the dismembered leg of a bear. This provides, furthermore, a contrast to the savagery of other visual images of wodewoses, including those from much later, such as the misericordes depicting combat with dragons and lions mentioned above. The image suggests that it has an element of humanity in its makeup, particularly when coupled in its terminology with the image of the Virgin and Child. The precise date of the tapestries cannot, of course, be ascertained, but, given that Fastolfe died in 1459, they must have been produced in the mid-1400s at the very latest. This makes it one of the earliest records of a wodewose that demonstrates not just a lack of savagery, but active care as part of its character.

In 1483, around two decades after the death of Sir John Fastolfe and the cataloguing of his household goods, William Caxton published a version of Aesop’s fables. It includes not only the most elaborate role a wodewose plays in extant Middle English literature, but also an accompanying woodcut. The fable “of the Viator or Palmer and of Satyre” draws on the various traditions surrounding the wodewose in medieval English culture. “Satyre,” the name of the wodewose, harks back directly to the classical tradition of satyrs and fauns, hairy, humanoid creatures of the forest, as does the woodcut illustration. It also points towards the conventional, animal fierceness of the wodewose, while simultaneously granting it noticeably human attributes. The story warns against hypocrisy, and tells the story of a pilgrim lost in a snow-blanketed forest. The wodewose takes pity on him and leads him to its home, where it gives him hot water to drink. The pilgrim blows on it, is chided for

having “bothe the fyre and the water in thy mouthe,” and is ejected from Satyre’s residence.

The wodewose is here unequivocally nonhuman; the text pronounces “a wodewose is a monstre lyke to the man / as hit appiereth by hys fygure.”¹⁶ The story, however, demonstrates that it is human-like in its nature as well as in its appearance. Like the creature carrying the child on Fastolfe’s tapestry, it displays a clear sense of care for the human it has encountered. Charity or pity was considered one of the chief Christian virtues during the Middle Ages, and for an animal to feel such towards a human suggests that it partakes in some way of that Christianity. Moreover, it is aware of the sin of hypocrisy in a way that the fully human palmer is not. White argues that “the Wild Man did not *know* that he lived in a state of sin, or even *that* he sinned, or even what a “sin” might be,” and that this ignorance was an indication that wild men were not human but rather neutral like (other) animals (White 22). For Satyre to show not only awareness but rejection of sin demonstrates possession of a rational soul, a trait unique to humanity in medieval thought.

While the story is a fable and thus not designed to be read as an account of real events, animal fables in the Middle Ages represent how the creatures that inhabit them were conceived of at the time, and this text thus offers insight into how wodewoses were conceptualised. Furthermore, as Yamamoto points out, *Mandeville’s Travels* contains the story of a hermit who is approached by “a monstre ... a thing disformed ayen kynde both of man or of best or of ony thing elles,”¹⁷ it knows the story of Christ’s Passion and asks him to pray for it, thus likewise demonstrating possession of a rational soul and therefore apparent humanity (Yamamoto 155). Caxton’s story was acknowledged as a fable, but the fabulous *Mandeville’s Travels* purported to be and was accepted as truthful, so the stories thus confirm the humanity of the wild men in them, despite the fact that both are also said to be monsters.

The duality in Caxton’s tale is reinforced by the accompanying woodcut. Many such images were factotums and used to illustrate multiple different stories and represent many different things, such as cities, people and so on. The woodcuts in Caxton’s prints of these fables, however, are clearly tailored to the stories and are clearly designed to accompany them rather than being generic scenes for use in many prints. The image of the wodewose and the palmer is no exception to this as they stand outside Satyre’s home. The wodewose has much in common with the satyrs for which it was named, having two small horns on its head and cloven hoofs

for feet. This makes it different from most extant images of wild men from Western Europe; I know of no others with horns and/or hoofs.

As discussed above, however, from the very first appearance of the word it was used in reference to this tradition, but with a degree of tension. In the centuries between 1100 and 1483 this association continued. John Trevisa seems to link them in his c.1390 Middle English translation of Bartolomeus' *De Proprietatibus Rerum*: "therein ben satires, wodewosis, tigers, and other horrible beasts."¹⁸ The line suggests that this is a list of different beasts, not that satyrs and wodewoses were considered the same thing. The Wycliffite Bible however, translates *faunis ficariis* as wodewose in Jeremiah 50.39, apparently equating the two. Caxton, it seems, found a way to reconcile any tension between satyrs and wodewoses by naming the latter after the former. The image seems to have more in common with the creatures of the classical Mediterranean tradition than with the wild men of Western European culture, but this slipperiness is symptomatic of the difficulties that surround medieval concepts of wodewoses.

Satyre's home is called a "pytte," meaning lair or den of an animal, or a cave,¹⁹ but the illustration belies this to a degree by having identifiable elements of construction. The home is roofed with leaves, and surrounded by trees, yet appears to have planks for its walls. It is not quite a house, but neither is it a natural cave or dug out hole. Husband notes that wild men occasionally "fashioned primitive hovels of branches and mud" (Husband 2). Although he notes that in some later images a level of civilisation might be indicated through the use of, for example, worked stone, he does not acknowledge that lower levels of work may likewise indicate human qualities. Just as the wodewose is part human and part animal, so is its home. Further elements of civilisation are found in the plate the palmer eats from and the jug Satyre holds.

The final point to be made here is that Satyre is hairless, and thus, to my knowledge, unique among images of wodewoses. Yamamoto argues that "hair that flows wild or covers the body, presents an antitype to civilised, disciplined restraint" (Yamamoto 163).²⁰ What then does nakedness mean in this image? It is tempting, given the other indications of civilisation, to read this as a clear marker that the wodewose is *not* the uncivilised, undisciplined being that hairiness would represent. While this is possible, it cannot be said with any certainty. What can be said with confidence is that by the 1460s hairiness was no longer an indication of inhumanity when related to the wodewose. In Sir Gilbert Hay's

Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror Alexander and his knights encounter a race of wodewoses, “thare was routh men and hary all-attoure.”²¹ The king treats with them and they act as his guides, at no point, despite their hairiness, are they said to be anything other than humans. If hairiness does not denote an animal hear nakedness may not denote humanity in Caxton’s *Satyre*. This uncertainty is itself telling as it is symptomatic of the status of the wodewose itself.

Some seven to eight decades after Caxton’s print, the wodewose again appears in an animal fable, albeit in a much more fleeting role. The Bannatyne manuscript of Robert Henryson’s fables, dated to the 1560s includes it in a long list of animals: “the tame cat, the wodwyss, and the wild wolfyne.”²² This brief reference gives no hint of humanity to the wodewose, it is in no way differentiated from the myriad other animals that likewise obey the call of their king, the lion, to attend his court. This complicates Sayer’s trajectory of animal to human development, and further demonstrates the uncertainty of the place the wodewose occupied; not only could it slip from animal to human, but it could also slide back again.

Larry D. Benson argues that the wodewose, as “a symbol of unruly passions” is directly opposed to the figure of the knight in medieval culture.²³ Yamamoto complicates this relationship with her exploration of knights who inhabit the wilderness at given times, and who occasionally run wild themselves, such as Lancelot (Yamamoto 189–96). She also briefly discusses the 1393 *Bals des Sauvages* where Charles VI of France and his knights appeared, as John Capgrave puts it, “arayed lich a wodwous,”²⁴ but does not examine masquerades generally. Wodewoses were common figures in the masquerades of medieval and early modern England, and such costumes are emblematic of the slippage between humanity and inhumanity that surrounded them. Wodewoses in masquerades are taken by Bernheimer to represent escape, for those costumed, from the pressures of “formalized living” (Bernheimer 67). Yamamoto notes that at the *Bals des Sauvages* the king was free of the chain that bound his companions together and that they thus “preserved their places within the social hierarchy” even when disguised (Yamamoto 176). Given that masquerades took place as part of court entertainments at the strictly controlled centre of formal society it is difficult to see how any such events could do other than represent contradictory elements in this way and thus embody the fraught space between wodewose and human. Yamamoto argues that the line between knights and wodewoses is

shifting and “re-invented as a site of play” (Yamamoto 167), in the case of masquerades this both symbolic and literal.

In the alliterative poem *Wynnere and Wastoure* we encounter a knight dressed as a wodewose, not as part of a masquerade but rather as part of a parley between two opposing (allegorical) armies:

Upon heghe one the holt ane hathell up stondes,
 Wrighte als a wodwyse alle in wrethyn lokkes,
 With ane helme one his hede, ane hatte appon lofte.²⁵
 [High on the hill a man stand up, dressed as a wodewose with
 tangled hair, with a helmet on his head and a cap upon it.]

He has the wild hairiness associated with barbarity, but also wears the most complex of clothing symbolic of civilisation as it is covered with heraldic symbols. The knight embodies that wodewoses which were common in heraldry throughout Europe and in this context symbolised fierceness and savagery in battle. Like costumes in a masquerade such heraldic devices complicate the boundary between human and animal by suggesting that the latter is an inherent aspect of the former.

The (in)humanity of wodewoses depends on their textual context and representation. Some works, like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* do construct such a dichotomy, but others present much more complex and ambiguous beings whose liminal existence cannot be pinned down with any certainty. Furthermore, their use in heraldry and masquerades suggests inescapable contradictions. A beast to human trajectory drawn chronologically is significantly oversimplified as the status of wodewoses slide back and forward across the boundaries of humanity in medieval and early modern England. This complicates medieval concepts of humanity by rendering their borders shifting and uncertain.

NOTES

¹ See, for example, Hayden White, “The Forms of Wildness: Archaeology of an Idea,” in *The Wildman Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism*, ed. Edward Dudley and Maximilian E. Novak (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), 3–38; Timothy Husband, *The Wild Man: Medieval Myth and Symbolism* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980).

² It is likely that the Old English plural of wuduwasa was wuduwasen, but I have used wodwyses as the “s” plural ending in used in the extant plural forms of the word. “Wodewasen” is a verb where it appears in Middle English.

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- ³ Dorothy Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human in Middle English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000), 156.
- ⁴ William Sayers, “Middle English *wodewose* ‘wilderness being’: A Hybrid Etymology?” *ANQ* 17. 3 (2004): 12–19 [16]. Sayers suggests the change may also have resulted from increased contact with the peoples of Africa and the Americas. See also Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages: a Study in Art, Sentiment and Demonology* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1952), 122–20; Yamamoto 148.
- ⁵ I return to connections between knights and wodewoses below.
- ⁶ White argues that wodewoses were objects of “religious anxiety” as “the quintessence of human degradation” but that they were not considered spiritually corrupt, merely ignorant of their sin (White 22), a point I return to later. Sayers remarks on wodewoses as a “nearly hidden motif in ecclesiastical art,” although he does not speculate as to its meaning (Sayers 15).
- ⁷ Thomas Wright and Richard Paul Wülcker, eds., *Anglo-Saxon and Old English Vocabularies*, 2nd ed. vol. 1 (London: Trubner & Co, 1884), 108. No pre-Conquest uses of the word exists, a fact which, as noted by Sayers, has given rise to some speculation the concept of a hairy humanoid inhabitant of the forests was imported into England from the Continent. This seems very unlikely given not only Sayers’ arguments about its etymology, but also that this late eleventh or very early twelfth century glossary is a copy of an older manuscript.
- ⁸ For example on Bartolomeus Anglicus whose own work was translated by John Trevisa in later centuries and is referred to below
- ⁹ “Unfele.” *Middle English Dictionary*.
- ¹⁰ *MS. Bodley 959: Genesis–Baruch 3.20 of the Earliest Version of the Wycliffite Bible*, ed. Conrad Lindberg, vol. 5 (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1959–1994), 116.
- ¹¹ This translation, like the others in the paper, is my own.
- ¹² *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. J. R. R. Tolkien and E. V. Gordon, rev ed., Norman Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), lines 720–23.
- ¹³ *The Northern Homily Cycle, Homily 15: Sexagesmia Sunday*, ed. Anne Thompson (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008), 367–68.
- ¹⁴ “Wodewose.” *Middle English Dictionary*.
- ¹⁵ Thomas Amyot, ed., *Transcript of Two Rolls, Containing and Inventory of Effects Formerly Belonging to Sir John Fastolfe* (London: J. Nichols and Sons, 1826), 29.
- ¹⁶ Aesop. *Here begynneth the booke of the subtil historyes and fables of Esope whiche were translated out of Frensshe in to Englysshe by nylham Caxton at westmynstre in the yere of oure Lorde M. CCCC. Xxxiiij*, ed. William Caxton, 2nd ed. 1484. British Library, *Early English Books Online*. Reel

position STC/ 16: 02 http://gateway.proquest.com.ezproxy2.library.usyd.edu.au/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:11597:113. There is an error in the text of the title: Caxton was not alive in 1433 to translate the work as the date suggests, an L is missing from the original printing.

¹⁷ *Mandeville's Travels*, ed. M. C. Seymour (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 33.

¹⁸ John Trevisa, *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum*, ed. M. C. Seymour et al, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 737.

¹⁹ "Pit" *Middle English Dictionary*.

²⁰ See also Husband 7.

²¹ Sir Gilbert Hay, *The Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror*, ed. John Cartwright, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1986), 55. Line 27.

²² Robert Henryson, *The Poems and Fables of Robert Henryson, Schoolmaster of Dumferline*, ed. H. Harvey Wood (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1938), 902. The manuscript is available as *The Bannatyne Manuscript. National Library of Scotland Advocates' MS 1.1.6*, Introduction Denton Fox and William A. Ringler (London: Scholar Press, 1980).

²³ Larry D. Benson, *Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1965), 80–1.

²⁴ John Capgrave, *The Chronicle of England by John Capgrave*, ed. Francis Charles Hingeston (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1858), 257. Capgrave wrote some time after the event in the 1460s.

²⁵ *Wynnere and Wastoure and The Parlement of the Three Ages*, ed. Warren Ginsberg (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992), lines 93–95.

MAN AS MACHINE?: THE MECHANICAL-HUMAN METAPHOR

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The more often the human body was opened, and the finer the work performed by the surgeon's scalpel, the more detailed the anatomical catalogues became. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, a good one hundred years after Leonardo's early researches, there was no shortage of material suggesting a mechanical model of the human body and its functions. By the early 1630s, the hypothesis had reached the point of explicit formulation, and we find it expressed on two occasions in the work of leading artists and thinkers: in Rembrandt's painting, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp* (1632), and in René Descartes' *Traité de l'homme* (1630–33) and *Discours de la méthode* (1637).

Rembrandt's painting was commissioned by the Amsterdam Guild of Surgeons and provides an insight into the contemporary practice of advanced pathology. The muscles and sinews of the forearm have been carefully laid bare, and the colleagues eagerly study their movement and function, guided by the explanations of the master who lifts (and thus activates) individual muscles or sinews with a medical instrument in order to demonstrate the structures and systems governing the movements of fingers and hand. Significantly, the seven onlookers, true students of their discipline, are looking less at the corpse lying stripped and distorted before them than at the anatomical work—probably Vesalius's *De humani corporis fabrica*—which stands open in the darkness at the foot of the dissecting table in the lower right hand corner of the picture.

By the early decades of the seventeenth century, at the latest, the idea of the human body as a mechanism—the physical man =

machine analogy—was undoubtedly in the air. Before turning to Descartes, however, and embarking on the philosophical stream, which in this instance followed the empirical investigations of the anatomists, it is worth taking a short step back to look at a matter touched upon in the discussion of the term “cyborgs”: William Harvey’s celebrated dissertation on the circulation of the blood, *Exercitatio anatomica de motu cordis et sanguinis in animalibus*, published in 1628, a mere four years before Rembrandt’s painting. Harvey envisioned the heart, without more ado, as a sort of pump, and the veins and arteries as pipes and tubes transporting a fluid (the blood) around the body via a complex system of chambers and valves:

I am persuaded it will be found that the motion of the heart is as follows: First of all, the auricle contracts, and in the course of its contraction forces the blood (which it contains in ample quantity as the head of the veins, the store-house and cistern of the blood) into the ventricle, which, being filled, the heart raises itself straightway, makes all its fibres tense, contracts the ventricles, and performs a beat, by which beat it immediately sends the blood supplied to it by the auricle into the arteries. The right ventricle sends its charge into the lungs by the vessel which is called *vena arteriosa*, but which in structure and function, and all other respects, is an artery. The left ventricle sends its charge into the aorta, and through this by the arteries to the body at large. These two motions, one of the ventricles, the other of the auricles, take place consecutively, but in such a manner that there is a kind of harmony or rhythm preserved between them, the two concurring in such wise that but one motion is apparent, especially in the warmer blooded animals, in which the movements in question are rapid.¹

Harvey went further, however, explicitly comparing the well-tuned system with a machine:

Nor is this for any other reason than it is in a piece of machinery, in which, though one wheel gives motion to another, yet all the wheels seem to move simultaneously; or in that mechanical contrivance which is adapted to firearms.²

If Vesalius had (in his twenty-fifth anatomical demonstration) compared the heart with a wine-press, Harvey’s “heart=pump” proposition went some way further, making the heart the hidden motor of the long dreamed of man-machine. Could the body be

compared with a clock? At all events it seemed to tick like one when you listened to the beating of its heart.³

Harvey's treatise exemplifies with singular clarity the fruitful interplay of various sciences. His comparison of the human body to a hydraulic system was in two respects revolutionary: not only did it at, the more general level, use a model from engineering to illuminate and explain a biological system, but in doing so it also developed the specific man = machine analogy for the first time in significant detail. Who would now dare to assert that metaphor has no place in the "hard" sciences?

Galen's model of the nervous system—and we have seen the authority he still possessed in Vesalius's day—fitted seamlessly into this analogical framework. Galen had assumed the nerves in the human being to be hollow and to act as a conduit for the tiny particles that transmitted external stimuli from sense organs to the brain. That entirely accorded with the atomistic principles of Epicurean anthropology.⁴ In his tentative description of the workings of the nerve and muscle systems, Leonardo had taken over Galen's hypothesis of hollow nerve cords:

The substance of the medulla enters for some distance into the origins of the nerves and then follows the hollow nerve as far as its terminal ramifications. Through its perforation sensibility is carried into each muscle. The muscle is composed of as many other minute muscles as there are fibers into which this muscle can be resolved, and each of the smallest of these muscles (i.e. fibers) is covered by an almost imperceptible membrane into which the terminal ramifications of the aforementioned nerves are converted. These obey in order to shorten the muscle with their withdrawal and to expand it again at each demand of the sensibility which passes through the hollow cavity of the nerve.⁵

It was this same theory, in the guise of what he called *esprits animaux*, which Descartes drew on and elaborated in his *Traité de l'homme*, and which used the analogy of the hydraulic machine to illustrate and explain human physiological systems.

The enthusiasm of Descartes' contemporaries for the wonders of hydraulic engineering is well documented. It ran from tales of Heron (or Hero) of Alexandria⁶ and his inventions in the ancient world to the miraculous constructions of Italian and German horticultural architecture (Tivoli, Pratolino, Nuremberg) in the modern. Johannes Georg Locher's description of the Nuremberg gardens, published in 1614, strikes the tone precisely:

Muscam and Aquilam Geometricis pennis illatam Norimberga exhibuerit; ... Claudius Gallus hisce proximis annis Tibure in Atestini Cardinalis hortis visus sit paene noua naturae miracula edidisse, cum effecisset, vt aquarum leni ac placido illapsu aeneae audiculae motu, voce, cantu, ad noctuae aduentum opportunè intermisso, ad eius discessum repetito opportuniùs; ita imitarentur veras, vt potius qui fictas assereret, temerarij, quàm qui veras aestimaret, nimis creduli nomen mereretur.⁷

In 1620 Olivier de Serres sang the delights of the modern garden in similar terms:

Quel plaisir est-ce de contempler les belles and claires eaux coulantes à l'entour de vostre maison, semblans vous tenir compaignie? Qui rejaillissent en haut par un million d'inventions, qui parlent, qui chantent en musique, qui contrefont le chant des oiseaux, l'escoupeterie des arquebusades, le son de l'artillerie, comme tels miracles se voyent en plusieurs lieux, mesme à Tivoli, à Pratoli, and autres de l'Italie?⁸

But the earliest of these travelogues is from Montaigne's visit to Italy in 1580–81. Not published until 1774, it lists the marvels of Tivoli as including a “natural organ” that, with no other power than that of water and wind, produced music indistinguishable from the melodies of trumpets, flutes or birds:

Ce rejallissement d'un infinité de surjons d'eau bridés and eslançés par un sul ressort qu'on peut remuer de fort louin, je l'avoï veu ailleurs en mon voïage and à Florance, and à Auguste, come il a été dict ci dessus. La musique des orgues, qui est une vraie musique & d'orgues natureles, sonans tousiours toutefois une mesme chose, se faict par le moïen de l'eau qui tumble aveq grand violence dans une cave ronde, voutée, & agite l'air qui y est, & le contreint de gagner, pour sortir, les tuyaus des orgues & lui fournir de vent. Un'autre eau poussant une roue à tout certaines dents, faict battre par certain ordre le clavier des orgues; on y oit aussi le son de trompetes contrefaict. Ailleurs on oit le chant des oiseaux, qui sont des petites flutes de bronse qu'on voit aus regales, & randent le son pareil à ces petits pots de terre pleins d'eau que les petits enfants soufflent par le bec ; cela par artifice pareil aus orgues, & puis par autres ressorts on faict remuer un hibou, qui, se presantant sur le haut de la roche, faict soudein cesser cete harmonie, les oiseaux étant effraïés de sa presance & puis leur

faict encore place : cela se conduit einsin alternativement, tant qu'on veut.⁹

All these reports were, however, put in the shade by Jacques Gaffarel's collection of "unheard of curiosities" from a distant world (somewhat unspecific in its location). His *Curiositez inouyes sur la sculpture talismanique des Persans, horoscope des Patriarches et lecture des estoiles*, listed a whole menagerie of artificial animals and humans that spoke, moved and made music, of birds that flew and sang, of dogs that barked, again impelled by no other force than that of ingenious hydraulic engineering:

Le passe encore ... la mouche and l'aigle qu'on a veu de nostre siecle voler par artifice dans Norimberg, dont l'ouurier auoit faict aussi des hidrauliques merueilleuses, & vn arc-en-ciel perpetuel, au rapport d'Antonius Passeuinus ... Le passe enfin l'inuention de diuerses hydrauliques de nostre temps, dont la merueille est pareillement si grande, qu'il n'y a rien au monde qu'elles n'imittent: comme ces statuës d'hommes & de femmes qui parlent, quoy que sans articulation, qui se meuuent, & qui sonnent de diuers instruments: des oyseaux qui volent & chantent; des lions qui hurlent, des chiens qui abayent; d'autres qui s'entrebattent avec des chats en pareilles postures que les vivans; & mille autres merueilles de l'inuention des hommes, qui estonnent nos gens.¹⁰

The stories purveyed by Gaffarel and his contemporaries may have embodied more fantasy than fact, but they increased in number and scope until people believed that even in Vitruvius's time there had been water machines that could imitate the human voice with deceptive accuracy; which were, indeed, so perfect that they could preach sermons in place of the priests:

Merulae autem, notante Philandro ad Vitruvium, & engibata sunt de genere hydraularum: quorum illis quidem reddebantur voces humanarum imitatrices, & cantus avium effictrices: his autem movebantur icunculae (ut utar verbis Suetonii) tanquam viverent. Nostro autem tempore non spiritu, vi aquae concepto, ut illa, sed fidiculis nervis occultis sigilla videntur ambulare, & humana omnia praeter sermonem repraesentare.¹¹

The decisive intellectual step followed in the early seventeenth century: if hydraulic machines could be refined to perform such feats of ingenuity, why not attempt to construct a hydraulic man? What was missing at that time was an internal motor capable of

driving such a machine, and it was not until the following century that this problem found an appropriate solution in the form of the watchmaker's balance wheel and spring, invented and patented by Christiaan Huygens in 1675 and used in mechanical timepieces ever since. Could this device not also help androids achieve an (ostensible) life of their own, at least as far as locomotion was concerned?

But back to René Descartes, to whom we owe the compound concept "bête-machine" (animal = machine). It was, in hindsight, prudent of Descartes not to take the idea any further. Another century had to pass before LaMettrie's "man=machine" equation made the rounds of the then learned world, for which its author earned the opprobrium and persecution of half Europe. The analogy of the body as such with a machine had, however, not just been sketched out by Descartes but fully developed, so that the logical step from the animal to the human body was in itself small. Yet Descartes himself played safe, projecting his man-machine into the realm of Utopia, an hypothesis in a merely postulated world. The concrete examples that grounded the hypothesis were confined to animals; indeed, the introduction of the *Traité de l'homme* made it clear that the treatment of human anatomy in that work should be regarded as a conceptual experiment, a thought-game set in a universe that functioned partly, but only partly, like our own. The 'human' creatures of this world would have bodies constructed on purely mechanical lines that enabled them to walk, eat, breathe and perform many of the activities proper to the men and women of our real world:

Ces hommes seront composez, comme nous, d'une Ame and
d'un Corps. Et il faut que ie vous décriue, premierement, le
corps à part ... Je suppose que le Corps n'est autre chose
qu'une statuë ou machine de terre ... dedans toutes les pieces
qui sont requises pour faire qu'elle marche, qu'elle mange,
qu'elle respire, and enfin qu'elle imite toutes celles de nos
fonctions qui peuuent estre imaginées proceder de la matiere.¹²

To lend plausibility to his postulate, Descartes referred to the advances of engineering and technology visible all around:

Nous voyons des horloges, des fontaines artificielles, des
moulins, and autres semblables machines, qui n'estant faites
que par des hommes, ne laissent pas d'avoir la force de se
mouvoir d'elles-mesmes ... les os, les nerfs, les muscles, les
venes, les arteres, l'estomac, le foye, la rate, le cœur, le

cerueau ... du tout semblables aux parties de nostre Corps.
(120)

If artificial fountains, mills and clocks can move of their own accord, might one not infer that the inner mechanisms of man and machine are similar? Might one not conceive a new type of “human” construct whose bones, nerves, muscles and veins are modeled on the rods and gears of some technical device and yet in their function within the body resemble their natural analogues down to the last detail? It is a thought that Descartes would take up again and affirm in his *Discours de la méthode*:

combien de diuers *automates*, ou machines mouuantes, l'industrie des hommes peut faire, sans y employer que fort peu de pieces, a comparaison de la grande multitude des os, des muscles, des nerfs, des arteres, des venes, and de toutes les autres parties, qui sont dans le cors de chaque animal, consideront ce cors comme vne machine.¹³

The hypothesis was all well and good, but what, in the current state of technology almost half a century before Huygens, could animate such a compositum? What *tertium comparationis* could be adduced to link body and machine? For Descartes, hydraulic power and engineering was the only option:

veritablement l'on peut fort bien comparer les nerfs de la machine que ie vous décris, aux tuyaux des machines de ces fontaines; ses muscles and ses tendons, aux autres diuers engins and ressort qui seruent à les mouuoir; ses esprits animaux, à l'eau qui les remuë, dont le cœur est la source, and les concautez du cerueau sont les regars. (*Traité* 130f.)¹⁴

Once again (remembering Galen and Leonardo) the model has recourse to fine particles—here the *esprits animaux*—flowing through the veins and driving the entire physiological system, just as the force of water conducted through various pipes and nozzles created the phenomena of grotto and garden, the “virtual” world of playthings, melodies and even rudimentary human words that so fascinated Descartes and his contemporaries:

Or, à mesure que ces esprits entrent ainsi dans les concautez du cerueau, ils passent de là dans les pores de la substance, and de ces pores dans les nerfs; où selon qu'ils entrent, ou mesme seulement qu'ils tendent à entrer, plus ou moins dans les vns que dans les autres, il ont la force de changer la figure des

muscles en qui ces nerfs sont inserez, and par ce moyen de faire mouuoir tous les membres. Ainsi que vous pouuez auoir vue, dans les grottes and les fontaines qui sont aux jardins de nos Roys, que la seule force dont l'eau se meut en sortant de la source, est suffisante pour y mouuoir diuerses machines, and mesme pour les y faire ioüer de quelques instrumens, ou prononcer quelques paroles, selon la diuerse disposition des tuyaux qui la conduisent. (130)

From the complex capabilities of these machines, which remained relatively simple constructs when compared with the demands of mechanical animals, let alone humans, Descartes concluded that all organic functions, or at least those concerned with locomotion and digestion, could ultimately be explained and imitated at the purely mechanical level.

The analogy, so far as it went, was complete; and Descartes admitted that in real terms it went no further. For man requires not only a body but a soul: "Dieux vnira vne Ame Raisonnable à cette machine (143)" [God joined a rational soul to this machine]. This was not, however, the case with animals; so for reasons of received metaphysics Descartes restricted his body = machine analogy to the animal kingdom. The mere trick of imitating speech, for example, did not prove an ability to feel or think; otherwise parrots must be regarded as among the most intelligent of living creatures:

les pies and les perroquets peuuent proferer des paroles ainsi que nous ... on ne doit pas confondre les paroles avec le mouuemens naturels, qui tesmoignent les passions, and peuuent estre imitez par des machines aussy bien que par les animaux. (*Discours* 57ff)

Descartes uses the same argument to counter the thesis that a well-trained monkey—and *a fortiori* his merely mechanical monkey—was almost human. For whatever skills it possessed, the monkey (or monkey-machine) was still "dumb," that is lacking human consciousness and reason:

Et ie m'estois icy particulierement aresté a faire voir que, s'il y auoit de telles machines, qui eussent les organes and la figure d'un singe, ou de quelque autre animal sans raison, nous n'aurions aucun moyen pour reconnoistre qu'elles ne seroient pas en tout de mesme nature que ces animaux ... le premier est que iamais en les composant, comme nous faisons pour declarer aux autres nos pensées. Car on peut bien conceuoir qu'une machine soit tellement faite qu'elle profere des paroles,

and mesme qu'elle en profere quelques vnes a propos des actions corporelles qui causeront quelque changement en ses organes: comme, si on la touche en quelque endroit, qu'elle demande ce qu'on luy veut dire; si en vn autre, qu'elle crie qu'on luy fait mal, and choses semblables; mais non pas qu'elle les arrange diuersement, pour repondre au sens de tout ce qui se dira en sa presence, ainsi que les hommes les plus hebetez peuuent faire. (56ff)

For the animal-machine was incapable of learning anything beyond the program instilled into it; unlike the human, of whatever education, it could not cope with what it did not know. In fact it did not "know" in the true sense at all, but acted solely in accordance with the predisposition of its "organs" or parts:

Et le second est que, ou peuestre mieux qu'aucun de nous, elles manqueroient infalliblement en quelques autres, par lesquelles on découuriroit qu'elles n'agiroyent pas par connoissance, mais seulement par la disposition de leurs organes. Car, au lieu que la raison est vn instrument vniuersel, ... vient qu'il est moralement impossible qu'il y en ait assez de diuers en vne machine, pour la faire agir en toutes les occurrences de la vie, de mesme façon que nostre raison nous fait agir. (57)

The remark strikes to the heart of a problem that our most advanced robot technology is still powerless to solve, and led Descartes to the conclusion that machines, far from being autonomous entities, have only one real purpose: to help human beings master specific situations, like the clock, which counts the hours for us: "vn horologe, qui n'est composé que de rouës and de ressorts, peut conter les heures, & mesurer le tems, plus iustement que nous avec toute nostre prudence (58)" [a clock, composed of nothing but wheels and springs, can count the hours and measure time more accurately than we can with all our wisdom].

Descartes' theses (of which only the *Discours de la méthode* rapidly became well known) met with mixed response. Diderot's mocking dismissal of his arguments a hundred years later was, however, directed at an aspect we have not yet touched upon: the theory of the energizing and circulation of the blood that was central to Cartesian physics and physiology. For the heart was the motor Descartes had sought for his machine: rather than a pump, it was itself, he argued, an engine for producing warmth; and the warmth

so produced, transferred to the blood, supplied it with movement and energy:

il y a toujours plus de chaleur dans le coeur qu'en aucun autre endroit du corps; et enfin que cette chaleur est capable de faire que, s'il entre quelque goutte de sang en ses concavités, elle s'enfle promptement et se dilate, ainsi que font généralement toutes les liqueurs. (*Discours* 177)

Only taken together, therefore, could heart and blood ensure the equitable distribution of warmth and energy throughout the body:

selon que le sang change de nature, il peut être raréfié par la chaleur du coeur plus ou moins fort, et plus ou moins vite qu'auparavan ... Et si on examine comment cette chaleur se communique aux autres membres, ne faut-il pas avouer que c'est par le moyen du sang, qui, passant par le coeur, s'y réchauffe, et se répand de là par tout le corps? D'où vient que si on ôte le sang de quelque partie, on en ôte par même moyen la chaleur; et encore que le coeur fût aussi ardent qu'un fer embrasé, il ne suffiroit pas pour réchauffer les pieds et les mains tant qu'il fait, s'il n'y envoyoit continuellement de nouveau sang. (*Discours* 181ff)

And the conjunction of heart and blood at the same time explained why men and animals breathed: for as fire needs air to maintain itself in being, so does the heart need air to produce warmth. Descartes elaborated his analysis in some detail:

Puis aussi on connoît de là que le vrai usage de la respiration est d'apporter assez d'air frais dans le poumon pour faire que le sang qui y vient de la concavité droite du coeur, où il a été raréfié et comme changé en vapeurs, s'y épaississe et convertisse en sang derechef, avant que de retomber dans la gauche, sans quoi il ne pourroit être propre à servir de nourriture au feu qui y est. (*Discours* 182)

This was playing into the hands of any satirist equipped with a later knowledge of engineering. No wonder, therefore, that by the middle of the eighteenth century Denis Diderot could remark that in Descartes' view the steam engine would be a human being (or at the very least an animal). After all it possessed all the features demanded by that definition: it was a machine that breathed and

generated warmth sufficient for internal motion and external locomotion, and above all it made a lot of noise:

Le jeu de cette machine est très-extraordinaire, & s'il falloit ajouter foi au système de Descartes, qui regarde les machines comme des animaux, il faudroit convenir que l'homme auroit imité de fort près le Créateur, dans la construction de la pompe à feu, qui doit être aux yeux de tout cartésien conséquent, une espece d'animal vivant, aspirant, agissant, se mouvant de lui-même par le moyen de l'air, & tant qu'il y a de la chaleur.¹⁵

One may well smile at all this huffing and puffing, which certainly hit the weak point in the Cartesian system. But it was a long time after Descartes before any real progress was made in the study of human anatomy. There were valuable individual insights, like Giovanni Alfonso Borelli's discovery (in *De motu animalium*, written toward the end of the 1650s in Pisa and published posthumously in 1680) that human bone and muscle structure resembles a system of levers and springs: from the compactness, length, tension and positioning of a muscle in relation to the bone depend the force and variability of a limb's movement. Nothing decisive happened either way, however, so far as the theory of the mechanical animal was concerned, until 1738, a century (almost to the year) after Descartes' *Discours*, when Jacques de Vaucanson's duck made its bow, inaugurating a new technological era that might justifiably be called the age of the androids. Invented by a watchmaker and driven solely by clockwork, the duck could move, consume and "digest" food, and soon also utter some musical notes. Vaucanson's workshop went on to produce musical androids whose performances, like that of the duck, staged first at court and then before the general public, excited great enthusiasm. The idea that the energy of a tensioned spring could harbour the mysterious force (*forza*) of life had already been mooted by Leonardo at the end of the 15th century,¹⁶ but it was Vaucanson who first demonstrated the practicability—and in doing so suggested some of the implications—of the project. The result was a twofold revolution. In the first place, it enabled huge technological advances, above all in the construction of androids, which soon became increasingly "human" in aspect and achievement; secondly it stimulated the conceptual model "man = machine" and its various counterparts in medical and philosophical research. Reading Albrecht von Haller's lectures on the human nervous system held before the Göttingen Scientific Association on 22 April and 6 May

1752 and published as *De partibus corporis humani sensilibus et irritabilibus* in 1753, one is struck by the fact that within a few years of Vaucanson's inventions the term "human machine," or as Haller put it "body-workshop," was taken for granted. Haller's intention, he announced, was to speak "about the parts of the human body that receive sensations and those that are thereby excited: a new system pertaining to the workshop of the human body will thus be demonstrated."¹⁷

The task (and risk) of describing this physiological workshop in detail had already been undertaken a few years previously by none other than Julien Offray de LaMettrie in his notorious tract *L'Homme machine* of 1748. LaMettrie felt himself destined to take this step, for as an experienced anatomist he possessed a great deal of empirical knowledge gained from the practice of dissection. Two aspects of his introduction are particularly interesting: that he assumes the man = machine equation as entirely natural, and that he dismisses the knowledge of the "great philosophers" as *a priori* and, as such, mere "vain opinion":

L'homme est une machine si composée, qu'il est impossible de s'en faire d'abord une idée claire, et conséquemment de la définir. C'est pourquoi toutes les recherches que les plus grands philosophes ont faites *a priori*, c'est-à-dire en voulant se servir en quelque sorte des ailes de l'esprit, ont été vaines. Ainsi ce n'est qu'*a posteriori*, ou en cherchant à démêler l'âme comme au travers des organes du corps, qu'on peut, je ne dis pas découvrir avec évidence la nature même de l'homme, mais atteindre le plus grand degré de probabilité possible sur ce sujet. Prenons donc le bâton de l'expérience, et laissons à l'histoire de toutes les vaines opinions des philosophes.¹⁸

Despite LaMettrie's dismissal of all but *a posteriori* reasoning, one cannot avoid the impression that the detailed development of his argument owes more to the spirit of the age, in its admiration for the watchmaker's skill, than to the evidence of the dissecting table. The mechanism of the clock seems to have provided the anatomist at least with the model that enabled him to order and systematize what he observed in the bodies lying open before him. LaMettrie's explanations were nothing if not direct: "Le corps n'est qu'une horloge (138)" [The body is simply a clock]. It is a particularly complex and well constructed clock, but not in the final analysis all that different from the common timepiece: "Je ne me trompe point, le corps humain est un horloge, mais immense, et construit avec tant d'artifice et habileté (143)" [I am not deceived, the human

body is a clock, an immense clock, constructed with such artifice and skill]. The analogy was so compelling that LaMettrie could use it to explain properties that up till then had remained unsolved mysteries. How did the human body function as a *perpetuum mobile*? The answer was simple: “Le corps humain est une machine qui monte elle-même ses ressorts: vivante image du mouvement perpetual (100)” [The human body is a machine that winds up its own springs, the living image of perpetual motion]. How could the body produce the force required for every function and movement without ever seeming to exhaust itself? The answer was, again, “If you see the body as a clock, you will recognize the oscillation of its fibers as analogous to that of a pendulum”:

Cette oscillation naturelle ou propre à notre machine, et dont est douée chaque fibre et, pour ainsi dire, chaque élément fibreux, semblable à celle d’une pendule, ne peut toujours s’exercer. Il faut la renouveler à mesure qu’elle se perd! lui donner des forces quand elle languit; l’affaiblir, lorsqu’elle est opprimée par un excès de force et de vigueur. C’est en cela seul que la vraie médecine consiste. (138)

To keep the pendulum moving, the human machine, of course, needed an external source of energy: this was, clearly, the consumption and digestion of food, which LaMettrie again described in detail in terms his governing model. Thus, step by step, *L’Homme machine* drew all the parts and functions, all the organs and motions of the human body into a single whole, a clockwork machine that nourished itself and moved autonomously: a machine that “lived.”

It was precisely at this point that LaMettrie left Descartes behind. To the question, “Where, then, is the soul?” he replied categorically that no soul is required to explain the human body. Whether animal or man, the body is matter. Nothing less, but also nothing more:

l’homme n’est qu’un animal, ou un assemblage de ressorts, qui tous se montent les uns par les autres, sons qu’on puisse dire par quel point du cercle humain la Nature a commencé? si ces ressorts différent entre eux, ce n’est donc que par leur nature; et par conséquent l’âme n’est qu’un principe du mouvement, ou une partie matérielle sensible du cerveau, qu’on peut, sans craindre l’erreur, regarder comme un ressort principal de toute la machine, qui a une influence visible sur tous les autres, et même paraît avoir été fait le premier; en sorte que tous les

autres n'en seraient qu'une émanation, comme on le verra par quelques observations que je rapporterai et qui on été faites sur divers embryons. (138)

The body is a system of springs of which the soul is the mainspring: a little later in the work the point is made in slightly different terms: "l'Homme est une Machine, et ... il n'y a dans tout l'Univers qu'une seule substance diversement modifiée (151)" [man is a machine, and...in all the universe there is but one substance, diversely modified].

For the uncompromising clarity and consistency with which he expounded his materialist vision LaMettrie was driven out of both his profession and his home. He found refuge in Berlin, at the court of Frederick the Great, where he died a few years later, reputedly from over indulgence in truffle pâté—an ironic end for one who had ceaselessly championed the clockwork perfection of the digestive tract.

NOTES

- ¹ William Harvey, *On the Motion of the Heart and Blood in Animals* (1628), Chapter V: "Of the motion, action and office of the heart," <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1628harvey-blood.html>, ct. 13, 2007)
- ² Harvey, *On the Motion of the Heart and Blood in Animals*. Chapter V.
- ³ See Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*. Vol. 4: Physics and Physical Technology. Part II: Mechanical Engineering (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 289. Aram Vartanian, "Man-Machine from the Greeks to the Computer," in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas. Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, ed. Philip P. Wiener, Vol. III: Law, Concept of—Protest Movements (New York: 1973, 131–146.
- ⁴ See Vartanian, "Man-Machine from the Greeks to the Computer," 132.
- ⁵ Leonardo da Vinci, *On the Human Body*, 356, col. 2.
- ⁶ Heron von Alexandria, *Peri Automatopoietikes* (c.50 A.D.).
- ⁷ Ioannes Georgius Locher, *Disquisitiones Mathematicae* (Ingolstadt 1614), 8: *Ad Lectorem*.
- ⁸ Olivier de Serres, *Théâtre d'Agriculture. Septiesme Lieu, Avant-propos* (Paris : 1620).
- ⁹ *Journal de voyage de Montaigne en Italie par la Suisse et l'Allemagne en 1580 & 1581*. Avec des notes par M. de Querlon (Rome : 1774), 77.
- ¹⁰ Jacques Gaffarel, *Curiositez inouyes sur la sculpture talismanique des Persans, boroscope des Patriarches et lecture des estoiles* (Paris : 1629), 364, 367.
- ¹¹ Daniel Lipstorpheus, *Specimina Philosophiae Cartesianae* (1653), 157.

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- ¹² René Descartes, *L'Homme*, in *Œuvres de Descartes*, publiées par Charles Adam & Paul Tannery, tome XI: *Le Monde. Description du corps humain. Passions de l'âme. Anatomica. Varia* (Paris: 1996, 119–215 (119f).
- ¹³ René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*, in *Œuvres de Descartes*, publiées par Charles Adam & Paul Tannery, Tome VI: *Discours de la méthode & Essais* (Paris : 1996), 1–78 (55f).
- ¹⁴ See also Vartanian, “Man-Machine from the Greeks to the Computer,” 136.
- ¹⁵ *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*. Par une Société de gens de lettres. Mis en ordre & publié par Denis Diderot & quant à la Partie Mathématique, par Jean Baptiste le Rond D'Alembert, de l'Académie Royale des Sciences de Paris (1751–1780). Article “Feu,” Vol. 6, 599–648 (609).
- ¹⁶ See Horst Bredekamp, “Überlegungen zur Unausweichlichkeit der Automaten,” in *Puppen, Körper, Automaten. Phantasmen der Moderne*, ed. Pia Müller-Tamm & Katharina Sykora (Düsseldorf : 1999), 94–105.
- ¹⁷ Albrecht von Haller, “De partibus corporis humani sensilibus et irritabilibus,” in *Commentarii Societatis Regiae Scientiarum Gottingensis* (Göttingen: 1753), Vol. 2, 114158 (6).
- ¹⁸ Julien Offray de La Mettrie, *L'Homme machine*. Edition présentée et établie par Paul-Laurent Assoun (Paris : 1981), 97. See also Werner Gerabek, “Der Mensch—eine Maschine? Bemerkungen zur Anthropologie des 18. Jahrhunderts,” in *Würzburger medizinhistorische Mitteilungen* 6 (1988): 35–52. Rudolf Malter, “Die mechanistische Deutung des Lebens und ihre Grenzen. Philosophisch-systematische Betrachtungen zum Organismusproblem im Ausgang von La Mettrie,” in *Medizin-historisches Journal* 17 (1982): 299–316. Vartanian, “Man-Machine from the Greeks to the Computer,” 139.

GIRLS TAKING OVER THE HUMANITIES IN JAPAN?

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In early January 2006 I was in Tokyo, trying to buy a copy of the November 2005 issue of *Yuriika* [Eureka] with the title “Bunkakei joshi katarogu” [Culture Girls’ Catalogue].¹ Since its establishment in 1956, *Eureka* has served as an influential literary magazine specialising in poetry and criticism. With a number of highly respected regular contributors, the magazine has introduced a range of literary and cultural theories to an educated general readership and provided a platform for new and established artists. The dominant areas of interest of this monthly magazine have been Euro-American and Japanese literature and related genres and themes, although other regions and cultures have occasionally been featured. The 1979 regular and supplementary issues, for example, feature Apollinaire, Kafka, Salinger, Dadaism, suicide, Inoue Hisashi (a contemporary Japanese novelist/playwright), *maniérisme*, theories on poetry, Latin American writers, fairy tales, Mallarmé, the poet Tanikawa Shuntarō, contemporary poetic experiments, and dreams. As the list also suggests, *Eureka*, like many other mainstream literary magazines in Japan, has been dominated by male writers and artists both as subjects and contributors.² The “Culture Girls’ Catalogue” issue was therefore seen as an exception—at least at the time. The title also suggests a postmodern, subcultural tone, which although not totally new, is certainly different from the magazine’s traditional emphasis on European decadent and Parnassian literature and art. None of the major bookstores had any remaining copies of the issue in question. There was nothing on the second-hand market, either. I found this extraordinary, and it brought home to me the extent of the rise of young women readers and writers in the traditionally male-centred literary genres represented by *Eureka*.

So it took me a while to get access to the “Culture Girls” issue and to read its opening article by Takada Rieko, which bears the intriguing title: “Korerakin-teki kōsatsu: Danshi-kei bunka no

suijaku to bunka-kei joshi no taitō” [An Examination from the Cholera Bacteria’s Viewpoint: The collapse of men’s culture and the rise of the culture girl].³ Takada is a scholar of German literature, with a special interest in the intellectual history of German studies in Japan. She is therefore more familiar with the declining Humanities tradition and the study of its canon of Goethe, Heine, Hesse, Kafka and Thomas Mann than she is with the new repertoire and vocabulary of contemporary “culture girls”—namely, *megane-moe* (girl/women’s fetish for bespectacled boys/men),⁴ BL (Boys’ Love), *fujoshi*⁵ and *yaoi* (male homo-erotic fantasy in girls’ and women’s graphic and prose fiction),⁶ which are the purported subjects of the *Eureka* special feature.

Takada’s position is an interesting one: despite her knowledge and experience as a German literature scholar, her gender makes her an outsider in a field of study that is perhaps more male-centred than in some other Humanities areas in Japan; on the other hand, this position has also given her both critical freedom and a subtle balance between objective observation and sympathetic viewing. She points out, for example, that many of the earlier male Humanities academics had intellectual and humanistic decency:

Male scholars who were protected by the system had never been too arrogant or complacent to believe that culture belonged to them. In their stable establishment they continued to turn the eye of praise and appreciation towards the mass, the heretic, the rural, the native, the sub-culture, the Japanese, and the feminine. (Takada, “Korerakin-teki” 45)

It is clear here that Takada is not naïvely admiring the open-mindedness of the male scholars “who were protected by the system.”

Takada argues that this tradition of decency in academia and in print culture, of which *Eureka* is a prime example, is now terminally “ill.” As this claim comes from the author of *Bungakubu o meguru yamai* [Maladies Surrounding the Faculty of Arts, 2001] and *Gurotesuku na kyōyō* [Grotesque Culture/Liberal Arts, 2005],⁷ neither the illness metaphor nor the cutting criticism of the Humanities is particularly surprising. In this *Eureka* article, however, the terminal illness is linked to the dramatic increase in the number of women and girls in Humanities. Of course Takada is by no means the first to make this connection. As these graphs clearly show, the trend of rapid increase in female student numbers started in the 1960s: (Figures 1 and 2).⁸

Figure 1. Male/female students continuing into tertiary education in Japan. Source: Inagaki Kyōko, *Jogakkō to jogakusei*, 2007

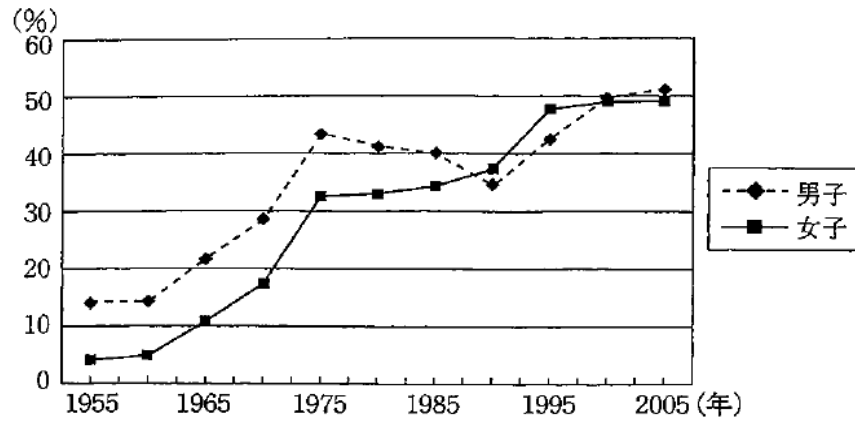
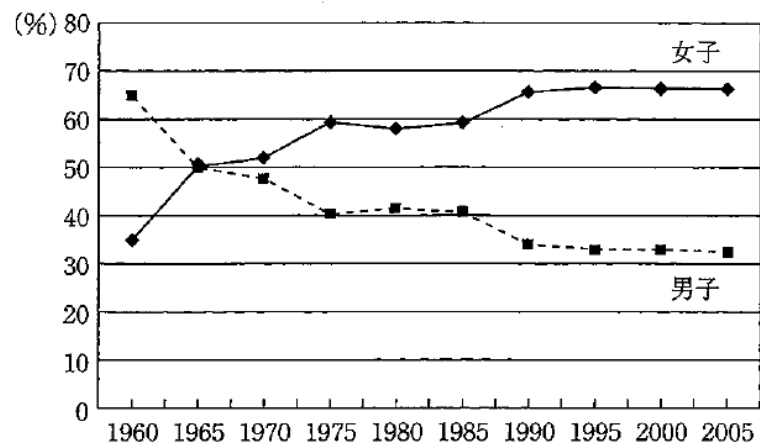


Figure 2. Male/female students ratio in Humanities in Japan. Source: Inagaki Kyōko, *Jogakkō to jogakusei*, 2007



The percentage of female student numbers continuing their study to tertiary level rose from only about 5% in 1960 to more than 30% in 1975 and about 50% in 2005. Even more stunning is the change in the ratio of male-female students studying in the Humanities.

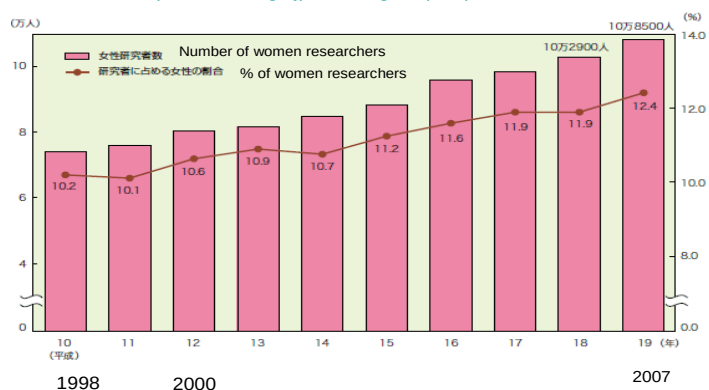
While boys accounted for around two-thirds of the Arts enrolments in 1960, within a mere five years girls had claimed a 50% share, reaching 60% in 1975 and completely reversing the 1960 ratio by 1990. Already in the early 1960s, renowned professors and journalists such as Teruoka Yasutaka (professor of classic Japanese literature at the prestigious Waseda University), Ikeda Yasaburō (professor of classic Japanese literature at the equally prestigious Keiō University), and Ōya Sōichi (a journalist) were warning that the increase in the number of girl students in university Humanities classes would have a negative impact on the future of Japan. They were worried that universities were turning into mere finishing schools for girl students who allegedly had no clear academic or social aspirations. Despite such blatantly discriminatory discourses and treatment, women have steadily increased in number not only as university Arts students but also as academics, though in the latter case the growth is much more modest. Japanese Bureau of Statistics figures (Figure 3)⁹ show that in 1998 10.2% of academics were women. In 2008 the figure had increased to 13%.

Figure 3.

increase of women academics

source: Bureau of Statistics

<http://www.stat.go.jp/data/kagaku/pamphlet/s-04.htm>



These figures cover all Faculties; other statistics identify the Humanities (especially foreign languages) and Home Economics as those faculties that tend to have a higher proportion of women academics.

That Takada's position is completely different from that of the concerned professors and literati of the 1960s is obvious from the title of her essay: she compares herself, as a female Humanities

scholar in a declining field, to cholera bacteria. In the article she explains that this metaphor was inspired by something she once heard on the radio—a scientist remarking that

From the viewpoint of the cholera bacteria, the patient's diarrhoea is nutritious food. The bacteria would rather continue to live comfortably in this paradise. It is not their wish to multiply so much that they kill the patient and hence stop the supply of diarrhoea. (Takada "Korerakin-teki kōsatsu," 42)

Scatology combined with cynicism? This cynicism, however, seems to be quite different from that identified by literary critic Tanaka Miyoko in some women writers in 1976:

Cynicism deprives the self of creative power. It nevertheless induces a drug-like effect that gives the illusion of standing on top of the world by belittling and criticizing everything except the self. It is little wonder, then, that the gifted but powerless woman should jump at this.¹⁰

Thirty years separate Tanaka Miyoko's comments from Takada's. Tanaka, who is best known for her work on the two male literary giants, Mori Ōgai and Mishima Yukio, must have witnessed and perhaps even experienced first hand "gifted but powerless" women academics, writers, and critics impelled into cynicism. In fact, in the essay she explains that the topic was not of her own choice but was requested by the editor of the journal *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* [Japanese Literature: interpretation and teaching material], which commissioned her to contribute this essay. The current situation is different: the canon and the intellectual patriarchy represented by Ōgai, Mishima, and the "decent" humanists are on the verge of extinction, according to Takada. Takada further comments that it is sheer masochism on the part of *Eureka* to produce an issue featuring "culture girls." Masochistic or not, the special feature opens with this very article by Takada Rieko and sold unusually well. The commercial success of the issue seems to have had a great impact upon the themes and marketing strategies of the magazine.¹¹ In other words, it seems that the declining Humanities and their products such as *Eureka* cannot but depend heavily on the "culture girls" as writers and readers.

It is wrong, however, to regard Takada's article as a simple announcement of the decline of the Humanities, liberal arts, and literature on the one hand and the rise of BL, yaoi, *bishōnen* and

such on the other, or as a lament or indeed a celebration of the change. She points out that for decades the real hardcore “culture girls” supported both the masculine (male-dominated) Humanities tradition and its male leaders (i.e. writers, critics, artists). Citing three Japanese women writers once married to their renowned writer/intellectual partners,¹² Takada remarks that “to these ‘culture girls’ of the past, ‘culture’ manifested itself in the form of a living, and preferably good-looking, man” (50).

I want to draw special attention to the last part of this quotation, “preferably good-looking.” The specific Japanese term Takada uses here for “good-looking” is *bibō* but elsewhere in the essay the term *bishōnen* is also used either in a quotation or in Takada’s own comment. Needless to say, my point is not whether any of the intellectuals considered here looks handsome to us (as their partners believed), but rather to link Takada’s observation to the strong cultural tradition in Japan of women, both young and old, admiring physical beauty in boys and men. While this tradition may well go as far back as *The Tale of Genji* or even to Himiko and mythology, my interest here is in a specific kind of women’s fetish for visually-appealing male intellectuals and artists from 1950s onwards. I would argue that this aestheticisation of men by women forms an important core of the culture-girls’ culture both in its popular forms and highbrow forms.

One of the key figures in women’s appreciation of men’s and boys’ beauty is author Mori Mari (1903–87), who published photo essays in the women’s monthly magazine *Musesu* [Mrs] in 1964, 1967, and 1968.¹³

Figure 4.

Mori Mari's sketches of "beautiful men" for
the magazine *Misesu* (Mrs)

month	"Watashi no jinbutsu sukechi" (character sketches) 1964	"Ishoku no geijutsuka-tachi" (unique artists) 1967	"Watashi no bidanshi ron" (on handsome men) 1968
Jan	Mishima Yukio (literature)	Fukazawa Shichirō (literature)	Fujiyama Aiichirō (politician)
Feb	Matsumoto Kōshirō (kabuki)	Ikeda Masuo (art)	Ishida Reisuke (railway)
Mar	Mizuhara Shigeru (baseball)	Modegi Shingo (chef)	Enomoto Ken'ichi (entertainer)
Apr	Nakadai Tatsuya (theatre)	Tatara Jun (actor)	Hagiwara Sakumi (film, writer)
May	Fukuda Tsuneari (literature)	Masuda Kōzō (shōgi chess player)	Mizuno Nario (business)
June	Uno Jūkichi (theatre)	Takada Eiichi (zoologist)	Mishima Yukio
July	Okamoto Kihachi (film director)	Ozawa Shōichi (entertainer)	Nakayama Tsuneaki (clinical medicine)
Aug	Ozawa Seiji (conductor)	Yoshiyuki Junnosuke (writer)	Charles Aznavour (singer)
Sept	San'yūtei Enshō (rakugo)	Taniuchi Rokurō (artist)	Kita Morio (writer, psychiatrist)
Oct	Dan Ikuma (composer)	Nakanishi Godō (writer)	Tatekawa Danshi (rakugo)
Nov	Nakamura Gan'emon (kabuki)	Takemitsu Tōru (composer)	Taihō (sumō)
Dec	Okamoto Tarō (modern art)	Fujiwara Yoshie (opera)	Mori Ōgai (literature)

Mori was the pioneer of subjective "aesthetification" of male artists and intellectuals. Of course, before Mori Mari there was poet Yosano Akiko (1878–1942), who found the famous statue of Buddha in Kamakura "handsome," and a thousand years earlier Murasaki Shikibu created the most beautiful man of the millennium, the Shining Prince Genji. But it was Mori Mari who most powerfully explored innovative ways of appreciating visual appeal of men and boys. It is important to note that this pleasure is not normally linked to heterosexual desire but is, so to speak, metaphysically romantic. Furthermore, Mori Mari found ways to use her impressions of men's physical beauty not only in essays but also in her fiction—regardless of their relevance, appropriateness or authenticity. For instance, she claims to have used a photograph of Jean-Claude Bryali and Alain Delon that she found in a film magazine or somewhere as the basis for her homosexual love stories such as "Koibito-tachi no mori" [Lovers' forest, 1961] and "Kareha no nedoko" [The Bed of Fallen Leaves, 1962].¹⁴ These novellas, which have long been neglected or dismissed merely as strange texts created by an eccentric old woman, are now regarded as pioneering works with *yaoi* and BL themes. In other words, the significance of Mori Mari and her unique literary representations of beautiful men and boys are for the first time widely recognised by contemporary culture girls. Even more surprising than the episode

about the Delon/Bryali photograph is that Moira, the “girl fatale” heroine of Mori Mari’s novel *Amai mitsu no heya* [The sweet honey room, 1975],¹⁵ is said to have been inspired by a photo of the young Peter O’Toole. Mori’s subjectivity is an important part of her power; or, rather, the beauty is not only in the eye of the beholder but in the pen of Mori Mari. Neither she nor her reader has the slightest concern about the lack of actuality or objectivity in these comments that link the actual film stars to completely fictional characters of different ages, sexes and nationalities.

The uniqueness of Mori Mari’s taste in male beauty is evident in this recent (February 2008) poll of the most beautiful men of the Shōwa era (1926–1989), conducted by the popular magazine *Bungei shunjū*.

Figure 5.

Bungei shunjū (Feb 2008) Readers’ Choice: The Most Beautiful Men of Shōwa 1926-89

			Dates	Total	M	F
1	Hasegawa Kazuo	actor (kabuki, film)	1908-84	1214	888	326
2	Uehara Ken	actor (film)	1909-91	595	418	177
3	Ishihara Yūjirō	actor (film, TV)	1934-87	558	377	181
4	Ichikawa Raizō	actor (kabuki, film)	1931-69	367	228	139
5	Kayama Yūzō	actor (film)	1937-	345	246	96
6	Shirasu Jirō	political/business leader	1902-85	339	183	156
7	Takakura Ken	actor (film)	1931-	296	197	99
8	Mifune Toshirō	actor (film)	1920-97	270	230	40
9	Sata Keiji	actor (film)	1926-64	261	148	113
10	Nagashima Shigeo	baseball player	1936-	259	221	38
11	Tsuruta Kōji	actor (film)	1924-87	199	164	35
12	Yoshida Shigeru	politician	1878-1967	198	165	33
18	Sawada Kenji	singer, actor	1948-	75	23	52
	(total votes)			8077	5506	2571

Despite the overlap in the time period, there is no overlap between Mori’s list of beautiful men and this one. This must be at least partly because the readership of *Bungei shunjū* consists mainly of middle-aged and mature men. In a sense it is surprising that this magazine, which is much more masculinist than *Eureka*, would have run a feature like this at all. About one-third of the 8077 votes in the poll for the most beautiful Shōwa man were cast by women, but one would assume that the average age of these women would

be higher than that of the women readers of *Eureka*. It is also interesting to compare the differences in rankings by male and female voters.

Figure 6.

Women's choice (left) and men's (right)

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Hasegawa Kazuo | 1. Hasegawa Kazuo |
| 2. Ishihara Yūjirō | 2. Uehara Ken |
| 3. Uehara Ken | 3. Ishihara Yūjirō |
| 4. Shirasu Jirō | 4. Kayama Yūzō |
| 5. Ichikawa Raizō | 5. Mifune Toshirō |
| 6. Sata Keiji | 6. Ichikawa Raizō |
| 7. Takakura Ken | 7. Nagashima Shigeo |
| 8. Kayama Yūzō | 8. Takakura Ken |
| 9. Sawada Kenji | 9. Shirasu Jirō |
| 10. Mifune Toshirō | 10. Yoshida Shigeru |

Take, for example, Shirasu Jirō (1902–1985), the Cambridge-educated dandy and political and business leader who played a crucial role after Japan's surrender. He appears at No. 4 on the women's list and No. 9 on the men's. Although a generation older than the three couples cited by Takada Rieko, Shirasu Jirō and Shirasu Masako (1910–98) were certainly a celebrity couple. We might also note that Masako is known for her books on aesthetics, especially androgynous beauty in the visual and performing arts and literature, ranging from noh plays to Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*.¹⁶ In her autobiography she writes that when she was eighteen she instantly fell in love with Jirō, whom she thought not breathtakingly handsome but attractive with his Western manners and unusual height.¹⁷ Even though Masako considered that he was not particularly beautiful, he seems to have been generally recognised as a visually exceptional figure.

In February 2008, the same month that the *Bungei shunjū* poll of the most beautiful Shōwa men was published, the all-women

Takarazuka theatre opened a musical play on the “Samurai Gentleman” Shirasu Jirō.¹⁸ In this musical both the Japanese couple and Douglas MacArthur(!) are visually enhanced. It is intriguing that a young, tall, slim, and beautiful *otoko-yaku* (male-role specialist) star plays General MacArthur, conveying a stunningly different impression from the historical portrait that highlights the victorious MacArthur’s masculinity in contrast to the defeated emperor Hirohito who is pictured beside to him. It would be interesting to see whether this “Samurai Gentleman” musical has transnational appeal.

In the last fifty years or so, girls and women have steadily expanded their territory by infiltrating traditionally male-centred Humanities departments in academia and by influencing a change in the content of leading literary publications and cultural productions. Takada Rieko’s cynical analogy between the rise of women and the multiplication of cholera bacteria killing the diseased body of the Humanities and thereby eventually stopping the supply of nutritious diarrhoea may offend some readers. Needless to say, illness and corporeality have frequently been used as metaphor within the Humanities tradition. Takada’s analogy offers some new perspectives and raises questions for further discussion. The bacteria is aware that unless the failing Humanities body maintains life and keeps its supply of nutritious diarrhoea, its (her) own life will be at stake. This ambiguous position makes it possible for the bacteria to take a sympathetic, though detached, view of the dying body. It can imagine, for example, the embarrassment of the former partners of the “culture girl” writers. In this sense the bacteria not only multiply but represent multiple viewpoints. Takada also cites an example from Kanai Mieko’s novel *Ren’ai taiheiki* [The Chronicle of Love, 1995], in which the protagonist Asako is disillusioned with her artist husband. When she decides to leave him after seven years, she tells him that:

“I respected you—yes, I learned a lot about art history and its discourse, as well as trends in contemporary art. Without you I wouldn’t have known all these things— actually, it was a lot more than that; I was completely infatuated with you. For a long time I thought compared with you I was an unimportant artist and that I was incredibly lucky to be able to live with you and make love with you.” (cited in Takada, “Korerakin-teki kōsatsu” 51–52)

No matter how disillusioned and depressed Asako may be, there still is an empowering aspect here: she is liberated from her own infatuation. She no longer sees herself as a lucky appendage to her artist husband; on the contrary, she sees through his charlatanism and pursues her own art and personal life. In other words, Tanaka Miyoko was wrong to suggest that cynicism and disillusionment cannot be used in a work of art or fiction. However, there are much jollier ways for women to deal with the beautiful men in the Humanities, art and culture. In this paper I have mentioned only a few examples—Mori Mari's essays on beauty in men, Shirasu Masako's pursuit of androgynous beauty, and the Takarazuka version of Shirasu Jirō—but there are numerous others, including some really innovative, amusing and insightful ones, and some that are inspired by Mori Mari, Shirasu Masako and other pioneering women. These I hope to discuss some other time.

NOTES

- ¹ *Yuriika* 37.12 (November 2005). The term *joshi*, when used in the normal sense, does not necessarily mean girls but also includes women. In this coined compound, *bunkakei joshi*, it seems more apt to translate it as girl, even though it still includes post-adolescent women. For a review of this and two other issues of the magazine, see Tomoko Aoyama, "Eureka Discovers 'Culture Girls', *Fujoshi*, and BL: Essay Review of Three Issues of the Japanese Literary Magazine, *Yuriika* (Eureka)," *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific* 20 (2009), <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue20/aoyama.htm> (accessed 15/05/09).
- ² See Table 1. "Topics covered in Eureka, 1988, 2005–2007" in Aoyama, "Eureka Discovers." For earlier data, see the appendix of Date Tokuo, *Shijin-tachi Yuriika shō* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, Heibonsha Library, 2005), 181–224, which includes topics and contributors of issues published between 1956 and 1961.
- ³ Takada Rieko, "Korerakin-teki kōsatsu: Danshi-kei bunka no suijaku to bunka-kei joshi no taitō," *Yuriika* 37.12 (November 2005): 42–51.
- ⁴ The back cover of the "Culture Girl" issue of *Eureka* has a full-page advertisement of a book entitled *Megane danshi* [Boys with Glasses].
- ⁵ The term *fujoshi* 腐女子 [lit. rotten girl] is coined by replacing the Chinese character *fu* for woman in the word 婦女子 [women & children] with a homophonic character for decay 腐; it is a term used, often self-mockingly, for girls and women with a particular interest in BL and *yaoi*.
- ⁶ For a discussion of some of these terms see paragraph 37 of Aoyama, "Eureka Discovers."

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- ⁷ Takada Rieko, *Bungakubu o meguru yamai* (Kyoto: Shōraisha, 2001; Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, Chikuma bunko, 2006) and Takada Rieko, *Gurotesuku na kyōyō* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, Chikuma shinsho, 2005).
- ⁸ These graphs are copied from Inagaki Kyōko, *Jōgakkō to jōgakusei: Kyōyō, tashinami, modan bunka* [Girls' schools and girl students: Humanities, accomplishment, and modern culture], (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, Chūō shinsho, 2007), 221 and 222. I am grateful to Professor Inagaki for permission to reproduce these tables.
- ⁹ Japanese Government, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Statistics Bureau, "Tōkei de miru nihon no kagaku gijutsu kenkyū" <http://www.stat.go.jp/data/kagaku/pamphlet/s-04.htm> (accessed 15/05/2009).
- ¹⁰ Tanaka Miyoko, "Hyōgen ni miru narushishizumu to shinishizumu," originally published in 1976, translated by Tomoko Aoyama and Barbara Hartley as "Narcissism, Cynicism, and the Writing of Women," in Rebecca L. Copeland, *Woman Critiqued: Translated Essays on Japanese Women's Writing* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 100.
- ¹¹ See the above-mentioned table in Aoyama, "Eureka Discovers."
- ¹² The three women writers are Yagawa Sumiko, Meiō Masako and Takahashi Takako, and their respective (ex-)partners are Shibusawa Tatsuhiko, Karatani Kōjin, and Takahashi Kazumi.
- ¹³ These are published with Ōkura Shunji's photographs in Mori Mari, *Watashi no binanshi ron*, which is also given the French title *Portraits des hommes superbes* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1995).
- ¹⁴ For a discussion of these stories, see Tomoko Aoyama, "Male Homosexuality as Treated by Japanese Women Writers," in *Modernization and Beyond: The Japanese Trajectory*, ed. Gavan McCormack and Yoshio Sugimoto (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 186–204.
- ¹⁵ On this novel, see Tomoko Aoyama, "A Room Sweet as Honey: Father-Daughter Love in Mori Mari," in *The Father-Daughter Plot: Japanese Literary Women and the Law of the Father*, ed. Rebecca L. Copeland and Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 167–193.
- ¹⁶ Shirasu Masako, *Rhōsei guyū no bi* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1997). My copy of this book published in 2000 indicates that within three years it has gone through eight print runs.
- ¹⁷ Shirasu Masako, *Shirasu Masako jiden* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, Shinchō bunko, 1999): 189–90.
- ¹⁸ See the DVD trailer for this musical entitled *Reimei no kaze: Samurai Gentleman Shirasu Jirō no chōsen*, at <http://www.tca-pictures.net/shop/press/080303.html>. Takarazuka Shōjo Kagekidan was established in 1919 and changed its name to Takarazuka Kagekidan

in 1940. Since its earliest days it has been an extremely popular all-women revue theatre with generations of devoted women fans.

**TO SPUR A DULL REVENGE:
THE RHETORIC OF SELF-EXHORTATION IN
REVENGE TRAGEDY**

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Few topics in literary criticism have received as much attention as Hamlet's irresolution, but relatively little has been written about the irresolution of other Elizabethan revengers. Irresolution is, in fact, a common motif in Elizabethan revenge tragedy. The motif is particularly conspicuous in Thomas Kyd's play, *The Spanish Tragedy*: Kyd's revenger, Hieronimo, doubts, delays and vacillates, before finally enacting his revenge at the end of the play.¹ The motif of irresolution is also prominent in classical revenge drama, especially in the tragedies of Seneca. Senecan revengers, like their Elizabethan counterparts, are beset by irresolution. They waver and delay; and, in lengthy soliloquies, they exhort themselves to overcome irresolution.

The revengers' self-exhortations are the focus of this paper: I compare, in particular, the Elizabethan soliloquies to those of Seneca. The self-exhortations in *The Spanish Tragedy*, I shall argue, draw upon Seneca's copious rhetorical style, and, more specifically, upon a set of rhetorical figures that characterize Seneca's self-exhortations. Similar rhetorical structures reappear in the self-exhortations of Hamlet. But in contrast to the earlier revenge tragedies, Hamlet's speeches display a self-consciousness about the rhetoric of self-exhortation; and they gesture towards a criticism of the copious rhetorical style. In *Hamlet*, we can discern a reaction against Senecan rhetoric.

In Seneca's play *Thyestes*, the king of Argos, Atreus, seeks revenge against Thyestes, his brother. Thyestes stole his throne and seduced his wife. Atreus's opening speech in the play is a self-exhortation—he exhorts himself to bloody revenge:²

Ignave, iners, enervis et (quod maximum
 probrum tyranno rebus in summis reor)
 inulte, post tot scelera, post fratris dolos
 fasque omne ruptum questibus vanis agis
 iratus Atreus? fremere iam totus tuis
 debebat armis orbis, et geminum mare
 utrimque classes agere; iam flammis agros
 lucere et urbes decuit, ac strictum undique
 micare ferrum. tota sub nostro sonet
 Argolica tellus equite; non silvae tegant
 hostem nec altis montium structae iugis
 arces. relictis bellicum totus canat
 populus Mycenis. quisquis invisum caput
 tegit ac tuetur, clade funesta occidat.
 haec ipsa pollens incliti Pelopis domus
 ruat vel in me, dummodo in fratrem ruat.
 Age, anime, fac quod nulla posteritas probet,
 sed nulla taceat. aliquid audendum est nefas
 atrox, cruentum, tale quod frater meus
 suum esse mallet. Scelera non ulcisceris,
 nisi vincis. (2. 176-196)

[Inactive, inert, enervated and (what I deem,
 in great affairs, the worst reproach for a king)
 unavenged, after so many crimes, after the treachery of a
 brother
 and the rupture of every principle, do you now act with empty
 complaints,
 raging Atreus? Now the whole world should ring
 with your arms, and on both coasts
 fleets should churn up the two seas; now towns and fields
 should blaze in flames, and everywhere
 the drawn sword glitter. Let the whole Argive land
 resound under my cavalry; let no forests conceal
 the enemy, nor fortresses built on high mountain ridges.
 The whole population, having left Mycenae,
 should trumpet war. May anyone who hides and protects
 that hated man die in violent slaughter.
 Let this, the mighty house of famous Pelops itself,
 fall even on me, as long as it falls on my brother.
 Come, my spirit, do what no future era will approve,
 but none will pass over in silence. I must venture some crime,
 horrific, bloody, of the kind my brother
 would prefer to be his. You do not avenge crimes
 unless you exceed them.]

This soliloquy is not the only self-exhortation in *Thyestes*: Atreus exhorts himself again later in the same Act. In fact, Seneca's tragedies abound in extravagant self-exhortations. His other revenge tragedy, *Medea*, features self-exhortations in all five Acts. The contrast to classical Greek tragedy is striking: the self-exhortations of Greek revengers are rare and comparatively brief.

What accounts for the prominence of self-exhortation in Seneca's tragedies? Part of the answer, it seems to me, is Seneca's preoccupation with Stoic practices of self-examination and self-transformation. Over the past decade, commentators have emphasized the importance of self-transformation in Seneca's philosophical writing, prompted in large part by Foucault's treatment of the topic.³ I do not have space in this paper, however, to explore the connection between self-exhortation and Stoic self-transformation. Instead, I focus on a second important context for Senecan self-exhortations—the declamatory practices of Seneca's Rome. In first-century Rome, the art of declamation had become an end-in-itself, detached from its practical function in law courts and government. Trained declaimers would perform “display” declamations in schools and civic halls, which became a form of entertainment. Seneca had considerable exposure to these declamatory practices; indeed, much of our knowledge of Roman declamation comes from treatises written by Seneca's father, Seneca the Elder.

Roman declamation is in large part responsible for Seneca's distinctive style: he exploited the rhetorical forms of declamation to create a new kind of drama. One reason for the prominence of self-exhortation in Seneca's drama, it seems to me, is that the soliloquies of self-exhortation provide a particularly good opportunity to deploy the resources of rhetoric. A self-exhortation represents an attempt by the speaker to influence herself. While rhetoric is typically defined as the art of influencing others, speakers may use the techniques of rhetoric reflexively—to influence themselves. The self-exhortations in Seneca's tragedies provided him with an opportunity to deploy such reflexive rhetorical devices.

There are four rhetorical forms that are especially characteristic of Seneca's self-exhortations. The first, called “self-apostrophe,” is where a speaker addresses herself, or addresses her mind, spirit, hand and so forth. Atreus's speech includes several examples: he addresses himself as “Atreus”; and then again, towards the end of the speech, he apostrophises his spirit. The second rhetorical form, “epilexis,” is the use of rhetorical questions to chide. Atreus uses

epilexis to castigate himself for delaying the revenge: “do you now act with empty complaints, raging Atreus?” The third form is self-command. Towards the end of the speech, Atreus commands himself “Come, my spirit, do what no future era will approve, but none will pass over in silence.” Finally, Senecan self-exhortations characteristically use the rhetorical figure of hyperbole. Throughout the speech, Atreus uses hyperbole liberally. He asserts that the “whole world” should ring with his arms; that the “whole Argive land” should resound under his cavalry; that fields and cities should be ablaze; that no future era should forget his action. The speech displays a number of other rhetorical forms, such as parison, antithesis, and sententiae; but I shall concentrate on the four that are particularly characteristic of Senecan self-exhortation.

As noted above, the extravagant self-exhortations in Seneca’s tragedies can be contrasted to the relatively brief and rare self-exhortations of Greek drama. And in the drama of Elizabethan England, the self-exhortations resembled those of Seneca rather than those of the Greek dramatists. This resemblance reflects the prominence of rhetoric in the two societies: in Elizabethan England, as in Seneca’s Rome, formal rhetoric occupied a central position in social and literary discourse.⁴ The Elizabethan dramatists saw self-exhortations as an opportunity to deploy the full range of reflexive rhetorical forms. One such dramatist was Thomas Kyd.

Kyd’s play *The Spanish Tragedy* was a great success with Elizabethan audiences: records show that it was the third most popular play between 1592 and 1599.⁵ The protagonist in the play, Hieronimo, seeks revenge for the murder of his son. But like Seneca’s revengers, he vacillates; and in lengthy soliloquies he exhorts himself to overcome his irresolution. The following soliloquy is prompted by Hieronimo’s encounter with another grieving father.⁶

See, see, O see thy shame, Hieronimo,
 See here a loving father to his son!
 Behold the sorrows and the sad laments
 That he delivereth for his son’s decease!
 If love’s effects so strives in lesser things,
 If love enforce such moods in meaner wits,
 If love express such power in poor estates:
 Hieronimo, when as a raging sea
 Toss’d with the wind and tied, o’erturneth then,
 The upper billows’s course of waves to keep,
 While lesser waters labour in the deep:

Then sham'st thou not, Hieronimo, to neglect
 The sweet revenge of thy Horatio?
 Though on this earth justice will not be found,
 I'll down to hell, and in this passion
 Knock at the dismal gates of Pluto's court,
 Getting by force, as once Alcides did,
 A troop of furies and tormenting hags
 To torture Don Lorenzo and the rest.
 (3.13.95–113)

We know that Kyd read Seneca's plays—in fact, *The Spanish Tragedy* includes lines of Latin lifted from Seneca. Hieronimo's self-exhortation was clearly influenced by Seneca's tragedies. The speech contains all four rhetorical forms that characterize Senecan self-exhortations. Self-apostrophe is freely used: in the opening line, Hieronimo addresses himself by name; and later he apostrophises himself several times. Hieronimo also uses epilexis: he chides himself with the rhetorical question "Then sham'st thou not, Hieronimo, to neglect/ The sweet revenge of thy Horatio?" The speech also includes self-commands: it opens with Hieronimo commanding himself to observe the grief of the other father. And finally, at the culmination of the self-exhortation, Hieronimo uses hyperbole: he issues hyperbolic threats, vowing to pursue his revenge even to hell.

There is also a parallel between the overall *movement* of Hieronimo's speech and Atreus's. As Hieronimo's speech progresses, its intensity rises. It opens with Hieronimo castigating himself. The self-castigation goads Hieronimo's anger; and his accumulating rage finds expression in hyperbolic threats. Atreus's self-exhortation displays a similar movement: the intensity rises with the ascent from self-castigation to hyperbolic threats.

The Spanish Tragedy was probably written in the late 1580s, at about the same time as Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*.⁷ In all three plays, the copious rhetorical style is on display, characterized by a liberal use of rhetorical figures and tropes—especially amplification and hyperbole. Hieronimo's self-exhortation is a paradigm example of the hyperbolic, copious style. And a similar hyperbolic self-exhortation appears in the *The Battle of Alcazar*.⁸

Mount me I will
 But may I never pass the river till I be
 Revenged upon thy soul accursed Abdelmelec,
 If not on earth, yet when we meet in hell,

Before grim Minos, Rodamant, and Eocus,
 The combat will I crave upon thy ghost,
 And drag thee through the loathsome pools
 Of Lethes, Styx, and fiery Phlegiton.
 (5.1.1293–1300)

While this self-exhortation is shorter than Hieronimo's, and does not deploy the full range of rhetorical forms, it uses a strikingly similar figure of hyperbole. Like Hieronimo, Peele's revenger vows to pursue his vengeance even to hell.

Such hyperbolic "bragging" is characteristic of the copious rhetorical style. Thus in his well-known criticism of the copious style, Thomas Nashe reproaches those tragedians who "think to out-brave better pens with the swelling bombast of bragging blank verse."⁹ Nashe's criticism was written in 1589, which suggests that the reaction against the copious style began soon after the appearance of *Tamburlaine*, *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The Battle of Alcazar*. And a decade later, the reaction persisted: for example, the copious rhetoric of the three plays is parodied by John Marston in *Antonio and Mellida* and Ben Jonson in his *Poetaster*.¹⁰

After this reaction against the copious style, what became of Senecan self-exhortation? It survived intact in those plays that are patently imitative, such as Ben Jonson's Roman tragedies, and the Senecan closet dramas of Fulke Greville.¹¹ But in other plays, such as *Hamlet*, the Senecan self-exhortation undergoes a transmutation. While Shakespeare draws on the rhetorical structures of earlier self-exhortations, he also distances himself from them.

Like Atreus and Hieronimo, Hamlet exhorts himself to overcome irresolution. The irresolution of Hamlet should not be interpreted as an idiosyncratic character trait; rather, it draws on a motif of revenge tragedy. The irresolution of Hamlet refers back to Hieronimo's irresolution, which, in turn, refers back to the irresolution of Seneca's revengers. This connection between *Hamlet* and *The Spanish Tragedy* is particularly apparent in the structure of Hamlet's self-exhortations.

Hamlet exhorts himself in two lengthy soliloquies, the first of which is provoked by the player's speech on the death of Priam. This self-exhortation has a similar architecture to Hieronimo's self-exhortation; and I shall draw attention, in particular, to three points of similarity. First, Hieronimo's speech is prompted by an encounter with a display of passion: he is driven to exhort himself when he meets another grieving father. Similarly, Hamlet's self-exhortation is provoked by the spectacle of a passionate speech.

Second, Hieronimo's speech is constructed around an *antithesis*: Hieronimo contrasts his own deficit of passion to the intense grief of the other father. Hamlet's soliloquy is structured around a similar antithesis—an antithesis between his own lack of passion and the display of passion by the player. Hamlet sees the player's "visage wanned, / Tears in his eyes, distraction in 's aspect, / A broken voice", while he himself 'can say nothing."¹² And, third, Hieronimo chides himself for having even more reason than the other father to feel such passion.¹³ Like Hieronimo, Hamlet castigates himself for having far greater reason than the player to display such passion: "What would he do / Had he the motive and the cue for passion / That I have?"¹⁴

The same pattern re-emerges in Hamlet's second self-exhortation. The prompt for this self-exhortation is, again, a display of passion—in this case, a display of martial courage and honour. The Norwegian army is marching off to fight for "a little patch of ground" in Poland, where it will face "all that fortune, death, and danger dare, / Even for an eggshell."¹⁵ Hamlet's self-exhortation is structured around an antithesis similar to Hieronimo's: Hamlet's lack of passion is contrasted to the honour and passion of the Norwegian soldiers; and he goes on to castigate himself for having far greater reason than the army to be moved by honour:

Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour's at the stake. How stand I, then,
That have a father killed, a mother stained,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep while, to my shame, I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain. O, from this time forth
My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!

(Q2: 4.4.44–57)

Commentators have noted a close connection between *Hamlet* and *The Spanish Tragedy*, leading some to speculate on an Ur-Hamlet written by Kyd.¹⁶ The correspondence between the self-exhortations is further confirmation of the connection between these two plays.

In *Hamlet*, the self-exhortations display rhetorical forms that are characteristic of Senecan self-exhortation. Like Hieronimo and Atreus, Hamlet begins his self-exhortations on a note of self-castigation. Thus, having encountered the Norwegian army, Hamlet chides himself using the rhetorical form of epiplexis: "How stand I, then, / That have a father killed, a mother stained, / Excitements of my reason and my blood,/ And let all sleep." And again, like the speeches of Atreus and Hieronimo, this self-exhortation of Hamlet displays not only epiplexis but also self-command. Hamlet ends the speech with a command to himself: "from this time forth / my thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth." If we compare Hamlet's speech to those of Hieronimo and Atreus, the most striking absence is the figure of hyperbole. As noted above, the self-exhortations of Hieronimo and Atreus rise in intensity as they modulate from self-castigation to hyperbolic threats. But Hamlet's self-exhortation fails to make that ascent; it remains at the level of self-castigation throughout. The absence of hyperbole is indicative of a movement away from the copious rhetorical style.

This reaction against rhetoric is even more striking in the self-exhortation provoked by the player's speech.

Yet I,
 A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak
 Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
 And can say nothing—no, not for a king
 Upon whose property and most dear life
 A damned defeat was made. Am I a coward?
 Who calls me villain, breaks my pate across,
 Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face,
 Tweaks me by th' nose, gives me the lie i'th' throat
 As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this?
 Ha? Swounds, I should take it; for it cannot be
 But I am pigeon-livered and lack gall
 To make oppression bitter, or ere this
 I should 'a' fatted all the region kites
 With this slave's offal. Bloody, bawdy villain!
 Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
 O, vengeance!—
 Why, what an ass am I? Ay, sure, this is most brave,
 That I, the son of the dear murdered
 Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
 Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words
 And fall a-cursing like a very drab,
 A scullion! (2.2.568–90)

As in the speeches of Hieronimo and Atreus, the self-exhortation opens with self-castigation for inaction. There is a rise in intensity, a build-up of anger, as Hamlet begins his string of copious insults: “Bloody, bawdy villain! Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!” When Hamlet then exclaims “O, vengeance!” the audience is invited to expect a further ascent to hyperbolic threats—threats such as those issued in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The Battle of Alcazar*.

Shakespeare defeats the audience’s expectations. Rather than ascending to hyperbolic rhetoric, Hamlet suddenly deflates the rhetoric. “What an ass am I?” he asks. Instead of bombastic threats, Hamlet offers an explicit criticism of such rhetoric. He reproaches his self-exhortation as mere “words.” Here Hamlet alludes to contemporary Elizabethan criticisms of rhetoric—criticisms which inveigh against the use of superfluous words.¹⁷ Hamlet then deprecates the use of rhetoric as effeminate, as the ranting of a “whore,” a “drab.” Again, he is referring to Elizabethan criticisms of the copious style of rhetoric. As Patricia Parker has shown, in the late-sixteenth century, critics of rhetoric associated the copious style with effeminacy.¹⁸ Hamlet’s self-exhortation is responding to this reaction against the copious rhetorical style.

Self-exhortations, I have argued, provide playwrights with an opportunity to deploy rhetorical devices. The techniques of rhetoric, typically used to persuade others, can also be used to exhort oneself. The self-exhortations of Atreus and Hieronimo are rich in rhetorical forms; and the correspondence between the two is a consequence, in part, of the similarity between the copious styles of rhetoric that were in vogue in Seneca’s Rome and in 1580s England. While Hamlet’s self-exhortations can clearly be located within this tradition, they also undercut the tradition, reflecting a movement away from the copious style of rhetoric.

NOTES

- ¹ Irresolute revengers also appear in John Marston, *Antonio’s Revenge*, ed. W. Reavley Gair (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978) and Fulke Greville, *Alaham*, in *Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville*, vol.2, ed. Geoffrey Bullough (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1938).
- ² Seneca, *Thyestes*, in *Seneca: Tragedies*, vol.2, ed. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004). The translation is mine.
- ³ For Foucault’s observations on Stoic self-transformation, see Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 3, trans. Robert Hurley (London:

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- Penguin, 1984), 39–69. Recent articles on the subject include Catherine Edwards, “Self-Scrutiny and Self-Transformation in Seneca’s Letters,” and Brad Inwood, “The Will in Seneca the Younger,” both of which appear in *Seneca*, ed. John Fitch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
- ⁴ A number of commentators have demonstrated the importance of rhetoric in Elizabethan England. For two recent studies, see Neil Rhodes, *The Power of Eloquence and English Renaissance Literature* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), and Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
 - ⁵ *Renaissance Drama: An Anthology of Plays and Entertainments*, ed. Arthur Kinney, second edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 146.
 - ⁶ Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. Bertram Joseph (London: Ernest Benn, 1964).
 - ⁷ Lukas Erne argues that 1587 is the most probable date of composition: Lukas Erne, *Beyond the Spanish Tragedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 58.
 - ⁸ George Peele, *The Dramatic Works*, ed. F. S. Hook and J. Yoklavich (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).
 - ⁹ Thomas Nashe, Preface to “Menaphon”, in *Menaphon* by Robert Greene and *A Margarite of America* by Thomas Lodge, ed. George B. Harrison (Oxford: Blackwell, 1927), 4.
 - ¹⁰ Marston’s Felice responds to a bombastic speech from Mazzagente with “Rampum, scrampum, mount tufty Tamburlaine! What rattling thunderclap breaks from his lips?”: the Induction, 91–2, in John Marston, *Antonio and Mellida*, ed. W. Reavley Gair (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004). And, as commentators have noted, parodies of *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The Battle of Alcazar* are scattered throughout Act 3, Scene 4 of Ben Jonson, *Poetaster*, ed. Tom Cain (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).
 - ¹¹ Ben Jonson, *Sejanus: His Fall*, ed. Philip Ayres (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 2.1.139–62; Ben Jonson, *Cataline*, ed. Witney Bolton and Jane Gardner (London, Edward Arnold, 1973), 1.1.1–72; and Fulke Greville, *Alabam* (2.2.105–172).
 - ¹² 2.2.556–8; and 2.2.571. All references to Shakespeare are from *The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).
 - ¹³ Hieronimo emphasizes the lower class of the other father— his “poor estates” and his “meaner wits.” He suggests that his own noble status means he has more reason to respond with an appropriate passion.
 - ¹⁴ 2.2.562–4.
 - ¹⁵ Q2: 4.4.9 and 4.4.43–44.
 - ¹⁶ Erne, *Beyond the Spanish Tragedy*, 146–55.

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- ¹⁷ See, for example, the criticism of rhetoric by Sir William Cornwallis in his essay “On Vanity,” published in 1600. Cornwallis criticizes rhetoric as “the child of words”; and asserts that words “are but the lackies of reason, of which to send more than will do the business is superfluous.” Sir William Cornwallis, *Essayes*, ed. D. Allen (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1946), 175.
- ¹⁸ Patricia Parker, “Virile Style” in *Premodern Sexualities*, ed. Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero (New York and London: Routledge, 1996).

SPEAKING TO SLAVES: THE RHETORIC OF COMMAND IN SWIFT AND PLATO

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We humans often speak to things we do not expect to speak back. We swear at our tools and at obstructions in our way. We talk to animals and infants, who may be able to express themselves, but who cannot answer. Commands are a particular instance of this type of speech. When I tell my dog “fetch!” for example, I expect him to obey, but not to reply. Similarly, when a firing squad is given the command to fire, there is a retort, but no rejoinder. Commands are a one-way use of language; they have a direction—an addressee—but they do not allow for response, for conversation. Philosophy, both ancient and modern, has often defined humans as linguistic animals. The linguistic capacity for dialogue is used to demarcate human existence from animal life by both Adam Smith and Aristotle, for example.¹ On this basis, the language of command appears to be a type of inhuman language. Commands do not allow for that reciprocal nature of speech still often understood to be a defining human characteristic. In these terms, to address a command to a human is to instrumentalise and dehumanise that person. To express this same point in another critical vocabulary, commands reify.

What is involved when a command is issued and obeyed? To examine this question, I will focus on two texts that address the relationship between language and slavery: Plato’s *The Laws* and Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*. In *The Laws*, the Athenian stranger, Plato’s mouthpiece, investigates the ideal constitution for a state, the colony of Magnesia. In doing this, he draws a distinction in the text of the law between commands and persuasive rational discourse. Commands are unblended law, but in the utopian laws of Magnesia, the command is preceded by a persuasive exhortation. The Athenian marks the social antagonism between slaves and masters with this distinction between two ways of using language,

command and reasoned dialogue. *Gulliver's Travels* describes the experience of the other party in a command, the one who obeys. In Plato's terms, Gulliver receives the full shock of the unblended law, for he obeys a command without understanding it. In consequence, Gulliver enters something like a psychotic state, endeavouring to abandon his human condition, which he views as inescapably slavish. This is motivated by his desire to escape the realm of commands and enter a language of purely rational conversation. No doubt, Gulliver is mad, but an ethical principle may be located nonetheless in this commitment to a life in which the word of the command is literally unspeakable.

I

Slavery is the subject of discussion in *The Laws* in three key passages, all of which hinge on the nature of commands. In the first, the Athenian draws a distinction between the medicine practiced by the doctor, a free physician who attends citizens, and the slave-healer who treats sick slaves. The freeborn doctor "carries his inquiries far back, and goes into the nature of the disorder; he enters into discourse with the patient and with his friends, both learning from the sick man, and instructing him as far as possible, and he will not prescribe for him until he has first convinced him."²² The method of treatment here is essentially dialogic: this is a talking cure. The slave-doctor, by contrast, has learnt medicine by rote, by obeying and observing his master. And the slave-doctor also relates differently to patients: "he neither gives a servant any rational account (*logos*) of his complaint, nor asks him for any, but instead prescribes what mere experience suggests, as if he had exact knowledge, and when he has given his orders, like a tyrant, he rushes off" (Plato 720c). Plato here as elsewhere understands slaves to suffer from a deficiency of reason. While a slave is capable of obeying commands, and even of passing on commands he or she may have previously received, the slave cannot participate in the dialectic that leads to true knowledge.

In *The Laws*, the Athenian employs this distinction between the slave-doctor and the free doctor to introduce the double nature of the laws he is expounding. The ideal legislator, he argues, includes a preface to the laws, and does not simply command "do this, avoid that." In this way, the legislator is like the free doctor: the commands of the unblended law are surrounded and explained by a conversational discourse that investigates the nature of each law in a search for truth. But the law's naked directives are like the prescriptions of the slave-doctor. They are pure commands, which

do not recognise their addressee as capable of reply. The ideal legislator combines both these aspects in his ideal laws. When the Athenian next returns to the subject of the doubleness of the law, he states:

The arbitrary command, which was compared to the commands of slave-doctors, is unblended law, and that which preceded it ... was likewise analogous to the preamble of a discourse. For I imagine that all this language of conciliation, which the legislator has been uttering in the preface of the law, was intended to create good-will in the person whom he addressed, in order that, by reason of this good-will, he might more intelligently receive his command, that is to say, the law ... To all his laws, and to each separately, the legislator should prefix a preamble. (Plato 723a–b)

In the ideal balance of *The Laws*, neither pure reason nor intransigent command can dispense with its opposing counterpart. Without the preamble, the law would treat citizens as slaves, incapable of serving as interlocutors in a common pursuit of truth. Equally, without the naked force of command, the potential ascendancy of slavish personalities will always place good social order at risk. This irresolvable tension can be registered in the formal strain of the text. Plato's characteristic dialogic framework is retained, modelling for the reader the forceless force of communicative reason. Nonetheless, this dialogue verges on the monologic, being dominated by a single voice to a far greater extent than is *The Republic*, for example.

There are two points to note here. Firstly, this double law clearly invokes a logic of the supplement. As deconstruction might suggest, the authority of the law draws strength from the explanatory discourse that precedes it. The ideal society cannot be regulated solely by unblended laws, for if the highest magistrate is unable to "give a rational account [*logos*] of all that admits of a rational account," then he is unfit to rule, leaving the state leaderless (Plato 968a). So the ideal state must be capable of producing the same type of rational account of itself as that provided by the Athenian. The philosophical investigation that articulates the constitution of the utopian state remains integral to the functioning of the state, just as, for Plato, it is the possession of true discursive knowledge that forms the basis for issuing legitimate commands, for uttering commands as such.

But, secondly, this deconstructive gesture needs to be repeated, for the explanatory, prefatory discourse, the *logos* with which the law is blended, itself depends on the law. The utopian legislation set forward here by the Athenian is for a slave society. And the investigation into truth that underwrites this law is made possible by a slave economy. It is the actions of slaves that give the Athenian, the Spartan and the Cretan their positive freedom for philosophical dialogue. The prefatory rational discourse remains in the service of a logic of command, just as this exercise into true conversation has, as its material basis, slavery.

II

This social antagonism between dialogue and the command is again brought into focus when the Athenian next discusses slaves. The unstable linguistic nature of the law is reflected in contradictory uses of the term “slave.” The Athenian remarks that “we speak about slaves in a way which is right, and which is not right, for our language both contradicts and agrees with our practical experience of them” (Plato 776b–c). On the one hand, slaves have often proved more loyal than family members. But on the other hand, we also say that the soul of a slave is utterly corrupt, and that no man of sense ever trusts a slave. This contradictory language about slaves is matched by contradictory treatment. Some masters treat their slaves as animals, “chastising them with goads and whips.” But this only makes slaves “many times more slavish than they were before” (Plato 777a). Others go to the opposite extreme, speaking to slaves familiarly. But this only makes “the life of servitude more disagreeable both for them and for their masters” (Plato 778a). Whether slaves are treated as animals, or as human equals, such treatment is detrimental to social order.

The problem is ultimately linguistic. Treating slaves as animals denies their capacity for language. Yet masters must communicate with slaves if they are to direct their actions. Conversely, slaves cannot be admitted to the potential condition of full communicative rationality, for if the world of the master were open to the communicative experience of the slave, then the master’s authority would be dialogically open to question. By entering into conversation with a slave, a master undermines the essential socio-linguistic distinction between master and slave. So slavery requires something like a one-way language, a paradoxical form of communication that refuses to acknowledge the community of speaker and hearer. Such a language exists, of course: it is the language of command. Commands address the social class of those

who are not quite human: human enough to obey, but not so human as to answer back. Thus the Athenian concludes that, in utopia, “the language used to a slave should always be that of a command” (Plato 777e).

III

Commands inflict the word directly upon the body of their receiver. Behind every command, Elias Canetti argues in *Crowds and Power*, lies the threat of death, the total extinction of human communicative possibility.³ For Canetti, to receive a command is always to receive a potential death sentence. No matter the extent to which this death has been sublimated and domesticated in modern civilisation, it still forms the horizon of each order, initiating action in the one who receives it. Through commands, death weaves the symbolic membrane of power that regulates social life. And through that power, our possibilities of meaning are stripped from us, for in commands the normative reciprocity of human communication no longer applies.

David Hume explores this experience of communicative impossibility in his critique of the traditional distinction between *nomos* and *physis*, between the norms of free human behaviour and the laws of nature. Hume states that natural events are entirely “determin’d by an absolute fate.”⁴ But Hume also famously argues that our sense of natural causality is strictly speaking imaginary, nothing more than the “customary transition of the imagination.”⁵ This is no contradiction for Hume, however, because for him nothing is more absolutely determined than the determinations of the imagination:

A prisoner ... discovers the impossibility of his escape, as well from the obstinacy of his gaoler, as from the walls and bars with which he is surrounded ... The same prisoner, when conducted to the scaffold, foresees his death as certainly from the constancy and fidelity of his guards as from the operation of the ax or wheel. His mind runs along a certain train of ideas: The refusal of the soldiers to consent to his escape; the action of the executioner; the separation of the head and body; bleeding, convulsive motions, and death. Here is a connected chain of natural causes and voluntary actions; but the mind feels no difference betwixt them in passing from one link to another; nor is less certain of the future event than if it were connected with the present impressions of the memory and senses by a train of causes cemented together by what we are pleased to call a *physical necessity*. (Hume, *Treatise* 2.3.1.17)

Here Hume literalises the metaphor of the chain of ideas: this prisoner is indeed bound by a semiotic chain, the chain of command. Here, too, Canetti's suggestion that executing a command always involves a symbolic execution is also literalised. In Hume, the imagination is always a social imagination: the consequences we draw from one event always following another are, in his words, not just habitual, but customary. So, for Hume, to be subject to command is to be subject to a force that is at once social and imaginary. And yet, that force is in fact more concrete than matter itself. The linguistic substance of the command is less malleable than iron, more unyielding than stone.

This account of commands stands in opposition to the way commands are generally understood within modern philosophy of language. For Jürgen Habermas, for example, the intersubjective matrix of language is invoked by all communicative action, no matter how apparently deficient, and every speech-act implies a speaker addressing him or herself to a listener who, inherent in his or her position as addressee, possesses an implied capacity to reply, to demand a further explanation. Hans-Georg Gadamer articulates a similar position when he takes the situation of receiving a command as a model for hermeneutic understanding more generally:

Here, understanding belongs to a relationship between persons ... A person who refuses to obey an order has understood it, and because he applies it to the situation and knows what obedience would mean in that situation, he refuses ... He is well able to distinguish between understanding and obeying an order. It is possible for him not to obey even when—indeed, precisely when—he has understood it.⁶

By identifying the framework of dialogue even within the situation of command, Gadamer asserts the hermeneutic priority of understanding over obedience. But if we accept Canetti's suggestion that every command bears with it a murderous denial of communicative reciprocity—or if we accept Hume's scene of the command, in which its symbolic force extinguishes imaginative possibility totally—or if we follow Plato's use of the command to demarcate within language the irreparable social antagonism between slave and master—then we need to reverse this account of the nature of the command. To receive a command does not mean

first to understand and then to obey, and for understanding to bring with it the possibility of not obeying. To the contrary: to receive a command is to obey without understanding.

IV

What is involved in obeying a command one doesn't understand? This is a question explored in the fourth book of *Gulliver's Travels*, in which Gulliver encounters the utopian society of the virtuous Houyhnhnm, rational horses who rule over the degraded humanoid Yahoos. All aspects of Houyhnhnm social order—marriage, administration, demography, land distribution, the classes of the inhabitants, sport and military exercises, education, and so on—all embody the Houyhnhnms' commitment to rationality, for they live, Gulliver states, "under the Government of Reason."⁷ Houyhnhnm language also reflects this pre-eminence of rationality. It differs considerably from standard human language because it conforms to the principle set out by Gulliver's Houyhnhnm master: "the Use of Speech [is] to make us understand one another, and to receive Information of Facts" (Swift 223).

For the Houyhnhnm, then, as for Habermas, communication is concerned with arriving at understanding through the purely linguistic force of the better argument. Other uses of language, Habermas argues, which do not appear to accord with this aim, are in fact only possible on the basis of this ideal horizon. We can gain some sense of what would be excluded from language were this communicative reciprocity to shape all speech by noting some of the words that the Houyhnhnm lack: "Power, Government, War, Law, Punishment, and a Thousand other Things had no Terms, wherein that Language could express them; which made the Difficulty almost insuperable to give my Master any Conception of what I meant" (Swift 227). Most significantly, as a result of this restriction to pure communicative understanding, Houyhnhnm language has no imperative mood. It cannot phrase commands. As Gulliver notes:

I should observe to the Reader, that a Decree of the general Assembly in this Country, is expressed by the Word *Hnhloayn*, which signifies an *Exhortation*, as near as I can render it: For they have no Conception how a rational Creature can be *compelled*, but only advised, or *exhorted*; because no Person can disobey Reason, without giving up his Claim to be a rational Creature (Swift 227).

Houyhnhnm language, that is, is like one part of the double law articulated by Plato's Athenian stranger. It is pure exhortation; persuasive discourse, rationally articulated. It entirely excludes the unblended law, the arbitrary command. Only speak to slaves using commands, the Athenian argues. Houyhnhnm language represents the opposite extreme: a language without commands, of pure communicative rationality.

Plato has long been recognised as a key reference-point for Book Four of *Gulliver's Travels*. But while scholarly attention has usually focused on *The Republic*, there are good philological grounds for advancing *The Laws* as a more important source for Swift. In terms of the social organisation of sexual reproduction, for example, Houyhnhmland is much closer to Magnesia than it is to *The Republic*. Similarly, while the presence of slaves in the state described in *The Republic* remains a topic of scholarly dispute, there can be no doubt that slavery is central to Magnesia. And Houyhnhnm society likewise has slaves: the degraded Yahoos, whom the Houyhnhnm choose not to exterminate only because they can use them "for Draught and Carriage" (Swift 253). In these ways, Magnesia and Houyhnhmland share a single biopolitical regime quite different to that of *The Republic*.

But Gulliver is neither a genuine citizen of Houyhnhnm utopia nor a Yahoo, neither fully master nor wholly slave. He is only visiting Houyhnhmland, uneasily suspended between supra-human Houyhnhnm rationality and the sub-human bestiality of the Yahoos. As an outsider, Gulliver must learn Houyhnhnm language from scratch. The first three words he learns are *yahoo*, *houyhnhnm* and *hhuun*. The word *houyhnhnm*, Gulliver later discovers, signifies "a Horse; and in its Etymology, *the Perfection of Nature*" (Swift 219). *Yahoo*, he also learns, means the brute, unaccommodated human animal, human life at its most bare. To understand these words involves a holistic understanding of the language of which they make up a part, and of the society constituted by that language—a properly hermeneutic undertaking. Gulliver first learns these two words as mere meaningless sounds, without them having any effect on him. But once their meaning is laid open for him, they name the social antagonism that organises his life in utopia. By contrast, the third word, *hhuun*, is only transliterated, never translated. We never learn what it means. And yet, unlike the other two early words, its practical effect on Gulliver is immediate:

The first [horse], who was a Dapple-Grey, observing me to steal off, neighed after me in so expressive a Tone, that I

fancied myself to understand what he meant; whereupon I turned back, and came near him, to expect his further Commands...The Grey made me Signs that I should walk before him; wherein I thought it prudent to comply, till I could find a better Director. When I offered to slacken my Pace, he would cry *Hbuun, Hbuun*; I guessed his Meaning ... the Horse beckoning to me with his Head, and repeating the Word *Hbuun, Hbuun*, as he did upon the Road, which I understood was to attend him. (Swift 211–12, 214)

This command to follow, to attend, is immediately “understood” by Gulliver. Unlike the names *yahoo* and *houyhnhnm*, the order-word *hbuun* has direct effect. But it does not signify. Gulliver does not need to know what it actually means in order to obey it. He hearkens; he attends; he awaits further commands; he complies. There is no possibility here of distinguishing between understanding and obedience, of understanding and not obeying. And precisely because there is no possibility of understanding and not obeying, there is in fact no understanding at all in the hermeneutic sense of Gadamer or Habermas. This is a case, rather, of obeying without understanding.

Even once Gulliver has learnt the language of the Houyhnhnm, they continue to speak to him almost entirely in commands. His conversations with his master never conform to the dialogic give-and-take one might expect in communicative utopia. Language is not used here to arrive at mutual understanding in an intersubjective exercise of truth. Gulliver claims the Houyhnhnm language has no commands, but his claim is directly contradicted by his entire linguistic experience in Houyhnhnmland. Indeed, he only learns the language because he is commanded to, and having learnt it, he is generally commanded to be silent. His speech is tightly circumscribed by the commands he must follow.

Thus the Houyhnhnm follow the advice given by the Athenian stranger in *The Laws*. Their society is organised by the division within the law: on one side, the discourse of communicative rationality; on the other, the arbitrary command. As in *The Laws*, this linguistic distinction sets rationality—the capacity to converse—apart from the world of the slave. But Gulliver recognises that our human world falls between these two realms, overlapping with the not-quite-human world of the slavish Yahoos, and that in consequence he—and we—remain enmeshed in the rhetoric of command. Indeed, the accumulated commands he receives in Houyhnhnmland lead him ultimately into a state of total

social dysfunction. On returning to England, he sets out, as far as possible, to become a horse.

V

These are, of course, texts from times very different from ours. The societies in which Swift, Hume and Plato wrote were ones in which slavery played a central role in the generation of wealth and the corresponding political order. Whatever pockets of slavery persist, this is no longer true of the global order today. During the Cold War, an ideological distinction was often drawn between command economies and market economies, but command economies are now similarly irrelevant in our world system. We still issue commands, of course—to our animals, to our children—but it would be a category error to set these on a level with the commands received by slaves. It may seem, then, as if the rhetoric of command is now solely of antiquarian or at most of marginal critical interest.

I have suggested that commands regulate the social order without engaging the intersubjective world of public speech. They require obedience and shape human lives even in the absence of rational understanding or agreement. In these terms, commands indeed remain central to our social order, however distant we may be from the master-slave relations explored by Swift and Plato. Today, our lives are predominantly shaped by the market, through the aggregation of countless acts of apparently free exchange. This moulding of our ends by an invisible hand is anonymous and publicly unanswerable in the sense I have outlined above: the demands of the market economy address us in a one-way language that impels our compliance in the absence of our understanding, and renders our own communicative capacities alien and barbarous to us even as we obey its dictates. As Boris Groys has recently argued in *The Communist Postscript*,

Economic processes are anonymous, and not expressed in words. For this reason one cannot enter into discussion with economic processes; one cannot change their mind, convince them, persuade them, use words to win them over to one's side. All that can be done is to adapt one's own behaviour to what is occurring. Economic failure brooks no argument, just as economic success requires no additional discursive justification.⁸

One of the critical tasks confronting the humanities today is that of understanding how our individual material actions generate collective general laws that strike us with iron force precisely because they are laws that are articulated by no-one in particular. For the market makes real what was still utopian and imaginary in the old slave model of command. The possibility that a slave might answer the master, might speak back in some symbolic fashion, might initiate dialectic, could never be wholly extinguished, however much it was minimised. But the commands of the market, by contrast, are in truth unimpeachable, irreproachable: they constitute an impersonal, inhuman force that admits no challenge and no answer. In this context, we may only now be beginning to register the true significance of the utopian desire resonant in Gulliver's commitment to escaping the realm of command, even at the cost of psychosis.

NOTES

- ¹ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1981), 1.2.2; Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1944) 1253a.
- ² Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato*, Volume IV, trans. B. Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 720d. Translations from Plato have been altered.
- ³ Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, trans. Carol Stewart (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1984).
- ⁴ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2.3.1.3.
- ⁵ David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 75.
- ⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2003), 333–34.
- ⁷ Jonathan Swift *Gulliver's Travels* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 277.
- ⁸ Boris Groys, *Das kommunistische Postskriptum* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), 6.

**WHEN GOOD CLICHÉS GO BAD:
DEVELOPING A POETICS OF MALAPROPISM
IN THE FIELD OF
CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC RHETORIC**

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The malapropism is a composite phrase made up of two or more cliché or platitude elements that do not belong together. It has much in common with catachresis, the combining of metaphorical elements that are at odds with one another—so much so that catachresis often manifests as malapropism. The distinction is that malapropism is a splicing-together of phrase formulas. And because it is recognisably constructed out of formulaic elements that do not belong together—or not analytically speaking, at least—a close observation of malapropism can give us a powerful insight into the language practices and grammatical pathologies of public figures.

This paper builds on several published since 2006,¹ in which I have argued that the “formulaic” methods of analysis Milman Parry² and his successors³ have applied to oral traditions of poetry are particularly well-suited to explaining key aspects of the performance and the reception of public language. Parry was struck by the extent of apparent arbitrariness between Homer’s most commonly used heroic epithets and their immediate narrative contexts—a relationship often verging on oxymoron. Thus a fleeing hero might be called “brave,” a grounded ship “fast.” Parry’s solution to that analytic problem in Greek epic poetics was to posit a system of compositional *formulas*: phrases and themes that are more or less prefabricated, frequently reiterated, and constituting a genre-specific set of clichés and platitudes. These may be inserted into a poem whenever the storyline will accommodate them—that is a requirement with relatively elastic parameters or criteria in its application—and whenever they are metrically apposite—that is a strict requirement.

Numerous scholars have gone on to extend and adapt this approach in a wide range of the “verbal arts,” the universalising term preferred by Ruth Finnegan.⁴ In applying this poetics to contemporary public language—an approach I call *public poetics*—my papers have sought to explain: (i) how speakers and writers use poetic formulas as composition-aids, again often drawing attention to their clichés and platitudes; (ii) how listeners and readers respond to and make use of the same poetic formulas in their reactions to rhetoric; and (iii) how journalists also use those formulas to identify, prioritise, and embody key themes in the opinions they report.

When we use the poetic formula as a principal unit of analysis in rhetoric, it reveals the importance of the malapropism, because it draws attention to an almost grammatical preference for aesthetically recognisable forms ahead of analytically sensible ones. Sheridan’s character, Mrs Malaprop, gives some form to that idea of willingly observing—even enjoying—the tortured cliché—indeed, she shares her name with the phenomenon.⁵ Shakespeare uses characters such as Mistress Quickly in the *Henries* and Constable Dogberry in *Much Ado about Nothing* to similar effect:⁶

DOGBERRY: Go, good partner, go, get you to Francis Seacoal, bid him bring his pen and inkhorn to the gaol: we are now to examination these men.

VERGES: And we must do it wisely.

DOGBERRY: We shall spare no wit, I warrant you; here’s that shall drive some of them to a non-come. Only get the learned writer to set down our excommunication, and meet me at the gaol.

Such is the delight of the playwright, of course, who entertains Dogberry’s audience by putting such creatively *déclassé* rubbish into his mouth. But we can trace a grammatically congruent preference in the words of public figures themselves, through examples from contemporary public language.

This paper looks at malapropism in contemporary public language specifically. It reviews a certain received wisdom, roundly condemned by those writing within what we might call the Orwellian tradition of language criticism,⁷ that it is politically acceptable for public language to settle on inelegant forms of expression, especially when the inelegances sound well-precedented—that is, formulaic. The next stage of this argument is

to explore a related, if less cogently expressed, fear: that such well-precedented inelegances are often the *desired* mode of expression—desired, that is, by listeners and by speakers alike.

I want to start with this example broadcast in May 2008. It is from an Australian Broadcasting Commission television current affairs report on the political fortunes of Australia's Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd:⁸

KIRRIN MCKECHNIE, REPORTER: It's been his toughest week in power, yet Kevin Rudd today shrugged off the leak controversy.

KEVIN RUDD, PRIME MINISTER: Always a challenging day in politics. You sort of rock 'n' roll with the punches.

I have previously published a short analysis of this excerpt,⁹ but I want to extend that commentary here and relate it to comparable examples of malapropism.

To begin with: where does that extraordinary phrase, "rock 'n' roll with the punches," come from? A hint lies in an article the *Age* journalist, Michael Gawenda, published a week before Rudd's election victory.¹⁰ Gawenda noted that Rudd consistently begins his press conferences by exhorting, "Let's rock 'n' roll!" In other words, concepts of rocking and rolling are apparently a patterned ideation for this public figure, Australia's Prime Minister, whenever he fronts a press conference. Thus, on a day when conventional wisdom suggests his stock/formulaic expression should be to "roll with the punches," those well-rehearsed poetics of conceding lost ground are easily melded with an also-rehearsed rock 'n' roll poetics of energy.

Of course, the product of this melding is an innovation—itself a well-rehearsed topic in contemporary Australian political discourse. When the ostensible purport of such phrasing is to cleave to the familiar, that might rate as something of a failure. And yet it does not often play out that way in practice. In cases such as this, when the anchoring in formula is strong enough—which we measure by asking whether the relationship to formulaic precedent is obvious enough—the speaker's neologism may produce some knowing snickers (as Rudd's malapropism assuredly did), but rarely any heavier censure. That is because, at the level of fundamental ideology, speakers, listeners, and reporters alike accept that such a manifest relation to formulaic precedent confers a certain

legitimacy on the utterance. We may deduce that it complies with the grammar of its generic discourse.

What is more, adapting a distinction from Piaget,¹¹ “rock ’n’ roll” may be analytically inelegant in this context, but on a syncretic level it retains those folksy norms of purpose and enthusiasm. Its connotations dignify Rudd while he is in the business of conceding lost ground; they remind us of his electorally positive (energetic, folksy) qualities in the same breath as they acknowledge the politically negative mood around his situation. When Kevin Rudd sets out to “rock ’n’ roll with the punches,” his grammar of public language performance is normalising a new and volatile situation. Cliché marks the safe ground to which he wants to take his discourse, although he does not quite make it to that sanctuary. Instead, he gets caught between two clichés—“rock ’n’ roll” on the one hand and “roll with the punches” on the other. Or should that be a rock and a hard place?

In short, to “rock ’n’ roll with the punches” is quite legitimate in the Rudd tradition, or genre, of press conference remarks. More than that, it is normatively encouraged by the situation in which he finds himself. And this leads us to the grammatically functionalist proposition that the form of a public language act is a function of its context-of-enactment. Much as verse-forms govern poets—albeit imperfectly, incompletely, irregularly, arbitrarily, and so on—so public situations govern public speakers. Eagleton very clearly captures the same idea, viewed from the opposite perspective, when he argues that “To write the history of poetic forms is a way of writing the history of political cultures.”¹²

Looking back on his expression, Rudd may feel that his phrasing was clumsy—although that is pure speculation—but the poetic norms he has conformed to necessarily outweigh such reflexive analysis in two critically important senses. First, they conform to an oral performer’s priority on that which is said. The aesthetics of the utterance and its reception come before the analysis of them. In other words, analysis is an after-effect, something conceived of in response to performance, not the leading force. To this end, note that much political and journalistic criticism of Rudd’s rhetoric has been in response to his use of prepared (that is, scripted) remarks, where there has been a view that he often enters a room to a standing ovation, but leaves it to polite applause:¹³ this performative flaw is viewed as unprofessional in a way that impromptu malapropism is not. Secondly, those “folksy norms” illustrate that Rudd’s phrasing and topical reference were produced within an intertextual, or traditional, context-of-interpretation.

Politicians and their audiences span numerous genres of communication, and are adept at recognising which genre frames a given remark in a given situation. These are normative judgements, meaning there is scope for error, but the nature of error is determined by the dynamics of each generic frame; it is not determined by absolute standards. What is more, the framing norms of public discourse tend to enforce aesthetic norms—and tend not to enforce analytical standards—to an extent that disturbs many language critics.

Any instance of malapropism in contemporary public language can be deconstructed to similar ends. As Fiore and McLuhan rather coolly explained,¹⁴ the clash of aesthetic norms and analytical standards is decisively resolved in favour of the former among those professional approaches to public communication that emphasise the effectiveness of affect. Contemporary Australian politics is certainly one such profession.

We can extend this analysis by looking at a particular variety of malapropism, whose point ends up being closer to tautology than the oxymoron that marks Rudd's utterance. In April 2008, leading up to the Beijing Olympics, a champion Australian athlete told ABC television reporters that she intended to shut out inconsequential distractions and focus on the core business of her sport:¹⁵

JANA RAWLINSON: I will make a pact to my fellow-fans,
that I'll use my legs to run and not to talk.

Two malapropisms in one sound-bite makes for entertaining media, of course, so it is no fluke that this sentence survived the editing suite. The first, "my fellow-fans," is a dramatic irony, in that it prompts the audience to ridicule her. It rather neatly plays into a caricature of Rawlinson as narcissistic, which has been a constant theme in public criticisms of comments she has made over the years. The second, a genuine catachresis, may be more revealing for the purposes of this paper, in that it embeds malapropism within the purposive strategy of Rawlinson's remarks. It is here that she expresses the essential idea she wanted to convey, here that she creates the news value of her utterance.

To run and not to talk means to choose athletics ahead of celebrity. It is something that active legs do. For a track athlete, it rhymes conspicuously with the commitment to run and not to walk. It is life for action and life for speed, not life for reflection or perambulation. These are matters of platitude for a professional

sprinter. In Rawlinson's case, this avowal was a newsworthy utterance because she had made many headlines with things she had said off the track. And of course the malapropism is that legs do not talk. To use her legs to run is manifestly commensurate with the properties of legs; the alternative, to use her legs to talk, is absurd.

Just to use the word "absurd" is to analyse and not to syncretise. It is the clearest possible indicator that aesthetic norms have been usurped by analytic standards. In other words, it is a criterion profoundly at odds with the grammatical system we have already discussed, in which a saying with well-precedented form is permitted great license in its intellectual content. Rawlinson's "pact to" (*si*) her fans is that she will continue to speak in formulas they can appreciate, in formulas that respect the grammar of the discourse they share with her. (In this respect, they are indeed her fellows at the same time as they are her fans.)

In any case, speakers more highly trained than Rawlinson have tripped on their uses of legs. Speaking as deputy prime minister, Julia Gillard offered the following advice about banks that refused to pass on successive decreases in the Reserve Bank's official rate of interest to their mortgage customers:¹⁶

JULIA GILLARD: They should put the acid on their banks,
to offer them the best possible deal, and if their banks don't,
then they should walk with their feet to another bank.

Here the tautology is almost stifling: how might customers walk other than with their feet? But this question, to which Barry Cassidy draws attention by repeating the utterance on his program, downplays the leading feature of the grammar, namely that Gillard's metaphor occurs within a genre of consumer activist discourse that includes the formula "vote with their feet." Her performance is legitimate in the same way as Rudd's malapropism was legitimate, because it so clearly references a familiar *topos* in contemporary political language, itself already legitimate.

What this paper describes so far is a way of speaking that references already-known ways of speaking. The malapropism illustrates its significance so clearly by paying so little regard to analytical standards of expression while it pays such great regard to aesthetic norms. We notice this phenomenon principally by reference to its phrasing, since the poetic resonances with known sayings (that is, clichés and platitudes) alert us to the formulaic nature of the utterance. At the same time, as the previous

paragraph shows, there is also a question of topicality: when a public speaker references a stock concern or theme, it may be recognisable even in those cases where the phrasing is radically innovative or bland.

To attend to topic rather than phrasing is not to re-impose analysis over aesthetics, though. Topicality has its aesthetic norms for every discourse or genre—as Parry and his successors showed with the “type scenes” that characterise traditions of verse. That it tends to be bound up in phrasing is no surprise, since we are talking specifically about phenomena observable through the malapropism, and more generally about language aesthetics, but Gillard’s example shows how it extends beyond that boundary as well: one’s feet are inherently powerful metaphors in any discourse about markets that accepts a deregulatory premise for policy.

As Voloshinov demonstrated, reported speech tells us a great deal about what people value or find important in the language they are reporting. He argues that the reporting of speech reveals deep ideological predispositions within a discourse.¹⁷ Using his analysis, I have previously shown how journalists cleave to the clichéd and formulaic when they choose language from interviewees and primary sources for quoting and paraphrasing in their reportage.¹⁸ Additionally, a related phenomenon is visible in some aspects of reportage that do not involve indirect speech. Take this example of a headline from Melbourne’s free afternoon commuter newspaper, *mX*, announcing the retirement of cricketer Matthew Hayden:¹⁹

TUESDAY JANUARY 13, 2009

FREE

Go home
Brit's comeback crushed
PAGE 3 **PLUS**
World's best parties:
where and when
PAGES 16-17

**Matt
finish**

Aussie batting legend calls time on international career

Australian opener Matthew Hayden has retired from international cricket, saying simply: "It's just time."

The 37-year-old, who played 100 Tests and 161 one-day matches for Australia, ended months of speculation at a press conference in Brisbane today.

He is expected to be given a lap of honour before tonight's Twenty20 match against South Africa at the Gabba.

Hayden was dropped from the one-day and Twenty20 squads last week and failed to make it past 50 in any of the five Tests played on home soil this season. He said he had been weighing up his future once the selectors had ended his short-form career.

Only last month he said he still wanted to play in this year's Ashes series in England.

"It's the time for us to move on," Hayden said today. "It's nothing in particular that has caused it, we are in a really good place right now. It's just time to move into other areas of our life."

Hayden, the most imposing figure in a dominant era of cricket for Australia that included 16 consecutive Test victories, averaged 50.7 in Tests and belted 6133 runs in his 161 one-day matches. He won the Allan Border Medal in 2002.

Hayden's former teammate, Darren Lehmann, said he was arguably the greatest opener in Australian history.

"He changed the game for the better," Lehmann said.

Chairman of selectors Andrew Hilditch said yesterday Hayden was partly to blame for Australia's first Test series loss to South Africa on domestic soil.

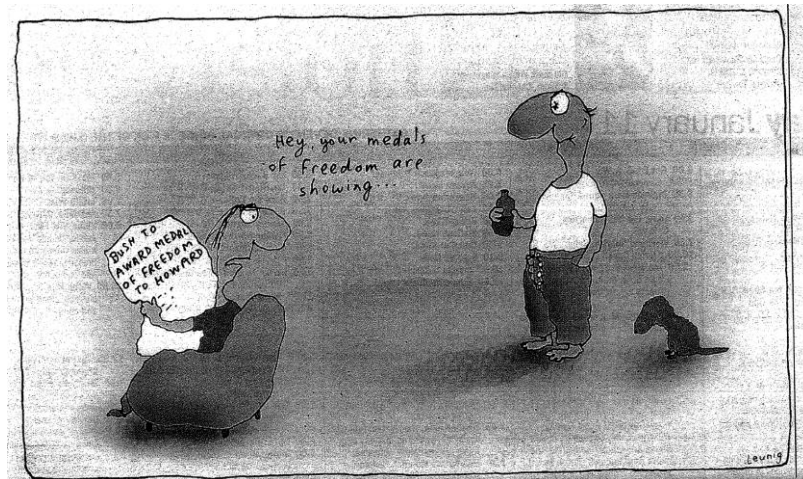
"Obviously Matthew's had a bit of a disappointing run," he said.

Australia is understood to be undecided who will replace Hayden in the Test team, but Phil Jaques – a century-maker in his last Test against the West Indies – is early favourite if he can fully recover from a back injury.

■ One of the greats, PAGE 11

The above example is typical of journalistic practice, in that it seeks to cover the novel event with a veneer (pardon the pun!) of familiarity: we have heard the phrase “matte finish” many times before, but in contexts completely unrelated to this one. Using it in this way is at once a kind of paronomasia or wordplay, and also a kind of creative cooption. It is paronomasia in the sense that the topical irrelevance of the familiar phrase within its normal context, ironically, is just what makes it apposite as a heading—journalistic culture actively celebrates the most obtuse uses of the most mundane formulas. It is cooption in the sense that it integrates the new event—the news that Matt Hayden has retired from international cricket—into the fold of precedent. This storing of new wine in old skins plays up the familiar or redundant at the expense of the unknown or entropic. In doing so, it exemplifies the irony and the conservatism of the journalistic profession.

We can find hundreds of similar examples from the headlining practices of news outlets in every media market, every day. I want to turn now to a different but related example, taken from Melbourne's daily morning broadsheet *The Age*, which shows the way journalism seeks to make clichés out of new or unfamiliar expressions. Note the way in which this character's "medals of freedom" are suddenly "showing" an unspoken ellipsis, an unmentionable... This epiphany of lewdness conveys, by mimesis, an unspoken interpretation of the news this cartoon references. American president George W. Bush had awarded the Medal of Freedom to former Australian prime minister John Howard, after he had lost the 2007 Australian federal election. Leunig is questioning the moral propriety of the event:²⁰



On the level of stylistics, Leunig is trying to make, or at least to pretend, a cliché where one does not already exist. This is within the ambit of wordplay, of course. It carries that simultaneous sense of conservative values and ironic permutations we could recognise in the *mX* headline discussed above. It also shows how profoundly journalism is predicated on the idea that everything either is cliché, or else easily could be. That inherently transformational and generative (after Chomsky) view of communication constitutes a kind of longing: a wilful imagining that the object of reportage would conform in its totality to the grammar of reportage. It is the impossibility of a profession that seeks to comprehend the world we live in.

Of course, every communicative profession is guilty of a longing along similar lines. I started this paper with political rhetoric because it shows these aspects so clearly: the yearning for ideologically stable forms of representation, for experience that conforms to precedent, for ways of filtering all novelty through the poetical grammar of formula. Such is the putative utility and the allure of cliché and platitude, as the phenomenon of malapropism reveals.

NOTES

- ¹ An accessible introduction to this work is: Tom Clark, "The Cup of John Howard's Poetry," *Overland* 190 (Winter 2008): 22–28. A more comprehensive overview is: Tom Clark, "Towards a Poetics of Contemporary Public Language: the Poetic Formula in Focus," *AUMLA* 111 (May 2009): 103–29.
- ² Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse: The collected papers of Milman Parry*, ed. Adam Parry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).
- ³ This paper is particularly informed by Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Routledge, 1982).
- ⁴ Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts—A guide to research practices* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).
- ⁵ Richard Sheridan, *The Rivals*, ed. T. Stern (London: A & C Black, 2004).
- ⁶ William Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, ed. M. Clamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Act III Sc V.
- ⁷ George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language," in *Selected Essays* (London: Penguin, 1957), 143–57. Also Don Watson, *Death Sentence: the decay of public language* (Sydney: Random House Australia, 2003).
- ⁸ Kirrin McKechnie, "PM blames public servants for Cabinet leaks," *Lateline* (broadcast 29 May 2008), website of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation: <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2007/s2259758.htm> (accessed 18 May 2009).
- ⁹ Tom Clark, "Towards a Formulaic Poetics of Contemporary Public Rhetoric: A Politician's Prosody," *International Journal of the Humanities*, 6.6 (2008): 41.
- ¹⁰ Michael Gawenda, "Desperately seeking Kevin," *The Age* (17 November 2007). <http://www.theage.com.au/news/in-depth/desperately-seeking-kevin/2007/11/16/1194766958567.html> (accessed 18 May 2009).
- ¹¹ Jean Piaget, *The Language and Thought of the Child*, trans. Marjorie and Ruth Gabain (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), 134.
- ¹² Terry Eagleton, *How to Read a Poem* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 164.

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- ¹³ Eg. Peter Jean, “Bob Hawke tells Kevin Rudd to find a speechwriter,” *Herald Sun* (Melbourne, 20 November 2008): <http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,24677949-662,00.html> (accessed 18 May 2009).
 - ¹⁴ Marshal McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967).
 - ¹⁵ Paul Lockyer, “Jana Rawlinson prepares for Beijing,” *7.30 Report* (broadcast 15 April 2008), website of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation: <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2007/s2217820.htm> (accessed 18 May 2008).
 - ¹⁶ ABC *Insiders* program (broadcast 24 May 2009), website of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation: <http://www.abc.net.au/insiders/> (accessed 24 May 2009)—see “Final observations and predictions” (1’27”–1’36”).
 - ¹⁷ V. N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. L. Matejka and I Titunik (London: Seminar Press, 1986), 117.
 - ¹⁸ Tom Clark, “Towards a poetics of contemporary public rhetoric: reporting platitude and cliché,” *AUMLA* Special Issue (December 2007): 199–207.
 - ¹⁹ Leader article, “Matt finish,” *mX* (Melbourne, 13 January 2009): 1.
 - ²⁰ Michael Leunig, “Final Word,” *The Age* (Melbourne, 10 January 2009): A2 44.

THE GIANTS OF TRISTRAMS SAGA

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Sidelined in the poem itself by prolonged passages of authorial introspection and in scholarship by ongoing debate as to whether the work speaks in praise or condemnation of passionate love,¹ the giants of Thomas of England's *Tristan* have slumbered largely undisturbed by modern critical excavation. But in peeling back or discarding Thomas's multiple layers of dialogue and interior monologue, the Old Norse prose *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar* (ca.1226), the only known "translation" of the poem in its complete form, foregrounds a number of giant combats, including two by King Arthur. True, both Thomas and the saga-writer dismiss Arthur's giant killings—one of which, the slaying of the Giant of Mont-Saint-Michel, is perhaps the most famous in medieval literature—as irrelevant to the main narrative, but these disclaimers are not, I suggest, to be taken at face value.

The world of Thomas's *Tristan* is a post-Arthurian Britain ruled by Tristan's uncle, the incompetent King Mark. Beyond the pageantry of chivalry and the theatre of the joust, his kingdom, it emerges, is bereft of knightly capability, tributary to Ireland, and meek servant to the increasingly outrageous demands of its king. Mark is impotent in the face of the oppressor; neither he nor a single one of his knights will volunteer to challenge the Irish king's emissary, Morhold, a huge, thick-throated brute who embodies the thin and frequently breached boundary between gigantism and knighthood in medieval romance.²

The lost golden age of Arthur is revisited in Thomas's retellings of the king's two great giant killings—of the Giant of Mont Saint-Michel and of another who fashions a cloak from the beards and skin of vanquished kings and princes and invites Arthur to add his

own in the place of honour—at which point, Tristram’s shaving off of Morhold’s beard as he delivers the coup de grace takes on a degree of retrospective significance. Thomas’s source for both episodes is Wace’s *Brut*, the Anglo-Norman verse translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*, in which Arthur’s defeat of the Giant of Mont-Saint-Michel foreshadows his victory over the Roman emperor, Lucius, and the killing of the beard-collecting giant is briefly recounted as a feat of near comparability.³

Giants are “originary” monsters in the *Brut*. The subjugation by the exiled Trojans of the giants of Albion and the defeat of the Giant of Mont-Saint-Michel are acknowledged as “foundational moments” (Cohen 70) in subsequent English historical chronicles. Transposed from the mode of history to romance, however, the giant-killings in *Tristan* and *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar* (henceforth *Tristrams saga*) take on a different complexion. Arthur’s giant-killings are feats for Tristan/Tristram to emulate, to reinforce his credentials as Arthur’s spiritual successor, and to underline the feebleness of Mark and other rulers.⁴ By the end of *Tristrams saga*, Tristram has despatched an interrelated global network of giants: he kills the beard-collecting nephew of Arthur’s beard-collecting giant and overcomes another, Moldagog, who claims a familial connections with that giant and with another, Urgan, whom he slays in the course of his service with a duke in Poland.⁵

But there is another dimension to the giants of *Tristan* and *Tristrams saga*, for the giant-knight dynamic in chivalric romance has more to do with regulating the boundaries of individual appetite than with acts of national foundation. Giant killing, as Jeffrey James Cohen puts it, is the definitive expression of romance’s “compulsion to restraint, especially to sexual restraint” (Cohen 79) and chivalry itself the “control mechanism” which “prevents the knight from becoming the giant that he always, in a way, already is” (Cohen 78)—a merciless and licentious plunderer, according to the anti-chivalry polemic of twelfth-century clerics like Peter of Blois. In Thomas’s poem, Tristan’s last opponent, in combat against whose forces he sustains a fatal wound, is just such a knight: an arrogant, ferocious and brutal abductor who does “whatever he likes” (*quanques li est bel*, l. 2215)⁶ with a lady he has carried off by force to his castle.

Giant aggression in *Tristan* and *Tristrams saga* is primarily aligned with unsanctioned sexual appetite. The beard-collecting giant symbolically emasculates his victims; in the *Roman de Brut* (ll. 11562–11592), the giant of Mont-Saint-Michel—abductor and killer

of Elena, daughter of the king of Brittany—commits a truly gargantuan act of sexual atrocity. And it is in the matter of sexual transgression that Tristan might be said to cross the giant-knight divide, for in accidentally swallowing the love potion intended for Mark and his bride, Isönd of Ireland, and thereby becoming subject to an overriding compulsion for sensual gratification—“unable to control his urges and desires,” as the saga says (ch. 67)—he, too, flagrantly disregards the rules of social, political, and chivalric order.

It is, I think, pertinent that, whereas in Wace, Arthur’s killing of the beard-collector is a postscript to the slaying of the giant of Mont-Saint-Michel, in Thomas and *Tristrams saga* these are two separate episodes, each concerned with a different facet of sexual irregularity. The reports of Arthur’s killing of a beard-collecting giant and Tristram’s of the same giant’s nephew accompany twin scenes of sexual trauma and frustration for Tristram and Isönd respectively. In the first of these, Tristram, having contracted a marriage with the Duke of Brittany’s daughter, Ísodd, in the hope of finding distraction from his obsession with Isönd and a measure of legitimate contentment, finds that thoughts of Isönd make it impossible for him to consummate the union. Back in England, in a scene which immediately follows and forms a parallel to Tristram’s miserable wedding night, Isönd lies in her bedroom and longs for love-making with Tristram as the only means which might “vilja hennar mætti hugga ok harm hennar bæta” [comfort her desires and alleviate her sorrow, 170, 171]. At this point, the narrative abruptly switches to its accounts of Arthur’s and Tristram’s defeats of arrogant, beard-collecting giants. Arthur successfully defends his kingdom, overcomes a direct and insulting threat to his masculinity, and preserves the honour of kings less capable than he. Tristram is said to have replicated that feat at an earlier point in his career, when he was in the service of the king of Spain (ch. 68). The Spanish king received the same insulting invitation as Arthur, in his case from the giant’s nephew, but was incapable of meeting the challenge himself and unable to find friend, relative, or knight to defend him; Tristram came to the rescue and killed the giant in a fierce battle in which he himself was seriously injured. According to Thomas and *Tristrams saga*, Arthur’s feat has been related simply because Tristram has emulated it:

Nú þó at þetta falli ekki við söguna, þá vil ek þetta vita láta, þvíat sá jötunn, er Tristram drap, var systurson þessa jötuns, er skeggjanna krafði (172).

[Even though this event is outside the scope of this saga, I wanted to tell about it, because Tristram also killed a giant who was the nephew of this giant who had demanded the beards (173).]

But why introduce these contests at such a seemingly incongruous moment in the narrative? It has been suggested that, as Thomas relates them in the surviving Sneyd fragment (ll. 720–805), they provide an oblique explanation of why Tristan cannot consummate his marriage, for the wound which he sustained in his battle with the giant is, he confides to his bride, close to his liver (l. 689)—and the liver, according to the thirteenth-century encyclopedist Bartholomaeus Anglicus, was the site of the libido.⁷ But although *Tristrams saga* also locates Tristram’s wound to the lower right side of his body, the narrator explicitly negates any such implication with the statement that his wedding-night infirmity is not physical: “Ekki var önnr sótt Tristrams en um aðra Ísönd dróttningu” [Tristram’s illness was nothing but the other Queen Ísönd, 170, 171]. In the saga, Tristram’s victory over the beard-collector serves as a reminder that, although he may be impotent with Isódd, he, like Arthur before him, is capable of destroying challenges to the virility of ineffectual rulers.

The killing of the giant of Mont Saint-Michel is more closely integrated into *Tristrams saga* (nothing of Thomas’s treatment of this episode survives). For despite the disclaimer that it “heyrrir ekki til þessari sögu nema þat eitt, at hann gerði þetta hit fagra hválfhús” [doesn’t belong to this saga except that this was the giant who constructed the beautiful, vaulted chamber, 184, 185], it is the essential precursor to Tristram’s greatest triumph: his subjugation of the giant Moldagog, in the course of which he might be said to surpass Arthur himself.

Moldagog, who occupies coastal territory bordering on Brittany, is wealthy in gold but also the possessor of a forest of great beauty. Tristram successfully challenges him to a fight for control of his forest, at the centre of which is a semi-underground rock with a hollowed out chamber, accessible only at low tide. This topographical information serves as a self-prompt for the narrator to recount the story of Arthur’s victory over the giant of Mont-Saint-Michel, because, he says, that same giant made and for a long time lived in this very vault, which was the place to which he took Elena (“hann helt hana með sér in hellinum” [he kept her with him the cave, 182, 185] and crushed her to death in his attempt to rape her: “sakir mikilleiks hans ok þunga, þá kafnaði hún undir honom

ok sprakk” [[d]ue to his size and weight, she suffocated and burst beneath him, 184, 185]. Tristram’s inability to consummate his union with Isódd a few chapters earlier is the reverse image of the giant’s murderous hypersexuality and, ironically, as destructive of the possibility of legal heirs. His harnessing of Moldagog’s riches and labour to the transformation of this house of sexual horror⁸ into sanctuary of perfect love becomes a more glorious conclusion to the Mont-Saint-Michel episode than Wace’s brief afterword (ll. 11599-11608) about the building of a chapel there by Elena’s father to the Virgin Mary.

Germanic giant lore becomes of interest here: Norse myths, in which the bodies of giants are the building material of the universe⁹ and where the giant is master-builder, as in the tale of the fortification of Asgard in the *Edda* of Snorri Sturluson,¹⁰ and in Old English poetry, where ancient stone ruins are attributed to *enta geweorc* [the work of giants] (Cohen 9–10);¹¹ for it is the paradoxical nature of giants to be builders and craftsmen as well as ravagers and destroyers. Despite its horrifying history, the chamber built by the giant of Mont-Saint-Michel is a construction of such beauty that it pleases Tristram “sem sjálfr hann kunni at vera æskjandi” [as much as he himself could have wished, 184, 185]. And when Tristram sets about his renovations, he works side-by-side with the now mutilated and enslaved Moldgaog (Tristram has chopped off his leg in their combat but supplied him with a wooden prosthesis) in a literal projection of the image of the giant as both the “primal enemy of the human, and humanity’s most constant companion” (Cohen xii). The huge statue of Moldagog, which, with gnashing teeth, fierce gaze, shaggy goatskin, and iron staff, stands in an attitude of homicidal menace and crude sexuality at the entrance to the chamber—“tók kyrtillinn honum skammt ofan, ok var hann nakinn niðr frá nafla” [his tunic didn’t come down very far, so he was naked from the navel down, 186, 187]—is like a gargoyle which serves not only as a reminder of the monstrous origins of this place of worship but also of that originary link between knighthood and gigantism found in anti-chivalry polemic.¹²

On the other hand, the giant-knight distinction is pointedly articulated inasmuch as, in contrast to its original stonework, Tristram’s refurbishment of the cave is entirely in wood. Its centerpiece is an exquisite lifelike representation of Isönd, which appears to be a wooden sculpture, after the style of interior devotional statues which survive in France, Germany and Italy from the twelfth to the fifteenth century.¹³ In ancient Northern tradition, giants work in stone; humans work in wood—although

stone takes on connotations of durability and displaces wood as the prestige building after the coming of Christianity, whereas the *enta geweorc* of pre-Christian times has primeval associations. Either way, in Tristram's makeover of the giant's lair, human artistry transforms elemental harshness into fount of solace, and fleshly desire is sublimated into expression of sculptural and decorative beauty. Tristram, then, like the giants of foundational myth, is both builder and destroyer: on the one hand, builder of a temple to perfect love and, on the other, sexual outlaw—traitor to King Mark and dynastic destroyer of the ruling houses of England and Brittany.

Like Isönd, Tristan has a “double,” a knight who is tall, handsome, well-proportioned, splendidly attired and armoured—and called “Tristan the Dwarf.” In the final stages of the story, which are preserved in Thomas's poem, he appeals for and obtains (the “real”) Tristan's help in the rescue of his abducted lady without whom, he says, he cannot live. The two Tristans fight side by side (*Tristan* l. 2305) in the ensuing combat; Tristan the Dwarf is killed outright and Tristan the Lover suffers a fatal wound. What, for my purposes, is particularly interesting in this Tristan *alter ego* is that he bristles with giant signifiers: apart from the pointed incongruity of his name and his size (in the saga he calls himself *manna mestr* [a very large man]), there's his domicile. It's archetypally giant: on the periphery. Tristan the Dwarf lives on the coastal border of Brittany (where Moldagog comes from), looking across to Spain (Thomas provides that detail), where Tristan slew the beard collector. So what are we to make of this somewhat shambolic rescue operation and of the ultimate fate of the lady, about which we learn nothing? The conversion of Tristan's giant-like, selfish pursuit of self-gratification into an altruistic act on behalf of another lover? The ultimate defeat of the inner giant? To cut to the chase—in an article on the “Augustinian sub-text” of Thomas's *Tristan* Tracy Adams has argued that Tristan's monologues dramatize twelfth-century theological thought about the unruly will—the postlapsarian discrepancy between what one wants to do and what one can do.¹⁴ The giant-knight contests of Thomas and *Tristrams saga* are, I suggest, another component of a larger discourse about appetite and excess versus control and refinement—which, in my interpretation of it, constitutes the moral and ethical problematic which frames this branch of the Tristan legend.

NOTES

- ¹ For a recent review of *Tristan* scholarship, see Tony Hunt and Geoffrey Bromley, "The Tristan Legend in Old French Verse," in *The Arthur of the French: the Arthurian Legend in Medieval French and Occitan Literature*, Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages IV, ed. Glyn S. Burgess and Karen Pratt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), 112–34.
- ² Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 77.
- ³ Judith Weiss, ed. and trans., *Wace's Roman de Brut: A History of the British* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), ll. 11481–11592.
- ⁴ Adrian Stevens, "History, Fable and Love: Gottfried, Thomas, and the Matter of Britain," in *A Companion to Gottfried von Strassburg's "Tristan,"* ed. Will Hasty (Rochester NY and Woodbridge: Camden House, 2003), 226.
- ⁵ Peter Jorgensen, ed. and trans., *Tristrams saga ok Ísöndar*, in *Norse Romance: 1. The Tristan Legend*, Gen. Ed. Marianne E. Kalinke (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), chs. 61–62.
- ⁶ Stewart Gregory, ed. and trans., *Thomas's Tristran*, in *Early French Tristran Poems*, in Norris J. Lacy, Gen. Ed., Arthurian Archives, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- ⁷ Merritt R. Blakeslee, *Love's Masks: Identity, Intertextuality, and Meaning in the Old French Tristan Poems* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), 103–104.
- ⁸ As Liam Semler suggested in post-paper discussion at the AULLA Congress, the giant's cave can be read as precursor and the counterpart to the serial killer's lair in contemporary crime fiction; for example, Jame Gumb's 'oubliette' in Thomas Harris's *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988).
- ⁹ Margaret Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse myths in medieval Northern Society*, 2 vols (Odense University Press, 1994), I, 152–56.
- ¹⁰ Anthony Faulkes, trans. *Snorri Sturluson: Edda* (London: Everyman, 1982), 35–36.
- ¹¹ See also Randi Eldevik, "Less than Kind: Giants in Germanic Tradition," in *The Shadow-Walkers: Jacob Grimm's Mythology of the Monstrous*, ed. Tom Shippey (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2005), 103–107.
- ¹² I am grateful to Margaret Clunies Ross for drawing my attention to the short, immodest tunics worn by a male and two female trolls of giant-like proportions who inhabit a cave in a cliff-face in the early fourteenth-century legendary saga (*fornaldarsaga*) *Gríms saga lóðikinna* (ed. Guðni Jónsson, in *Fornaldar Sögur Norðurlanda*, II, [Reykjavík: Íslendingasagaútgáfan, 1959] ch.1), which suggest that the statue of Moldagog reflects Norse associations between giants and gross sexuality.

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- ¹³ Ilene Forsyth, *The Throne of Wisdom: Wood Sculptures of the Madonna in Romanesque France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); James Rorimer, "A Monumental German Wood Statue of the Thirteenth Century," *Metropolitan Museum Studies*, 1/2 (1929): 159–75.
- ¹⁴ Tracy Adams, "'Pur vostr cor su jo em paine': the Augustinian subtext of Thomas's *Tristan*," *Medium Ævum* 68 (1999): 278–91.

**“A GOOD LENGTH WITH MY SHORT THREAD”:
HUBRIS AND ANXIETY IN THE
PETRARCHAN SONNET SEQUENCE**

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One of the most important genres of writing in the European Renaissance, the sonnet sequence, spanned several countries and almost four centuries between roughly 1250 and 1620. The way sonnet sequences develop uses of the first-person voice deserves more critical attention than it has received. As is well known, meta-fiction is fictional writing which draws the reader's attention to the writing itself, and exposes the process of fictional creation to the view. Could sonnet sequences be the beginning of meta-fiction?

Along with confessions, consolations, public letters and dream sequences, the sonnet sequence is a rare literary genre to offer first-person fictions to the medieval and early modern writer, and the only first person genre dealing with erotic subject matter. Further, the unique nature of a sonnet sequence as a poetic art form is to be essentially twofold: it contains self-sufficient, prosodically complex poems, each seeking to develop an idea to its conclusion, but it also functions as a *sequence*, an integrated work in which poems have been ordered, and characters fashioned, to engage the reader when the work is read from beginning to end. It seems hardly necessary to remind a reader of this, yet the lyrical nature of the (individual) sonnets, easily anthologized, read and studied out of context, routinely overshadows the question of sonnet-sequence integrity. Such a model of the genre inevitably neglects the interlocking practices of writing, which contain among themselves elements of change fighting for expression within the convention in which they are created. Its popularity and longevity gives the sonnet sequence a unique position amongst the medieval first-person genres. I argue

that this is popularity owes a lot to the fascinating characterization of the sonnet sequence speakers.

All of the sonneteers I will discuss in this essay—one fourteenth-century Italian and five Elizabethan Englishmen, Petrarch, Sidney, Spenser, Drayton and Shakespeare—represent their speakers not only as lovers but also as writers. They dramatize and fictionalize not only the processes of yearning/ wooing, but also the process of writing: its conflicts, its creative and logistical challenges and the ethical dilemmas surrounding the need to place one's writing before contemporary and future audiences. As this essay hopes to show, the sonnet sequence speakers raise an extraordinary range of theoretical questions and speak about writing in vivid and memorable self-contradicting voices.

Francesco Petrarch, "A good length with my short thread": the Ambivalent Writer

Petrarch wrote his sequence, *Il Canzoniere* [the Songbook], over the 40 years from the late 1330s to his death in 1374. The sequence is a tale of the poet speaker's obsession with Laura, the silent, unattainable beauty. But it is also a story which constructs a writer character torn between the importance of writing and the inadequacy of words.

Early in the sequence, Petrarch's speaker suggests that the most important principle guiding his material selection is getting a reaction from his reader:

[...] many things recorded in my mind
I overlook, and tell only of those
that stun the mind of anyone who listens.
(23:93–95) ¹

Yet towards the end of the sequence, he has changed his mind. "Beauty," he claims, "is wind and shadow," "cannot be learnt," and is "gained by destiny, and not by art" (350, 261). Thus, at once self-assured and self-doubting, in control of his material and at its mercy, Petrarch's speaker internalizes the Aristotelian debate on the question of supremacy of rhetoric (*pisteis*) versus inspired creation (*poiesis*). Emerging from the lines is a multi-faceted mind looking at itself through the prism of an appreciable artificiality.²

Petrarch's speaker is often deliciously haughty. He suggests, for instance, that not even Heaven is out of reach for the power of his verse (259), or that his words are impossible to resist:

I go in silence, for my deadly words
Would make everyone weep
(18:12–13)

He also suggests that there is greater difficulty in creating rhymed poetry, such as his own, than there ever was in the work Orpheus, Ovid's mythical singer:

Would that I had so sorrowful a style
That I could get my Laura back from Death
As Orpheus did Eurydice without rhymes.
(332:51–53)

The speaker yearns for both poetic immortality and is convinced he will achieve contemporary approval:

to stir, perhaps, some pity in the eyes
of someone born a thousand years from now
(30:34–3)

I shall, perhaps, compose a work so doubled
Between the modern style and ancient tongue
That then (and I dare say it, fearfully)
As far as Rome you'll hear the bang it makes.
(40:8)

Yet any such expressions of hubris and desire for worldly recognition are also juxtaposed with expressions of insecurity and fine self-irony:

all of my words and sighs
that wear me out, and others too, perhaps
(360:72–74)

always hoarding what in a moment scatters,
[...] I've wound the spool,
a good length with my short thread
(264:72; 131–2)

The speaker also stages unconcern about other people's opinion of his work, be it good or bad:

If Latin or Greek tongues
praise me when I am dead, it is all wind
(264: 68–69)

[...] the weight's not heavy,
nor does the point of disdain pierce my armor.
(229:9–11)

He admits, however, that he is envious of other writers:

Envy will find me, hidden though I am.
(130:14)³

The confessional tone in which the deadly sin is admitted serves to heighten the sense of intimacy between speaker and reader.

In some of the sonnets of his sequence, Petrarch addresses young sonneteers in the role of a teacher, and seeks to turn them away from writing. Interestingly, however, he makes his words of warning sound like words of enticement:

I still advise you lift your soul above
To the celestial realm and spur your heart
Because the road is long and the time is short.
(244:12–14)

Petrarch talks of sin and the trouble of writing in way that seems dangerously close to talking of pleasure, described so vividly that it is almost impossible to believe that these lines advocate *not writing*. But they do.

Yet, despite his warnings to others, the pain of writing is not pain he wishes to escape. Poetry may be an “imperfect good” (328), but it is also the only way to transcend the triviality of this world:

where we in poetry descend and climb
to lift our intellects from earth to heaven
(10: 8–9)

Nevertheless, in the final poem of *Il Canzoniere*, after 366 poems of longing and contemplation which, with the possible exception of Homer's *Iliad*, form the most influential work of Western literature, Petrarch's speaker renounces Laura and embraces the Virgin Mary. With this final apostasy, he dismisses the forty years of work on *Il Canzoniere* as a waste of time; and the reader is implicitly invited to refute this. The writer's conflict represented in *Il Canzoniere* goes deeper than rhetoric: it is the living heart of the sequence.

Sir Philip Sidney, “*Pitie the Tale of Me*”: a Fictional Fiction Maker

In *Astrophil and Stella*, Sir Philip Sidney creates a fictional character, Astrophil, who shows off about writing fictions of love:

I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe
(1:5)

Then thinke, my deare, that you in me do reed
Of louers ruine some thrise-sad tragedie.
I am not I: pitie the tale of me.
(45:12–14)⁴

In order for the fiction to be convincing and appealing, the work must create an illusion of truth, without necessarily being the *real* truth. Or, in Sidney’s own words:

What childe is there, that comming to a play, and seeing
Thebes written in great letters upon an old Doore, doth
beleeeve that it is Thebes? (*Defence of Poesy*, 34)⁵

But although, in his theoretical writing, Sidney laughs at writers and readers who believe things that are said in fictional works, Astrophil insists that his sonnets involve no skill and contain nothing but the truth:

I beg no subject to use eloquence,
Nor in hid wayes to guide Philosophie:
Looke at my hands for no such quintessence;
But know that I in pure simplicitie
Breathe out the flames which burne within my heart,
Love only reading unto me this art.
(28:9–14)

These lines seem to suggest that there is nothing to writing other than a feeling. “Look how easy it is: If only you felt this way, you could write like me,” seems to be the underlying message. But we would be wise take this quasi-renunciation of skill with a grain of salt. Clearly, there is more to writing than a feeling—particularly when the writing in question is a sonnet, a strict poetic form with an intricate rhyme scheme. Astrophil’s flirtation with nature and simplicity is specifically designed to display poetic skill, and to make Sidney’s readers, many of them writers, feel inadequate.

Throughout the sequence, Sidney represents Astrophil as a

uniquely talented natural writer in possession of a scathing wit. If the audience is right, Astrophil is committed to giving fictional pleasure: in the very first sonnet he states that he writes “her wits to entertaine” (1). But he often appears impatient with what he perceives to be minds of a lesser calibre, and strives to assert the authority of a poet in the contemporary world—much as he does in *The Defence*.⁶ Expressions of superiority in Astrophil and Stella are many. Astrophil condemns other poets who invoke Muses “with strange similes enrich each line” (3), or require inspiration at all. Yet at the same time, Astrophil explores his qualms about writing being a waste of time, refers to poems as “toyes” (8) (echoing the “ink wasting toyes” of *The Defence*), or makes sure he offers insight into difficulty of the writing process. A Petrarchan powerlessness of words is a constant theme of Sidney’s writing:

phrases and problemes from my reach do grow
and strange things cost too deare for my poore sprites.
(3:10–11)

Thus, in his sequence, Sidney seeks to construct a character who embodies both a belief in *energeia*—which in *The Defence* Sidney explains to mean integrity of emotion—and *sprezzatura*, the perfect courtier’s art of making skill appear effortless.⁷ As Ovid puts it, the art is to hide the art⁸; Sidney’s Astrophil’s aim is to make his art almost, but not quite, concealed.

Edmund Spenser, “*Expresse her fill*”: the Author-Lover’s Challenge

Since Petrarchan sonnet sequences usually address erotic subject matter, most sonneteers’ autopoetic writings are intertwined with the erotic. This connection is particularly significant in the work of Edmund Spenser, who used his sonnets to woo and win a real-life woman, Elizabeth Boyle. *Amoretti* caters to two audiences: Boyle as the primary reader, and the wider readership in the secondary role.⁹ Despite occasional sonnets addressed to other people, the narrow scene of the sonnets’ influence is set between the lady’s “lily hands” and “lamping eyes” (1), and her role as the addressee is reinforced throughout the sequence. Thus, forced to read “past” the lady and with an awareness of her presence in the text, reading the sequence represents an intensified, almost voyeuristic experience to the reader.

In Spenser’s sequence, the autopoetic is often elided with the sexual and the transgressive, and rhetoric is used which displaces

(or, more precisely, heralds) the erotic. This may be an old story, as the quest to win the beloved by means of words is crucial to both Platonic and Petrarchan discourses, and Elizabethans have traditionally elided storytelling with erotic dalliance¹⁰; but Spenser does this particularly well. To begin with, the frustrations of writing are connected to erotic frustrations:

And when my pen would write her titles true,
It rausht is with fancies wonderment.
(3:9–12)

What pen, what pencil can expresse her fill?
[...] eke his learned hand at pleasure guide
least trembling it his workmanship should spill
(17:4–7)

Spenser's speaker is shown as a poet working under pressure, aware that his poetry must seduce. But this doesn't always work. Sonnet 30 represents the lady as "congeald with sencelesse cold" (30), and in sonnet 76 the speaker offers a sarcastic apology for his desire, which "her too constant stiffnesse doth constrayn." Subtly redefining tranquility as frigidity, Spenser casts his speaker in the role of a hero who must use writing to alter this terrible state to his advantage.

The lady's intelligence does not go unscathed, either. As the recipient of the sonnets and the beloved chosen by the speaker, the lady must be intelligent: the speaker places his faith, specifically, in her ability to decipher the hidden meaning of his poems (note the special reference to conception):

Which her deep wit, that true harts thought can spel,
Will soone conceiue, and learne to construe well.
(43:13–14)

But the lady's continued resistance earns her criticism as a deficient reader:

What then can moue her? If nor mirth nor mone,
She is no woman, but a senceless stone.
(54:13–14)

What we see here is the classic Dantesque *domina petrosa* motif, employed in a complex way: on one hand, it reveals the author desperate to move the mistress (and the reader); and on the other,

by his word “senceless,” which combines the meanings of “callous” and “mindless,” economically taunts the lady as both unwomanly and unintelligent.¹¹

Yet Spenser’s speaker’s assertiveness is also frequently offset by self-questioning and humility, again both in terms of his poetic and erotic prowess. He defines his unworthiness as a suitor in terms of poetic unworthiness, while his other claims of inadequacy range from inferior social status to an unspecified baseness of character (66, 82). The lady’s accomplishments are such that they “make [the speaker’s] darkness greater to appeare.” Someone whose love is not “meane,” who does not “embase” the lady, such as a “princes pere” or “some heavenly wit,” would be a more appropriate suitor for such a woman. Ostensibly saddened that the lady has no better opportunities than him, he promises that he will invest his “labour and long toyle” involved in the processes of writing and wooing (69), and that what little talent he has shall be spent in “setting your immortal praises forth” and raising her an “eternal monument.” Needless to say, promises of poetic immortality quickly reverse any claims of humility.

Michael Drayton and Samuel Daniel, “*The pack-horse way*”: Writers’ Confessions

In their respective sonnet sequences, *Delia* and *Idea*, Drayton and Drayton both create fascinating speakers by projecting deep and multi-faceted ambivalence towards the processes of writing and reception. Drayton opens his *Heroicall Epistles* by referring to Ovid as a poet “whose Imitator I partly professe to be.” By this, we could assume that he is claiming to be a “non-Virgilian” (and therefore a “non-epic,” or a “non-heroic” poet¹²), although, in the same breath, Drayton also claims to name his work *Heroicall* because this is a word “properly understood of Demi-gods, [...] of Hercules and Aeneas [...] and others] who for the greatnesse of Mind come neere to Gods”¹³; his claiming of Ovid could simply be a claim of poetic excellence and emotional complexity. Nevertheless, in his Dedication to Anthony Cooke at the beginning of 1594 *Idea’s Mirrour*, Drayton positions his speaker as English and original, revealing an awareness (and contempt) of contemporary sonnet-writing practices which involve borrowing from other writers,¹⁴ while Daniel’s speaker openly compares himself to Petrarch:

I wrong not other men,
Nor trafique further then thys happy Clyme,

Nor filch from *Portes*, nor from *Petrarch's* pen,
 A fault too common in this latter time.
 (Ded. 9–12, 1594)¹⁵

He [Petrarch] never had more faith, although more rime,
 I love as well, though he could better shew it.
 (D35:7–8)

Daniel's speaker's comparison shortchanges Petrarch: Daniel's speaker is represented as Petrarch's equal in feeling, and, despite the grudging concession that Petrarch "could better shew it," Petrarch did so in "more rime"—Daniel's speaker claims the advantage of conciseness.¹⁶ It is clear, however, that, even as they renounce him or employ him as a point of departure, both poets position their speakers in relation to Petrarch.

They also make similar attempts to place the sequences in the context of the work of contemporary sonneteers (Ded. 1594; 3, 1599). Drayton expresses contempt for the practice of "filching" from foreign writers and deplores the fashionableness of "well trick'd rimes" (Ded. 1594); Daniel seeks to distance himself from writing styles which use "aged accents, and untimely words" (D46). (This could be a reference to Spenser, although the *Faerie Queene*, the chief perpetrator of "aged accents," was first published four years later, in 1596.) Daniel's *Musophilus*, a dialogue on autopoetic concerns, dramatizes the conflict between the need to create works of lasting value, and the need to achieve contemporary acceptance:

Musophilus. And give our labours yet this poore delight,
 That when our daies do end they are not done.
 [...]

Philocosmus. Be new with men's affections that are now;
 [...] For not discreetly to compose our parts
 Vnto the frame of men (which we must be)
 Is to put off our selues, and make our artes
 Rebles to Nature and societie,
 Whereby we come to burie our desarts,
 In th'obscure graue of singularitie.
 (Daniel, *Musophilus*, 38–9; 78–85)

Although Philocosmus need not be taken as Daniel's mouthpiece, a sonnet sequence in the 1590s could be seen to embody this advice. In both sequences, the (literary) reader emerges as all-important, while the ladies do not appear to be the intended readers of the sequences: Drayton's 1594 sequence may begin by being addressed

to the lady (1, 1594), but the next edition begins by addressing the reader; and while Daniel's speaker also gestures towards the lady as the intended recipient, it is the reader who is addressed directly.

Another aspect of Daniel and Drayton's auto-poetics that merits a mention here is a strong tendency to reference contemporary works by other poets, as well as their own works, in the sonnets Drayton mentions Sidney, Constable and Daniel, as well as Sidney's *Pamela*; Daniel recalls du Bellay and Spenser.¹⁷ In addition, Daniel and Drayton place self-promotional references to their other works into the sequences; both techniques foster the representation of the speakers as active members of the community of writers, reflecting a concern with reception. Drayton begins the 1599 edition of *Idea* by referring it directly to his own successful *Heroicall Epistles*, the revised edition of which had appeared earlier in the same year:

Dudleys mishap, and virtuous *Grays* mischance;
Their seuerall loues since I before have showne,
Now giue me leaue at last to sing mine owne.
(1:9–13, 1599)

The question of poetic talent and industry is a deeply fraught one. On one hand, Drayton's speaker represents poetic talent first and foremost being seen as innate, pre-ordained and more important than nobility of birth:

I will, yea, and I may,
Who shall oppose my way?
For what is he alone,
That of himselfe can say,
Hee's Heire of *Helicon*?
(Drayton, "To Himselfe and the Harpe," 6–10)

This elitism purports to be merit-based: a claim that poetic ability (although defined as innate, *poeta nascitur, non fit*) is a quality with a higher claim on divine origins than even royal birth, is a favorite theme with Drayton:

For they [*the Muses*] be such coy things
That they care not for kings
And dare let them know it;
Nor may he touch their springs
That is not borne a poet.
(Drayton, "Ode to Himselfe and the Harpe," 16–20)

In the sonnet to King James, Drayton places James' poetry above his kingly accoutrements, implicitly equating the royal reader with the speaker:

Not thy graue Counsell, nor thy Subiects loue,
 [...] Others in vaine doe but historifie
 When thine own glorie from thy selfe doth spring
 (63:1–4, 1602)

But Drayton then subverts this self-assurance by hinting at the apprehension writers feel when imagining their readers. To make things funnier, he employs what I would call “slapstick vision”—a remarkable ability to combine rhyme, vivid visual imagery and laugh-out-loud humour—to create memorable descriptions of readers who are nightmarishly hostile:

Me thinks I see some crooked Mimick ieere
 And taxe my Muse with this fantastick grace,
 Turning my papers, asks what haue we heere?
 Making withall, some filthy anticke face.
 (31:1–4, 1599)

This description could well be a retort to Sir John Davies, who had ridiculed Drayton for ascribing to his first version of *Idea* the title of the “tenth Worthy” (8, 1594)—and, with it, the manly attributes of courage and wit. The exact date of John Davies' epigrams is uncertain, but Robert Kruger suggests that they were written in the late 1590s¹⁸:

Audacious Painters have nine worthies made,
 But Poet Decius more audacious farre,
 Making his mistres march with men of warre,
 With title of tenth worthie doth her lade;
 Me thinkes that gul did use his termes as fit,
 Which termed his love a Giant for hir wit.
 (Davies, Epigram 25, 1–6)

Drayton ridicules readers and laughs at them. But beneath the jibes, his qualifications of the reader are remarkably consistent: whether imagined as a despiser, a painstaking fault-finder, “a Criticke” or “a Mimick,” Drayton's and Daniel's imagined readers are always concerned with literature in general, and their writing in particular. Tackling reader hostility, both poets use *refutatio*, a rhetorical overture that pre-empts negative criticism, to express contempt for

a hostile reader's intelligence or sensitivity. Their ludic self-justifications show a high awareness of contemporary critical opinion, with a great deal of humour:

Some who reach not the height of my conceite,
They say (as Poets doe) I vse to fayne,
[...] Thus sundry men their sundry minds repeate.
(28:5–8, 1594)

Thou leaden braine, which censur'st what I write,
And say'st my lines be dull and do not moue,
I maruaile not thou feelst not my delight
Which neuer felt my fiery tuch of loue.
(46:1–4, 1599)

Both poets also repeatedly express unconcern with other people's opinion:

Like me that lust, my honest merry rimes,
Nor care for Criticke, nor regard the times
(3, 1599)

What though my selfe no honour get thereby,
Each byrd sings t'herselfe, and so will I.
(D49:13–14)¹⁹

But the huffy disavowals refute nothing but their own professed unconcern. The communication with the reader continues uninterrupted.

Yet for all his elitism, Drayton seems ever-ready to have his speaker explain his idiosyncrasies to his audience. He wonders why write poetry, when it is badly paid and the lady is unyielding. The answer is funny:

I will resolve you: I am lunaticke.
(12:5, 1602).

Although not with Drayton's fierceness and humour, Daniel's speaker also voices a certain reluctance to take part in the rat-race:

My loue affects no fame, nor steemes of art.
(D4:14)

But, as with Sidney, this “modesty” is no less ambiguous than Drayton’s “disdain.” By renouncing “art” here, Daniel argues that a poet is born, not made, siding with Drayton’s belief in the divine nature of poets.

I know I shall be read, among the rest
So long as men speake English.
(D “To the Reader”: 59–60)

No real modesty is possible where a poet believes in his poetic immortality in his language.

William Shakespeare, “*Bastard signs of fair*”: Innovative Autopoetics

Shakespeare creates a speaker who engages with the Petrarchan discourse in a highly creative fashion, working to redefine it from within. A Petrarchan discussion of reception becomes, under Shakespeare’s pen, an exploration of the conflict between intimate and public validation, idolatry of the beloved grows into idolatry of creativity; fluctuations between authorial superiority and inferiority take on particularly poignant, subtle and eroticized forms.

Where the English Petrarchan convention dictates gentle disparagement of other poets to position oneself as original, Shakespeare’s speaker achieves the same purpose by employing the opposite strategy: he pretends to disparage his own style in a way which reads suspiciously like bragging:

Why write I still all one, ever the same,
... That every word doth almost tell my name
(76:6–7)

His promises to immortalize the beloved are imbued with self-reflexivity (39:2). His tone fluctuates from “masculine” authority to “feminine” entreaty,²⁰ and his tenor from authoritative advice-giving to self-abasement. Flagrantly narcissistic statements of poetic immortality (such as the famous “so long as men can breathe and eyes can see/ so long lives this,” 18) abound in the sequence, but they are undercut by a cosmic dread—striking poetic worthlessness whose blackness and insecurity reach their nadir in the concatenation of sonnets from 72 to 75. Shakespeare builds a fascinating portrait of a superior writer in the grip of profound anxiety.

Although it has a place in Shakespeare's sequence, classic Petrarchan idolization of the beloved/s is phased out in favour of the idolatry of creativity: Shakespeare's speaker compares poetry to prayer and displaces faith and Heaven as the source of eternal life (74, 108). Shakespeare remodels Horatian belief in the true permanence of written monuments, as well as the Ovidian defiance of death by self-deification:

Yet I'll be borne
The finer art of me, above the stars,
Immortal, and my name shall never die.
Wherever through the lands beneath her sway
The might of Rome extends, my words shall be
Upon the lips of men.

(Ovid, *Met* XV. 874–78) ²¹

You still shall live, such virtue hath my pen,
Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men.
(81:13–14)

And yet, Shakespeare's speaker's insecurity appears more genuine and profound than Petrarchan expressions of "modesty":

I am shamed by that which I bring forth
and so should you, to love things nothing worth.
(72:13–14)

The reader is invited to admire the plight of the great writer who detests himself and his work even as he is shaping it into an eternal monument to himself.

I have set out in this paper to argue that Renaissance sonneteers represent their speakers not only as lovers but also as writers. They dramatize and fictionalize not only the processes of yearning/wooing, but also the process of writing: its conflicts, its creative and logistical challenges and the ethical dilemmas surrounding the need to place one's writing before contemporary and future audiences. Such characterization, I have argued, affects the reader's involvement with the character, which, in turn, affects the way we perceive the genre: not only as a string of unconnected lyrical poems, but also as a story of writers' selves on a road to self-discovery. Across the centuries, we hear the anxiety and hubris writers long dead, and recognize our own.

NOTES

- ¹ Unless otherwise specified, all references to Petrarch's *Il Canzoniere* are from Francesco Petrarch, *Il Canzoniere*, or *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, ed. and trans. Mark Musa (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999).
- ² "For [...] the image will not give pleasure *qua* mimesis, but because of its execution or colour or for some such reason." Aristotle, *Poetics IV*, ed. and trans. Stephen Halliwell, the LOEB Classical Library (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 39.
- ³ Petrarch's speaker admits envy also in 207:25.
- ⁴ All quotations from *Astrophil and Stella* have been taken from the edition of William J. Ringler, *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1962).
- ⁵ *Sidney's "The Defence of Poesy" and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. and with an Introduction and Notes by Gavin Alexander (London: Penguin, 2004), 5.
- ⁶ "I conjure you [...] to beleve with me, that there are many misteries contained in Poetrie, which of purpose were written darkly, least by prophane wits it should be abused." Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy* in *Sidney's "The Defence of Poesy" and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, 33.
- ⁷ Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), trans. Charles S. Singleton (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1959). For an excellent discussion of the culture of visual display and *sprezzatura* at the Renaissance court, see also David Kuchta, "The semiotics of masculinity in Renaissance England," in *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. James Grantham-Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 233–66, esp. 235–6.
- ⁸ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, X, 252, trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).
- ⁹ For a discussion on Queen Elizabeth I in the role of primary audience for the *Faerie Queene* as well as Spenser's claims of kinship with Lady Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke and the three Spencer sisters, see William A. Oram, "Spenser's audiences 1589–91," *Studies in Philology*, 100(2003): 514–33, esp. 520–25.
- ¹⁰ In 1593, Shakespeare's Venus woos Adonis with stories: "A thousand honey-secrets shalt thou know" (l. 16) and "bid me discourse, and I will enchant thine ear" (l. 145). A year earlier, so does Abraham Fraunce's Venus: "Rolling tongue, moyst mouth with her owne mouth all to be sucking, / Mouth and tong and lipps, with Ioues drinck Nectar abounding, / Sometimes louely records for Adonis sake, she reciteth: / How Leander dyde, as he swamme to the bewtiful Hero, [...] How Medea the witch causd golden fleece to be conquerd, What lost Euridice; who first came safely to Circe." Othello's wooing of Desdemona strongly resembles this passage and

also recalls Dante's description of Francesca and Paolo, sinners eternally joined together in the second circle of Hell, who courted reading stories "of Lancelot, and how he fell in love". (William Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt with Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katherine Eisaman Maus (New York/London: Norton, 1997); Abraham Fraunce, *The Third parte of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yuychurch*, London, 1592, f. 44, (New York and London: Scholars facsimiles, Garland Publishing Inc, 1976; William Shakespeare, *Othello* ed. M. R. Riley (London and New York: Routledge, The Arden Shakespeare 1994), xv.); Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy, Inferno*, V.126, *The Portable Dante*, ed. Paolo Milano (London: Penguin Books, 1977).

- ¹¹ This recalls Errour of *The Faerie Queene*, a fecund, but evil and blind beast (Spenser, Edmund, *The Faerie Queene*, facsimile of the 1596 edition published by W. Pösonbie, London, with an Introduction by Graham Hough (London: The Scolar Press, 1976). For an illuminating account of the echoes of Errour-like characterisation in the SF novel, see Susan Kornfeld, "Suppression and Transformation of the Maternal in Contemporary Women's Science Fiction," *Extrapolation*, 45 (2004): 65–75.
- ¹² Patrick Cheney, *Marlowe's Counterfeit Profession: Ovid, Spenser, Counter-nationhood*, (Buffalo/London: U of Toronto Press, 1997)
- ¹³ Michael Drayton, *Heroicall Epistles*, *The Works of Michael Drayton* ed. J. William Hebel (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961), 130.
- ¹⁴ However, it should be noted that the claims of originality and of belonging to a vernacular language that this sonnet makes are also classically Petrarchan.
- ¹⁵ I quote from *Idea's Mirrour* (1594) and *Idea* (1594, 1602, 1605 and 1619) using the reference to the sonnet, lines and year of publication in brackets, e.g. (1:1–4, 1619). Citing *Idea* has represented a challenge, as standard editions provide incomplete selections. In this article, I have cited *Idea* and other works by Michael Drayton using *Minor Poems by Michael Drayton*, ed. Cyril Brett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), which, despite its age, I have found to be the most complete, and *The Works of Michael Drayton* ed. J. William Hebel (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961). I have also consulted *Poems of Michael Drayton*, ed. John Buxton (Cambridge, Massachusets: Harvard University Library, 1967). I do not, however, generally use this edition to cite *Idea*, as it represents a selection of 33 sonnets from five sequences authorised by Drayton in his lifetime, all provided without reference to the year of their publication. As an exception, I have used Buxton to cite two sonnets which do not appear in Brett and Hebel's editions. To minimise confusion which could arise when two poets are cited alongside each other, Daniel's sonnets have been quoted with the capital "D" for *Delia* preceding the reference to the sonnet and line,

the year of publication omitted (e.g. D4:3–4). I have quoted Daniel's work using *Samuel Daniel's Poems and a Defence of Ryme* ed. Arthur Colby Sprague (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

- ¹⁶ I understand the “not more faith/ more rime” juxtaposition as a reference to quantity, as Petrarch's sequence is approximately five times as long as Daniel's.
- ¹⁷ Spenser, in his turn, mentions Daniel by name in his *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*: “Then rouse thy feathers quickly *Daniell*, / And to what course thou please thy selfe aduaunce: / But most me seemes, thy accent will excel, / In Tragick plaints and passionate mischance.” Edmund Spenser, *Colin Clouts Come home againe* (London: Printed for William Ponsonbie (sic) 1595).
- ¹⁸ Robert Kruger, ed. *The Poems of Sir John Davies: With Introduction and Commentary by the Editor and Ruby Nemser* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975)
- ¹⁹ Compare Petrarch's *Il Canzoniere*: “the weight's not heavy, / nor does the point of disdain pierce my armor” (229:9-11); “all of my words and sighs / that wear me out, and others too, perhaps (360:72–74); “Singing, the pain renders itself less bitter” (23:4) (translation mine) or “I try by speaking to slow down my pain” (276:4).
- ²⁰ I use the words “masculine,” “feminine,” “male” and “female” in inverted commas to signify contemporary cultural constructs of gender, not biological determinants.
- ²¹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XV. 874–78.

“NOBLER IN THE MIND”: THE EMERGENCE OF EARLY MODERN ANXIETY

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It would seem self-evident that the literatures and cultural practices of the early modern period reflect the sources and levels of anxiety incumbent upon the people of that time. A growing body of scholarship in the last three decades has delved into any number of sources of anxiety for early modern populations, and in literary studies the correlative of this scholarship has been an increasing interest in anxiety in the writings of Shakespeare and others. As a case in point, Valerie Traub's *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (1992) maps a “fractured terrain” in Shakespeare's treatment of gender and the body, characterized on one side by a more conventional romantic love and on the other by a politicized sexuality that is “simultaneously physical and psychological, often bawdy, and constituted as much by anxiety as by desire.”¹ Traub does not use the concept of anxiety lightly; more than a dozen pages of the book are devoted to elaborating the psychoanalytical definition of anxiety and tracing its relevance to the culture of early modern England. Some other writers are not quite so thorough, and I shall have more to say on this in a moment. In the brief reach of this essay, however, I want to consider the implications for the study of anxiety in early modern writing—and in Shakespeare in particular—of an historical problem: the word “anxiety” does not appear to gain any currency in English until the second decade of the seventeenth century. Certainly, the word is nowhere to be found in Tyndale's Bible of 1526 or the King James Bible of 1611, even though subsequent translations into English (including the New King James Version) include the word in several passages in which vaguely synonymous words like “care” or “carefulness” were used in these early English

translations. Certainly also—and of more immediate relevance to this essay—the word appears nowhere in any of Shakespeare’s plays or sonnets. How, then, can we speak with any confidence of “anxiety” in Shakespeare?

It may well be, indeed, that confidence is *not* a characteristic of treatments of anxiety in recent Shakespeare scholarship. Aaron Landau’s essay on “Skepticism and Anxiety in *Hamlet*,” for example, clearly uses “anxiety” as a key term in the title but then only uses the word on three occasions within the essay, all in the one paragraph, in order to explain the difference between the “skeptical anxiety” associated with the Reformation and the “extreme anxiety,” identified by Landau with the appearance of the ghost in *Hamlet*.² Beyond this brief explanatory point, the word disappears from the remainder of the essay, despite its prominence in the title. Similar issues are in evidence in Philip Collington’s “Sans Wife: Sexual Anxiety and the Old Man in Shakespeare’s Plays”³ and Gretchen Minton’s “Discharging less than the tenth part of one’: Performance Anxiety and/in *Troilus and Cressida*,”⁴ for example, in which two very different sources of anxiety are covered by the respective authors in quite similar terms, but historical explanations of the particular mechanisms of anxiety are sparse. Yet my point is not to claim that there is any deficiency in the work of these scholars; rather, I want only to observe what may be evidence of a kind of anxiety at work *within* the scholarship that seeks to understand early modern anxiety. When one uses the word “anxiety” to describe early modern anxieties, at least, that is, in relation to pre-seventeenth century writings, the primary materials to which one has access simply do not echo the term back to the scholar. It is not the case that a scholar must therefore avoid discussion of anxieties, but it is the case that the word “anxiety” itself will not be present in the texts used as primary evidence for such anxieties. The result is, I think, a kind of compensatory compulsion at work in recent writings about early modern anxiety. The most common manifestation is the deployment of a more recent language of anxiety, including puns such as “performance anxiety,” to overcome what seems to be the silence of the primary texts on the subject of anxiety, as if this silence is proof of the early modern writers’ anxieties, the point being that the early moderns will have avoided writing about the things that caused anxiety. Dare we suggest along these lines that Traub’s dozen or so pages on the psychoanalytic definition of anxiety may be evidence of overcompensation to some extent?

One writer who could not be characterized as lacking in confidence in any area of inquiry has also found occasion to deploy the language of anxiety in Shakespeare scholarship. In essays in *Learning to Curse* and *Shakespearean Negotiations*, Stephen Greenblatt has entertained protracted discussions on the subject. “The Cultivation of Anxiety: King Lear and His Heirs” (first published in *Raritan* in 1982) develops the comparison of Lear’s testing of his three daughters with a description of a childrearing technique from 1831, based on the prominence within both texts of what Greenblatt calls “salutary anxiety.”⁵ Importantly, the term on which he hinges comparison is of Greenblatt’s own devising: it is not even the case that Reverend Francis Wayland uses the term in 1831 and Greenblatt reads through it to Lear; rather, Greenblatt notes a point of similarity between two texts separated by over two hundred years and coins his own term to explain the similarity. If his treatment of “salutary anxiety” shows no signs of any anxiety on his own part—the term is simply stated and then used without any qualifying comments—it may well be the case that Greenblatt is fully aware of the limitations of his own strategy and so does not entertain qualifications that may exert added pressure on an already tenuous comparative framework. Less pressure seems to bear on Greenblatt in the final chapter of *Shakespearean Negotiations*, in which another typically obscure fragment is used as a foil to discuss several plays of Shakespeare, but “anxiety” is deployed only in general terms to describe something Greenblatt sees as confronting the Elizabethan theatre *writ large*: “theatrical anxiety”.⁶ Greenblatt’s point is that the Elizabethan stage is a locus for presentations of anxiety in order to give pleasure to an audience, which he sees being at odds with the presentation of anxiety for disciplinary purposes (as demonstrated in an obscure text from 1552). Even as he makes this assertion, however, Greenblatt inserts an endnote that qualifies his comment: “This is, however, only a *working* distinction, to mark an unstable, shifting relation between anxiety and pleasure” (*Negotiations* n.9, 193). In the next few paragraphs, while discussing this theatrical anxiety, he inserts still more endnotes, each qualifying his comments with further care. Such qualifications evince even in Greenblatt’s work a degree of hesitation in the face of early modern anxiety, a necessary willingness to compensate for the lack of the word itself in the primary text by begging the question of the existence of early modern anxiety, to some extent.

Space, of course, prevents me from pursuing recent scholarship of this kind in any greater detail. I hope instead to have simply

established a general tendency in relation to early modern anxiety: that the absence of the word from the primary text need not prevent the scholar from talking of anxiety, but it does produce an anxious discourse of its own within the scholar's treatment of the subject. I want to focus for the greater part of this essay on the question of the emergence of the word "anxiety" at a time that would seem to have been characterized by anxiety. My contention is that the word "anxiety" becomes necessary in English around the turn of the seventeenth century precisely because a discursive universe had built up in the preceding century around the concept of a physically troubled mind, culminating among other things in Shakespeare's presentations of some of the most troubled minds on the early modern stage. This is particularly significant in relation to the larger project toward which the present study makes a contribution: I am interested in the notion that early modern writings provide us with insight into the historical moment on the cusp of Cartesian dualism, when mind and body had not yet been conceptually separated and when the language of abstraction was as yet the language of the body. In what follows, then, I shall also outline the significance of my observations regarding the emergence of early modern anxiety in relation to this much broader investigation into what I am calling the early modern body-mind.

Before we can discuss the emergence of the word as a phenomenon of the turn of the seventeenth century, there is however a small obstacle that must be considered. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word "anxietie" appears in English in Thomas More's *De Quatuor Novissimis*, circa 1525. There are a number of aspects of this citation that I think warrant closer scrutiny, rather than leave it as read that the word appearing in More indicates that it was readily available to authors throughout the sixteenth century. First, there is the issue of dating More's use of the word. In the OED, it is given as *circa* 1525, since the date of the composition of the *Novissimis* is in fact a matter of conjecture. More's prefatory note refers to his text—a "Treatise Upon Those Words of Holy Scripture, Memorare novissima ... (etc.)"⁷—as having been "Made about the year of our Lord 1522," although it is clear that this note refers only to the time at which writing commenced on the treatise. The treatise was in fact never finished, so the date allocated to the writing of the passage in which More uses the word "anxiety"—it is used twice, once each in consecutive paragraphs in "Part 3: Of Covetousness, Gluttony, and Sloth"—is doubtless based on sound scholarship, to be sure, but remains nevertheless speculative. Of course, I may seem to be quibbling

over a trifle in this instance: whether the word was written in 1522, 1525, or any other year in close proximity, there is obviously no case to argue against the fact that More wrote the word “anxiety” in a text written in English sometime in the third decade of the sixteenth century. Yet it is worth noting that the *Novissimis* was never finished in More’s lifetime, and it did not appear in print until William Rastell’s *Workes of Sir Thomas More* was produced in 1557.

This question of the date of the *Novissimis* is important, I think, if we are drawn to speculate on whether More is using a word readily available in his native tongue or whether he introduces a word that was not in common usage at the time. At this point, it is worth venturing beyond the OED for some clarification on the issue. The word is not given, for example, in the *Medulla Grammaticæ* (from around 1480), in relation to the Latin “*Anxietas*,” which is defined as “anglice noye” (the English *noye*, meaning annoyance).⁸ By 1538, a good decade after More uses the term in the *Novissimis*, the word is not used by Thomas Elyot in his *Dictionary*, wherein we find *Anxietas* and *anxietudo* explained with two pairs of English words thus: “anguysshē or sorowe” (anguish or sorrow) and “care or heuynesse” (care or heaviness).⁹ The same is true of many other early to mid-sixteenth century dictionaries and glossaries consulted via the Lexicon of Early Modern English, all of which contain entries on or references to the Latin word *anxietas* and its variant forms *anxietatis*, *anxius*, and *anxifer*, for example, but no instance of the word “anxiety” in any English form. John Withals’ *Short Dictionary for Young Beginners* (1556) even defines the English words “peine, ache or grefe” (pain, ache or grief) with, among other things, the phrasing “*anxietas, tatis, i. corporis cruciatus*” yet there is no similar entry for “anxiety.”¹⁰ Indeed, it is not until 1587 that the anglicized form of the word finds its way into any of the texts investigated. Thomas Thomas’s *Dictionarium* defines the Latin *Scrūpōlositas* as “Curiousnes of conscience, scrupulositie, anxiety, spicednes of conscience,”¹¹ which in itself seems somewhat out of place with the sense previously given for *anxietas* in association with “*i. corporis cruciatus*,” dare we suggest. It is also interesting that Thomas’s definition of *Anxietas* repeats the use by earlier definitions of anguish, sorrow, and such like, but does not use the word “anxiety.”¹² Nevertheless, it is in the dictionaries of the early seventeenth century that the word “anxiety” begins to appear with greater frequency, and carries with it this enlarged sense of conveying notions of doubt, curiosity, and even hoariness, along with its more Latinate sense of anguish, grief, or heaviness of care. Thomas Wilson’s *Christian Dictionary* (1612) includes the word

“anxiety” in definitions for “Doubting,” “Feare,” and “Thought,” for example, but it does not contain an entry for “anxiety” itself.¹³

It is not until Thomas Blount’s 1656 *Glossographia*, so far as I can glean, that any lexicon of English words contains a dedicated entry for “anxiety.”¹⁴ The variant spellings, “anxitie” and “anxietie” do appear as entries in the dictionaries of Robert Cawdrey (1604)¹⁵ and Johyn Bullokar (1616)¹⁶ respectively, but we can observe that these variant spellings do not appear any earlier than “anxiety” in the various lexicons we have surveyed as a part of the definitions provided for other words. To summarize this detour into the lexicographical record: until 1587, there seems to be no use of the word “anxiety” or any variant English spelling in any of the books that contribute to lexicographical knowledge of English or Latin words; the meanings associated with the Latin *anxietas* rarely gravitated away from its derivation, aligned with *angere* (strangulation, pain, distress) until the late sixteenth century; and in the seventeenth century, the English word “anxiety” and a number of variant forms such as “anxious” and “anxiferous” begin to appear with frequency in association with a range of new meanings related more generally to many different mental states besides anguish or distress. Along these lines, it is worth mentioning here Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*, which of course in 1621 lists “anxiety” unproblematically as one of the known symptoms of melancholy, albeit very late in the book—it is mentioned in the third last sub-section of the final section of the tome—and the word is notable for its absence from the detailed index that follows.¹⁷ Anxiety is also mentioned twice in the prefatory Democritus section, yet on the occasions that anxiety is mentioned in Burton it is always coupled to synonymous terms—“troubled with perpetual fears, anxieties, insomuch” (707); “these men’s discontents, anxieties” (709); “full of continual fears, cares, torments, anxieties” (6737), and so on—which suggests that the term is used at this stage of its life in English in somewhat circumspect fashion. My point here is that even in those discourses in which we might expect the word to gain currency rapidly at this time, such as medicine or psychology in their formative guises, the word is not yet, by 1621, being used with a clear sense of what it means in its own right.

What, then, we ask, is the word doing in one of More’s more obscure writings *circa* 1525? I stated before that there were a number of aspects of the OED citation that were worth further consideration. In addition to the date, observe that the word is used both times in what appear to be paraphrases from scripture. Might

we conjecture that in these two passages More is simply transliterating from a Latinate form into an anglicized form, rendering *anxietas* as “anxiety.” Indeed, along these lines, it can be pointed out that the spelling changes from one paragraph to the next—that is, from “anxitie” (90) to “anxietie” (91)¹⁸—suggesting perhaps that More was experimenting rather than writing from familiarity with the word. Regardless, though, my sense of the use of the word in More is not so much that the word was available at the time of writing, nor even perhaps at the time of publication (hence, perhaps, an error by the compositor of the *Workes* rather than in the original penmanship), nor even that More *introduced* the word into English; rather, I suggest that More pre-empts the emergence of the word in English in the latter half of the sixteenth century and its sudden uptake in the next as a result of what may well be nothing more than mere happenstance. If it is the case that a later reader is prompted by More’s text to mimic the use of “anxitie” or “anxietie” as English forms for the Latin *anxietas*, it certainly can have been no earlier than 1557, and the fact that it is not until a further three decades later that the word appears as “anxiety” in print suggests to me that there is no link between More’s earlier use and the subsequent later uses of the term.

It is at this point that Shakespeare can be brought into the picture. We know that Shakespeare was a voracious collector of new words, and it is to be assumed that if he wanted to convey something like anxiety in his plays *and* he knew of the existence of the word, then he most surely would have used it on at least one occasion. We may wonder whether Shakespeare would have read More’s *Novissimis*? The evidence from established scholarship of textual sources in Shakespeare’s plays—including the play of *Sir Thomas More* itself, albeit in line with disputes over the authorship of this play—suggests that he was certainly familiar with the historical figure, would have read a portion of the most famous works, but likely read very little if any at all of the smaller doctrinal writings. This is of course a very speculative overview, and justice cannot be done to the long history of debates over some of these matters. Suffice to say, though, that a search through this large body of writings will come up empty on the question of whether Shakespeare was influenced by or familiar with the obscure treatise on the *Novissimis*. An alternative consideration may be whether Shakespeare was familiar with Thomas’s *Dictionarium Linguae Latinae et Anglicanae* of 1587, and its inclusion of the word “anxiety” in the definition of the Latin *Scrúpulositas*? Of course, there can be no expectation of any specific evidence either way on this score, but

we could at least ponder whether Shakespeare would have been likely to draw upon a lexicon of Latin words in English translation as a source for the words to use in his writing? We can be fairly certain that he was able to read Latin,¹⁹ but this does not mean that he did so by preference in sourcing material for plays that were to be staged for an audience of lower educational standing. Without knowing for certain whether Shakespeare read the *Novissimis* or Thomas's Latin-English lexicon, it is at least fair to claim, I think, if he did not acquaint himself with either of these texts, then he would not have known of the two best and perhaps only examples of the use of the word "anxiety" in English prior to 1611.

John Florio's Italian-English dictionary, *Queen Anna's New World of Words*, printed originally as *A World of Words* in 1598 but expanded with the royal seal of approval in 1611, has an entry in the later edition for *Ansietà*, defined as "anxiety, curiosity, a longing desire, a sorrowing care."²⁰ Now of course we know that Florio *was* well known to Shakespeare, since he tutored the playwright in French and Italian, but again we must assure ourselves that if Florio had introduced him to the English "anxiety" at any time before 1611, it would have surely found its way into his plays during the so-called "tragic period" of 1600 to 1608. Indeed, we can confirm that in the 1598 edition of Florio's book, the word "anxiety" is missing, with the entry for *Ansietà* defined thus: "curiositie, longing, desire, thought, anguish, sorrow, care, toile."²¹ If we accept, then, that the word "anxiety" does not find its way into more common use earlier than around 1611—recall that the King James Bible of 1611 has no mention of the word—it would be fair to say that Shakespeare just missed the boat on anxiety, since we also know that he wrote little, at least without collaboration, in the last two years of his career before retiring to Stratford in 1613. We return then to the question on which the first paragraph of this essay rested: how can we speak with any confidence of "anxiety" in Shakespeare?

What this history of the emergence of the word in English tells us is that at just this moment, while Shakespeare was plying his trade in London, there became a clear need for a word like "anxiety" to pull together a range of meanings that are associated on the one hand with the Latin word *anxietas* and on the other hand with doubting, fear, thought, and other cognitive states. Perhaps we may consider that Shakespeare does not miss the boat as such; rather, might we consider that Shakespeare's writings contribute to the establishment of a wider need, out of which we may see the sudden uptake of the word in the decades immediately after his

career ended as something of a consequence. A language of anxiety is everywhere to be found in Shakespeare's plays, particularly during that later period in which the great tragedies were written; the only thing missing from this language is the word itself. We find in its stead an accumulation of soliloquies and piquant phrases in which descriptions of the mind and inward dispositions are linked directly to—or, I would argue, contained wholly within—descriptions of bodily suffering. For the purpose of concision here, we need look no further for a prime example of this than what may be the single most famous speech in the history of the theatre. The speech is from *Hamlet*, a play written around the start of this so-called tragic period of Shakespeare's career. It begins, innocuously enough, with a tiny conundrum: "To be, or not to be—that is the question" (3.i.55).²²

With no small exaggeration, this single line is often quoted as *the* quintessential statement of existential angst: to exist or not to exist or, in short, to live or die. This is of course well married to the reading of *Hamlet* as a play about the inner turmoil of its central character. Yet I want to look a little more closely at how this very speech calls the nature of inwardness itself into question. Having established the principal terms of the question, Hamlet immediately dissembles. We must not forget that the most recent words we have heard from Hamlet are the presentiment of triumph at the end of 2.ii: "The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King" (539–40). At the end of this scene, he exits, and Act 3 begins with the entry of the royal entourage, and Claudius speaking in no uncertain terms about needing to "Get from him why he puts on this confusion" (3.i.2). Recall, of course, that in the Quarto texts there are no act or scene divisions, so we only separate the "play's the thing" speech from his next words based on a convention established by the later editors. Closer analysis of 2.ii and 3.i, I suggest, shows that no such separation in time needs to be presumed, as the action of one flows naturally into that of the next. The arrival of the royal entourage does not come with an attendant flourish. On the two occasions prior to this in which the King and his entourage take to the stage, their arrival is met with a flourish. After this point, Claudius comes and goes from the stage on numerous occasions but only in his arrival for the central play scene and in his appearance before the final duel is his return met with similar signals. It is clear that on all other occasions, the return of Claudius to the stage is in the context of his ongoing scheming, which must be seen to be taking place away from the eyes of the public or, more importantly, from the eyes of his nephew. This is

of course the first such occasion, so to mark the distinction between an official and a private dialogue, Shakespeare removes the flourish and has Claudius entering in mid-sentence: “And can you by no drift of conference ...” (3.i.1).

The fact that Claudius is at this moment grilling Rosencrantz and Guildenstern on the nature of their most immediate conversations with Hamlet, which make up the greater part of the dialogue of 2.ii, carries the weight of this idea that the action is nigh on continuous. Hamlet’s long monologue at the end of 2.ii, which culminates in his triumphal statement that he shall indeed catch the conscience of the king, gives ample time for his two colleagues to have returned to Claudius with news of their interaction with the Prince, during which subsequent conversation they enter the stage again to complete the business that they had commenced with him at the very beginning of 2.ii. Indeed, the passage of time from the departure of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their return is the same length of time from the departure of Hamlet at the end of 2.ii to his return during 3.1: the former depart at line 483 and return 56 lines later at the beginning of 3.i, and the latter departs at the end of 2.ii and begins speaking on his return in 3.i at line 55. For me, this evinces a clear indication that the action is all but continuous across this imposed scene division. Thus, I contend further that when Hamlet returns to the stage he is indeed only newly filled with a sense of confidence immediately prior to saying the words that are so often read as an expression of inner turmoil and existential angst. Whence, then, this turmoil?

In what follows his initial statement of the principal terms of the question—“To be, or not to be”—Hamlet does not drift off immediately into his extrapolation of the broader issues related to this question; rather, he restates the question:

Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them;
(3.i.56–9)

In what follows the first line of the soliloquy, then, the initial terms are immediately restated as a binary dictum that is not simply concerned with living or dying: “To be” has as its analogue “to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” whereas “not to be” has as its analogue the taking up of arms “against a sea of troubles.” The second is of course presented as an impossible

option, for none may take up arms against a sea, thus its inevitable outcome is the ending of troubles via the ending of being. Of greatest interest to me here, though, is that the terms of this dissimulation are presented not solely in terms of the physical, nor are they presented solely in terms of an inner turmoil. Hamlet expresses the binary in terms of which path is nobler *in the mind* but that what one does in pursuing either pathway within one's mind is to take part in an action that has a physical counterpart: to suffer slings and arrows, or to take up arms. The confusion that, as Claudius says, Hamlet "puts on" is thus not only confined to some "true state" as Guildenstern calls it (3.i.9).

Rather than turmoil delimited by the mind, Hamlet's is a turmoil that does not find expression only in a language of interiority: even as it is given to the mind, it is aligned with physical suffering or action on either side of the dilemma. This duplicity is precisely what the word "anxiety" names, I will suggest. Derived from *angere* (to strangle, cause pain, or distress), *anxietas* names worry of the kind that possesses a physical analogue, causing the sufferer to feel pain: slings and arrows indeed. Yet in the late sixteenth century, as we have seen, the emergence of "anxiety" in English also involved carrying forward the meanings of the Latin *anxietas* along with a range of new meanings related to cognitive processes in general. This leads me to speculate in no small measure about the prospect that "anxiety" comes to name "thought" during this period because a discursive universe was in the process of being formulated about the very question of interiority. To put it simply, I suggest that the thought of thought being set apart from the body was itself a source of anxiety, to wit, the cause of pain or distress. By this claim I do not mean that the early modern individual was mindful of the imminence of Cartesian dualism, and feared its arrival. I suggest instead that we find in the plays of the turn of the century—certainly in Shakespeare—and elsewhere, perhaps, simply the embryonic gestures toward an inquiry into the nature of the body-mind relation. We can put this into perspective by imagining in the first instance that pre-modern cognition does not discriminate between mental phenomena and physical states or bodily form. In such a discursive universe, the language of mind is already a subset of the language of the body. Even the merest gesture toward a relation *between* mind and body is, therefore, a terrifying prospect.²³

When Hamlet stoops to question which form of physical distress is nobler in the mind, he is voicing this prospect. No surprise, then, that he continues to raise the issue of death in relation to the *problem* of sleep:

No more, and by a sleep to say we end
 The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
 That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation
 Devoutly to be wished—to die: to sleep—
 To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub,
 (3.i.60–4)

Sleeping and, perchance, dreaming provide compelling conceptual problems for the early modern body-mind. Emotions or feelings are not quite so problematical, since even “heartache” is equated here with the natural shocks to which the flesh is heir. Yet sleep is said here to end such natural shocks: twice, on lines 59 and 63, a precise correlation is made between the verbs “to sleep” and “to die.” Sleep is thus equated with the end of flesh and yet—here indeed is “the rub”—it has an activity that can be associated with it: “perchance to dream.” The *problem* of sleep for the early modern body-mind is that it provides us with an example of an activity in which the physical body plays no part. Importantly, however, “what dreams may come” (3.i.65) in that sleep of death cannot be fully extricated from the calamity of life, as the catalogue of the “fardels” (75) borne by those who choose to sweat “under a weary life” (76) will attest, since it is the “dread of something after death” (77) that makes cowards of us in the face of a life or death choice. The dreams we experience now can only feed such dread if they already *exceed* the natural shocks to which our flesh is heir while we are alive and, by being set apart from the flesh, if they leave open the promise of dreams to come after the flesh has ended.

Surely, though, such a reading of this speech confirms the assessment that it is indeed truly an expression of existential angst: to live or to die? Certainly, I agree that the dilemma phrased as “to be or not to be” is a statement concerning suicide, and not a predicate in need of a subject, as D. H. Lawrence, for example, once famously noted: “The question, to be or not to be, which Hamlet puts himself, does not mean, to live or not to live. It is ... To be or not to be King” (177).²⁴ Yet the direction in which I have been heading with this argument is that this is a statement *concerning* suicide, and not a genuine contemplation of the same. Previously, in his verbal joust with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet establishes a clear pattern of speaking in opposition to the apparent realities surrounding him: the baby Polonius, the hawk from the hand saw, and so on. During this verbal joust, of course, the players arrive and Hamlet hits upon his plan to trap Claudius. To the player

and thereafter in his aside while left alone on stage, Hamlet speaks with assurance about matters over which he maintains control: the selection of the play to be performed, the insertion of some twelve or sixteen lines and, importantly, the fact that he has until now been duplicitous—“unpack my heart with words” (2.ii.520)—since he has only a devil’s word on which to base his revenge but at last has “grounds more / Relative” (538–39). Here, then, we have Hamlet telling us in an aside that he has been routinely duplicitous, so presumably he must continue to do so at least until his newly devised plan has been put into full effect.

When Hamlet enters the stage in what is now designated as Act 3, he thus has a renewed commitment to his duplicity. He has most likely followed Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who he knows were “sent for” by his uncle, and indeed enters the stage that is still occupied by Ophelia (unconcealed) and Claudius and Polonius (concealed behind the arras, but possibly known to him, dare we suggest). When he utters words that bespeak a contemplation of suicide, then, I suggest that he is indeed engaging in a deliberate display of *seeming* anxious. Hamlet is certainly no stranger to the idea that appearances can be deceptive, and indeed he refers to both Claudius and Gertrude in terms of “seeming” at different points prior to the playing of the *Murder of Gonzago*: Gertrude is described as a “seeming-virtuous Queen” (1.v.46) and Hamlet declares he shall monitor the King’s reaction to the play “in censure of his seeming” (3.ii.83). Yet I do not wish to make the point about “seeming” on the grounds that it speaks only to the idea that the early modern body-mind hinges on exposing the difference between appearances and substances, or between deeds and thought, although there is certainly plenty of fodder for a reading of *Hamlet* along these lines. I focus on the “to be or not to be” speech here precisely because it shifts the terrain of the body-mind problem in an early modern context. Here Hamlet is seeming neither virtuous nor ready for action—neither a quality nor an apparent deed—but is seeming contemplative, doubtful, and, in short, anxious. He is staging, for the benefit of his onlookers, concealed or not, the greatest of dilemmas—life or death—expressed in terms of the increasingly troubled relationship between the outside and inside of the body and the most dreadful notion that the inside of the body is in fact entirely separable from it.

In seeming anxious, Hamlet stages the intertwining of those things that were at this very time about to be captured together under the umbrella of the word “anxiety” itself: distress, anguish,

sorrow (as were naturally carried forward from the meanings of *anxietas*), but also thought itself as a source of doubt and uncertainty. This is to say that Hamlet stages both the contemplation of death, and the anxiety occasioned by the possibility that thought is itself a kind of death: the end of the body. In *Shakespeare's Entrails: Belief, Scepticism and the Interior of the Body*, David Hillman argues for the widespread emergence of *homo clausus*, the "demarcation of the interior of the human body as separate from and problematically related to the exterior world"²⁵ throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In an otherwise detailed reading of *Hamlet* in terms of *homo clausus*, Hillman curiously omits the "to be or not to be" speech from his frames of reference. Perhaps the point to be made from the reading of this speech in the present essay is that it speaks of a resistance to *homo clausus* even as it seeks to extend the notion: Hamlet speaks to nobody (since he is ostensibly alone), yet in this respect he is *staging* a speech to nobody (since he is not alone, with others already on stage in differing levels of concealment), and he speaks of the possibility of an end to the body (he stages contemplation as no body, if you will). There is thus separation of the body from its exterior world but also, and perhaps more importantly, separation of the interior from the body altogether. For these reasons, I contend, while Shakespeare did not have the language of anxiety at his disposal, he stages the staging of anxiety at a moment in time when the word becomes necessary to capture, in a word, the notion that the human mind and its various processes may be set apart from the flesh that had until this point adequately contained it.

NOTES

- ¹ Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 2.
- ² Aaron Landau, "Let me not burst in ignorance': Skepticism and Anxiety in *Hamlet*," *English Studies* 3 (2001): 218–30 [223].
- ³ Philip D. Collington, "Sans Wife: Sexual Anxiety and the Old Man in Shakespeare's Plays," *Growing Old in Early Modern Europe: Cultural Representations*, ed. Erin Campbell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 185–208.
- ⁴ Gretchen E. Minton, "Discharging less than the tenth part of one': Performance Anxiety and/in *Troilus and Cressida*," *Shakespeare and the Cultures of Performance*, ed. Paul Yachnin and Patricia Badir (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 159–89.

- ⁵ Stephen J. Greenblatt, "The Cultivation of Anxiety: King Lear and His Heirs," *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 80–98 [90].
- ⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 134.
- ⁷ Thomas More, *The Workes of Sir Thomas More Knyght, 1557*. Facsimile reproduction. The Thomas More Studies Library site. Date consulted: 2 February 2009. URL: http://www.thomasmorestudies.org/library_1557Workes.html. 72.
- ⁸ Ian Lancashire, ed. *Lexicons of Early Modern English*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Library and University of Toronto Press, 2006. Date consulted: 6 February 2009. URL: leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry.cfm?ent=537-1057
- ⁹ Lancashire, ed. *Lexicons*. Date consulted: 6 February 2009. URL: leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry.cfm?ent=53-915
- ¹⁰ Lancashire, ed. *Lexicons*. Date consulted: 6 February 2009. URL: leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry.cfm?ent=78-3966
- ¹¹ Lancashire, ed. *Lexicons*. Date consulted: 5 February 2009. URL: leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry.cfm?ent=179-31622
- ¹² Lancashire, ed. *Lexicons*. Date consulted: 6 February 2009. URL: leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry.cfm?ent=179-2530
- ¹³ Lancashire, ed. *Lexicons*. Date consulted: 8 February 2009. URL: leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry.cfm?ent=308-757; leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry.cfm?ent=308-2316; and leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry.cfm?ent=308-3672
- ¹⁴ Lancashire, ed. *Lexicons*. Date consulted: 8 February 2009. URL: leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry.cfm?ent=478-571
- ¹⁵ *A Table Alphabetical*. Lancashire, ed. *Lexicons*. Date consulted: 20 May 2009. URL: leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry.cfm?ent=276-159
- ¹⁶ *An English Expositor*, Lancashire, ed. *Lexicons*. Date consulted: 20 May 2009. URL: leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry.cfm?ent=323-250
- ¹⁷ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (eBooks@Adelaide, 2007), date consulted: 25 May 2009. URL: <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/b/burton/robert/melancholy/>
- ¹⁸ More, Workes. Date consulted: 2 February 2009. URL: http://www.thomasmorestudies.org/1557Workes/A_Treatyce_upon_the_last_thynges_part_3.pdf.
- ¹⁹ See, for example, Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2004), 24–8.
- ²⁰ Lancashire, ed. *Lexicons*. Date consulted: 6 February 2009. URL: leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry.cfm?ent=299-3569

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- ²¹ Lancashire, ed. *Lexicons*. Date consulted: 7 February 2009. URL: leme.library.utoronto.ca/lexicon/entry.cfm?ent=231-2116
- ²² All references to the play are from Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, eds. *Hamlet*. Arden Shakespeare Edition (2006).
- ²³ For a discussion of *Hamlet* as an expression of resistance to the emergent philosophy of dualism, see Paul A. Cefalu, “‘Damned custom ... habits devil’: Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Anti-dualism, and the Early Modern Philosophy of Mind” *ELH* 67 (2000): 399–431.
- ²⁴ D. H. Lawrence, “An Aversion from Hamlet,” *Hamlet: A Norton Critical Edition*, second edition, ed. Cyrus Hoy (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1992), 175–80.
- ²⁵ David Hillman, *Shakespeare’s Entrails: Belief, Scepticism and the Interior of the Body* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 7.

MILTON'S ALIENS: THE HUMAN AND THE HUMANOID

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That pioneering work of science fiction, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, appears to be entirely populated by "aliens"—at least for the first eight of its (final) twelve books. There is the meticulously researched opening catalogue of devils and demons, presided over by Lucifer—all of them fallen angels—and describing their late, present, and future machinations. There are visits to Earth by the archangel Raphael, where intellectual, scientific and social-sexual discussions take place, sometimes over lunch. In the elsewhere of Heaven, or in the realms of Chaos in between, the angels chorus and sing, dispute and squabble, space travel and spy, and contest an inconclusive but cataclysmic war with each other. And although in Book 4 we meet, initially through Satan's eyes, Adam and Eve—new formed, adult, formidably intelligent, breathtakingly beautiful, and sexually overheated—they are not exactly "human." For one thing they have no belly buttons. As Dr Johnson shrewdly pointed out long ago, they are in a condition that no human being has ever known, or could ever know.¹ In contrast to ourselves, they, like the angels, appear to be aliens or, at best, only humanoid.

In our critical thinking over the years we have been much encouraged to think (sometimes rather tediously) in terms of *binaries*. And the notion of "the human" invites several possibilities, of course: most broadly, the human and the non-human. But this last could subdivide into various and disparate categories. The human and the animal, for instance, with gestures towards realignment (a T-shirt seen the other day proposed "If eating people is wrong so is eating animals"), or gestures of separation (a rival T-shirt proclaimed, "I love animals. They are delicious!").

Another available binary is “human” and “alien”—one which seems to fascinate our own society in ways perhaps analogous to early modern interest in angels. Even a brief trawl through the internet will throw up countless websites about aliens, many of course about UFOs and abductions by aliens, but also earnest, portentous sites and blogs vouchsafing that, for example, Adam and Eve were aliens, sent to kick start the rest of us; or that “Jesus was an alien”; or that it is a cunning group of aliens who are currently interfering with our planet. And so on. Even the modern movement of creationism depends, for its foundations, on inexplicable mysteries of creation that we are simply expected to accept—the alien, the mysterious, the intriguingly irrational. That our global culture has far from lost an interest in angels is evidenced by their frequent appearances in movies and TV miniseries: Clarence in *It’s a Wonderful Life*; *Touched by an Angel*; John Travolta’s pie-eating, dirty-dancing archangel in *Michael*; *City of Angels*; *Heaven Can Wait*; or *Dogma*; or the deviant Gabriel in *The Prophecy*. It is also demonstrated by the numerous websites devoted to the binary of “human” and “angelic,” or “human” and “demonic”—both of these non-human categories frequently overlapping with “aliens.” The *reasons* for our own fascination (one that is anyway a recurrent human fascination, of course) with the inexplicable, the numinous, the extra-terrestrial, the gods, or the aliens, or the angels, would take a substantial socio-cultural study to even sketch out. But, as I shall argue, for Milton angels aren’t—or at least, were not originally—inexplicable or numinous at all; in fact, they are just like us—and consequently vice versa. Our continued *imaginative* transactions with them seem driven, like our imaginative longing for a lost Garden, by a deep and ineradicable sense of nostalgia.

What, then, is the relationship between humans and angels in the poem? And why does it matter to think about it? I would suggest it matters because through their analogical kinship and shared substance Milton is working not so much to define angels but to define what it means to be *human*. Despite the very considerable number of treatises and literary or folkloric representations of angels in Milton’s time, and of course earlier, Milton and his contemporaries actually knew no more about angels, except as imaginative constructs, than we think we do. His purpose, then, is rather to explore through them not, as was most usual, their *otherness* but our humanity and our connection to the divine. But if angels pre-existed mankind, what then was the purpose of our own creation? Milton speaks only of God’s will to create for his new

world a creature “endu’d / With Sanctitie of Reason / ... self knowing... / Magnanimous to correspond with Heav’n / But grateful to acknowledge whence his good / Descends” (7.508–13).² But there were other theories about why we were created. The informative mini-essays that supplement the current Norton edition of *Paradise Lost*³ have sections on the Scale of Nature, and on Angels. There we read the following: “In asserting that ... in creating man [God’s] purpose was to fill the ranks vacated by the fallen angels (intending human beings eventually to evolve into angels), Milton followed theological speculations well-known to his readers” (466). Without nit-picking unduly, there are a number of problems with such a statement—even excluding the attribution to God of purposes and intentions which were never fulfilled (an egregious but familiar theological faux pas, and one which Milton is always careful to avoid). As always in this dramatic poem it is important to notice who is saying what to whom—and it is not Milton but Raphael, speaking to Adam in Book 7, who speculatively suggests, following St Augustine—no, that cannot be right of course: it is Augustine who follows Raphael—that men supply the places of the rebel fallen angels, and preserve the number of heavenly inhabitants. Adam and Eve at their creation are, of course, like angels, immortal. But it is only a guess. Wisely, as Alastair Fowler notes, “Raphael nowhere advances any theory about the *cause* of man’s creation.”⁴ And nor does Milton. Whatever God’s imputed “intentions,” however, angels connect the human and celestial worlds—a bridge literally figured in the poem in the image of the ladder or scale from Earth to the portal of Heaven, a ladder on which Jacob dreamed he saw “Angels ascending and descending, bands / Of Guardians bright” (3.510–12), and physiologically figured in their, and our, shared corporeality. Although Milton says very little about the Incarnation, either directly in the poem or in his theological writings, such as *De Doctrina Christiana*, its implications—that is, the immanence of flesh in spirit and vice versa—are everywhere apparent in *Paradise Lost*.

Most of the modern academic and scholarly work on angels, including angels in Milton, has concentrated on two areas. One is the relation of Milton’s angelology to biblical, rabbinical, Christian patristic and scholastic accounts of angels—their names, hierarchies, functions and interventions—and on to contemporary (that is, early modern) views about angels. Though not specifically about Milton, the most recent study came from Cambridge University Press in 2006, *Angels in the Early Modern World*.⁵ Another area—and growing out of Aquinas’s famous question about how

many could dance on the head of a pin—concentrates on the *substance* of angels: what are they made of? Are they made of anything at all? Patristic and early modern speculations on this question, and Milton's response to and adaptations of them, have been vigorously examined by scholars like Robert H. West,⁶ and by Stephen M. Fallon in his *Milton among the Philosophers*.⁷

At stake in Stephen Fallon's argument is a complete re-examination of assumptions about Milton's ontology in *Paradise Lost*, and a large part of it hinges on Milton's treatment of angels. His handling of angels, Fallon claims, is audacious and original and is further evidence of Milton's idiosyncratic animist materialist monism, in which *everything* that is not God is corporeal, material, and has substance. Fallon critiques Dr Johnson's assumption that there is a fatal "confusion of spirit and matter" in Milton's epic, leading to what Johnson thought of as the philosophical and scientific absurdities of angels fighting, or of angels eating and drinking. Johnson's criticism of Milton's inconsistency, or carelessness, argues that certainly Milton had to invest his angels with form and matter if was to be able to show them in action in an epic poem, and that is fair enough. You cannot make images out of immateriality. But, Johnson says, "he has unhappily perplexed his poetry with his philosophy"; "his infernal and celestial powers are sometimes pure spirit, and sometimes animated body" (Johnson, 108).

Fallon argues, and convincingly demonstrates, that for Milton there is only one substance, diffused, extended and modified throughout the universe and shared in various forms ("various" is a favourite word in *Paradise Lost*) by all created things. His epic subject required angels, and Milton's monist materialism has no difficulty in representing them. He rejects the scholastic, and common early modern, view that angels, only intermittently and tenuously corporeal, had to assume temporary bodies to appear on earth, but invests them with a materiality that is not a separable vehicle for an intelligence but is a dimension of intellectual being. Their bodies may be infinitely fluid—

All Heart they live, all Head, all Eye, all Ear,
All Intellect, all Sense, and as they please,
They limb themselves, and color, shape or size
Assume, as likes them best, condense or rare—
(6.350–53)

but, when Raphael flies down through the spheres to Earth and lights on “th’Eastern cliff of Paradise,” he “to his proper shape returns/ A Seraph winged” (5.270–77), suggesting that angels do indeed have their own shapes resembling our material bodies, with the addition of wings.

Apart from the War in Heaven, one of the most notorious instances of an apparent confusion of “spirit” and “matter” occurs over lunch in Eden, when Adam inquires about angelic digestion. And a second is when Adam asks about angelic sexuality. At lunch Raphael explains that

food alike those pure
 Intelligential substances require
 As doth your Rational; and both contain
 Within them every lower facultie
 Of sense, whereby they hear, see, smell, touch, taste,
 Tasting concoct, digest, assimilate,
 And corporeal to incorporeal turn.
 (5.407–12)

As Fallon wittily notes of this passage, Milton “agrees with the health-food industry: you are what you eat” (153). A little later, Raphael tells Adam that such transformative interactions are possible because the Almighty “created all / Such to perfection, one first matter all, / Indu’d with various forms, various degrees / Of substance, and in things that live, of life” (5.471–74). The important, almost throw-away, phrase here is “*one first matter all*.” That is, *everything* created is matter, in one form or another, including angels. Similarly, when Adam asks Raphael how angels make love—“by looks onely?” he wonders—Raphael, with “a smile that glowd / Celestial rosie red,” answered:

Let it suffice thee that thou know’st
 Us happie, and without Love no happiness.
 Whatever pure thou in the body enjoy’st
 (And pure thou wert created) wee enjoy
 In eminence, and obstacle find none
 Of membrane, joint, or limb, exclusive barrs:
 Easier then Air with Air, if Spirits embrace,
 Total they mix, Union of Pure with Pure
 Desiring ...
 (8.620–28)

And then, as if embarrassed, Raphael looks at his watch, says it's late, and he must get on home. But Raphael's diffidence in talking about the sex lives of angels is an understandable and dramatically *human* touch. That is to say, it has nothing to do with a Miltonic diffidence about taking on a controversial or inconsistent poetical elaboration: in the ebb and flow of levels and degrees of materiality in the poem, the orgasmic interpenetration of angels is no different from their appreciation of Eve's grape juices, berries and "dulcet creams."

Even the Son is in this respect material and visibly embodies the Father. It is only God who is invisible and essentially unmanifestable to our eyes: "Bright effluence of bright essence increate" (3.6). But "in him [the Son] all his Father shone / Substantially express'd, and in his face / Divine compassion visibly appeared" (3.139–41). The Son is thus a substantial, material expression, and is thus located in place. Like angels, and ourselves, he cannot appear in more than one place at once. Fallon comments that, although Milton grants "other divine attributes to the Son, he significantly denies him omnipresence. If the Son is material, it is certain that the angels are as well" (166).

Since Milton's poem is a "Puritan" biblical epic it may be wondered what his stance is in relation to biblical angels. Despite hand-me-down to the contrary, references in the Bible to human encounters with angels are in fact extremely infrequent—if we exclude the visionary Revelation of St John, which is set in an elsewhere. There are more if the Apocrypha is included, and Milton takes many of the angels' given names from those and other Jewish texts—Beelzebub, Moloch, Astoreth, or Uriel, Abdiel, or Ithuriel. In the Bible, Lot and Jacob have encounters with angels; Michael is seen in a vision by Daniel as the deliverer of the children of Israel, and is an archangel in Jude and in the New Testament. Gabriel interprets one of Daniel's visions, and in the Gospel of Luke is the messenger of God. Raphael is purely apocryphal. And when they do occur, their interventions in human affairs can be highly problematic—as the Virgin Mary discovered—and their rare appearances in Scripture are inevitably made, of course, in a fallen and dysfunctional human world.

The difficulties of interpreting the status and intentions of angels do not diminish with time. Although angels are God's emissaries, and are therefore good (unless they are from Satan's transformed followers), accounts of their activities can be puzzling. For example, several fundamentalist websites (like their patristic or Renaissance forebears) casuistically wrestle, as Jacob once wrestled

with an angel, with the moral—was Lot hero, villain, or victim? what were the two angels doing there?—of the bizarre account in Genesis 19 (the Bible's most elaborate narrative of angelic intervention) where Lot is visited by and entertains two angels in his house in Sodom. His home is then besieged by hordes of men, young and old (the narrative says), demanding access to the two obviously beautiful male creatures they spotted earlier so that they can gang rape them. Lot tries to see off the inflamed crowd by gallantly offering instead his two unmarried daughters for their pleasure. The randy Sodomites scoff at this, and the angels intervene by striking them all blind. (Later, it will be recalled, the two now unmarriageable daughters take their revenge by getting their now widowed father drunk—his wife having been turned into a pillar of salt—and sleeping with him...) But most angel lore was constructed very much later than the biblical texts themselves. Although in his *De Doctrina* Milton collected all the facts the Bible supplies about angels—that they are either good or evil, and that the good stand “dispersed around the throne of God in the capacity of ministering agents” (Norton edn. 466)—in his poem he plunders the non-biblical, esoteric and occult material freely, apparently uninhibited by the “Puritan reserve” of other writers reluctant to elaborate on anything that was not strictly scriptural. He is, after all, writing not schematic doctrine but creating an imaginative and pulsingly animated cosmos teeming with possible life-forms, and he populates it with as many of them as he can lay hands on.

Binaries assuredly help structure Milton's poem, as they are bound to: darkness and light, innocence and knowledge, reason and passion, truth and falsehood, or the ultimate binary of creator and created. But it should be obvious that an argument like Stephen Fallon's, demonstrating how in Milton's universe angels and men are of one substance, does not leave much work for binaries to do here—not Johnson's “spirit” and “matter,” nor our own “human” and “alien,” or even “human” and “animal.” Fallon notes that Milton's original and radical monism was quickly superseded by more “modern” and “scientific” eighteenth-century conceptions of the relation between matter and non-matter, accelerated by Descartes and inherited in part from Hobbes's scornful dismissal of a phrase like “incorporeal substance” as essentially incoherent. It is the cooler, scientific air, resistant to or sceptical of the existence of angels or aliens, that modern readers of Milton inhabit, though clearly reluctantly and uncomfortably at times.

But for Milton that phrase “incorporeal substance” is not incoherent or oxymoronic at all (as it is not for modern quantum physics), but an expression of the mystery of materiality that, diffused throughout the universe, can inhabit men and angels, the corporeal and the apparently incorporeal. For Milton, spirits exist not in another dimension, but in our own. By the same token, we too live in theirs. And for a brief and transient moment, extending over the first eight books of the poem, until the fatal eating of the forbidden fruit, Milton imagines the working out of this fundamental *identity* between human and non-human beings, both upwards to angels, who “though Spirits of Heav’n / ... visit thee” (5.374–75), and down to the world of animals: “About them frisking playd / All Beasts of th’Earth, since wilde” (4.340–31). The fragmentation of this identity and connectedness is one of the most poignant indices of Paradise being truly lost. It is the loss of a sense of belonging, and a loss of hope. The animals desert Adam and Eve, and Raphael never drops in again. Adam had earlier assured Eve that “Millions of spiritual Creatures walk the Earth, / Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep” (4.677–78) and had pointed to the evidence of their close presence, heard on “the midnight air” or on their “nightly rounding walk.” The rapid end of Adam and Eve’s open traffic with such beings is recorded by the epic narrator as he begins the book in which the Fall is to occur:

No more of talk where God or Angel Guest
 With Man, as with his Friend, familiar us’d
 To sit indulgent, and with him partake
 Rural repast...

I now must change
 Those Notes to Tragic.

(9.1–6)

To be sure, the concept of Christian “tragedy” is deeply contradictory, as Milton well knows, and in his justification of “the wayes of God to men” he resoundingly echoes the Augustinian “fortunate fall”—the fall we had to have to become not “humanoid” but truly human. But, just as the Garden becomes a rock in the Persian Gulf, “an Iland salt and bare, / The haunt of Seales and Orcs, and Sea-mews clang,” so angels, as the bridge between the human and the divine, fade into the shadows at the Fall. In Milton’s diagnosis of the human condition (which seems equally if not more relevant to our own time and place), the loss induces in both cases a profound and abiding nostalgia: the one for

the remembered Garden, the other for the lost discourse with the spirits of heaven. Even when the Son "appears" in the Garden to question Adam and Eve after the Fall, he is only a disembodied voice.

Subsequent appearances by angels in the poem are distinctly scary, and predict the uneasy relationship that characterizes our future history of commerce with them. "Heav'n," as the epic narrator remarks, is "now alienated" (9.8–9). In the last two books it is the archangel Michael, recent war hero, who is assigned the task of sitting Adam down to watch reel after reel of film, as it were, of humankind's bleak and painful future, though leavened finally with the promise of an ultimate redemption. It is Michael too who organizes the scowling squadron of Cherubim to throng the gate from Paradise "With dreadful Faces" and "fierie Armes," and to thrust Adam and Eve out into human history: "whereat / In either hand the hastening Angel caught / Our lingring Parents, and to th'Eastern Gate / Led them direct" (12.624–39). Thus Milton's angels, or aliens now, define further for us, through what we have lost, what it means to be human: they are a crucial part of the myth written at large in *Paradise Lost* designed to account for our recurrent dreams of Eden, and for our dreams of angels.

NOTES

- 1 Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, vol.1, "Milton" (London: Dent, 1958), 107.
- 2 Quotations from *Paradise Lost* are from *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, ed. Helen Darbishire (London: Oxford University Press, 1958).
- 3 *John Milton: Paradise Lost*, ed. Scott Elledge, second edition, Norton Critical Editions (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993).
- 4 *Milton: Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler (London: Longman, 1971), 365n.
- 5 *Angels in the Early Modern World*, ed. Alexandra Walsham and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- 6 Robert H. West, "The Substance of Milton's Angels," in *Saula Studies in Milton: Essays on John Milton and his Works*, ed. J. Max Patrick (University of Florida Press, 1953); and *Milton and the Angels* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1955).
- 7 Stephen M. Fallon, *Milton among the Philosophers* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1991).

**DAPHNE DU MAURIER'S *MY COUSIN RACHEL*:
IN THE LOOKING GLASS**

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In 1905, Freud published “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality.” His theories were very popular in the early twentieth century: in particular his naming of the unconscious and his discovery of the Oedipus complex and infantile sexuality. Incest was finally brought into the public legal domain with “The Punishment of Incest Act,”¹ which was passed in 1908 and yet remained a subject that was concealed and relegated into the realm of fantasy.² By the 1920s, lesbianism and bisexuality had also entered the language of sexuality, and in 1921 there were attempts to adjust the Criminal law Amendment Act to include lesbianism and bring it in line with male homosexuality as illegal. However, these attempts were defeated on the grounds that the inclusion of lesbianism in the Act would lead to women’s awareness of something they were not aware of and *should not be aware of*—a woman’s place in society was to love and serve men. Daphne du Maurier was born on the 12 May 1907, two years after Freud had published his essays, and her formative years were circumscribed by the burgeoning discourse on sexuality that had entered the public arena. This is reflected in her writing in which she dared to voice the unspeakable: the subject of incest.

Margaret Foster in her biography on du Maurier comments that in her writing the gap between reality and fantasy often narrowed and, when the two became confused, so did she.³ I argue instead that the gap between reality and fantasy is clearly marked in du Maurier’s writing—fantasy expressed through fictitious characters and situations; and reality through her subject matter, namely, incestuous desire. Forster asserts that Daphne was “two distinct

people,” and writing gave her release from thoughts and ideas that disturbed her, and her “whole life’s work was an attempt to defy reality and create a world far more exciting and true than the one in which she lived” (419). Du Maurier is widely celebrated as a writer of popular romance in the gothic genre and, undoubtedly a great “story teller,” mesmerises her readers by immersing them in the plot to the extent that the subtext becomes occluded. It is indeed arguable that incest underpins most of du Maurier’s writing. Her unconscious was obsessed with incest and dominated by a “compulsion to repeat” the theme in different ways over and over again in her writing. As Freud explains:

It is clear that the greater part of what is re-experienced under the compulsion to repeat must cause the ego unpleasure, since it brings to light activities of repressed instinctual impulses.⁴

It seems that du Maurier tried to come to terms with incest through her writing, and the “unpleasure” she experienced, due to her “compulsion to repeat” the theme, becomes palpable in the horror and macabre that underpin her writing. It is a plausible reason that the relationships in her fiction are so tortured, a factor that led her to write texts that can fairly be described as bizarre. This paper will focus on three of du Maurier’s novels—*Rebecca*⁵, *Frenchman’s Creek*⁶ and *My Cousin Rachel*⁷—in which she engages with doubles and mirror-imaging. It will draw on the methodologies of Freud’s Oedipal schema and offer a close textual reading that will explore these texts as a representation of a quest for identity for du Maurier through the nameless narrator in *Rebecca*, Dona St Columb in *Frenchman’s Creek*, and Philip in *My Cousin Rachel*.

There is a temptingly autobiographical resonance to du Maurier’s writing. Martyn Shallcross in his biography on du Maurier notes that *Rebecca* is not in the “usual mould” of romantic fiction—it is also a study of du Maurier’s “own personality and repressed sexuality” and can “almost be regarded as an autobiography in disguise—not only her private thoughts but also her personal experiences went into the story.”⁸ Forster records that when du Maurier thought back to the writing of *Rebecca* it “made her dwell on the story of her own life” (391). She also says that du Maurier “often felt vicious and full of rage” but hid her feelings, never allowing them to “emerge except in her work” (396), and it was through the escapism of writing that she truly lived (416). Du Maurier herself asserted in her autobiographical *Myself When Young*

“if writing goes there would be no longer any reason for living.”⁹ Writing gave her the freedom to explore and come to terms with the self she presented to the world and the self that emerges in her writing in her search for identity.

It has been well documented that du Maurier had a very close relationship with her father—her male protagonists seem, interestingly, to reflect her father in different ways that range from the incestuous relationship between Janet and her son, Joseph, in du Maurier's first novel *The Loving Spirit*, published in 1931, to the fun-loving Jake and his surrogate son, Dick, in *I'll Never Be Young Again*, Julius and his incestuous relationship with his daughter Gabriel in *The Progress of Julius*, Joss Merlyn and his niece, Mary, in *Jamaica Inn*, the nameless narrator and Maxim in *Rebecca*, Ambrose and his nephew Philip in *My Cousin Rachel*, and years later in her short story “A Border-Line Case,” published in 1971, in which Nick, the chief protagonist, has a sexual relationship with his daughter, Jinnie.

Before moving on from the autobiographical resonance of her work, I want to state that my paper will not present an (auto)biographical reading of du Maurier's writing but rather, drawing on the methodologies of Freud's Oedipal schema and offering a close textual reading, it will explore her texts as a gothic representation of a quest for identity. It will trace out psychological patterns that have been hitherto un-remarked, which (though I do not wish to emphasise the point unduly) seem closely connected with the experiences and circumstances of du Maurier herself. The provocative and rebellious thrust of anti-realism in du Maurier's narratives both question and subvert established notions of order, control and restrictive ideology, in particular the Oedipal, by reproducing and yet challenging the patriarchal world in which she lived.

In *The Rebecca Notebook* du Maurier upholds both the Oedipal and the anti-Oedipal—she acknowledges the importance of marriage, “the law of the family unit, the binding together of a man and a woman to produce children,” yet she sees this as a flawed system: “the fact that marriages so often fail is our misfortune. Incest being denied us, we must make do with second best.”¹⁰ In her introduction to the *Notebook* Alison Light makes no reference to du Maurier's assertion that an incestuous relationship is preferable to a

records that du Maurier was “condemned” to “subterfuge” because of her “Venetian tendencies” and her attitude “sprang” from her father’s “detestation” of homosexuality, and this is why she could never have admitted to them. She says that du Maurier “battled with it all her life and the result is seen in her work” and it is due to her efforts to control her “No 2” persona, the “boy-in-the-box,” that she felt “tortured”; yet, it had the positive effect of fuelling her creative powers (419). Du Maurier’s “Venetian tendencies” have been well documented by Forster and Shallcross—however, it was not a subject that tormented her to the extent that she felt compelled to exorcise it or come to terms with it through repeating the theme over and over again in her writing. I argue instead that du Maurier felt “tortured” all her life because of her obsession with incest and she felt compelled to try and come to terms with it in her writing and this is evidenced in her work, manifested in the macabre and bizarre. In any event, at this point I wish not to speculate biographically about du Maurier herself but to pursue the textual resonance of her work for an understanding of its exploration of incest through du Maurier’s engagement of doubles and mirror imaging.

One of the stock devices of the gothic novel is the haunted house, and its gendered and ideological construction as woman’s place is used by du Maurier to signify the containment of women within traditional power structures whereas, the standard motifs of violence and eroticism in the novels, combine to create the uncanny that typifies the genre. Rebecca, Dona and Rachel evade the strictures of their confinement: Rebecca openly flaunts Max’s wishes and follows her desires; although Dona lives in Navron House with her children, overtly conforming to her Oedipal role, she secretly, aided and abetted by William, a Danver’s like servant, escapes to join the pirate—neither her husband, Harry, nor Lord Godolphin, any the wiser. Rachel ignores Philip’s expectations that she will stay on the estate—she does what she wants.

All three novels are heavily laced with the gothic: *Rebecca* opens with a dream sequence in which the narrator is possessed with supernatural powers and passes “like a spirit through the barrier before [her],” returning to Manderley to reunite with the ghostly presence of Rebecca. Indeed, she can do this whenever she wants, through her imagination: “for if I wish I can give rein to my imagination, and pick foxgloves and pale champions from a wet, streaking hedge” (11). There is, of course, a sexual resonance to that natural imagery. The landscape surrounding the house is dominated by nature and imaged like a witch who “in her stealthy,

insidious way had encroached up on the drive with long, tenacious fingers" (6). In *Frenchman's Creek*, the creek that runs close to Navron House is presented as ghostly, enchanted and mysterious. Strange shadows, the appearance of a "painted phantom ship," the apparition in the moonlight of a man dressed as a pirate and a woman with "dark ringlets" (9–10), all add to the ghostly atmosphere. In *My Cousin Rachel*, Philip notices that on his estate "the trees that fringed the lawns were black and still"; he hears the "high sharp bark of a vixen" and sees "the lean low body creep" (162–63). When he is in Fiesole (near Florence), the sound of the city bells evoke death and gloom, and Rachel's villa has a "medieval musty smell" (34). As he stands on the bridge beside the river Arno, he sees the body of a dog "stiff and slowly turning, with its four legs in the air" (47).

In *Rebecca*, the nameless narrator is obsessed with the ghostly presence of Rebecca, her husband/father Maxim de Winter's dead wife, who is her mirror image, and in *My Cousin Rachel*, Philip is obsessed with his uncle/father Ambrose, his mirror-image. After Ambrose dies, Philip's obsession shifts to Rachel, Ambrose's wife, and after her death he unites with his uncle's spirit and "becomes" Ambrose. Rebecca and Rachel are feminine, beautiful and passionate, prototypes of women in gothic romance who are damned—either killed by their male partners or imprisoned because they are deemed mad: Rebecca and Rachel are murdered by their male lovers in contrived accidents.¹¹ They are both anti-Oedipal, whereas Dona, also passionate and beautiful, functions as two selves: the Oedipal and the anti-Oedipal. Dona's desire is to release her "No 2" persona, "the-boy-in-the-box," and "become" man. However, to avoid being perceived as "other" she conforms to society's expectations in her female role and had consented to be the Dona her world had demanded—"a superficial lovely creature, who walked, and talked, and laughed [...] and all the while another Dona, a strange, phantom Dona peered at her from a dark mirror and was ashamed"(15). Covertly and imperceptibly, she "becomes" man through her identification with the French pirate Jean-Benoit Aubéry, and becomes his "cabin boy."

Amidst such gothic presentations of the uncanny lies more than a hint of incest. In *Rebecca* it can be inferred, for a start, in the narrator's relationship with de Winter. As Forster observes, she is reduced to begging for Max's love as her father, brother and son (138). She refers to herself as a "little scrubby schoolboy with a passion for a sixth form prefect" and "young enough to win happiness in the wearing of his clothes, playing the schoolboy again

who carries his hero's sweater and ties it about his throat choking with pride" (39). The father-daughter/son relationship is clear—Maxim, who is twice the narrator's age, tells her that a husband "is not so very different from a father after all". He treats her like a child and even suggests that she go to the Manderley Ball dressed as Alice in Wonderland. After appearing at the ball wearing the same dress as Rebecca, she is humiliated by Max who orders her to take it off. His anxiety concerning her adult female sexuality makes it necessary for him to keep her infantilised, and this is evidenced early in the narrative when he tells her he is attracted to her *because* she does not dress in black satin, with a string of pearls, and she is not thirty-six (41). The father-daughter/son relationship is further emphasised when Maxim tells the narrator she is "young enough" to be his daughter and he does not know how to "deal" with her (45), and Danvers (the housekeeper) herself says she is a "young ignorant girl, young enough to be his daughter" (255). Thus it can easily be argued in the context of father and daughter/son, that Maxim and the narrator's relationship borders on the incestuous. Her insecurity and fear of failure in her role as the second Mrs de Winter is because she is shy and inexperienced—she is Maxim's "poor lamb" (67), and "good dog" (125), which is why she identifies with the strong and confident Rebecca, a threat to established notions of order and control. Hand in glove with the novel's evocation of incest is its evocation of lesbian desire. Danvers is a ghostly shadowy figure who keeps the memory of the dead Rebecca alive. She crystalises the lesbian subtext in the erotic scene in Rebecca's bedroom when she shows the narrator Rebecca's bed and accuses her of touching Rebecca's nightdress (176). Critics have observed that Danvers's obsession with Rebecca's clothes and Maxim's statement that Rebecca was "not even normal" suggests Danvers "may have engaged in a lesbian relationship with her."¹² The narrator is Oedipal—she reflects the values of the dominant ideology whereas her mirror image, Rebecca, challenges those values. She is worldly, immoral, flirtatious and her being elaborately associated with the uncanny, the covert, the taboo—takes popular romance through the darkly gothic into the domain of modern understandings of the sexual (12).

In "The 'Uncanny'" Freud discusses the phenomenon of the "double":

the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous

self for his own. In other words, there is doubling and interchanging of the self.¹³

On the penultimate page of *Rebecca*, the uncanny “doubling and interchanging” of the narrator’s self with Rebecca takes place when she sees a face staring back at her in the looking-glass that was not her own: “It was pale, very lovely, framed in a cloud of dark hair.” The narrative trajectory inexorably blends both identities—the narrator finally merges with Rebecca—she no longer lives in her shadow (396). The realist story of the narrator imprisoned in her marriage to de Winter interplays with the anti-realist gothic genre. Rebecca is the monstrous double of the narrator—she represents the “monstrous feminine” because, like Dona and Rachel, everything she signifies is a threat to the Oedipal construct. Susanne Becker in *Gothic Forms of Feminine Fiction* comments on those narratives that construct a figure for the “monstrous-feminine” that enhances the horror of the story and such a figure is “particularly suggestive”:

the “monsters” of the feminine gothic are among the most powerful female figures of literary history, representing forces which are among the most challenging to the structures both of the house of fiction and of the symbolic order. (56)

Like *Rebecca*, *Frenchman's Creek* commences with a dream sequence, the dream motif re-occurring throughout the narrative. Du Maurier engages with anti-realism in her representation of a search for identity for Dona who merges with her mirror image, the French pirate. The relationship between Dona and the pirate borders on the incestuous. The pirate mirrors Maxim de Winter: he is a father figure to Dona and she is his “cabin-boy” (106). Like the narrator and Maxim’s marriage, Dona and Sir Harry’s marriage is boring and lifeless and she yearns for release—she escapes into a dream world and “becomes” man. When she joins Jean-Benoit on his ship, he tells her she is “one of us” — part of his gang of pirates—and it seems to Dona “like a dream under the sun” (55). Dona and the pirate want to escape from their ascribed roles in society. Dona wants “to become somebody else” and he confesses to having felt “weary” of his role as Jean-Benoit Ambéry and therefore “turned into a pirate” and built his ship the *La Mouette* (64). He is her mirror image: they are two sides of the same coin. Although he had never met Dona before, he knows all about her and can read her thoughts (50). He admits seeking the “comfort” of

her bedroom at Navron House in her absence and “somehow” feels she “would not mind.” He says:

I consulted your portrait [...] I addressed myself to it several times. My lady, I said [...] would you grant a very weary Frenchman the courtesy of your bed? And it seemed to me that you bowed gracefully and gave me permission” (54).

Dona yearns to be a man (102): she dresses in breeches (115), impersonates a groom (225), and even fights like a man and kills Rockingham (192/3). In a strange re-enactment of du Maurier’s relationship with her father, Gerald, the pirate tells Dona she should have been a boy: “It is a pity you were not born a boy” (91). Shallcross notes that:

Gerald had always wanted a son and Daphne became, before her sexual awakening, his surrogate boy [...] Daphne sometimes dressed in boys’ shirts and trousers [...] Muriel (Daphne’s mother) was jealous of Daphne and of the love, attention and expensive gifts Gerald showered on her (43)

The search for identity that du Maurier begins in *Rebecca* and continues in *Frenchman’s Creek* through the use of doubles and mirror imagery is reinforced in *My Cousin Rachel*. Rachel is an enigma for Philip: he oscillates between trust and doubt. No sooner does he think she is innocent of Ambrose’s death than she does something to unsettle him. Like Rebecca and Dona, Rachel is slippery, unfixed, changeable, attractive and sexy, and although Philip had never “loved anyone in the world but Ambrose” (94), he falls in love with Rachel after Ambrose’s death. When Philip first learns of Ambrose’s plan to marry Rachel, he feels the “jealousy of a child who must suddenly share the one person in his life with a stranger” (23). Ambrose and Philip’s relationship is reminiscent of the father/son relationship with its incestuous and homosexual undertones in du Maurier’s *I’ll Never Be Young Again* that is in turn reminiscent of du Maurier’s relationship with her father. Forster records that du Maurier adored and hero-worshipped her “fun-loving” father, and this changed as she grew into young womanhood, which made Gerald insecure. He became controlling and suspicious and, because he felt his parental role slipping, began openly to express the wish that he was Daphne’s brother and “hoped” that after his death “he could come back as her son” (52–3). Ambrose is “seized with pity for his small orphaned cousin” and

"brought" him up "as he might have done a puppy, or a kitten, or any frail and lonely thing needing protection" (11). Philip not only identifies with Ambrose, he eventually *becomes* Ambrose: "I looked like Ambrose ... I felt like Ambrose" (9). When Rachel first sees Philip, her eyes "widen[ed] in sudden recognition" (72); she thinks she sees Ambrose: "Not Philip, but a phantom" (9).

The final scene in *My Cousin Rachel* is an uncanny re-enactment of the merging of the narrator and Rebecca in the looking glass, and Dona and the French pirate through Dona's portrait in her bedroom. Before Rachel dies, she looks at Philip: "she called me Ambrose, I went on holding her hands until she died.". Rachel's death frees Philip: he merges with his mirror image, Ambrose:

I have wondered lately if, when he died [...] whether his spirit left his body and came home here to mine, taking possession, so that he lived again in me, repeating his own mistakes, caught the disease once more and perished twice. It may be so. All I know is that my likeness to him, of which I was so proud, proved my undoing. (8)

NOTES

- ¹ "The Punishment of Incest Act 1908: A Case Study of Law Creation", *Criminal Law Review* (1979): 708-718, 709.
- ² Elizabeth Ward, *Father-Daughter Rape* (London: The Women's Press, 1984), 105.
- ³ Margaret Forster, *Daphne du Maurier: The Secret Life of the Renowned Storyteller* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 417.
- ⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond The Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961), 14.
- ⁵ Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938; rpt. Arrow Edition, Random House, London, 1992)
- ⁶ Daphne du Maurier, *Frenchman's Creek* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1941; rpt. Arrow Edition, Random House, London, 1992)
- ⁷ Daphne du Maurier, *My Cousin Rachel* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1951; rpt. Arrow Edition, Random House, London, 1992)
- ⁸ Martyn Shallcross, *The Private World of Daphne du Maurier* (London: Robson Books, 1998), 76,78.
- ⁹ Daphne du Maurier, *Myself When Young: The Shaping of A Writer* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 163.
- ¹⁰ Daphne du Maurier, *The Rebecca Notebook and Other Memories* (London: Virago Press, 1981; rpt 2004), 115.
- ¹¹ See Joanna Russ, "Somebody Is Trying To Kill Me and I Think It's My Husband: The Modern Gothic," in *The Female Gothic*, ed. Juliann E. Fleenor (London: Eden Press, 1983), 3. Susanne Becker, *Gothic*

Forms Of Feminine Fiction (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 86.

¹² Richard Kelly, *Daphne du Maurier* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), 60.

¹³ ““The Uncanny”” in *The Standard Edition Of The Complete Psychological Works Of Sigmund Freud*,” trans. James Strachey, Vol XV11, 1917–1919, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955. rpt. 1964), 234.

**MORE HUMAN THAN HUMAN:
THE ETHICS OF ALIENATION IN
OCTAVIA E. BUTLER AND GILLES DELEUZE**

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Since Octavia E. Butler published her first novel *Patternmaster*, in 1976,¹ her science fiction and fantasy novels have attracted interest from a range of perspectives, including feminist literary studies, postcolonial theory and posthumanism. Across the *Patternmaster* and *Xenogenesis* series, Butler's engagement with the gendered dimensions of ethical and social obligation has intersected in striking ways with ongoing discussions in feminist and postcolonial critical theory, while being criticized for its recuperation of normative family values and its naturalization of gendered social behaviours.² In this paper, I will explore her complex ethical responses to developments in genetics and sociobiology in the 1970s, with a focus on the ethics of filiation and altruism in Butler's works, and drawing upon celebratory and critical readings of Butler from the feminist perspectives of Donna Haraway, Nancy Jesser and Michelle Osherow. Butler's speculations about the possibilities of futures based on very different "humans" will then be compared with those of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, whose philosophies of biology and human agency, especially those developed with Felix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, reflect similar anxieties around the normative definitions of human behavior implicit in both sociobiology and psychoanalysis. While it is difficult to place philosophical texts in conversation with literary works, especially when both authors and their imagined audiences are separated by linguistic, cultural and geographical divides, this analysis teases out some of the overlapping challenges faced in mapping out utopian (or revolutionary) thought beyond the limits of the human.

For both Butler and Deleuze, the relationships between biology, the family and interpersonal ethics are always embedded in political problems: what are the basic human needs that currently underpin, or *should* underpin, forms of social organisation? What sorts of personal relationships are valued or ignored by dominant discursive regimes of social representation? In answering these questions, Butler and Deleuze diverge significantly in the emphases they place on care, interpersonal dependencies and intimacy, but they do share a common rejection of “top down” structuralist explanations of human behavior and cultural norms. Instead, the immanent and variable necessities of creation and survival, shaped by the urgencies and traumas of lived experience, come to the foreground as starting points for ethical thinking and living.

However, this focus is not intended to minimize the importance of the racial politics and colonial “resonances” in Octavia Butler’s work.³ In an interview, Butler offers her Nebula award-winning short-story “Bloodchild” as a re-scripting of the early science fiction scenarios that modeled themselves on the colonial venture (Kenan 498), and a similar case could be made for the *Xenogenesis* series: the key narrative revolves around migrating aliens seeking a new planet, but needing to negotiate with disempowered local inhabitants, sometimes through force or coercion, the terms of their occupation. Nevertheless, an overly allegorical treatment of Butler’s novels risks obscuring her deliberate use of the science fiction genre to distill ideas around familial and interpersonal ethics that underpin her broader critiques of hierarchical, patriarchal and racist social institutions. This paper’s focus on gender difference as an organizing ethical trope in Butler’s work is thus intended as a complement to broader discussions around the function of “race” and “culture” in naturalizing and reproducing (sometimes literally) wider forms of social injustice and inequality.

For *Wild Seed*, published in 1980,⁴ much of which is set in nineteenth-century Louisiana, Butler drew on both her own family history and on African myths, most prominently the myth of Atagbusi, which she creatively works into the overarching narratives of the *Patternmaster* saga.⁵ Although the third written in the series, *Wild Seed* acts as a prequel, introducing us to the ancient spirit Doro who kills by taking over human bodies and consuming their souls. In *Wild Seed* and then *Mind of My Mind*,⁶ Doro engages in a social engineering project, collecting strangely gifted individuals, usually telepathic but sometimes shape-shifting or telekinetic, and breeding them to amplify their abilities. Doro meets Anyanwu, a 300 year old woman with the ability to shape-

shift into any living being, and who like him, is the parent of numerous kinship lineages, also fulfilling the role of doctor and, if necessary, protector. But her interest in her extended kin is entirely altruistic—while Doro seems to value his progeny only insofar as they contribute to his prized gene pools and exploits his role as demi-God by taking women at his choosing, Anyanwu is her peoples' oracle and healer, a maternal guardian who frequently sacrifices her personal autonomy and happiness for her kin. While Doro breeds his people like "cattle," as Butler puts it (*Wild Seed* 200), Anyanwu intends to build a family.

After their first meeting, Doro takes Anyanwu as his wife, with threats that if she is not willing to produce children for him, he can always pursue and possibly kill her own living kin. Anyanwu is further bound to Doro through the children she has with him: like the female characters in Butler's *Kindred*,⁷ Anyanwu's devotion to her children forces her into patriarchal subservience. Most surprisingly, *Mind of My Mind* delivers a plot twist in which Anyanwu commits suicide shortly after Doro's own death, with the suggestion that her long-term enslavement to him has grown into genuine feelings of affection.

While their respective shape-shifting abilities could have facilitated a narrative unfettered by issues of biological sex difference,⁸ Butler uses Doro and Anyanwu to provide seemingly normative examples of male and female behaviour that transcend historical or social contexts. Over the hundreds of years that *Wild Seed* and *Mind of My Mind* take place, and throughout numerous sex and body changes, Doro and Anyanwu's essential tendencies towards "masculine" and "feminine" behaviours subsist. For different people, Anyanwu can become a mother, an older sister, a teacher and a lover, but never a master, trader or business entrepreneur. These are roles reserved for Doro and his male offspring, like Karl (in *Mind of My Mind*), who attend to their various investments and control people as if they were "robots" (*Mind of My Mind* 291). Butler's gender roles thus frequently conform to well-established patriarchal divisions between the public (masculine) and the private (feminine), or between social production, associated with the "industrial man," and social reproduction, associated with feminine domesticity and the "maternal instinct."

Nevertheless, these worlds are rarely mutually exclusive in Butler's novels: a key tension throughout *Wild Seed*, but also 1978's *Survivor*,⁹ is around the uses of the "political sphere" itself, which is usually administrated by men but always impacts upon, and is

necessarily negotiated by, the female protagonists. Butler keenly explores the power relations between these gendered domains, through Alanna's pleas for cooperation between her husband and her father in *Survivor*, and in Anyanwu's demands for compassion from Doro in the management of his enslaved peoples.

These tensions find their parallel in the *Xenogenesis* trilogy, beginning with *Dawn* (1987) and followed by *Adulthood Rites* (1988) and *Imago* (1989).¹⁰ *Dawn* introduces a strong female character called Lilith,¹¹ who is charged with the task of building and sustaining new human families in a post-apocalyptic world. The novel begins with her awakening on an alien spaceship, home to the Oankali, who have rescued a handful of human survivors from a nuclear war that has ravaged the Earth. The Oankali themselves are motivated by their innate and irrepressible desire to mix their genes with those of other species: they "consume difference" by producing offspring with mixed-species parenthood (literally, "xenogenesis"). The Oankali offer the humans little choice but to breed with them, having altered the human survivors so they can no longer breed with each other. In this respect, the Oankali are highly manipulative, using humans only insofar as they further the aliens' own ends, and forcing them to make an impossible choice: co-operate or become extinct.

The situation of the humans in the *Xenogenesis* trilogy parallels that of Anyanwu in her relationship with Doro—because of her desire to have children and have a family, she is forced to accommodate Doro's tyrannical power over her and her progeny. In both these scenarios, there is an underlying tension between individual autonomy and familial (and, more generally, social) obligation, with the latter invested in primarily by female characters. And again, Lilith's commitment to ethical personal relationships and family are complicated by the political resonances of her position as the builder of the new human population, both through her enhanced strength (a gift from the Oankali) and political leadership, and through her role (literally) as mother of a new generation. In this way, the constitution of a new political community intersects directly with issues around reproductive rights and the role of the family: Lilith is persuaded, if not entirely coerced, to have a half-Oankali baby as part of a "nation-building" project.¹²

The dependence of political and community projects on the familial sphere is most clearly articulated in *Dawn* and *Adulthood Rites*, when the Oankali decide to repopulate the earth by breeding with humans, the aspiring alpha-male Gabe takes his wife Tate and

a handful of humans to start a Resister community called Phoenix, in which, without Oankali assistance, families will be infertile. The reader later discovers that Tate wanted to stay with Lilith, who chose the option of family—even a mixed-species one—over the individual autonomy desired by the men. Phoenix, while initially prosperous, is torn apart by a combination of constant attacks from male marauders, intent on capturing women to rape and to sell to other villages, and their own boredom and despair. Tate describes theirs as a “pointless” existence: “We don’t have kids, and nothing we do means shit” (*Dawn* 185). The meaning Butler thus ascribes to human life is thus directly tied to familial relationships and, in particular, the kin altruism displayed by female characters.

Here Butler’s humanism also reaches a paradox: by fulfilling the basic human imperative to reproduce and raise a family, the humans in *Xenogenesis* must reproduce with other species, thus precluding the reproduction of an exclusively “human” biology. Being “human” in Butler’s moral sense, then, involves abandoning narrow conceptions of the human as a stable (or desirable) biological category. This is a major theme in the *Xenogenesis* trilogy, when the so-called “humanization” or acceptance of the Oankali takes place through the forging of family ties. To put it simply, being “human” has little to do with ontology (what one “is”) and everything to do with altruistic behaviours (what one “does”), which are in turn presented as the domain of the feminine.

An influential reading of Butler’s gender politics is that suggested by Donna Haraway in “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century.” She suggests that alongside acclaimed sci-fi writers like Joanna Russ and Samuel Delany, Butler is a story-teller “exploring what it means to be embodied in high-tech worlds. They are theorists for cyborgs”.¹³ Cathy Peppers follows Haraway’s reading, suggesting that the mixed-species offspring in *Xenogenesis* provide an image of the human being’s basic cyborg condition, its potential to become something else and blur the distinctions between the human and the alien.¹⁴ In turn, human identity is rendered porous, as different conceptions of self outside those naturalised by biological differences come into being: children without determinate sex, for example, or children with the ability to control their sexual biology, as is the case with some Oankali and their mixed-species offspring. Like Haraway, Peppers conceives Butler’s post-human imaginary as a challenge to social assumptions about race and gender, exploring the potential for differences beyond those recognized by current epistemologies and ultimately leading towards a xenophilia—the

love of the Other, or in this case, the alien—rather than xenophobia.¹⁵ This reading is supported by the centrality of unexpected interpersonal relationships and family structures in Butler's novels, from incest to interspecies relationships to (biological) parenthood shared between three or even five adults. Butler forces us to confront normative assumptions about what the human body can do and critiques hierarchical, and specifically patriarchal, social arrangements as (literally) dead ends for the human species.

Furthermore, *Dawn's* Lilith is highly reluctant to take on a maternal social role expected of her by both human men and the Oankali. The "maternal" identity forced upon Lilith, as the prospective "mother" of the new human population, is shown to be impossibly compromised, insofar as Lilith must negotiate between jealous women, domineering men and the omnipotent Oankali. Butler is less concerned with whether women should adopt maternal roles than with the strategies women develop for surviving the demands of a (seemingly inevitable) gendered division of labour. For this reason, Nancy Jesser argues that "Butler proposes a world of interaction between the female body and the world it is situated within," and links Butler's feminism to her discussion of Simone de Beauvoir's "situated body."¹⁶

However, in the course of the *Xenogenesis* series, Lilith not only adopts, but eventually embraces, what Michelle Osherow describes as the "Eve" function, the mother of all (76). Anyanwu and *Dawn's* Lilith and Tate all exhibit "maternal instincts" and a need for family rarely found in Butler's male characters, and not entirely explained by their "situatedness" in their social worlds. Rather, many of the key struggles that animate Butler's texts are not just between the "sexes" as biological constructs, but between explicitly gendered psychological dispositions: violence against healing, individuality against family, social ambition against domestic harmony, the latter values held exclusively by women.¹⁷

As Jesser points out, Butler's stories of women displaying or adopting certain behaviours in order to ensure the survival of their children places her novels in conversation with the sociobiology of the 1970s and, more recently, evolutionary psychology.¹⁸ In interview, Butler says that "I don't accept what I would call classical sociobiology. Sometimes we can work around our programming if we understand it."¹⁹ Jeffrey A. Tucker characterises this as a hardware/software approach, corresponding to biology and culture, respectively (179–80). In *Wild Seed*, the challenge faced by the offspring of Doro, hardwired to be telepathic and sometimes

shapeshifting, is to live functional and responsible lives alongside other human beings. Those of Doro's progeny with the telepathic ability to feel someone else's pain become their own worst enemies, insofar as biological determinations conflict with personal or emotional interests. In the *Xenogenesis* series, Butler provides examples of characters "working around" their hardwiring: much of *Dawn* finds both Oankali and Lilith herself preoccupied with ways to minimize male aggression and destabilize those hierarchical social divisions to which humans' own genes have naturally predisposed them.

Haraway and Peppers' alignment of Butler with a social constructivist feminist theory overlooks Butler's dependency on genetically transmittable "feminine" biological traits. Across both the *Patternmaster* and *Xenogenesis* sagas, Butler naturalises parenthood—and especially motherhood—as an essential, if highly rewarding, feminine activity. In this respect, Butler's position differs markedly to that of Haraway, who argues that "Ideologies of sexual reproduction can no longer reasonably call on notions of sex and sex role as organic aspects in natural objects like organisms and families" (61). For Butler, the centrality of "family" is rarely questioned, but the political dynamics of reproductive power are constantly placed under scrutiny, especially when family projects become tied to community building and larger structures of patriarchal domination.

So far, I have outlined some of the key ethical themes in *Wild Seed*, *Mind of My Mind* and the *Xenogenesis* series. On the one hand, like Haraway and Peppers, Butler is highly critical any humanism that would posit the human body as a stable entity, or that would overlook the role of social practices in negotiating the ways in which we understand our bodily experiences. On the other hand, she commits her protagonists—whether human, shape-shifting or alien—to the basic imperatives of family building and reproduction, while unambiguously suggesting that those values most useful to this endeavour are almost exclusively held by women. In this way, she re-instates a familiar dichotomy of maternal kin altruism pitted against an almost Hobbesian male individualism. In the following section of this paper, I will discuss French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's ethical engagement with what he has sometimes described as "vitalism."²⁰ In doing so, I will point to some of the parallels between the Deleuzian and Butlerian critiques of humanism and human identity, while also drawing attention to their conflicting accounts of morality and, in particular, family.

Like Butler, Deleuze (and his collaborator, Felix Guattari) was

interested in the place of biological development, in particular neurobiology, in philosophical thought, while careful not to reproduce the normative principles of “social engineering” that frequently accompany discussions of biology and human behavior. Deleuze’s fascination with non-human becomings and non-organic life is motivated by an impulse (inspired by Baruch Spinoza, Henri Bergson and Friedrich Nietzsche, among others) to explore and experiment with what the human body can do, the unfamiliar excitations that affect it and that connect with the non-human: “To open us up to the inhuman and the superhuman (*durations* which are inferior or superior to our own), to go beyond the human condition: This is the meaning of philosophy.”²¹ In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari focus on the ways in which normative understandings of the human psyche (through psychoanalysis in particular) intersect with wider socio-economic structures, turning the body, the family and the wider community into resources for ever-expanding cycles of capitalist production. The concept of the ‘human’, as it is used normatively in legal, political and philosophical discourses to organise social behaviours, is from the authors’ perspective a restriction on the possibilities for social, even revolutionary, change.²²

Moving away from functionalist or utilitarian understandings of human needs, Deleuze explores the internal difference of the biological organism from itself, its constitutive capacity for transformation and infinite variation. This human is defined not by what it lacks, but by how it produces its own conditions of existence: “what is missing is not things a subject feels the lack of somewhere deep down inside himself, but rather the objectivity of man, the objective being of man, for whom to desire is to produce.”²³ For Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, human desires are not tied to pre-existing goals, like reproduction, altruism, or even self interest, but are themselves productive: what we “want” is immanent to the act of “wanting.” Human “needs” are thus immanent to processes of biological and social becoming, in which the terms and limits of human existence are constantly renegotiated and rearticulated. In this respect, one might consider Butler’s Anyanwu a surprisingly Deleuzian protagonist, insofar as her basic identity is ensured only through her ability to transform, to become other than what she is. The Oankali of the *Xenogenesis* series are also prime candidates for a Deleuzian reading, insofar as their consumption of difference and commitment to xenogenesis makes them explicitly products of difference and alterity, rather than identity or species unity.

However, while a central theme across both Deleuze and Butler's work is the embrace of difference, and the ethical possibility of going beyond the human to imagine new social modes of being, the key moral imperatives at the heart of their writings contrast sharply. For Deleuze, the imperative towards exploring "new modes of existence" does not describe new biological entities or family formations, but rather corresponds to the possibility of new ways of thinking, with a particular emphasis on the rejection of all moral codes dependent on "recognisable" social identities. While, like Haraway and Butler, he displays a fascination with the possible permutations of the human body, this is intrinsically tied to a critique of social or biological identities (whether defined in terms of race, gender or sexuality) as the sites of genuine political struggle. Butler's empowered Earth Mother figures like Anyanwu, for example, might be critiqued for their subordination to oppressive structures of familial obligation, contingent on narrowly defined gendered identities. In Butlerian narratives the feminine Self is defined in relation to its Other (either kin or lover), while Deleuze insists that revolutionary movements exist outside or beyond any fixed categories of selfhood or otherness, which serve to create "internal colonies" in the psychic unconscious.²⁴

Most importantly, Deleuze and Guattari strongly argue that the family unit, far from being the fundamental interpersonal structure from which social relations are derived, (the "founding" familial Oedipal horde is, in this respect, as suspicious as the "Earth Mother" narrative of Lilith), is itself symptomatic of capitalism's re-territorialisations on private property and the familial household or "domestic sphere."²⁵ The moralisation of familial relations thus implicitly validates the ideology of "private persons" (*Anti-Oedipus* 286) necessitated by relations of private property ownership:

it is through a restriction, a blockage, and a reduction that the libido is made to repress its flows in order to contain them in the narrow cells of the type "couple," "family," "person," "objects" ... The persons to whom our loves are dedicated, including the parental persons, intervene only as points of connection, of disjunction, of conjunction of flows whose libidinal tenor of a properly unconscious investment they translate. (323)

From this perspective, the scenario presented in the case of the failed Phoenix project seems to suggest that liberty and individual fulfilment can be attained only through that altruistic bond with an

Other particular to familial relations. Butler's characters are arguably required to recognise the "human" in familial figures, even the alien or the unborn, in the case of precarious pregnancies (see *Kindred* and *Dawn*, in particular). For Deleuze and Guattari, these anthropomorphic co-ordinates of ethical meaning are themselves functions of politico-economic relations that seek to reinvest desire in oppressive social institutions. Thus, Anyanwu's commitment to family building could be read as benefiting, rather than resisting, Doro's financial economies of human production.

So what might escaping from closed "familial" (or Oedipal) investments involve? Here Deleuze and Guattari's narrow understanding of the "nuclear family" becomes more transparent. Behind the psychoanalytic "theatre" of the family the authors locate "an economic situation: the mother reduced to house-work, or to a difficult and uninteresting job on the outside; children whose future remains uncertain; the father who has had it with feeding all those mouths" (*Anti-Oedipus* 390). One might ask what changes might need to be made, economic or otherwise, to dismantle these "fascizing, moralizing, Puritan, familialist territorialities" (305). But Deleuze and Guattari do not put forward an economic argument for a re-organisation of the household division of labour; rather, Deleuze seems to advocate the abandonment of the family altogether. In his *Essays Critical and Clinical*, Deleuze finds Franz Kafka in "combat against the castle, against judgment, against his father, against his fiancées,"²⁶ as if fiancés or fathers are so inevitably and inescapably "Oedipal" that no re-negotiation of power relations within the family (nuclear or otherwise) could be conceived as possible or desirable.

The bind inevitably faced by Deleuze and Guattari's critique of psychoanalysis is that, while de-naturalising Oedipus, Oedipalisation remains the only lens through which the family is understood. This leads to a fetishisation of the "nuclear family" as the only relevant familial structure in the operation of Western capitalism,²⁷ and ultimately depends on the indirect "evidence" provided about the nuclear family by psychoanalysts, who—as Deleuze and Guattari themselves argue—cannot move beyond symbolic accounts of familial structures. While Deleuze and Guattari argue against a reading of human pathology in terms of the Oedipal daddy-mummy-me triangle, the both the variability of family structures and their potential social benefits are given only a cursory mention.²⁸ The authors' brief discussion of the household division of labour involves no reflection on how domestic and non-domestic labour might be re-imagined and re-organised without

appeals to essential gender roles or “naturally” gendered instincts, so their critique remains at the level of the symbolic—“escaping” the Father, the Family—rather than at the level of political economy, despite their protestations to the contrary.

In contrast, Butler’s characters’ relations to family are conceived more in terms of emotional and corporeal needs than in terms of symbolic struggles. In *Wild Seed*, Anyanwu is both a guardian and a healer, possessing special abilities to mend injuries and produce antidotes to poisons. In the *Xenogenesis* series, one of the primary interventions that the Oankali make into human social life is via their bodies themselves—while partially sterilizing the humans, they also provide them with immunities to certain diseases, and remove tendencies towards cancer. While Butler’s attribution of healing powers to female characters is frequently problematic in its naturalization of gendered “psychologies” and consequent divisions of labour, it is powerful in its recognition of care-giving as constitutive social practice, one that cannot be simply dismissed as historically or “ideologically” contingent. To treat Butler’s familial scenarios as “symbolic,” or even “determined” by political economy, would be to overlook the ethical centrality of co-dependency and altruism in the *Patternmaster* saga and *Xenogenesis* series.

Furthermore, for Butler the distinction between “nuclear” and “non-nuclear” families is much less relevant than the reproductive politics of social organization, whether this be imbedded in hierarchical and normative familial structures, like Rufus’ patriarchal and rigidly traditional Southern family in *Kindred*, or more open-ended kinship arrangements, like the communal living arrangements of Doro’s “gifted” offspring in *Mind of My Mind*. If both Butler and Deleuze are interested in what the body can “do,” Butler is more focused on what the body might “need” across a range of diverse familial and social arrangements. So when Deleuze and Guattari claim that “desire ‘needs’ very few things,”²⁹ it is worth considering what these “very few things” might be, and whether the “objective being of man,” as the precondition to desiring production, might already involve basic elements of care and emotional support, whether accessed through the nuclear family or less “traditional” familial structures.

While Butler’s novels are limited in their dependencies on traditional gender dichotomies, she uses her strong female characters to highlight issues around personal relationships and the practicalities of family and community building. Butler’s refusal of social constructionist accounts of social identity enables the

exploration of problems that frequently remain invisible within poststructuralist epistemologies. In contrast, while giving lip-service to “family” and “community” in their collaborative writings,³⁰ Deleuze and Guattari tend to elide the wider spectrum of social and interpersonal work done between family members, or members of a close community, that do not fall comfortably into their analyses of the capitalist axiomatic and its familial overdeterminations. The crucial task, from Butler’s perspective, is less to critique the moral baggage of “familialism” than to investigate the ways in which established social structures and parameters might be reused in more ethical, and ultimately more compassionate, ways.

NOTES

- ¹ Octavia E. Butler, *Patternmaster* [1976], in *Seed To Harvest* (New York: Warner Books, 2007).
- ² See Charles H. Rowell and Octavia E. Butler, “An Interview with Octavia E. Butler,” *Callaloo* 20 (1997): 51.
- ³ Butler extensively researched African slave narratives from the antebellum South for her novel, *Kindred*. See Randall Kenan, “An Interview with Octavia E. Butler,” *Callaloo* 14 (1991): 496–97. She has also reflected on the *Patternmaster* saga as retrospectively suggesting a comment on leadership in black America (Rowell 63). For discussions of race in Butler’s work, see also Angelyn Mitchell, “Not Enough of the Past: Feminist Revisions of Slavery in Octavia E. Butler’s *Kindred*,” *MELUS* 26 (2001) and Elyce Rae Helford, “‘Would You Really Rather Die Than Bare My Young?’: The Construction of Gender, Race and Species in Octavia E. Butler’s ‘Bloodchild,’” *African American Review* 28 (1994).
- ⁴ Octavia E. Butler, *Wild Seed* [1980], in *Seed To Harvest* (New York: Warner Books, 2007).
- ⁵ See Rowell and Butler 50
- ⁶ Octavia E. Butler, *Mind of My Mind* [1977], in *Seed To Harvest* (New York: Warner Books, 2007)
- ⁷ Octavia E. Butler, *Kindred* [1979] (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988)
- ⁸ A case in point is Ursula Le Guin’s *Left Hand of Darkness*, which engages with feminist “utopias” insofar as it erases fixed gender difference altogether. See Kathy Rudd “Ethics, Reproduction, Utopia: Gender and Childbearing in *Woman on the Edge of Time* and *Left Hand of Darkness*” *NWSA Journal* 9 (1997).
- ⁹ See Octavia E. Butler *Survivor* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1978)
- ¹⁰ Octavia E. Butler, *Dawn* (New York: Warner Books, 1987), *Adulthood Rites* (New York: Warner Books, 1989) and *Imago* (New York: Warner Books, 1997).

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- ¹¹ For a discussion of the significance of “Lilith” in feminist mythmaking, see Michele Osherow, “Dawn of a New Lilith: Revisionary Mythmaking in Women’s Science Fiction” *NSW Journal* 12 (2002).
- ¹² See “The Theory of Infantile Citizenship” in Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of American Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 25–54.
- ¹³ Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century” in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 170.
- ¹⁴ See Cathy Peppers, “Dialogic Origins and Alien Identities in Butler’s Xenogenesis”, *Science Fiction Studies* 22:65 (1995)
- ¹⁵ Critiques of the “love of the Other” are by now very familiar, and are already implicit in Butler’s ambivalent characterisation of the Oankali’s consumption of difference as potentially destructive, especially if executed without consultation from their human captives.
- ¹⁶ Nancy Jesser, “Blood, Genes and Gender in Octavia Butler’s *Kindred* and *Dawn*,” *Extrapolation* 43 (2002): 55–6.
- ¹⁷ See also *Kindred*, *Survivor* and *Bloodchild and Other Stories* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1996).
- ¹⁸ The classic texts of sociobiology are Edward O. Wilson’s *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1975) and *On Human Nature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978). The field of evolutionary psychology has distanced itself from sociobiology, but presents similar ethical problems around ethical agency and biological determinism. See Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (New York: Simons & Schuster, 1995).
- ¹⁹ Butler, quoted in Jeffrey A. Tucker, “‘The human contradiction’: identity and/as essence in Octavia E. Butler’s Xenogenesis trilogy,” *Yearbook of English Studies* 37 (2007): 180.
- ²⁰ For their discussion of two “sorts” of vitalism, one belonging to Kant and the other developed by Raymond Ruyer, see Deleuze and Guattari *What Is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill (London: Verso 1994), 212–14.
- ²¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 2006), 28.
- ²² For a defense of Deleuze and Michel Foucault against accusations of anti-humanism, see Felix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis (Sydney: Power Publications, 2006), 9.
- ²³ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (London: Continuum Press, 2004), 29. The gendered use of language in Deleuze and Guattari is the

matter for another paper entirely. As a starting point, see Alice Jardine, “Woman In Limbo: Deleuze and His Br(others)”, *Substance* 44/45(1984).

²⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 185-186

²⁵ See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 286–87.

²⁶ Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 132.

²⁷ An excellent example of non-nuclear familial structures still embedded in the political economies of Western capitalism is given in Carol Stack’s *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975)

²⁸ In *Anti-Oedipus*, the authors initially state that “It is not a question of denying the vital importance of parents or the love attachment of children to their mothers and fathers” (51), but fail to elaborate on this important qualification to their arguments.

²⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* 29

³⁰ The notion of “communities” to come is developed, albeit in a consciously a-historical way, in Deleuze and Guattari *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 17, 91.

COYOTE MEETS MOBY DICK: THE PRODUCTIVE NON-HUMAN IN THOMAS KING'S FICTION

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The writing of Native Canadian novelist Thomas King satirises the devaluation of non-human and supernatural elements in the western canon and explores the dangers of universalism, reason and authenticity in the traditional Western conception of the human. This article analyses the productive use of the non-human in King's re-framing of the novel form via construction of magic realist narrative. The novels *Green Grass*, *Running Water* and *Truth and Bright Water* re-evaluate what it means to be human and our relationship with the non-human. This paper will illuminate how King's trickster figures demonstrate the essential role that the non-human, land, animal and story play in the production of "humanity" and the "human."

Presentation of contemporary supernatural and mythical creatures as natural may be antithetical to Western constructions of human reality. King's particular forms of supernatural beings are not super-human wonders or chimera, as is often the case in genres such as fantasy. The non-human in King's work is not a source of escape from the real. Instead, his mythic and supernatural beings are quotidian, in dialogue with ordinary human concerns as they simultaneously traverse a storied other place. This place allows the non-human beings (ageless, gender ambivalent story tellers and their irreverent anthropomorphised coyote companion) to ceaselessly ingeminate known stories (historical, biblical and literary) with liberating connotations. This counter world of re-told stories seeps into the lives of the ordinary humans, who have little control over a reality continually disrupted by the story-tellers. It is because of coyote's tricks and the power of his/her stories (and

his/her accidents) that events inexplicable to Western rational understanding occur: Alberta becomes pregnant, the dam bursts, and a famed Hollywood western's ending is transformed to feature victorious Indians and a shamed John Wayne.

King embraces deliberately incoherent motifs in order to expand the understanding of humanness. Even an ostensibly human trickster characters such as Monroe Swimmer in *Truth and Bright Water* is not strictly human in terms of realist norms. King's use of the non-human is an attempt to allow native story freedom from Western preoccupations such as the universal human state. This is constructed through an engagement with chaos both in the novel's form and content. This chaos is constructed out of dialogue between the oral and the written, between Christian and Native creation, between history and story and between the local understanding and storying of real versus the universal assertion.¹ Presumptions of universal human experience create semantic difficulties when radical difference is encountered. Similarly, reason can be drawn in "logical" lines that function to disenfranchise large groups of people. When Columbus named the people he encountered "Indian," he began a project by which Indigenous people in the Americas were to be judged and reasoned against a paradigm external to their own world view. Both the myths of noble savage in Eden and uncivilized almost inhuman savage become intrinsic to the colonial project of understanding human difference. Blanca Schorcht states that such colonising understandings of the real are perpetuated through the formation of "humanistic meta-narratives," an understanding of a literature that is canonised because of universal appeal (Schorcht 54). But this universal appeal silences certain voices and represents the Indigenous as only symbolic and necessary in the past and passing out of existence.

King argues that the use of the Native in past canonical American literature is so pervasive that Native writers generally choose to set their texts in the present. He says:

The Native American past of school curriculum [...and literature...] traps Native people in a time warp and insisted we had no presence or future, so Native writers used Native presence to reconstruct Native past and envision Native future.²

King's works are re-performances of the contradictions intrinsic in presentations of human qualities in canonized American fiction.

The tendency to see all humans as having qualities, varying according to ethnic group, is re-worked in *Green Grass, Running Water*. King positions Natty Bumppo of Fenimore Cooper's *Leather Stocking Sagas* in conversation with a First Nation creation figure to expose the dangers of extended logic and the Western sense of the human in isolation:

Indians can run fast. Indians can endure pain. Indians have quick reflexes. Indians don't talk much. Indians have good eyesight. Indians have agile bodies. These are all Indian gifts, says Nasty Bumppo.

Interesting, says Old Woman.

Whites are patient. Whites are spiritual. Whites are cognitive. Whites are philosophical. Whites are sophisticated. Whites are sensitive. These are all white gifts, says Nasty Bumppo.

So, says Old Woman. Whites are superior, and Indians are inferior.

Exactly right, says Nasty Bumppo. Any questions? ³

Here King reveals the Cartesian split of the mind and body permeating into colonial discourse, binarising the colonised against the coloniser and silencing the potential for Indigenous agency. King's chaotic juxtaposition is enabled by trickster re-telling of story in anarchic ways and this conversation is actually part of a re-told story of creation.

This pattern of joining creation stories (Christian and Native) with local stories and canonical literature occurs again and again. Not only is the split between colonised and coloniser / body and mind exposed as destructive, but the split between animals and humans is humorously explored. Coyote repeatedly questions his separateness and abdicates responsibility for chaos:

Talking to animals again, shouts Noah. That's almost bestiality, and it's against the rules.

What rules?

Christian rules.

"What's bestiality?" says Coyote.

"Sleeping with animals," I says.

"What's wrong with that?" says Coyote.

(King *Green Grass, Running Water* 6)

Likewise, other animals that have become locked in to symbols of Western humanity are similarly freed through trickster's retelling. For example, King re-visits Melville's *Moby Dick* in chaotic ways:

[...] Moby-Jane swims over to the ship and punches a large hole in its bottom.

There, says Moby-Jane. That should take care of that.

That was very clever of you, says Changing Woman as she watches the ship sink. What happens to Ahab?

We do this every year, says Moby-Jane. He'll be back. He always comes back.

(King *Green Grass, Running Water* 221)

Through his revision of this canonical text, King demonstrates the universalising concepts of male archetypal struggle and Christian monoliths implicit in the original Melville story by replacing them with the very different Black, lesbian whale who keeps "coming back" in circular migration.

Through such re-working, King demonstrates that non-Indigenous texts, both past and present, position the tribal as historical.⁴ The critic, Gerald Vizenor highlights the way in which many non-Indigenous depictions and concepts of Native people are absent of any Native reality. Vizenor contrasts these absent images with the Native "presence," which he terms "survivance":

[...] natives are the presence, and *indians* are simulations, a derivative noun that means an absence [survivance] is more than survival, [...] endurance or response [It is] an active presence [...] repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimcry.⁵

Through his attempts to use trickster attributes, such as *survivance*, King's works can be seen as being *continually in process* rather than stagnantly representative of an Indigenous essence. Part of ensuring a literature permeated with motifs of continual process, is the strategic use of water imagery.

Water is a crucial and repeated non-human and natural emblem for Thomas King. Every novel is titled with reference to water. *Green Grass, Running Water* begins and ends with water; not only in the story of "I" but in the bursting of the dam at the novel's close. Each of the creation stories the four Indians tell within the novel involves diving and floating for the central woman. Inexplicable pools of water form in characters' shoes and under car tyres. The

narrative in *Truth and Bright Water* is similarly kept flowing and floating by motifs of water. The water at the opening is a live thing:

The river begins in ice.
Grey-green and frozen with silt, the Shield shifts and breaks
out of the mountains in cataracts and cascades, fierce and
alive. It plunges into chasms and dives under rock shelves, but
as the river leaves the foothills and snakes across the belly of
the prairies, the water warms and deepens, and splits the land
in two.⁶

Water portrays solidity and movement, protection (the river is named the Shield) and destructive power, freedom, boundaries and life.

The water is a kind of trickster, symbolic of and complicit in freeing Indigenous representation from the ossification of universal binaries positing white presence and logic in opposition to Indigenous absence and reductive primitivism. Many of the moments of “trickery” centre on the river “Shield” in *Truth and Bright Water*. This is the place the boy narrator, Tecumseh, must move across to visit his Grandmother on the reserve—water is the dangerous liminal space, lying in between the Non-Indigenous township and the Indigenous Reserve. But this space in-between, this fluid, unrestricted, undemarcated space is also the location of ceremony, implicit in the trickster’s process.

As said above, the not quite human trickster character in this text is Monroe Swimmer. His name indicates the importance of fluidity in trickster formation. Monroe selects the river as the site for his redemption of Native voice by attaching red ribbons to the skulls of Indian children which he removes from museum archives, and then throwing them into the currents (*King Truth and Bright Water* 252). Monroe rejects the mythology established in the past of the Indigene as artifact, and seeks to construct living presence not simulations as Vizenor would term them. He destabilizes museum-style attitudes to Indigenous culture by restoring Indigenous human remains to the land. This is an allusion to the Native American Graves Repatriation Act, which requires museums to return identifiable remains to the descendants for proper burial.⁷

There is a satire of the assumption that Indigenous people cannot navigate past and present, and are, in effect, locked in the past. The frequent appearance of ghosts in the present and the conflation of “mythic” and contemporary narrative content are

crucial. Kathryn Shanley emphasises the continuance of older stories and the productive space it can engender:

Thawing Indians from the “iced” permanence of museums and academic discourse becomes political because in doing so it enlivens the forever time frame implied in the pun of the language of treaties that is being made in the novel’s title, “as long as the grass grows and the river runs.”⁸

Shanley’s term “forever time frame” is significant for allowing history life and a relationship with the present, not simply cause and effect treatment of progress. As Barbara Babcock-Abraham puts it:

As Trickster travels through the world, develops self, and creates for mankind haphazardly, by chance, by trial and error without advance planning, he reenacts the process that is central both to perception and creation, to the constant human activity of making guesses and modifying them in light of experience—the process of schema and correction.⁹

Kimberly Christian agrees with Babcock-Abraham’s definition, focusing on the “unpredictability, liminality and messiness” as common traits of the trickster.¹⁰ Duality, Christian says, is the key. The trickster, then, is the ideal figure to fulfil the enlivening role. As Christian has said, “each time the stories are told or performed the scene and plot may change, leaving open the possibilities for endless numbers of performances and tales” (Christian xiii). Endless possibilities evade representativeness and the problems of universal contextualization of human culture.

King’s Coyote/or trickster figure is repeated in many of his texts. He/she is both inside and outside the system. S/He is not mystical or benevolent and has many unfortunate anthropomorphic qualities. In *Truth and Bright Water* tricksters include the dog named, Soldier, and the man beyond time, Monroe Swimmer. The trickster, Coyote, reappears in *Green Grass, Running Water*, *One Good Story, That One* and *A Coyote Columbus Story*. This is a figure that operates to both create balance and calamity. For example, in King’s children’s book, *A Coyote Columbus Story*, Coyote is responsible for the creation of the world including the plants, animals and television commercials. He/she is also inadvertently responsible for bringing the hostile and exploitative presence of Christopher Columbus to the land.¹¹ In *Green Grass, Running Water* additional tricksters include the four Indians, whom I referred to as the story tellers above.

They begin as Mr Red, Mr White, Mr Orange and Mr Blue, escaped mental patients. They are locked into an endlessly repeated attempt to tell a creation story that will fix up the world. They are seen by some as women, as biblical figures by others, and colonial prisoners by others again. They address each other as The Lone Ranger, Robinson Crusoe, Hawkeye, and Ishmael—a clear reference to the shared mythology of the Indigenous side kick in the *Lone Ranger* television series, *Robinson Crusoe*, Fenimore Cooper's *Leather Stocking Sagas* and *Moby Dick*, respectively. These same characters also intersect with Indigenous mythology, keeping company with Coyote as they attempt to retell stories in order to illuminate a forty year old Blackfoot television sales man on the limitations of his John Wayne desires, among other goals.

But, King does not dispel untruths with truths in terms of the combating of past representation of Indigenous peoples, and it is arguably this factor that marks the writing out as trickster discursive and a meaningful redress of western rationalist visions of the human and the real. The presence of Indigenous identities and emblems are not proving themselves, nor are they unified and static in their utterance. There is no self-conscious “this is how it *really* is.” Such an attempt would border on the primitivism that resulted in Europeans construction of an imaginary Indian to authenticate and legitimate their own presence on the landscape through access to laws of custom, such as Anchor lodges or white shamanism (King *The Truth About Stories: Massey Lectures*).

Munroe Swimmer is repeatedly engaged in magical and satirical activities that are designed to reject such Western-based Indian “simulations.” Monroe describes himself as a restorer rather than an artist. He is hired by the non-Indigenous institutions to “restore” nineteenth-century landscape paintings in museums because images of Indians keep bleeding through into the land picturesquely featured in the painting. This is an example of trickster discourse; Swimmer does not need to refill an absent space with Native presence because material “facts” are challenged by “magical” appearance of Indigenous figures in the art. In fact, he ironically re-imagines his intended function as “restorer” of art, by refusing to respond to the Non-Indigenous request for him to paint the Indians out of the picture and allowing the images to inhabit the canvas. The “trick” of the art piece suggests the sovereignty and autochthonous nature of First Peoples.

This tricky use of the term “restore” is repeated when Monroe buys a church in order to “restore” it (King *Truth and Bright Water* 129–30). He then paints it green as the grass and blue as the sky

and in effect, out of existence (King *Truth and Bright Water* 49). Thus the term “restore” is played with outside the fixed possibility of the original term. King takes this word-play even further by having Monroe plant metal buffalo across the prairies, enacting a pre-colonial presence, while at the same time mocking the possibility of such a simplistic transferral:

It's a buffalo. Or at least, it's the outline of a buffalo. Flat iron wire bent into the shape of a buffalo. [...]

“I had them made up before I left Toronto. It's my new restoration project.” [says Monroe].

“Neat.”

“I'm going to save the world.”

(King *Truth and Bright Water* 13–4)

Terms such as “restore” and “save” have double meaning, both connotations of redemption and preservation are parodied and embraced. Art can stand as an analogy for Indigenous identity; there is no need to restore a piece of art, or a landscape, which is already infused with healthy presence.

In *Green Grass, Running Water* King creates a subversive and timeless “now” by repeating historical acts of colonialism and defeat through a patterning of disruptive trickster acts of creation. Human creations and assumptions become unfixed through this process. One such example is the repetition of “Buffalo Bill” in the novel *Green Grass, Running Water*. Buffalo Bill Cody's “Wild West” show travelled through North America and Europe in the late 1800s re-enacting “scenes” of wild Indian lifestyles for the voyeuristic pleasure of white spectators. This show served as a precedent for the racist images of the frontier in Hollywood westerns¹²—another deconstructed theme in King's stories. Many of the Indigenous “actors” in these “Buffalo Bill” shows were actually leaders of subversive activity and had suffered greatly at the hands of white invasion. For example, Sitting Bull, the first central leader of the Sioux in the face of broken treaties and the encroachment of the gold rush of 1875, spent five years with Buffalo Bill's show (Nies 282 and 293). Another great leader, Black Elk, who fought at the battle of Little Bighorn and who survived the massacre at Wounded Knee, also travelled with the show (Nies 333). Because it insisted on aesthetic “truth,” authentic “truth,” the show took on limiting dichotomy.

King re-enacts Buffalo Bill's re-enactments, which were in fact exploitations of Indian chiefs and caricatures of Indigenous people.

The author does this by creating a contemporary Buffalo Bill, actually Buffalo Bill Bursum, who owns a television store—the television being the central vehicle for image-creation in Western society until the recent past and the rise of the internet. Buffalo Bill Bursum employs Lionel, a man from the reservation, paralleling the original Bill’s “employees.” Bill’s most joyous moment is when he attempts to construct a map of North America out of the televisions he sells by piling them one on top of the other against the far wall of his store. Not only is the crooked stack of two hundred televisions an awesome advertising opportunity in Bill’s mind but it also signifies western power and reason for him:

It was stupendous. It was more powerful than he had thought.
It was having the universe there on the wall, being able to see
everything, being in control.

(King *Green Grass, Running Water* 140)

Bursum chooses to play “cowboy and Indian” westerns depicting Indian defeat on this “map.” King is tying together many images with this portrayal of Buffalo Bill Bursum staring in wonder at his creation. The author is projecting the white desire to control land, signified by the map. The mapping of land connotes legalised, authorised, “paper” ownership.¹³ In addition, the maps of North America today cut directly through tribal groupings thousands of years old. For Bursum the map has affiliations with Machievelli’s *The Prince* and notions of the governance of the state and power (King *Green Grass, Running Water* 140-141). King links this interpretation of the map with Indigenous issues by having Bursum play Hollywood Westerns. This “map” depicts specific representations of Indigeneity, in particular the image of the “savage.” Thus the author not only posits white desire to control land, but also unveils the myths developed to justify such a desire. This impetus to control is thwarted by the introduction of Coyote and the four old Indians—each of which embodies trickster’s timelessness by telling their own intersecting stories encompassing such far-reaching referents as Native creation “myths,” genesis, and canonical North American literature. The story telling four Indians and coyote “sing” subversion into the image portrayed—changing the ending of the film to portray Indian “survivance”:

The Lone Ranger’s voice was soft and rhythmic, running
below the blaring of the bugle and the thundering of the

horses' hooves. Then Ishmael joined in and then Robinson Crusoe and then Hawkeye.

"Come on Coyote," said the Lone Ranger. "You can help, too."

"I had nothing to do with it," says Coyote. "I believe I was in Houston." [...]

There at full charge, hundreds of soldiers in bright blue uniforms with gold buttons and sashes and stripes, blue-eyed and rosy-cheeked, came over the last rise.

And disappeared.

Just like that.

"What the hell," said [Buffalo Bill] Bursum, and he stabbed at the remote.

Everywhere was color. [...]

"Thought it was supposed to be black and white," said Eli.

(King *Green Grass, Running Water* 356-7 and 359).

After this Coyote's states, "I had nothing to do with it." This moment, when juxtaposed with Coyote's powers of magical creation and transformation, produces the ambiguity implicit in the formulation of trickster discourse. Trickster is responsible for act of creation while at the same time disclaiming responsibility. The original Hollywood western film is a classic example of what Vizenor would call Native absence or simulation, a mythic image perpetuating racist stereotypes. As trickster is in part "creative and liberative" (Vizenor 2), a song, an act of creativity disrupts this image. Coyote's singing, along with that of the four Indians, restages the end of the film with subversive presence.

The liberative function of the trickster narrative is shown at the end of the film when dominant societal norms are subverted. In King's text, John Wayne is left, without reinforcements, while his soldiers mysteriously disappear and are then easily defeated by the Indian warriors. The Wayne figure is "stupidly" in "disbelief" and urinating in his pants (King *Green Grass, Running Water* 358). This act inserts a bawdy reference to bodily functions, which is common to trickster stories.¹⁴ The trickster-style bawdiness at this point inserts slapstick subversion rather than victorious inversion. Thus while the Indian characters in the new film are sung into being by Coyote and four Indians as victorious, this is not rational replacing of image with true-image *nor* a presentation of primitivism as superior culture. It is a humorous trickster utterance of inherent presence and rejection of societal convention that has vitally unfunny significance to both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters watching the film on Bursum's "map" in the shop.

In the excerpt quoted above, Eli, the Native professor, says “I thought it was supposed to be black and white.” The film has been remade in “swirling colours” and any notion of black and white clear truths and oppositions is refuted. The reformatting of the film is an analogy for Native “continuance” through trickster ambiguity; the colours and shapes are swirling and powerful but not distinct. In King’s work oppressive societal norms are abrogated, but they are not simply replaced with another fixed representation. The four Indians see their work as continuing, constantly referring to other “fixing” that is required, and “mistakes” of the past. In summary, there is no beginning and ending to these tales; they are written to suggest moments of process and action rather than moments of final correction and resolution. There is an unceasing reiteration of Native issues, which need constant attention.

Vizenor states that the trickster is not a representative of Native culture; instead he is both a creature of “creative and liberative stories” and a teaser of “creation, totemic conversion, and even of their own continuance in literature” (1–2). Anne Doueihi has noted that Western scholarship invented “the problem” of the trickster figure by creating a distinction between subject and discourse.¹⁵ King conflates the distinction between form and meta-narrative and all chronological progress and assertions of primitivism are avoided. King is not “representing” or reconstructing mythological, anthropological, or (more importantly) tribal and cultural facts. Rather, the discourse of the tribal is *suggested* through the embodiment of contemporary trickster theory. An examination of form—and of themes relating to form—allows the reader to explore a supra-textual, trickster type of organizing principle.

The repetition and ambiguity of storytelling traditions is employed by King so that “every story elicits another story.”¹⁶ Circularity and even *mise en abyme* is created in order to avoid the fixed type of representation developed by non-Indigenous writers in the past. The form constructed in so as to make ideas of fixed or empirical meaning redundant. As Marlene Goldman has pointed out, the notion of the circle is inherent to the structure of *Green Grass, Running Water*, “ending as it does on page 360” (37).¹⁷ Goldman notes that midway in the novel, (page 180), Lionel falls asleep in front of the television, light falling on him like water, foreshadowing the novel’s conclusion, so full of water and the bursting of the dam:

Thus, midway through its own circular journey, the text looks across its horizontal axis and catches a glimpse of events that take place at the end (or should I say beginning) of its narrative orbit. (37)

As King states, in *The Truth About Stories* 2003 Massey Lectures, “the truth about stories is that is all *we* are” [emphasise mine]. Our humanity (or lack of it in the colonialist example) is continually reformed in the stories we tell: the privilege of truth over story in the tradition is no longer tenable.

Thomas King’s fiction of the last fifteen years constitutes a post-colonial revision to oppressive representations of Indigenous peoples in North America. But it is also a significant redress to the assumptions about what makes us all human and highlights the myth of human isolation. We are, King suggests, what we story ourselves to be, and the process of story telling is endless. The stories King tells effect an elision of the splits between mind and body, coloniser and colonised, story and truth and animal and human. The use of trickster discourse—including animal and other non-human trickster figures, circular narrative and fluid imagery—operates to free Indigenous representation from the past and to open up how we see our humanity with wit and warmth.

NOTES

- ¹ Blanca Schorcht, *Storied Voices in Native American Fiction Texts: Harry Robinson, Thomas King, James Welch, and Leslie Marmon Silko* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 53–4
- ² Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: 2003 Massey Lecture* (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Audio Documentary, 2003).
- ³ Thomas King, *Green Grass, Running Water* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1993), 434–35.
- ⁴ For example, Terry Goldie has pointed out that Early European “explorers” felt themselves to be travelers not only across distance but back in time. He terms this predilection in anthropology and literature the “denial of the coeval” in Terry Goldie, *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian and New Zealand Literature* (Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1989), 164–65.
- ⁵ Gerald Vizenor, *Fugitive Poses: Native American Scenes of Absence and Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 14–15.
- ⁶ Thomas King *Truth and Bright Water* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1999), 1.

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- ⁷ See Barb Bocek (compiler), *Native American Repatriation & Reburial: A Bibliography* at <http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/native/appf.html> accessed 19/6/2008.
- ⁸ Kathryn Shanley, "Talking to the animals and taking out the trash," *Wicazo Sa Review*, 14(2) (1999): 32–45 [37].
- ⁹ Barbara Babcock-Abraham, quoted in *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts and Criticisms*, ed. William J. Hynes and William J. Doty (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 8.
- ¹⁰ Kimberly A. Christen, ed. *Clowns and Tricksters: An Encyclopedia of Tradition and Culture* (Denver: ABC-CLIO, 1998), xi.
- ¹¹ Thomas King, *A Coyote Columbus Story* (Toronto: Groundhog Books, 1992), 1.
- ¹² Judith Nies, *Native American History* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 293.
- ¹³ Marlene Goldman, "Mapping and dreaming. Native resistance in *Green Grass, Running Water*", *Canadian Literature* 161/162 (1999), 18–19.
- ¹⁴ See Jay Miller Editor's Introduction in Mourning Dove (Humishuma), *Coyote Stories* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), xii; and *A Coyote Reader*, ed. William Bright (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1993.
- ¹⁵ Anne Douiehi "Trickster: On Inhabiting the space between discourse and history," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 67 (1984), 283.
- ¹⁶ Laura E. Donaldson, "Noah meets Old Coyote or Singing in the rain: Intertextuality in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*," *Studies in Native American Literature*, 7(2) (1995), 29.
- ¹⁷ Note Goldman is referring to a specific edition.

**THE BANALITY OF EVIL?: ARNO SURMINSKI'S
*DIE VOGELWELT VON AUSCHWITZ***

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Arno Surminski's recent novella *Die Vogelwelt von Auschwitz* [The Bird Life of Auschwitz]¹ has, at first sight, a provocative if not even distasteful title, until one becomes aware that the title, as well as the content of this novella are based on an ornithological scientific article: Günther Niethammer, "Observations about the Bird Life of Auschwitz," which appeared in the *Annals of the Natural Historical Museum*, Vienna, in 1942.²

Before Surminski devoted himself in fictional form to the story of a German SS-Obersturmführer (a rank roughly equivalent to first lieutenant), who conducted ornithological studies in the surroundings of the Concentration Camp Auschwitz, this curious story was not widely known. Günther Niethammer was born in Waldheim, Saxony in 1908 and died near Bonn in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1974. He studied Zoology in Tübingen and Leipzig, and, after completing his doctorate on the formation of crops in birds, he was employed in museums in Berlin, Bonn and Vienna. His main scientific work was undoubtedly the three-volume *Handbook of Ornithology* (1937–1942), which for a long time was considered a standard ornithological reference work. In 1937, he became a member of the SS and in 1940 he joined the Waffen-SS. In the period of 1940 to 1942 he was initially on guard duty in Auschwitz, but was soon released from these duties by the Auschwitz Commandant Rudolf Höss in order to engage full-time in "ornithological special duties" in the surroundings of Auschwitz. In this time the scientific article referred to above was written. Niethammer requested to be transferred from Auschwitz, and subsequently served in the Research Institute for Central Asia (a research organization belonging to the SS Ancestral Heritage

Foundation). After the war, although not until February 1946, he gave himself up to the British military authorities, and was extradited to Poland, where on account of his service in Auschwitz he was initially sentenced to eight years imprisonment, which was subsequently reduced on appeal to three years. After that he continued his scientific career in the Federal Republic of Germany, becoming a Professor in Bonn in 1957, and from 1968 to 1973 he managed to become the President of the German Ornithological Society.³

The most detailed account of the historical figure of Niethammer that I am aware of comes from a Polish author, likewise an ornithologist, Eugeniusz Novak, "Reflections on Ornithologists I used to know."⁴ Although published in an ornithological journal in 1998, this was not a scientific article as such, but its different intent was described in the article summary thus:

He relates the biographies of a number of mainly East and West European, now deceased ornithologists of the middle of the Twentieth Century, his efforts are mainly directed to investigating the influence of the political and social circumstances on the scientific endeavours of these scientists, as well as the involvement of some of these scientists in the politics of the day. The author is interested especially in the person of Professor Günther Niethammer, one of the most successful ornithologists in Germany, [...] whose past has thrown up many a critical question in recent times.⁵

Novak's description of Niethammer is very sensitive and understanding: "German colleagues described the young Niethammer as being patriotic, but with little interest in politics, and not active at all [...]. As a person he was described as being 'very decent'." Although Novak acknowledges that Niethammer "on his own initiative sought to free himself of this service [as a guard in Auschwitz]," he nevertheless accuses him of opportunism:

It is therefore very likely that Niethammer undertook this step [of joining the Waffen-SS] out of opportunism, maybe on the advice of or under pressure from colleagues, who were more devoted to the regime of that time than he was. But it is irrelevant whether it was opportunism, family solidarity, or "patriotism": it was a wrong step, as an intelligent person should have surmised even then what sort of war this was!

Novak, however, ends his description of Niethammer with the words: "I think this all had to be said, in order—in as far as possible—to exonerate Niethammer." It remains open, however, in how far Novak's caveat of "in as far as possible" detracts from this exoneration.

Finally, it should also be mentioned here that Novak in his reflections names a Polish Auschwitz camp inmate, who (in fictional form) also plays a central role in Surminski's novella: during his trial Niethammer had (albeit without success) sought to find as a possible character witness the former prisoner Jan Grebacki, born in 1908, forester by profession, who had served as Niethammer's assistant in his ornithological studies in Auschwitz. Grebacki had been a political prisoner, first in Auschwitz, and then in the concentration camp Neuengamme, "and his whereabouts could only be traced to the end of 1944" (Novak, 341).

Before we turn to the actual analysis of Arno Surminski's novella we must I think have a quick look at the scientific treatise of Niethammer, which forms the background to and inspiration for Surminski's fictional work, for here we can already see that "even such a harmless science as ornithology"⁶ can compromise the person concerned in the wrong political circumstances. Already in the title of the essay the name of the author is followed by the notation in brackets "Currently serving in the Waffen-SS," where the letters SS are represented by the then customary Nordic runes. I think it to be worthwhile to quote the first, introductory paragraph in full, because here we can clearly see the way in which the author, largely unrecognized by him, is compromised by the political-historical situation in which he finds himself:

In the time from October 1940 till August 1941 I had the opportunity of getting to know the surroundings of Auschwitz, with particular regard to the bird life. In the autumn and winter months as well as in the current spring my service with the Waffen-SS left me little time for ornithological observations. I was, however, able in the last week of May, and in June and July, to devote myself at length to this, whereby I managed to achieve a fairly comprehensive picture of the ornithological conditions of this interesting and as yet totally unresearched new German Eastern territory, especially regarding bird species who breed here. For this I have to thank the Commandant of the concentration Camp Auschwitz, SS-Sturmbannführer Höss, and his adjutant SS-Obersturmführer Frommhagen, for the special understanding

which they had for the scientific exploration of this area, and for the research tasks posed to science by the German East.⁷

Apart from this introductory paragraph, which shows the insidious entanglement of the author in the then ruling Nazi system, it has to be said that the remainder of the article is purely scientific, with exception perhaps of then common formulations such as “Comparison with other German “Gauen” (“Gau” is a Nazi designation for administrative districts). Ironically perhaps, I note that the author also felt obliged to add (in brackets) the name of the province (Ostoberschlesien or Eastern Upper Silesia) after the name Auschwitz, as the name Auschwitz would not have been a well-known name in 1941–42. It should also be mentioned that the scientific periodical in which this article was published contained a number of apparently “harmless” treatises on, for example, the avifauna of the Iberian Peninsula or the insect fauna of German East Africa [sic], but also at least one article directly serving the Nazi racist ideology: “Scientific Racial Investigations of Germans and Czechs in the Southern Bohemian Forest.”⁸

The writer Arno Surminski, born in East Prussia, who in this recent work writes about the involvement of an SS officer in the concentration camp Auschwitz, and about a Polish concentration camp inmate, who becomes dependent for his very survival on the SS man as his scientific assistant, is undoubtedly better known in the first instance as an author in the area of “Vertreibungsliteratur” (“refugee literature”), devoting himself to depictions of his lost “Heimat” or home province of East Prussia, and the sufferings of the German civilian population subject to the grim fate of flight and expulsion.⁹ While the emphasis in most of these works is well and truly on the Germans as victims, be it as subjects of Russian atrocities, or the vicissitudes of fleeing on foot or by horse cart through East Prussia in mid-winter, it must be mentioned that from the very beginning of his writing career Surminski balanced this with the empathic depictions of the harsh fates of Polish and Russian prisoners of war, and the situation of Polish civilians who were likewise expelled from their homelands in pre-war Eastern Poland. One of his early stories, “Fallen out of the Nest,”¹⁰ depicts the cruel fate of the East Prussian Jew Aaron Eisenstein, who is plucked out of the relative comfort of his East Prussian village, and deported to Treblinka, where he ultimately perished. Another short story, “Waiting for Renard,”¹¹ deals with a weeping young German Waffen-SS member, who nevertheless goes on to participate in the infamous Oradour massacre in France. In a later novel, *The Summer*

of *Forty-Four*,¹² a little-known massacre of Jewish women at Palmnicken on the East Prussian coast on 31 January 1945, is briefly described, and a German POW being questioned about it by his captors, is able to say that he wasn't present, but he too would have fired if he had been ordered to.¹³ In his penultimate novel, *Fatherland without Fathers*,¹⁴ Surminski describes the terrors of the war on the Eastern Front through the eyes of three "ordinary" German soldiers, who all perish, perpetrators and victims at the same time.

Despite the above, and despite Surminski also having treated in earlier works the fates of German soldiers, who had become complicit in greater or lesser degree in the war and the atrocities often associated with this, it is in my opinion nevertheless a large jump for this author now to devote himself to the story of an SS guard in the concentration camp Auschwitz. And it is significant that Surminski does not deal with a "typical" SS guard, in as far as there can be such a thing,¹⁵ but rather he relates the extraordinary story of an SS guard, who lets himself be released from his "normal" duties, and, together with a Polish political prisoner assigned to help him, actually goes out and conducts ornithological studies in the vicinity of Auschwitz, and then publishes these observations in a scientific journal.

Although Surminski uses the historical persons and events briefly described above as the basis for his novella *The Bird Life of Auschwitz*, he is nevertheless at pains to insist on the fictional nature of his work. In his introduction (printed in italics) he writes:

During World War II there appeared in a scientific journal an article entitled "Observations about the Bird Life of Auschwitz." The author, a biologist, had served in the concentration camp Auschwitz as an SS guard from 1940 till the end of 1941, and whilst there, he had researched the bird fauna in order to write a scientific article about it. The title of my novel is taken from that article, and while the persons, their thoughts and their dreams, are freely invented, the world in which this happened was real. (V7)¹⁶

The narrative perspective of the novel is largely that of the personal third person narrator.¹⁷ There is, however, especially at the beginning and end of the story, also on occasion a superior authorial narrator, who disappears almost entirely during the narration, and nearly everything which occurs in the novel is filtered through the limited perspective of the Polish concentration camp inmate, Marek Rogalski. But even the authorial narrator is not

omniscient, or at least he does not transmit his omniscience to the reader: he knows (and tells us) that it is wartime, but he does not know (or say) when this war will be over:

In the old royal city on the banks of the Vistula [Cracow] a man lived in the middle of the Twentieth Century, who was called Marek Rogalski, who had been brought into a prison camp through the vicissitudes of war. These circumstances began in September 39, nobody could say how long this would continue. (V9)

Because most of the novella (with some exceptions which will be looked at later) is narrated from the perspective of the Polish former art student and concentration camp prisoner (thus, for example, the town of Auschwitz is mostly referred to by its Polish name of Oswiecim), therefore the (other) main character of the novel, the German SS guard and *Sturmbannführer* Hans Grote, is mainly depicted through the perspective of Marek, with the exception of Grote's few utterances to his assistant, as well as a few (fictional) letters which Grote sends to his wife in Germany.

I think it can be suggested that just as Hans Grote is observing the bird life of Auschwitz, so Marek is observing the strange and unfamiliar figure of the "rare bird" of a German SS-*Sturmbannführer*, whose behaviour is thus estranged by this view from outside, and therefore hard to comprehend. At first Marek only sees Grote's external appearance: "Marek looked at him. For an SS man he was surprisingly small. He was probably around thirty years old, had a round face and grey eyes. The uniform did not seem to fit to him, it made him look angular" (V17). Although Grote says at the very beginning of their unequal master-servant relationship: "If you do stupid things, I will have to shoot you" (V25), Marek nevertheless soon makes the following provisional judgement: "He is not like the others, he thought. He can even laugh. He loves birds and I love art" (V26).

Although there is obviously no equality between these two men, and therefore no free or unfettered conversations are possible, there are nevertheless short albeit mostly guarded conversations or perhaps more accurately brief interchanges between them. Grote asks Marek why he is a prisoner, only to then make the lapidary observation: "He who has done nothing wrong, does not get imprisoned" (V40). Of course we do not know whether this or similar utterances made throughout the course of the novel are in accordance with his inner convictions, or whether he "protects"

himself by these routine statements from any real engagement or dialogue with Marek. Later Marek asks why Grote is serving in the camp. We only receive Grote's this time silent reaction from the observations of Marek: "He looked at him in astonishment" (V41). But this silent reaction on the part of Grote leads to Marek making further observations about Grote and the Germans of the time in general:

Marek bowed to excuse himself, he had gone decidedly too far. These Germans have learned to obey, so that they don't have to think for themselves. An order is an order, they say when they have to do something which normal people would never do. They have ordered him to come to this damned camp. Because he was interested in ornithology, he got the idea to study the life of birds in a concentration camp, a purely scientific task, naturally. (V41)

Although we can of course not expect that there can be free communication between Grote and Marek, there are, however, several indicators in Grote's letters to his wife in Germany, which support the image of somebody supporting, at least passively, the Nazi ideology. He writes: "There is still much to be investigated. This relieves me of the difficult duties, which we guards have to carry out here" (V71). In a later letter he repeats and intensifies this utterance: "I am glad that I do not personally have to engage in these difficult duties" (V115). Although we cannot know in how far such utterances are to protect himself from mail censorship, utterances of such a nature would very well fit into the image of a man supporting in principle the Nazi atrocities, who is just glad that he is not personally involved. Because of the distanced method of narration, the true thoughts and feelings of Grote remain unknown to the very end. The only thing that we do know is that Grote is constantly attempting to screen out reality and to immerse himself in his "bird world." In the same letter Grote writes: "I am still occupied with the bird life here. [...] There is still much to be investigated" (V115).¹⁸

It does seem, however, that in a very circumscribed fashion, Grote attempts to shield or protect his prisoner. He advises him: "You can't let yourself lose your reason here, Marek. He who thinks too much, does stupid things, and he who does stupid things, gets shot. That's how it is" (V52). He then adds: "If you have wild phantasies, you won't survive this camp, said Grote. You have to think small, only think of everyday things" (V56). Later still,

Grote actually suggests that Marek should make an application to become a “Volksdeutscher” or ethnic German, in order to be released from the camp. Marek rejects this, on the one hand because he says he has “no German grandmother,” but on the other hand with the thought that if he were successful in this, he would be forced to wear the “field-grey uniform” of the German Wehrmacht, and that he would thus also become one of the perpetrators. He says: “I can’t shoot, master” (V122), but he is also aware that such a step would also have its dangers: “... and the day after tomorrow you are dead” (V122).

It is finally, however, Grote’s advice to “think small” that contributes to the ultimate survival of the somewhat impulsive Marek, who was at first constantly fantasising about escaping, in order to get back together with his equally threatened fiancée in Cracow. He survives his imprisonment in Auschwitz, even after his relatively privileged status as Grote’s assistant ends when the latter is transferred away from Auschwitz. When Grote leaves, his ornithological assignment having been completed, Marek is transferred to the work camp Monowitz (also known as Auschwitz III), obviously as a result of Grote’s patronage: “... then you will go to Monowitz. It’s better there than in the main camp [Auschwitz I], and much better than in Birkenau [Auschwitz II]” (V140), Marek reflects on this (very relative!) “privilege”: “In Monowitz you only have to work in order to survive ... In Monowitz he finally forgot all his dreams and limited himself to the little things” (V146ff).

As already mentioned, this work of under 200 pages is designated a “Novelle” or novella by Surminski on the cover page. Already at the very beginning of the story, in the short second chapter (the chapters are typically only 2–5 pages long, interspersed with one page (or less) quotes or letters and the like, all in italics), the normally reticent omniscient narrator comes to the forefront and announces to the reader: “The unheard-of occurrence [unerhörte Begebenheit] which is being reported here, began on 17 March of the year 1941” (V12). The “unheard-of occurrence” which the narrator highlights here, is the successful request of the SS guard Hans Grote to the Auschwitz Commandant to be relieved of his “normal” duties in Auschwitz, in order to free himself for “the pursuit of ornithological studies” (V15), which of course sets in train the relatively privileged situation of his Polish assistant Marek.¹⁹ While the narrator explicitly refers us to the “unheard-of occurrence” of the classic German “Novelle” theory, it is somewhat more difficult to establish the “Wendepunkt” or “turning point” of classic Novelle theory, in as far as there is one in

this modern novella. In my opinion, the turning point of this novella is the decision of Marek not to kill his SS master, a decision which together with Marek's slowly growing conviction to "think small," contributes very much to Marek being able to survive his imprisonment in Auschwitz and Monowitz.

As already mentioned, Grote becomes the object of Marek's observations; he is virtually studying the "rare bird" or "rara avis," the SS officer Grote. In a letter written only in his thoughts to his fiancée Elisa, Marek writes (or thinks):

The German with whom I am studying the bird world is basically a decent person, who couldn't kill a bird. He could kill people if he is ordered to. He also believes in the brown idol who orders what is to happen, who gets killed and who may live. They have just tried out a new gas on 600 Russian prisoners of war, it functioned one hundred percent. My bird professor would have participated in this if he had been ordered to. He was lucky that it was others who were ordered to do this. Believe me, it's all a matter of the orders. What the brown idol orders continues in many subordinate orders, and as a result of the terrible word, mass graves arise. (V130)

In contrast to the German perpetrators, who do kill others, when ordered to do so, solely on the basis of their nationality or ethnic origins, Marek decides not to kill the "enemy" Grote, it is an ethical decision of Marek, who, although he would have had the opportunity, feels unable to kill somebody who is designated by outside forces as an enemy, but who has not done him (or others, as far as he can determine) any harm: "Above all, one sentence stood in his way: there is no reason to kill him ... Just because Grote was German and wore the SS uniform was not enough reason for Mark to kill him" (V139).

Because of Grote's direct help with the transfer to Monowitz, but also because of Marek's decision not to kill Grote (which would almost certainly also have resulted in his own death), as well as his decision to refrain from attempting to escape and to keep a low profile, Marek survives the horror of the camp, whilst at the same time witnessing the unimaginable atrocities committed in Auschwitz.

Towards the end of the novel, Surminski departs from the historical background, certainly as far as the fate of Marek was concerned. While we lose the trail of the historical figure in the concentration camp Neuengamme in 1944, and we probably have to assume that he perished in the last year of the war, Marek does

survive. In a kind of epilogue, we discover that Marek's fiancée had somehow managed to flee to the United States, and from there was able to arrange for Marek's immigration very soon after war's end. While the penultimate chapter of the novel still describes the train journey of the "displaced person" Marek through the destroyed Germany to the port of Hamburg from Marek's personal perspective, in the last chapter the omniscient narrator takes over and from his more distanced perspective gives the reader information about the further fate of Marek:

Near Albany in the State of New York two children were born in the fifties, who bore the surname Rogalski. When they were grown up and wanted to travel to Europe to see the places where their parents had lived, their father forbade them the journey. (V188)

The novella ends with these laconic comments, and we can see that this ending can hardly be seen as reconciliatory. While one may doubt whether a father in the America of the seventies could actually forbid his grown-up children to do such a thing, this ending nevertheless shows very clearly that Marek Rogalski, and presumably also his wife, want to have nothing more to do with this terrible past, which they are obviously repressing.

While the story of Marek departs considerably from the historical model, Surminski stays, externally anyway, very close to the historical facts (as known) of Günther Niethammer. As told briefly, also by an omniscient narrator now, Hans Grote gives himself up to the occupation authorities after war's end, and is extradited to Poland for trial:

His punishment was reduced to three years, Hans Grote came home early. He lived in the pleasant half of the Twentieth Century on the banks of the Rhine, and became a world authority of ornithological science. (V175)

We do, however, also discover that he never really admits to his passive support of the Nazi regime. In a letter to his wife while he is in a Polish prison he writes: "[...] During my service in Auschwitz I did not kill or hit a single person" (V176). He continues to insist on his personal innocence, and does not seem to realize that even as an ornithologist he was still serving the same reprehensible organisation that was responsible for the Holocaust in Auschwitz and elsewhere.

After this external depiction, the omniscient narrator does allow, on the very last page of the novel, the reader for the first time a glimpse, albeit very brief and limited, into the inner thoughts of Grote. During a conference trip to Cracow many years later the fictional figure of Grote makes a brief excursion to Auschwitz:

Years later Hans Grote too visited Cracow with an international group of biologists. The excursion to Auschwitz he undertook by himself. There he stood in front of the camp gate and asked himself whether he had been a different man who in the years 1940 to 1942 performed that what was then called service and duty. He did not go to Birkenau. (V188)

At the end of the novel thus, Grote's views and feelings remain just as mysterious as they were at the beginning. It is "the banality of evil"²⁰ that we see here, and Grote should in the first instance not be seen as a perpetrator and certainly not as a victim, but as an opportunistic "Mitläufer" or "fellow traveller," who, in a mixture of opportunism and chance, is prepared to participate in any and all atrocities if ordered to, but who receives the rare ("unheard-of") chance to withdraw himself from any such participation, because he happens to be a scientist in what also happened to be an "innocent" science. This (former) SS man remains incomprehensible to himself and to the reader.

Surminski's novella about this bird-loving SS guard and his Polish prisoner assistant is part of the continuing discourse, which we can still call "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" [coming to terms with the past]. In the past decade or so, it may have seemed to some that the discussion had perhaps swung too far and too one-sided in the direction of the "Germans as Victims" (as a *Spiegel* title story of 2002 put it).²¹ Apart from authors such as Arno Surminski, who has devoted himself for decades largely to the theme of German refugees and their sufferings, one can mention here works such as W. G. Sebald's *Air War and Literature* (1999),²² Jörg Friedrich's *The Conflagration, Germany in the Bombing War 1940–1945* (2002),²³ and in literature above all Günter Grass' *Crabwalk* (2002),²⁴ to name just a few representative examples. After Günter Grass had concerned himself with the sufferings of the refugees, exemplified by the sinking of the refugee ship "Wilhelm Gustloff," it is interesting to note that in his next work, *Peeling the Onion* (2006),²⁵ he devotes himself to his own past as a member of the Waffen-SS, and he talks about the "collective responsibility" of all involved, even where there was no personal guilt. And in France,

also in 2006, the Jewish-American-French writer Jonathan Littell attempts in his novel *Les Bienveillantes* (which has entered this controversial debate in Germany with the translation *Die Wohlgesinnten* in February 2008)²⁶ to put himself into the mind of the high-ranking SS officer Max Aue, and through his callous and unrepentant first-person narrator attempts to come to an understanding, but of course by no means a justification, of the incomprehensible. Arno Surminski's work, especially this latest work, *The Bird Life of Auschwitz*, indicates that like many (mainly German) writers he is still attempting to come to terms not only with German suffering, but also with German guilt and responsibility.

NOTES

- ¹ Arno Surminski, *Die Vogelwelt von Auschwitz* (Langen Müller: München, 2008). All translations from this novella, and from other German sources quoted in this article, are mine.
- ² Günther Niethammer, "Beobachtungen über die Vogelwelt von Auschwitz (Ostoberschlesien)," *Annalen des Naturhistorischen Museums in Wien*, 52 (1941): 164–99. On the cover page is the additional information, "Ausgegeben im Mai 1942" [Published in May 1942].
- ³ Wikipedia, <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki>, last altered on 1 February 2008. See also other accounts such as Ernst Klee, "Von deutschem Ruhm," *Die Zeit*, 25.9.2003, and the report from a Belgian newspaper by Gie van den Berghe, "Wee de overwonnenen! Herdenken in Auschwitz en Dachau," *De Rode Vaan*, 31.1.1992.
- ⁴ Eugeniusz Novak, "Erinnerungen an Ornithologen, die ich kannte," *Journal für Ornithologie*, 139 (1998): 325–48. I note that the English language article abstract is quite different to the German abstract, which I have translated above.
- ⁵ Novak, "Zusammenfassung" [Summary], 325.
- ⁶ Novak, 326. The complete sentence goes as follows: "Today we are living in a time in which younger colleagues cannot understand that politics was able to seriously influence even such a harmless science as ornithology."
- ⁷ Niethammer, 164. Apart from this dedication in the introductory paragraph of his article, there was, according to Novak, an off-print of this article with a hand-written dedication of the author to Rudolf Höss. This was found in the safe of the Commandant after the liberation of Auschwitz by the Red Army. Novak presumes that this document subsequently found its way to the KGB archives in Moscow (Novak, 342).

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- ⁸ Anna Sittenberger, Josef Wastl und Karl Beer, "Rassenkundliche Untersuchungen an Deutschen und Tschechen im südlichsten Böhmerwald," *Annalen*, 52 (1941): 397.
- ⁹ For a detailed depiction of Surminski's works till 1997 see especially: Herman Beyersdorf, *Erinnerte Heimat, Ostpreußen im literarischen Werk von Arno Surminski*, Studien der Forschungsstelle Ostmitteleuropa an der Universität Dortmund, Band 24, Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 1999.
- ¹⁰ In Arno Surminski, *Aus dem Nest gefallen*, Hoffmann und Campe: Hamburg, 1976.
- ¹¹ In Arno Surminski, *Gewitter im Januar* (Hoffmann und Campe: Hamburg, 1986).
- ¹² Arno Surminski, *Sommer vierundvierzig* (Ullstein: Berlin, 1997).
- ¹³ In an interview with me in Hamburg on 23 June 2009, Arno Surminski informed me that he was engaged in writing a novel about this little-known massacre, and was expecting to publish this novel in the next year or so.
- ¹⁴ Arno Surminski, *Vaterland ohne Väter* (Ullstein: Berlin, 2004). See also: Herman Beyersdorf, "Das kleine Dorf und der große Krieg. Arno Surminskis Roman *Vaterland ohne Väter*," in: *Ostpreußen–Westpreußen–Danzig. Eine historische Literaturlandschaft*, ed. Jens Stüben (R. Oldenbourg Verlag: München, 2007), 589–603.
- ¹⁵ I realize that there is undoubtedly no such thing as a "typical" SS guard. A useful comparison could be the SS officer Max von Aue in Jonathan Littell's novel *Les Bienveillantes* (Gallimard: Paris 2006). This novel has now been translated into German (Jonathan Littell, *Die Wohlgesinnten* (Berlin Verlag: Berlin 2008) and English (Jonathan Littell, *The Kindly Ones* (Chatto & Windus: London 2009)).
- ¹⁶ At the end of Surminski's novella, there appears the "Afterword of a Biologist" by Martin Bilio, who had in fact made Surminski aware of this real story. He writes: "And then the two main characters. It was useful for the imagination of the writer that little was known about the Polish assistant. The ornithologist, however, about whom much more was known, had to be altered, in order also to protect his relatives, and this character was sketched only schematically" (V191).
- ¹⁷ See Franz Stanzel, *Typische Formen des Romans* (Göttingen 1964).
- ¹⁸ An anonymous reviewer calls Hans Grote "einen menschenfeindlichen Vogelfreund" [a misanthropic bird lover]. "Lerchen und Massenmord" [Larks and Mass Murder], *Preußische Allgemeine Zeitung (Ostpreußenblatt)*, 8.3.2008.
- ¹⁹ An overall positive review in the *Jüdische Zeitung* (Berlin, February 2008) refers to "die merkwürdige Beziehung ... zweier aufeinander angewiesener Privilegierter" [the peculiar relationship ... of two privileged persons dependent on each other].

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- ²⁰ The reference here, as in the title of this article, is of course to the well-known reportage by Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Viking Press: New York, 1963).
- ²¹ “Die Deutschen als Opfer,” *Der Spiegel*, 4.2.2002.
- ²² W. G. Sebald, *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (Hanser: München, 1999).
- ²³ Jörg Friedrich, *Der Brand. Deutschland im Bombenkrieg 1940–1945* (Propyläen: München, 2002).
- ²⁴ Günter Grass, *Im Krebsgang*, Steidl (Steidl: Göttingen, 2002).
- ²⁵ Günter Grass, *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* (Steidl: Göttingen, 2006).
- ²⁶ See Note 15.

TECHNOLOGY, THE HUMAN, AND THE SUBLIME IN CONTEMPORARY LITERARY FICTION

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As technologies of information and communication increasingly saturate contemporary Western life, they are increasingly represented in different ways in our fictions. The genre of science fiction has long fictionalized or dramatized human engagement with technology, while literary fiction has been slower to incorporate issues of technology in our lives. However, as technology becomes more and more prevalent in the lives of everyday people—and in the lives of writers of literary fiction—it seeps more and more into literary fiction. While some authors respond to the rise of technologies in the lives of humans by articulating anxieties through figures such as the mad scientist, or tropes such as the destruction of civilisation, others see in technology a promise, not of posthuman empowerment as frequently found in science fiction, but of new and exciting ways of being and expressing the human in the face of co-evolution with technology. Some authors have responded to technology by investing it with elements of the spiritual or the sublime. We can instantly point to Arthur C. Clarke's "The Nine Billion Names of God"¹ or Isaac Asimov's "The Last Question"² as two examples among many in science fiction that incorporate themes of God, spirituality or the divine in a technologised fictional landscape. Here, the religious impulse is a signifier of the human among otherwise completely secular texts and contexts. This paper sketches three different ways that contemporary writers of literary fiction locate a sense, not of the religious, but of the sublime in the technologies discussed in their twenty-first century texts. Jeanette Winterson's *The PowerBook* (2000), Zadie Smith's *The Autograph Man* (2002), and Gail Jones's *Dreams of Speaking* (2006) include references

to computers and other forms of information technology, and incorporate elements of the sublime or references to the divine connected in some way with those technologies.

Rather than accounting for the contentious concept of the sublime as it exists in philosophy, aesthetics and literary theory, I am more concerned here with the way authors incorporate aspects of the sublime into their fictions. For the purposes of this study, I see the sublime as the result or outcome of an attempt to represent the unrepresentable: the infinite, the vast magnitude of nature or space, feelings that are too great for and cannot be contained by human understanding, or experiences like sex or the spectre of death that tend to confound representation. According to the *Macquarie Dictionary*, the sublime can be defined as “elevated or lofty in thought, language” or “impressing the mind with a sense of grandeur or power; inspiring awe.”³ Philip Shaw, in his 2006 book *The Sublime*, writes that “A building or a mountain may be sublime, as may a thought, a heroic deed, or a mode of expression.”⁴ Note the way Shaw begins this list with an achievement of human architecture and construction. This indicates the extent to which contemporary understandings and uses of the concept of the sublime have moved away from the sort of Romantic conceptions of nature as the epitome of the sublime found, for example, in Shelley’s poem “Mont Blanc,” often heralded as a typical example of the natural sublime.⁵ Shaw argues that “the sublime marks the limits of reason and expression together with a sense of what might lie beyond those limits” and that this explains the relationship between the sublime and “the transcendent” (2). According to Shaw,

Sublimity refers to the moment when the ability to apprehend, to know, and to express a thought or sensation is defeated. Yet through this very defeat, the mind gets a feeling for what lies beyond thought and language. (3)

In recent years, there has been a move to articulate a postmodern sublime, which is often seen as a technological sublime.⁶ For Joseph Tabbi, the sublime “persists as a powerful emotive force in postmodern writing, especially in American works that regard reality as something newly mediated, predominantly by science and technology (ix). He argues that “technological progress” has replaced the “infinite power in nature” as the sublime object of our times “that cannot be represented” (ix). David Nye (1994) follows Leo Marx (1964)⁷ in arguing that technological

processes have come to replace the magnitude of mountains and canyons in the natural world. Nye points out that “in a physical world that is increasingly desacralized, the sublime represents a way to reinvest the landscape and the works of men with transcendent significance.”⁸ Related to the sublime is the concept of transcendence, and we can see this at work in narratives of technology. Transcendence, obviously, refers to going beyond some kind of limit. The inability to represent and conceive of something in its entirety can inspire magical awe, but the reverse of this is the anxiety—or even terror—of the unknown, of not being in control. This is particularly observable in contemporary narratives—in fiction, in film, and in the media—of technology.

While I draw heavily on the framework of the sublime provided by philosophy and literary theory, I want to point out that authors can consciously or unconsciously invest their texts with attributes of the sublime without adhering strictly to the philosophical attributes of the sublime. I locate this trend in novels by Jeanette Winterson, Zadie Smith and Gail Jones. In *The PowerBook*, Winterson offers a techno-romantic account of transcendence achieved through liberation from the constraints of the human body through computer/internet technology. In *The Autograph Man*, although computers do not take centre stage, Smith characterises them as lofty and elevated by using lines of modernist poetry to represent them. In *Dreams of Speaking*, Jones engages with the technologies of modernism, bringing attributes of the sacred and the divine to man-made objects. These (female) authors exalt the technology in some way, raise it up conceptually above the level of man-made object or tool; they cast it in some way as sublime.⁹ However, while Winterson and Smith specifically praise the computer itself, Jones exalts other technologies of modernism and postmodernism while denigrating the computer.

Jeanette Winterson's *The PowerBook* (2000)

After writing a number of books that demonstrate both a continuing interest in embodiment and an evident wariness for technology—consider, for example, the depiction of medical technology in *Written on the Body* (1992)—*The PowerBook* marks a brief but enthusiastic shift in Winterson's work towards a reverence for computer and internet technology. There is no mistaking the lofty language with which Winterson describes and engages with the technology in this book.

While Zadie Smith's *The Autograph Man*, as we shall see, uses chapter titles based on the ten Sefirot of the Kabbalah, Winterson

uses as chapter titles key words of the Macintosh Operating system and the MicroSoft Word word processing program, interspersed with other chapter titles. Note chapter titles in the table of contents (which Winterson here calls a “Menu”) such as: OPEN HARD DRIVE, NEW DOCUMENT, SEARCH, VIEW, VIEW AS ICON, EMPTY TRASH, SPECIAL, HELP, SHOW BALLOONS, CHOOSER, QUIT, REALLY QUIT?, RESTART, and SAVE. “Save,” of course, is the most relevant to our discussion here.

The PowerBook was published in 2000, and this date accounts for much of the author’s out-of-character techno-enthusiasm: this is her millennial novel, her marking and celebrating of the new millennium or, more cynically, her attempt to cash in on it. Winterson unifies this collection of fragmented stories through the framing device of storytelling itself. The narrator of the book is a woman using an instant messaging platform to chat with potential lovers on the internet. To impress the object of her affection, the narrator tells a number of stories, referencing a range of methods of storytelling from oral, to print, to online chat rooms.

The manufacturing of identity is a key theme for Winterson throughout her work, as is the idea of storytelling. Here, Winterson combines the two with the tools offered by computing and the internet. Cyberspace allows Winterson’s characters to transcend the limits not only of their physical bodies but also of their identities, to shed their selves and play in the vast open space that is the interface between cyberspace and the mind:

You say you want to be transformed ... this is where the story starts. Here, in these long lines of laptop DNA. Here we take your chromosomes, twenty-three pairs, and alter your height, eyes, teeth, sex. This is an invented world. You can be free just for one night.¹⁰

We can read Winterson’s use of lofty language as a means of conceptually elevating computer technology to the realm of the sublime when she writes:

Time is downloaded into our bodies. We contain it. Not only time past and time future, but time without end. We think of ourselves as close and finite, when we are multiple and infinite.

This life, the one we know, stands in the sun. It is our daytime and the stars and planets that surround it cannot be seen. (103–104)

Winterson uses elevated and religious language when writing about computers and computer-mediated-communication. There is not much direct divine description of technology, though the accoutrements of Winterson's religious past are evident in the text. Rather, Winterson invests the technology with a sense of the sublime. The technology even becomes a substitute for the body, and the narrator gives herself over to it.

Winterson also explores and performs the mind/body split that was fashionable in the earlier days of the internet. She writes, "I can't take my body through space and time, but I can send my mind" (53). In this equation, the mind is privileged as superior and even holy compared to the body. This is an incongruous shift away from Winterson's consistent focus on embodiment, and its centrality to feminist and queer perspectives, as throughout her other works. However, it is not all unequivocally positive. Winterson acknowledges "You kiss me and the glass grows cloudy. I stop thinking. Meatspace still has some advantages for a carbon-based girl" (174). Winterson's techno-enthusiasm becomes increasingly wearying and empty. The author cannot sustain it even for the short length of *The PowerBook*, as evinced in the acknowledgement of the sexual advantages of the body, consistent with Winterson's celebration of the human sexual body elsewhere in her oeuvre.

Zadie Smith's *The Autograph Man* (2002)

The Autograph Man (2002), Smith's second novel, is very different from the expansive *White Teeth* (2000), her highly acclaimed debut novel. Here, Smith follows a smaller cast of characters and focuses largely on the worries, fears and desires of Alex-Li Tandem, a slacker in his late-twenties who buys and sells autographs for a living, takes drugs, and cannot commit to his girlfriend. Smith continues her engagement with contemporary cultural themes of obsession, celebrity, authenticity and truth as Alex searches for an ageing B-movie actress, Kitty Alexander, and her coveted autograph.

Alex-Li is a hybrid character, the son of a Chinese father and Jewish mother. In his childhood, Alex's Chinese father dies, and the larger plot of the novel is about his growing readiness to participate in Kaddish prayers of mourning for his father, a symbol of Alex's maturity and growth. Spirituality permeates the text. In addition to Alex's Kabbalah rituals, we also encounter religion in the form of two of his best friends: Rabbi-in-training Mark Rubenfine, and

Adam, who smokes marijuana as a means of connecting with and understanding the Kabbalah.

To reflect Alex-Li Tandem's cultural hybridity, Smith has organised the novel into two parts. In Book One, Smith uses as chapter titles the ten Sefirot, which are, according to Kabbalistic tradition, the ten attributes God created in order to manifest in the physical and metaphysical worlds. In Book Two, the chapter titles come from Buddhist principles. Additionally, to subdivide sections of the Prologue, Smith uses the tetragrammaton "YHWH," the four Hebrew letters for the name of God. Smith's character uses the traditional qualities marked in the Sefirot—the ten qualities God created and can manifest through (such as righteousness, eternity, splendour)—and aligns them with celebrities and famous historical figures (Muhammad Ali, Bette Davis, John Lennon), thus casting the sublime in light of the twentieth century aura of celebrity. Smith thus identifies modernity's new objects of sublime investment in celebrity culture rather than religion. After all, Kitty Alexander's autograph is the holy grail that Alex-Li seeks.

In Smith's world, sublime celebrity extends to cinema, sports and the high arts. Virginia Woolf and Ludwig Wittgenstein are there on Adam's representation of the Sefirot, and Smith uses T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*—perhaps the high point of English cultural modernism—to describe the sounds of the computer. Here we can see most clearly the way Smith invokes the sublime in order to engage meaningfully with late modernity's information technologies. The text of the novel includes emails and transcripts of internet chat sessions as well as multiple lists and other means of breaking out of the linear page. This is the intertextuality of the digital age. Instead of using the term computer, Smith writes that Alex

switched on the box of tricks.
Weialala leia went the music.
 Alex drummed his fingers, waiting—
 Only fifteen seconds but it feels *so long*—
 (Teach us to care and not to care ... Teach us to sit still)
Wallala leialala.¹¹

Smith clearly echoes elements of Eliot's "The Waste Land". Part of Chapter III: The Fire Sermon reads:

The river sweats
 Oil and tar

The barges drift
 With the turning tide
 Red sails
 Wide
 To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.
 The barges wash
 Drifting logs
 Down Greenwich reach
 Past the Isle of Dogs.
 Weialala leia
 Wallala leialala
 Elizabeth and Leicester
 Beating oars
 The stern was formed
 A gilded shell
 Red and gold
 The brisk swell
 Rippled both shores
 Southwest wind
 Carried down stream
 The peal of bells
 White towers
 Weialala leia
 Wallala leialala.

Chapter III: "The Fire Sermon," 92–117¹²

Smith repeats the refrain "Weialala leia, Wallala leialala" a few pages on when Alex-Li succumbs to the predictable call of online porn, a stereotypical aspect of the internet. Here our lofty "Weialala leia, Wallala leialala," which a moment ago seemed so exalted and acted to dignify the computer with the language of high modernism, stands not for the sounds a computer makes as it starts up but for the presumably faked orgasm sounds of the female porn star: "*Wallala leialala*, cried the woman, after a while. *Oh baby! Ug*, said Alex, after a while. *Oh, yeah. Uung*. In six minutes it was all over" (154).

Sex appears as an agent of the sublime in all three texts examined here, and while sex serves a number of functions within the texts, the primary one of interest here is the role of sex as "the reply to death" (128). Death, another agent of the sublime, fills *The Autograph Man*—from Alex-Li's father's death in the early pages, to the frequent references to death by car crash, suicide, and overdose, to the reclusive former-starlet's ageing body. Death surrounds them all. As epitomes of the natural sublime, death and sex reflect the importance of the body in the sublime. But these are tempered by

other forms of the sublime presented by Smith. The sublime of celebrity is contextualised within Jewish arcana with the ten Sefirot of the Kabbalah, for example, explained through replacing the name and value of the Sefirot with a celebrity. The use of Eliot to elevate the workings of the computer both sanctifies and dirties the technology, in that this high art is applied to aspects of both technology and highly mediated sex. It also calls into question the relationship between Romantic, Modern, and Post-Modern sublime. Here we can see the workings of Nye's revised view of the technological sublime in his 1997 book *Narratives and Spaces*, where the vast expanse of the networked world is located in and signified by the small, and increasingly smaller, computer.¹³ This is essentially consistent within practices of religious iconography and signification. Religious meaning is frequently concentrated in objects and icons—the crucifix, the sacred wafer and wine, and so on—which represent that which is essentially unrepresentable and beyond, but frequently conveyed through, words.

Gail Jones's *Dreams of Speaking* (2006)

Just as death permeates the text of *The Autograph Man*, so too does it stalk *Dreams of Speaking*. Here, too, sex is presented as a reply to death. A sublime engagement with technology is another reply to death. The relationship between humans and technologies that Gail Jones dramatizes in *Dreams of Speaking* is the most complicated that I will discuss, and this may be, in part, because it was written later than the other two novels, away from the hysteria of the new millennium. However, like Winterson, Gail Jones performs a rapturous disembodiment within the text. Her protagonist, like Winterson's, transcends the confines of the human body through engagement with technology.

As readers, we are instantly alerted to the melding of technology and the sublime when in the early pages of the novel a young academic from Perth, travelling to Paris on an academic sabbatical, stands in the cockpit of a jet, contemplating the marvels of technology, and “feels the mind of God.”¹⁴ An identification of technology with the spiritual or the sublime is immediately forged for readers.

The novel's protagonist, Alice, is writing a “poetics of modernity,” and the objects of Alice's study are the technologies of modernity:

she wished to study the unremarked beauty of modern things,
of telephones, aeroplanes, computer screens and electric lights,

of television, cars and underground transportation. There had to be in the world of mechanical efficiency some mystery of transaction, the summoning of remote meanings, an extra dimension—supernatural, sure. (18)

This passage gestures towards the sublime or the spiritual—a relationship or connection usually made with nature, not technology. The “mystery of transaction” and the “summoning of remote meanings, an extra dimension” indicate a quasi-spiritual language here, and Alice invests these technologies with a sense of the sublime. But the phrase “there had to be” indicates to the reader the nebulous sense of loss and absence in Alice’s life that fuels this project. Furthermore, note that Jones, through Alice, includes the term “computer screens” here, but ultimately the computer is not characterized in the novel as an object of sublime technological transcendence in the same way that other objects are. The figure of the astronaut also hangs over the narrative as the only post-World War II technological invention. It represents grief and loss, the emotional isolation of the contemporary era, and the significance but also the strangeness of embodiment. The image of the astronaut in the darkness and emptiness of space is an epitome of human technological progress—putting a man in space—and it comes to represent Alice as a person cut adrift and floating, while her friend, the ageing Mr Sakamoto, is represented by the telephone—a technology of communication that brings people together and overcomes isolation.

For Alice, the technologies of postmodernity are not as interesting. However, there is some slippage between the categories of the modern and the postmodern. While the television was invented prior to World War II, it is a thoroughly postmodern technology, and yet it is on Alice’s list of good technologies. On the list of bad technologies, however, is the internet, another thoroughly postmodern technology. Alice (perhaps like Jones) identifies the internet as multiplicity in overdrive in opposition to the singularity and solidity of books:

This was an odd form of consumption or play, or technological subservience, to be seated at the receptive nexus of so many intervening sites ... Cluttered, schismatic, astronomical, microscopic.

Alice felt depressed. After this, she thought, she would visit a bookshop. Her tastes in knowledge garnering were irredeemably old-fashioned. She loved the feel of books, their integrity as objects. (136)

The problem with the internet, for Alice, seems to be its lack of embodiment, the “knowledge” it contains suffering from a lack of unit and “integrity.”

Jones’s book highlights the rapture of the technologies of modernity—and, to some degree, postmodernity—by offering new means of looking at ordinary objects and new ways of thinking about the poetry of living in “this buzzing world,” (Jones 61, 65), yet Jones and her protagonist give pause at the key and defining technology of the contemporary era. This multiplicity in overdrive connects Jones’s depiction of the internet with her depiction of her protagonist’s sister’s cancer and Alice’s friend’s mother’s cancer; cancer epitomizes a disease that cannot (yet) be obliterated by technology, and the body continues to rebel and assert itself in dangerous ways, as well as Mr Sakamoto’s death.

While Winterson and Smith marvel at the vastness of cyberspace, for Jones it appears to be too vast to be contained in one object, as if the terror of the unrepresentable has over-balanced the awe of the unimaginable. It is my contention that the disembodied nature of the computer/internet is part of what makes it so unappealing to Alice.

The novels discussed here represent gradations of the attempt to locate the sublime in the technology of mundane existence. Where traditionally the sublime has been located in nature, and where Nye’s technological sublime is reserved for grand works of masculine engineering, these women authors find a sense of the sublime not in these “works of men” but in the everyday use of technological objects. And they do so with varying degrees of success. Winterson’s attempt is a knee-jerk reaction and attempt to mark an historical moment in human history—the millennium—with a clichéd nod to the posthuman. Jones and Smith offer much more complex, intricate, and well thought out responses. Smith’s more sophisticated means of representing technology uses Eliot’s *The Waste Land* to invest computer technology with sublime emotion to computer technology, but locates the sublime just as much in the faked orgasmic cry of a porn star, complicating any investment of technology with sublime attributes.

Jones, however, is highly sophisticated, and more literal to the philosophical definitions of the sublime, in her exploration of the theme in modern technologies. Alice’s refusal to place computer technology in the same exalted category, however, means the character and author are operating outside populist impulses. Jones’s exalting of the photocopier, the television, and the camera

only serves to highlight her refusal to exalt the computer in the same way. Jones is drawing attention to the fact that the human tendency to invest technology with meaning has resulted in vast techno-romantic myths and attitudes about the computer and the internet as a site of worship and a tool of disembodied transcendence, the sort of myths perpetuated by Jeanette Winterson in *The PowerBook* and interrogated, though to a lesser degree than Jones, by Zadie Smith in *The Autograph Man*. For Jones and her protagonist, it is the disembodiment effects of the computer which drive her away.

It is Zadie Smith's *The Autograph Man*, however, which blurs these boundaries. Smith manages to write both the ironic and the sublime. While Smith does not exactly infuse the technology with spiritual or divine elements, she is certainly infusing it with lofty and exalted language, lifting it up from the usual utilitarian representation of technology. At the same time, though, Smith attributes the fake orgasm of a porn star with equally lofty language and aligns celebrity iconography with religious iconography. In her own way, Smith, like Jones, invites readers to critique the authenticity of her investment of technology with attributes of the sublime.

NOTES

- ¹ Arthur C Clarke, "The Nine Billion Names of God," *The Other Side of the Sky* (London: Gollancz 1961), 3–14.
- ² Isaac Asimov, "The Last Question," *The Complete Stories, Volume 1*. (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 290–300.
- ³ *Macquarie Dictionary* (North Ryde, NSW: Macquarie Library, 2005).
- ⁴ Philip Shaw, *The Sublime* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 1.
- ⁵ Angela Leighton, *Shelley and the Sublime: An Interpretation of the Major Poems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
- ⁶ Joseph Tabbi, *Postmodern Sublime: Technology and American Writing from Mailer to Cyberpunk* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).
- ⁷ Leo Marx, *The machine in the garden: technology and the pastoral ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).
- ⁸ David Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), xiii.
- ⁹ Both technology and the field of the sublime have largely been conceived as masculine domains. That these female authors seek to invest technology with a sense of the sublime has significant gender implications. However, I do not have the space to investigate that fully here.
- ¹⁰ Jeanette Winterson, *The PowerBook* (London: Vintage, 2000), 4.

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- ¹¹ Zadie Smith, *The Autograph Man* (London: Penguin, 2002), 148–49.
- ¹² T. S. Eliot, “The Waste Land” Chapter III: The Fire Sermon, 92–117, in *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 37–8.
- ¹³ David Nye, *Narratives and Spaces: Technology and the Construction of American Culture* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997).
- ¹⁴ Gail Jones, *Dreams of Speaking* (Milsons Point, NSW: Vintage, 2006), 6.

HUMOROUS SUBVERSION IN WOMEN WRITERS FROM LATIN AMERICA

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Until now, the literary humour of female Latin American writers, as is the case with other genres tackled by women all over the world, has been relatively little explored by critics and academics alike. Although some academics have attempted to demonstrate the importance of the genre of comedy when confronting the absurd in society, they have shown little interest in analysing humour in female Latin American writing. In fact, a great deal of work has been done on the humorous works of writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, Guillermo Cabrera Infante and Alfredo Bryce Echeñique,¹ but there is only a small number research papers on comic writing by Latin American women.

Some of the reasons for this omission can be attributed to the fact that, generally, comedy written by female writers is taken less seriously than that of male writers, but also to the fact that women have traditionally been marginalized politically, economically and culturally. In addition, it is commonly believed that humour is a male prerogative as it is seen as aggressive and “unfeminine.” Indeed, an important factor in this is the mistaken old patriarchal concept of the “lady”: an educated woman should not tell jokes. Thinkers such as Freud, for example, excluded women from the area of humour. For Freud the difference between masculine and feminine humour is that men have a more urgent need to express humour. The superiority of the humourist, according to Freud, allows him to gain control of his super-ego, that voice of external authority which influences his natural impulses. Freud suggests that the need to control is stronger in men than in women, and therefore women do not need a sense of humour.²

When we speak colloquially of “humour,” we refer to those things that make us laugh, but, as has become clear during my research, there is nothing more complex than attempting to define the genre of humour. Most of the critics I have studied prefer to speak of comic writing, and this is defined as the whole gamut of ways used to provoke laughter. Robert Escarpit, for example, states that there are two obligatory phases in order to “produce humour”: a critical eye for everyday life and, second, the ability to leave that critical eye to one side and enter into the constructive/creative phase, which consists of the humorous effect.³ In fact, most studies of humour cite criticism as one of its main features. Others go beyond this. They say that humour is aggressive and therefore needs a victim. According to Jean Sarrailh, however, aggression does not need to be present in comic writing. What he does accept is the negativity of this type of discourse as, although it may not attempt to destroy, or the joke may not be malicious, it will always be “in contra.”⁴ Both critics agree that humour is the least innocent of the components of a literary poetic.

As a matter of fact, from a literary point of view, the most important attribute of humour is its ability to challenge the dominant ideological discourse by portraying its contradictions and absurdities, and, at the same time, exposing it to ridicule. Likewise, humour can be used as a defence mechanism, or, as a weapon against pain or the control of the ruling class. Therefore, humour has a significant role to play in the texts of some female writers as they attempt to criticize the patriarchal power that controls the society in which they live.

Feminist academics have explored the myth of the supposed lack of a sense of humour in women, as stated by Freud. In French writer Hélène Cixous’ famous essay “The Laugh of the Medusa,”⁵ she encourages women to break the bonds of their cultural conditioning and find their own voice in writing. She finds the idea that women do not have a sense of humour to be absurd: “You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she is not deadly. She’s beautiful and she’s laughing” (Cixous 885). This triumphant outburst of laughter emerges, according to Cixous, each time a woman uses her true voice since, “writing is the very possible change, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of transformation of social and cultural structures” (Cixous 879).

Also, the feminist academic Regina Barreca, in her introduction to *A Last Laugh: Perspectives of Women and Comedy*,⁶ maintains that women writers have always used a sense of humour to subvert the

existing conventional structures. She asserts that feminist criticism has studied other narrative strategies used by female writers but has largely ignored the important role of humour and its feminist aspects. She adds, "Humour is a weapon. Laughter is refusal and triumph. Humour is dangerous because it is about de-centering, dis-locating and de-stabilizing the world" (Barreca 14). Other studies in Barreca's book clearly establish that feminine subversion is one of the trademarks par excellence of female humorous writing as it uses many ways to provoke laughter, irony being the most common.

In the last three decades, there has been an increase in studies on Latin American female writers, but it was only at the beginning of the 90s that feminist readings of female writing began to enjoy a greater place in the Hispanic academic canon. Some of these studies have argued, very convincingly, that feminine humour, particularly in contemporary writing, is often used as means of protesting against traditional codes of behaviour and of contributing to the demythologizing of taboos. Those women, particularly from underdeveloped countries, who write in a subversive manner, run the risk of being rejected not only by men, but by women too. Nevertheless, they continue to write because writing is a form of confrontation, and humorous writing even more so.

Academics Debra Castillo and Myriam Jehenson have made important contributions to the feminist literary criticism of Latin American female writers. Castillo studied the humorous writing of the Mexican Rosario Castellanos and the Argentinean Luisa Valenzuela; she asserts that both authors make a "radically subversive proposal."⁷ Castillo's essay asks literary critics to re-examine literary values and invites them to give feminine humour a central position in their studies. Jehenson, on her part, argues that it is the rebellious and subversive nature of Latin American women that makes their texts "revolutionary, conflictive and dialectical."⁸ All the writers analysed in her book speak through female narrative voices and use humour to celebrate "women's appropriation of discourse or their trespassing into exclusively male domains." She notes that one of Luisa Valenzuela's female narrators says ironically: "A woman writer? Don't be funny; women don't know how to write" (Jehenson 38).

As I have already mentioned, one of the most prominent Latin American female writers of humorous texts and essays on humour is the Mexican writer and essayist Rosario Castellanos (1925–1974). In *Mujer que sabe latín...*⁹ [A woman who knows Latin...], an

important study on Latin American female writers, she proposes that through the use of humour as a strategy of criticism as well as one of liberation, women should ridicule the absurd expectations of the oppressive patriarchal order:

[Y]o sugeriría una campaña: no arremeter contra las costumbres con la espada flamígera de la indignación ni con el trémolo lamentable del llanto sino poner en evidencia lo que tienen de ridículas, de obsoletas, de cursis y de imbéciles. Les aseguro que tenemos un material inagotable para la risa. ¡Y necesitamos tanto reír, porque la risa es la forma más inmediata de liberación de lo que nos oprime...!

[I] would suggest a campaign: not to lash out against customs with the flaming sword of indignation or with the tremulous lament of tears but to expose those things about them that are ridiculous, obsolete, vulgar and imbecilic. I can assure you that we have an inexhaustible supply of material for laughter. And we so much need to laugh, because laughter is the most immediate form of liberation from oppression...!]. (38)

In the wake of Castellanos' suggestion, a significant number of contemporary female Latin American use humour in their writing as a means of expressing irreverent and subversive ideas against the patriarchal system. The use of subversive humour is one of the features commonly found in the work of writers such as Griselda Gámbaro, Silvina Ocampo, Luisa Valenzuela, Rosario Ferré, Ana Lydia Vega, Angélica Gorodisher, Ana María Shúa, just to name a few. One of the characteristics of this comic writing is generally the mocking of stereotypes and the standards set by patriarchal values. All this is generally conveyed through a "dual" discourse such as satire, irony and parody, in which transgressive elements are woven into the predominant discourse and constitute a subversion of the status quo.

The short story, "La lección de cocina"¹⁰ [The Cookery Class], by the Mexican Rosario Castellanos, is a case in point. In this story, we see a woman in a domestic environment striving to contend with the demands of her role as a housewife. The protagonist, who is the narrator, is a young intellectual woman, recently married, who is confronted with the domestic situation of having to cook a piece of meat for supper. She comments ironically on the circumstances of her life as a married woman even as she submits to them:

Gracias murmuro, mientras me limpio los labios con la punta de la servilleta (...) Gracias por haberme abierto la jaula de una

rutina estéril para cerrarme la jaula de otra rutina que según todos los propósitos y las posibilidades, ha de ser fecunda.
[Thank you I whisper as I wipe my lips with the corner of a napkin (...) Thank you for having opened the cage of a sterile routine only to lock me up in the cage of another routine whose purposes and possibilities, they say, should be fertile.] (840)

The narrator-protagonist analyses the relationship between her husband and herself as she cooks the red meat that she associates with the sexual act: her husband, always demanding, and she, silent, resigned and compliant. Her sarcastic discourse (with ironic tones) revolves around the beliefs about marriage, the romanticism of the “honeymoon” and the wonderful sex life that newlyweds are supposed to enjoy:

Boca arriba soportaba no sólo mi propio peso sino el de él encima del mío. La postura clásica para hacer el amor. Y gemía, de desgarramiento, de placer. El gemido clásico. Mitos, mitos.
[Lying on my back I bore not only my own weight but that of his on top of me. The traditional position for making love. And I moaned from passion, from pleasure. The traditional moan. Myths, myths.] (838)

The discourse of the protagonist in this story shows her frustration at her inability to confront social conventions in an open and more drastic way. Therefore, the criticism is aimed not only at men, who impose the traditional roles of women, but also at the women who perpetuate them. The satiric discourse is used here as a weapon to question and expose the absurdity of the female situation and, at the same time, to defy the patriarchal order. In this regard, one might remember Linda Hutcheon’s definition of satire: satire is a literary form whose objective is to correct certain vices and shortcomings in human behaviour by ridiculing it.¹¹ By the same token, it is worth mentioning that, for many studies, irony is an inherent feature of satire to the extent that satire without irony is inconceivable. Hutcheon maintains that the effect of irony and satire used together is much more efficacious, as they can be placed at the far end on the scale of irony, producing contemptuous laughter (Hutcheon 146).

The other two stories I would like to look at in this paper are especially interesting in terms of the analysis of other humorous female strategies, as both relate to parody in the fairy tale. We

should remember that parody is defined as a form that superposes itself on a text and therefore is intertextual. The aim is to mock (or imitate) other texts or literary conventions. In accordance with Hutcheon, it is worth highlighting that, like satire, irony is inherent part of parody (Hutcheon 143).

Recently, feminist criticism has focused its interest on fairy tales as a source of inspiration for many women writers. Most of the studies carried out maintain that the aim of the women writers undertaking this subject do so with the idea of subverting the masculine canon. This is, in my opinion, the intention of Silvina Ocampo in “Jardín de infierno”¹² [Hell’s garden] and Luisa Valenzuela in “La llave”¹³ [The key]. Both texts are a parody of the story “Barbebleu” [Bluebeard] by Charles Perrault. Remember that this story is based on the popular story of a powerful nobleman, who marries a number of young women, then murders them. The story tells how Bluebeard leaves them the keys of his castle, including one that opens the door to a mysterious room, and orders them not to open the door under any circumstances. The women, unable to contain their curiosity, open the door and are punished by death for their disobedience.

Unlike the other two women writers discussed in this paper, Silvina Ocampo (1903–1993) never openly declared herself to be a feminist; nonetheless, strategies of feminist subversion are frequent in her works.¹⁴ Ocampo makes use of comic writing in many of her texts: satire and parody being the main means of expressing subversion.

The main character in “Jardín de infierno” is called Bárbara, which is obviously a play on the sound of the name in the parodied text (Barbazul). The main narrator of the text is a young man, Bárbara’s husband. The text subverts the balance of male/female power in the conventional story. Barbara is the one that holds the power: she is the owner of the castle and the one that brings in the money. The young man is a philosophy student, dependent on the woman both economically and emotionally. Note the irony with which Ocampo presents the attitude of deference adopted by the male narrator towards his wife in the following excerpt:

Me adora, se preocupa por mí. Me da todos los gustos (...) Suele ausentarse muchas veces (...) Ya la filosofía no me interesa como antes, pero tendré que seguir estudiando, recibirme para independizarme un poco de la vida conyugal.
[She adores me, she worries about me. She gives me everything I want (...) Philosophy doesn’t interest me as it did

before, but I will have to carry on studying until I graduate so that I can become less dependent on married life.] (83)

One of the important similarities with the parodied story is that every time Bárbara goes out she leaves a bunch of keys with her husband with the instruction that he must not, under any circumstances, open the “forbidden” room. The man tries to resist the temptation to enter and see the mysteries the forbidden room contains, but one day he decides to open it, and when he does, he finds the bodies of six men hanging from the ceiling. In shock, he drops the key into the blood on the floor. He tries to clean it, but the blood won’t come off. From this point on, the narrator becomes omniscient, and we are told of Bárbara’s return to the castle. Unable to find her husband, she goes to the forbidden room, and there finds the man hanging and a message written on the wall saying that he has committed suicide as he prefers that “company.” The end of this story combines humour with ambiguity, which are common discursive strategies in Ocampo’s work.

The second text to parody “Bluebeard” is by Luisa Valenzuela (b.1938). Valenzuela is a contemporary writer who enjoys wide recognition by both European and North American critics. Her position is very clearly feminist. In her essay, *Peligrosas palabras* [Dangerous words], she urges women writers to appropriate masculine discourse to express those things that concern women.¹⁵ Indeed, Valenzuela uses ironic humour, black humour and the grotesque not only to mock the position of women with regard to men in the patriarchal society, but also to criticise relationships in power and politics in Argentina.

Unlike Ocampo, Valenzuela chooses the last of Bluebeard’s wives as her narrator who was, according to the Perrault version, freed by her brothers. Valenzuela has transported the story to our age and the narrator is a modern woman. One of the first incidences of irony we come across in the story is precisely when the narrator protests about the fact that, according to the story, the woman is saved by male characters:

Ay, todo era tan difícil en aquel entonces. Dicen que sólo Dios pudo salvarme, mejor dicho mis hermanos-mandados por Dios seguramente-, que me liberaron del ogro. Me lo dijeron desde un principio. Ni un mérito propio supieron reconocerme, más bien todo lo contrario.

[Oh, everything was so difficult then. They say that only God could save me, or rather my brothers—sent by God surely—

who freed me from the ogre. They told me this from the very beginning. They recognised no merit on my part—quite the contrary in fact.] (93)

According to Roy Boland in Valenzuela's collection, *Simetrías*, to which belongs the story "La llave," the writer uses feminist rewritings of fairy tales by Perrault, "transgressing the norms, distorting the structures and up ending expectations" (Boland 142).¹⁶

Indeed, the narrator refers to the subordinate role of women, and how this role has gradually been changing; she states that despite the disadvantages of the being female, women have survived into the twentieth century, and therefore must have done something right, "although they won't miss an opportunity to disparage me again," she adds.

Valenzuela's protagonist spends her time giving classes of "entendimiento" [enlightenment] to a mainly female public. The seminars and workshops she gives on this subject refer to feminine curiosity as a virtue, not a defect. The woman looks at the subject of the bunch of keys left by Bluebeard to his wives with the strict instruction not to enter the forbidden room. She gives a bunch of "imaginary" keys to her pupils and invites them to think seriously about whether they should give in to the temptation to open up the forbidden room. On the one hand, she tells them of the dangers this implies but at the same time incites them to use the keys as a means of enlightenment. She also alludes to the fear of punishment most of the women feel if they should disobey.

Valenzuela brings history to an aspect of the current political situation and makes open reference to the courage of the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, who for years have been protesting about the disappearance of their children during the Argentinian military dictatorship. In the list of dedications in the book, we can deduce that special reference is made to one in particular, Renée Epelbaum, who represents the strength of all the women in daring to raise their voice in protest against the injustices in this world: "the blood on the key she holds shines more brightly than the key itself," she concludes.

According to Aldarondo, this text is "more than just a simple game of parody, a questioning not only of its intertext and the obstacles that limit women's freedom, but an act of both literary and sociopolitical disobedience" (Aldarondo 736).¹⁷ Valenzuela's protagonist is a woman engaged with the society in which she lives and with the position of women in that society. The protagonist

tries to convince her students that the search for truth, rather than deserving of punishment, is a virtue that can save them. For Valenzuela, the key is the symbol of women's liberation and of her triumph; she suggests that women's curiosity is also a weapon against power.

The similarity between the texts of Valenzuela and Ocampo lies in the fact that both, through the inversion of male and female roles, attempt a subversive rewriting in opposition to the male canon. In both texts, intertextuality has in itself ideological implications that parody the conventional element in the fairy story, as does the insubordination of the female or female-victim by the male. We should remember that for Gilbert and Gubar parody written by women is both revisionary and revolutionary at the same time.¹⁸ In Ocampo's text men are the victims, not innocent maidens; Bluebeard's power has been given to the female protagonist. In Valenzuela's story it is also the woman that holds the bunch of keys, including the forbidden key that opens all the doors she chooses to open.

In this study, I have attempted to demonstrate that these female Latin-American writers reduce the traditional female role to humorous situations, and parody romantic relations. The protagonists in the three stories, "La lección de cocina," "Jardín de infierno," and "La Llave" show a variety of aspects of femininity that transcend literal interpretation by representing the transgressive in their nature and thus, through ironic humour, challenge the patriarchal order.

NOTES

- ¹ See, for example, Rene de Costa, *El humor de Borges* (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1999); Ardis Nelson, *Cabrera Infante in the Menippean Tradition* (New York: J de al Cuesta, 1983); Ramón Rodríguez Moreno, *Humor, remedio contra el dolor. La obra de Alfredo Bryce Echenique* (Mexico: UNAM, MA Thesis, 2000); Ana María Zubieta, *Humor, nación y diferencias: Arturo Cancela y Leopoldo Marechal* (Buenos Aires: Beatriz Viterbo Editora, 1994).
- ² Sigmud Freud, *Le mot d'esprit et la relation à l'inconscient* (Paris: Gallimard-N.R.F., 1988), 26.
- ³ Robert Escarpit, "L'humour," *Que sais-je* 877, (Paris, PUF, 1987), 135.
- ⁴ Jean Sarrail, *L'écriture comique* (Paris, PUF, 1984), 131.
- ⁵ Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1-3 (1976): 857-93.
- ⁶ *Last Laughs, Perspectives on Women and Comedy*, ed. Regina Barreca (New York/London: Gordon and Breach, 1988).

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- ⁷ Debra Castillo, *Talking Back: Towards a Latin American Feminist Literary Criticism* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 367.
 - ⁸ Myriam Yvonne Jehenson, *Latin American Women Writers: Class, Race and Gender* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), xi–xii.
 - ⁹ Rosario Castellanos, *Mujer que sabe latín ...* (México: Fondo de Cultura económica, 1984).
 - ¹⁰ Rosario Castellanos, “La lección de cocina,” *Obras I. Narrativa* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989): 837–47.
 - ¹¹ Linda Hutcheon, “Ironie, satire, parodie. Une approche pragmatique de l’ironie,” *Poétique* 46 (1981): 140–155.
 - ¹² Silvina Ocampo, “Jardín de infierno,” *Cornelia frente al espejo* (Barcelona: Tusquets 1988): 837.
 - ¹³ Luisa Valenzuela, “La llave,” *Cuentos completos y uno más* (Mexico: Alfaguara, 1999): 93–7.
 - ¹⁴ This is discussed in Marcia Espinoza-Vera, *La poética de lo incierto en los cuentos de Silvina Ocampo* (Madrid: Editorial Pliegos de ensayo, 2003), 173.
 - ¹⁵ Luisa Valenzuela, *Peligrosas palabras*. (Buenos Aires: Temas, 2001), 2.
 - ¹⁶ Roy Boland, “Fairy Tales and Luisa Valenzuela,” in *Writing Women*, ed. Alastair Hurst, *Antipodas Monographic*, 5 (2002): 137–45.
 - ¹⁷ Hiram Aldarondo, “Barbarrosa enfrenta a Barbazul: debate paródico entre Charles Perrault, Silvina Ocampo y Luisa Valenzuela,” *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 86 (2003): 729–42.
 - ¹⁸ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 81.

**LIVING AND PARTLY LIVING:
JEAN-PIERRE JEUNET'S *AMÉLIE***

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For a while after its release in 2001, Jean-Pierre Jeunet's popular film, *Amélie*,¹ provoked controversy over a perceived insensitivity to the cultural diversity of today's Paris. Alison James noted at the time in *Variety* that: France's major left-wing newspaper, *Libération*, accused Jeunet of "propagating unsavoury extreme-right values in his "nauseating" portrayal of a Paris in which there are no blacks or Asians and where the outside world is never allowed to impinge."² Sylvie Waskiewicz argues however:

While many might agree that *Amélie* presents a nostalgic view of the Paris of yesteryear ("un conte extraordinaire qu'aurait pu chanter Charles Trenet" according to one critic), especially given its Montmartre location, there is no real reason to equate this nostalgia with the ideology of the far Right. Certainly the film does not endorse any such ideology, even implicitly. [...] Like Woody Allen, Jeunet knows how to put his city's best foot forward, and *tant pis* if Paris doesn't really look like that.³

It certainly does not "look like that;" in fact, it does not look at all like Jeunet's previous French films. What strikes anyone who has seen *Delicatessen*⁴ or *The City of Lost Children*⁵ is Jeunet's departure in *Amélie* from consistently sombre colours. This nostalgic tourist's dream of a Paris is highlighted in bright optimistic hues (red, green and occasionally, a transcendent gold), while Yann Tiersen's lilting accordion music reinforces the mood.

Since the film first appeared, there have been discussions of its genre and themes, its ambiguities of time and space; of its narrative viewpoints and of its vast number of historical, cultural and

intertextual references; these last to other films, particularly animations, to written texts and to music. “*Ce cinéma surréférénciel*” is how one critic refers to *Amélie*.⁶ Much has been written too on the multiplicity of cinematic techniques and technologies used by this most punctilious of directors, and, of course, on the charm of Audrey Tautou in the starring role. *Amélie* is as multifaceted as a diamond, and equally designed to please. Waskiewicz concludes:

Amélie carries no obvious social message, beyond the platitudinal “seize the day” or “love makes everyday life magical.” A poetic love story with comic touches, *Amélie* is a hip antidote to the recent trend towards gritty realism [...]. Jeunet has said as much, declaring that his overriding goal was to make a positive film that would leave viewers happy.

[...]

As Jeunet argues, he is simply portraying the positive aspects of his own experience—images of his childhood and his neighbourhood ... After all, the film is not a social documentary, but a surreal fable. (153; 155)

However, it is possible that Jeunet’s very profession of his (at first sight clichéd) aim, itself paradoxically expresses a deeper purpose. This paper proposes a parallel reading which is beyond, but not contrary to “feelgood.” It looks at the nature of the world with which Jeunet presents us, at the representation of humanity within that world and at human interactions, including the interplay of humans with the non-human, of the animate with the (normally) inanimate. It demonstrates the blurring of these categories and discusses the “real,” imaginary and symbolic roles of inanimate objects and the urban environment. Within the context of this reading, it also explores the interaction of the film’s audience with the film itself, which for its own duration interrupts the time stream of the spectator’s “real” life, and becomes its “animated” but non-living substitute.

As Isabelle Vanderschelden points out in her book on the film, *Amélie* “combines the familiar and the quaint, because it associates the local and the universal, the exotic and the ordinary. It lingers on the small aspects of everyday life to which everyone can relate [...]”.⁷ Indeed, “universals” are central; during the opening credits we are shown a series of universal phenomena, of various apparent levels of importance, in very specific Parisian contexts. A fly beats its wings in a particular Montmartre street as wind lifts a particular tablecloth in a particular restaurant nearby. Death has struck the best friend of Monsieur Eugène Colère, who grieves in his 9th

arrondissement apartment, just as a particular one of Raphaël Poulain's spermatozoa with an X chromosome meets his wife's waiting ovum—and Amélie Poulain's life begins. All these events take place at the same second and are described by the ubiquitous voiceover, which gives the "facts," in a flat voice reminiscent of the television docudrama; the kind of voice designed to convince the viewer that the report is trustworthy and every fact significant. The cut, a little later, from the reporting of the likes and dislikes of the Poulains senior to Amélie at six years old, again shows the universal in the context of the particular; this time it is the universality of certain solitary childhood games, guaranteed to draw the audience in.

Vanderschelden also notes that, "the plot unfolds in a series of episodes triggered by cause and effect relationships, chance and destiny" (32). This description is both apt and at first seemingly unhelpful to the task of trying to discover a world-view in and from which the film operates, since the statement covers the mechanistic (modern), postmodern and fatalistic/religious. But Vanderschelden is right, since these are precisely what the film holds in tension. The fly-wings beating and the tablecloth lifted by the breeze could be a reference to chaos theory. A little later, the visual reference to tumbling dominoes points us toward a more simply mechanistic cause and effect (where the prime cause is the child Amélie herself). As for God, He perhaps receives a cameo role when Amélie's mother takes her to church to pray that she will have a baby brother, and a *québécoise* suicide falls on madame Poulain and kills her outright. Is this to be seen, perhaps, as a comment on the non-existence of God, or as an immediate answer that no more children shall be born to such cold and restrictive parents?

The tension is reinforced by the original French title of the film, *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain*. In both languages the adjective *fabuleux*, "fabulous," comes of course, from the noun "fable" and a fable can be a story that is not only legendary or mythical, but also didactic. Could there be a hidden lesson for the audience in *Amélie*? In French, as well as in English, the adjective can also convey the ideas "extraordinary" or "prodigious." *Fabuleux* can also mean "unlikely though true," which suggests the possibility of life-changing coincidence.

This brings us to the word *destin* [destiny], which implies the point of view that certain things at least are preordained; but would "preordained" here suggest a force outside the material world or within it? *Destin* could also, of course, be used ironically, suggesting that what seems ordained is in fact random—or *vice versa*. Yet some

of the opening sequences, particularly those of the fly and the dominoes, seem to be pointing away from this interpretation. The question of world-view is of course never directly addressed within the dialogue. It is slipped in, to be picked up by those who will among the privileged audience. Meanwhile, most of the characters concentrate only on the particularities of their own lives; all except Amélie herself, Dufayel (the man of glass—*l'homme de verre*), and Nino, who each have a quest larger than themselves to distract them from themselves: in the case of Amélie and Dufayel, to help others realise their potential; in Nino's case to find the identity of the mysterious man who recurs in so many photo booth pictures.

After the deliberately delightful opening snapshot scenes of Amélie's childhood games, the humour, optimistic colours and music continue, but the events themselves are less bright, as we are shown the child's deep solitude and what amounts to her emotional abuse. In her case, and, we learn later, in the cases of Nino, Amélie's future love, and of Bretodeau, the owner of the box which starts Amélie on her life-changing quest, great damage took place in childhood, which is portrayed, particularly through Amélie herself, as a *state* of innocence, dreams and play, but as a *time* of disappointment and cruel reversal. The ritualised games Amélie plays in childhood are, as we have suggested, something with which all can identify. Pain, however, freezes these and other characters into ritual behaviour, based in the past, which creates a wall between them and others.

Though we are shown little of their past, The Poulains senior are prime examples of alienating conduct. In the café where Amélie later works, Georgette's hypochondria, Madeleine's constant retelling of her betrayal to anyone who can be forced to listen, Joseph's jealous mutterings into the microphone — all these are obsessive behaviours which keep others at a distance. Amélie herself, attractive though her childlike rituals, such as stone skimming, may be, has locked herself into a way of game playing with the world that will ensure there is no real interaction. Nino is similar in his obsession with photos of other people, rather than interacting meaningfully with others. The adult characters in *Amélie* have become warped versions of previous selves. They desperately both seek love and sabotage it. It is in overcoming these deep-seated contradictions that Nino and Amélie appear finally to triumph.

Vanderschelden identifies "confinement, loss, loneliness and solidarity" (40) as some of the themes and motifs of the film, but the first three of these are all-pervasive. There is no major character

in the film who is not emotionally and/or physically damaged. Each one either bears recognizable scars of abuse or deprivation, abuses or deprives others, or both. The brittle bones of Dufayel symbolise or reflect both his own and Amélie's psychological condition. Some characters, like Suzanne the limping barmaid, betrayed by her fellow trapeze-artist, the philanderer's widow, Madeleine Wallace, and the unpublished author who haunts the café, are suffering the pain of adult rejection. Georgette, the café tobacconist, shows most clearly the link between the physical and the psychological, since her hypochondria disappears (along with the mediocrity of her looks) only when, for a while, she feels loved. A poignant and memorable image is the blind beggar, alone on a vast, echoing and empty station platform, gazing sightlessly as the turntable on his knee plays, "How could I live, never to know the joy that you give ..." to no-one.

The storybook retro-Paris of Jeunet's film is in fact a locus of human pain and the film revolves around humanity's attempts at denial, displacement and the desire to cling to the past, even to past wrongs, as a shield from the present. From childhood on, the film's human characters use the inhuman and, most often, the inanimate (or at least inhuman) to deflect reality, to protect and deceive themselves.

The teddy bear is a major symbol of childhood: of the warmth, nurturing and play that should be at its heart. This toy, cuddly *par excellence*, is the companion Amélie imagines in the cloud and photographs immediately before she is unjustly blamed for a car accident. Her teddy bear is the toy she sadly pushes on the swing at her time of greatest pain. It is abandoned, forgotten, in the garden bed beneath the window. Amélie's mother's ashes are deliberately enshrined in the garden by monsieur Poulain. However, there is a connection between the symbolism of the bear and the ashes; the abandoned bear becomes covered, trapped in ice, just like Amélie's heart. Its pathetic innocence echoes that of the garden gnome, lovingly repainted by monsieur Poulain, then "reconciled" to the deceased madame Poulain by her husband, who cannot let go of his grief. Amélie watches, longing only to be reconciled, herself, to her father.

The Teddy bear, Amélie's toy crocodile and other innocent childhood playthings stand in stark contrast to the jaded "adult toys" of the sex-shop where Nino works: toys in which neither he nor any other major character show any interest whatsoever except as commodities. These sad, inanimate substitutes for physical human love are no substitute at all; neither is the shop's stripper,

reduced to the level of a sex toy herself, as she pathetically acts out her parody of a dance which men pay to see.

There is a blurring of the animate (in the sense of breathing, and living) and the inanimate at several points in the film. Madeleine Wallace's stuffed dead dog is said to be looking longingly at his unfaithful master—a mute companion in her misery. A mime in the guise of a statue points the way to the telescope through which Amélie must look. Nino caresses Amélie while dressed as a skeleton on the ghost train. The garden gnome, of course, courtesy of Amélie's imagination and resourcefulness, travels the world and sends postcards. Cute framed birds comment on the lives of their owner, Amélie, and similarly a photo-booth set of pictures of a real man discuss Nino. A plaster pig lamp-stand pulls the chain to turn out the light, mirroring the earlier scene in which the vengeful child Amélie, like a small but malevolent puppeteer, sits on her sadistic neighbour's roof, unplugging the television aerial at key points as he attempts to watch a soccer match, causing him to jump and curse on cue.

This, of course, prefigures her adult manipulation of physical objects (such as the forged long-lost letter from Madeleine's long-lost husband), of physical laws (such as electricity in the home of the sadistic greengrocer, Colignon), of objects which have become the reassuring stuff of habit (as when Amélie reverses Colignon's door-handle and swaps his toothpaste for foot cream), and of known human behaviour (the newspaper seller will of course pass on the "secret," which Amélie has whispered to her, of the supposed desire of Georgette for Joseph). These manipulations—as seemingly insignificant in themselves as the beating of a fly's wings, will, in turn, change the perceptions and thus the behaviour of the person for whom they are intended. A hidden puppeteer "pulls the strings"; a skimmer of stones sets ripples in motion.

A human overriding of a kind of social determinism, then, seems to be at play here. Abuse produces pain, self-deception and self-protection. Minute changes in the environment (a tin box, a letter, a postcard from a gnome, a slipper which suddenly does not fit), result in changes in human behaviour calculated in advance by Amélie. Chaos theory, suggested in the opening shots by the fly beating its wings, is here not chaotic at all. The manipulated characters do not, of course, know this. For them, chance, fate or the inexplicable have changed their lives for the better (except for Colignon's), just as, previously, chance, fate or the inexplicable changed them for the worse. Thus, the existence of the "puppeteer" Amélie, working unknown behind the scenes, might

suggest the existential dilemma of modern and postmodern humanity, for all previous events in the lives of the characters would, according to their personal world view, have seemed as random or as destined as those initiated by Amélie.

Amélie's own self-protection is symbolised by the fact that much of the action takes place at main line or métro stations or on trains: anonymous modes of transport which take the traveller to a predetermined destination. Amélie can only head in a new direction once she gets off her own tracks. In pursuit of Nino she is constantly led (and finally leads him) out of the station, away from the platform, up stairways into the hustle and bustle. The motor scooter on which she and Nino ride away in the final scene is the opposite of the train: rather dangerous, intimate, free to go where the driver will. Unlike conventional fairy tales, this twenty-first century tale gives us no guaranteed "happily ever after." With no tracks to guide them, Amélie and Nino ride into an unknown future with no guarantees.

Another kind of line which recurs constantly in the film is that of the telephone, used by Amélie to keep people at a distance and herself anonymous. It helps her to avoid direct contact with Bretodeau while returning to him the precious box, and, later, to avoid direct contact with Nino, the person with whom, above all, she desires intimacy.

At the heart of Amélie's apartment block and at the heart of the film is Dufayel—*l'homme de verre*, "the Man of Glass," (note in the name the merging of the human and the inanimate). He is the character who begins, through encouragement, to melt the ice of Amélie. At the same time he is the supreme symbol of her (and the human) condition. He is unable to leave his room. Like the psyche of a hurting human being, the *interior* in which he lives is filled with objects whose sharp edges and corners are wrapped so that he cannot cause himself pain by brushing against them.

As well as *verre*, there is also in French the word *glace* which has the meanings of *mirror*, *ice* and *plate glass*. There is thus in French a linguistic link between *ice* and *glass* which is not so obvious in English.

Glass, particularly plate-glass is, in fact, one of the major motifs of the film. Like Dufayel's bones and Amélie's heart, (between which Dufayel himself makes the connection), it is brittle. When glass is broken there can be pain. It is, in that respect, dangerous. A more subtle danger is that it allows the observer to see without interacting. Most often in the film, it also allows the observer to see without being noticed. As Amélie's and Dufayel's relationship with

each other develops, the windows separating their apartments open. The plants that Amélie nurtures are all on the outside. Inside her apartment lives her cat, which, in the few shots in which it appears, appears to live a life that mirrors the self-containedness of Amélie's own.

Glass appears as a barrier throughout. Even the beloved goldfish, best friend of the child Amélie is, like her, untouchable. Suicidal in its glass bowl, it is ultimately granted a more dangerous freedom, as, later, is she. As well as the windows of Amélie and Dufayel's flats, there are the telescope and binoculars through which they watch each other. Glass separates stripper from audience at the sex-shop. The glass of the café windows allows the outside world only to be dimly seen. The glass station roof half masks the sky. It is behind the glass of the toilet door that Georgette and Joseph so dramatically express their passion. Amélie watches the targets she has lured with a ringing telephone through the glass of the booths from which she has made her calls. There is plate glass behind the table at which Nino sits in the café, through which Amélie observes him, not daring to reach out. Glass, therefore, is both a mask and as a lens through which characters observe the world and each other.

A subset of the glass and lens symbolism, of course, and perhaps even more important, is the camera lens. Here, perhaps, is another play on words, since the French word for a camera lens is *objectif*. If it is a play on words, it is surely ironic, for in choosing to watch life through a lens ("the camera never lies") the characters often project onto the image that they register their own subjective wish-fulfilment dreams or fears. There are the cloud-toys seen by young Amélie; her projection of imaginary futures onto the television screen; the travels of the garden gnome, and, of course, the image of the mystery man from Nino's album who turns out to be simply the photo-booth repair man.

Cameras abound: Amélie's childhood instamatic, Dufayel's video camera. There is also the recording of sound through Joseph's cassette recorder, onto which he projects his own pained and distorted view of the world and of women. The various photo-booths, which play a central role in the unfolding drama, are mirrors in which the initiator of the photo wishes to see him or herself, but, as before a mirror, consciously poses—puts on a mask. The photos which reach Nino's Album, though, are torn. Like Amélie, Nino tries to put people back together again.

The ubiquity of cameras has as its corollary the ubiquity of images: not only photos but the images seen through Dufayel's

camera (a glass man watches time pass on a clock through a lens, through a window) and the videos sent to him by Amélie—taped images of living creatures acting unpredictably: stepping out of the mould.

Dufayel's copy of the Renoir painting is itself the image of another image—frustratingly lacking the expression on the face of the central character. Onto this image Amélie is gently persuaded to project herself; again, we see a symbolic blurring of the animate and inanimate.

The ultimate camera lens is that of Jeunet himself; the ultimate set of images the story of *Amélie*. The film is relentlessly self-referential, the heroine herself smiling and speaking frequently in asides to the camera. In a sense, we, the other side of the lens, become her intimate friend. Is this intimacy possible because we cannot touch her, therefore we cannot hurt her? Yet, she is a "character" set forever in cinematic form: a celluloid friend for us; in her turn, then a "safe" friend for each spectator.

Jeunet's digital modifications cause the very cameras recording the story to lie constantly, and he invites us to accept and enjoy the lie, as Amélie invites other characters to accept and enjoy the lies she offers them. The audience is of course watching *Amélie* for various subjective reasons of its own and, like the characters it is watching, may use the film and its images as a shield from what surrounds it in real life. As T. S. Eliot writes, "Humankind cannot bear very much reality."⁸ Jeunet says "The intent of *Amélie* [...] was to make audiences feel happy [...]"⁹ However, as the film itself shows, he knows that beneath the surface, audiences are likely to be *unhappy*. Why would we need "feelgood movies" if we are already feeling good? Like Amélie herself, he shows us the Paris we would like to see and believe, dresses everything up in bright colours, adds lovely music, humour and a love interest and, ironically, we are willing to forget the painful reality of being human, even when reminders of that reality are at the core of the film itself—so long as Amélie keeps smiling at us. The beautiful Amélie, like Jeunet, is a "control freak."¹⁰ Jeunet, like Amélie, cannot ultimately control reality; he can only make images of it. All but the first of Amélie's adult "adjustments" of reality are themselves images: adjustments of other people's perception of the reality they are living in, have lived through or have yet to live through. They are not changes to the inconvenient, problematic reality in which we all live. So far as we know, she succeeds when she "alters" for Madeleine Wallace the safely distant past or sends her father off to an as yet unknown future. Her influence does not last when she attempts to

manipulate the feelings of people in the present. Georgette and Joseph quickly revert to type.

Amélie cannot, however, adjust her own destiny, except insofar as she invents subterfuges simultaneously both to confront and avoid it—subterfuges which are almost her undoing. The “chance” dropping of the perfume stopper which (unlikely though it may be) rolls in a straight line, the “chance” sighting of Nino, the encouragement she receives from Dufayel, all contribute to Amélie’s final pursuit of the fulfilment of her *own* deep need for love and point perhaps to a determinism, a destiny, beyond what she can manufacture for others, but she must be ready to grasp what is offered. Damaged Amélie finds solace in damaged Nino. But it is a risk. She is off the tracks and on the road on a wobbly bike.

Jeunet gives us no solutions to the human condition, but he does hold up a mirror in which humanity can simultaneously see it and, like the characters, hide from it. For a fictional film is technology making the unreal seem real, re-animating invented characters whose portrayals have long-since moved on to other things. Amélie the character finally becomes, to use Sartrean terminology, authentic. Presented with this authenticity of the (because fictional) inauthentic, we, the audience, after losing ourselves in the love story, must also move out into the real streets of our own “Paris,” and either take the risk of our dreams shattering like glass, or find another way to hide.

Through *Amélie* Jeunet demonstrates, indeed, the need to “seize the day.” Simultaneously, however, he metaphorically turns the camera on us, as we give ourselves up to the bright humour and romanticism of these fictions, which distract us both from the pain of the situations portrayed, and the lives we ourselves live.

NOTES

¹ *Le Fabuleux Destin D'Amélie Poulain* (Australia: *Amélie*; USA: *Amélie from Montmartre*), directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet; screenplay by Jean-Paul Jeunet; music by Yann Tiersen; starring Audrey Tautou, Mathieu Kassovitz, Rufus, Isabelle Nanty, Dominique Pinon, Yolande Moreau, Jamel Debbouze, Artus de Penguern, Michel Robin, Maurice Bénichou, Clotilde Mollet, Serge Merlin, France 2001, distributed in France by UDF.

² Alison James, “French hit stung by critical backlash. (Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *Amélie From Montmartre*)”, *Variety*, 383.3 (4 June 2001): 7.

- ³ Sylvie Waskiewicz, "Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain" (review), *French Politics, Culture and Society*, 20 (2002): 152 ff.
- ⁴ Directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro; screenplay by Gilles Adrien; music by Carlos d'Alessio; starring Dominique Pinon, Marie-Laure Dougnac, Jean-Claude Dreyfus, France, 1991.
- ⁵ *La cité des enfants perdus*, directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet; screenplay by Marc Caro; music by Angelo Badalamenti; starring Ron Perlman, Daniel Emilfork, Judith Vittet, France, 1995.
- ⁶ Martin Barnier, "Amélie révisé son histoire," *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 74 (Numéro spécial: Les 25 ans de l'Espagne démocratique, April–June 2002) : 163.
- ⁷ Isabelle Vanderschelden, *Amélie; Le Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001)* (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press), « French Film Guides » series, 2007, 33.
- ⁸ T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," *Four Quartets* (London : Faber and Faber, 2001 (1943)).
- ⁹ Bruce Crumley, "Absolutely Fabulous: Jean-Pierre Jeunet's film about a girl determined to do good is charming hearts and making a bundle," *Time International*, vol. 157, i. 20, 21 May 2001, 71.
- ¹⁰ A characteristic frequently admitted by Jeunet about himself. See, *inter alia*, Harry Haun, "Fantasy in Paris," *Film Journal International*, Nov. 01, 2001: http://www.filmjournal.com/filmjournal/esearch/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1000692553

PERFORMING THE HUMAN BETWEEN ARTS AND SCIENCE IN CONTEMPORARY DRAMA

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Bringing IVF and the Genetic Debate onto the Stage

All literature, including drama, is intertwined with and linked to other surrounding cultural and historical discourse. While literary discourse can be considered a cultural practice involved in structuring knowledge and imagery in a society, drama is the most performative of literary genres. Each work inherently requires performance, a process involving not only a literary text being staged by actors, but also the presence of an audience.¹ Erika Fischer-Lichte therefore considers the cultural institution of theatre as an “anthropological laboratory.” For Fischer-Lichte, theatre provides a cultural mirror through which society observes itself while different possibilities of personhood and human life are being played out.² Hence, theatre generally presents performative aspects of every-day life, and demonstrates that elements of human identity and life are not given in a material sense, but created in and through social and personal interactions. In this context it is no surprise that while the public is debating issues such as artificial fertilisation, genetics and bioethics, test-tube babies are part of dramatic plots, and human clones have begun to appear on the theatrical stage.

Dramatic literature and its theatrical performance deal with, and reflect on, language and the body as two major tools of human cognition. In general, theatre and drama deal pre-eminently with the physicality and performance of the body. German drama researcher Hans-Thies Lehmann states:

No other form of art but theatre focuses that strongly on the human body, on its vulnerable, violent, erotic or “holy”

substantiality. [...] As is generally known everything starts with a bodily act [...]. The cultural imagination of what “the” body is undergoes “dramatic” changes and theatre articulates and reflects on those imaginings.³

This means that drama is a form of body performance art reflecting on societal changes in concepts of the body and body perception. Research on the history and sociology of medicine and technology shows the impact of technological progress on the perception of the human body.⁴ Reproductive technologies have a particularly strong impact on perception of corporeality, since these technologies hint at the functioning of the body itself. With reproductive technologies “everything” no longer begins with a bodily act but rather with a technical act involving appliances.

The Gene as a Cultural Icon in Contemporary Society

In their recently released handbook *Gender@Wissen* (“Gender@Knowledge”), Christina von Braun and Inge Stephan consider the gene as *the* modern metaphor of the body *per se*.⁵ However, as Dorothy Nelkin and Susan Lindee point out in their book *The DNA Mystique*, the gene serves as more than a metaphor of the body. Nelkin and Lindee assert: “[T]hree related themes underlie the metaphors geneticists and other biologists use to describe work on the human genome. These are the characterization of the gene as the essence of identity, a promise that genetic research will enhance prediction of human behaviour and health, and an image of the genome as a text that will define a natural order.”⁶ This is particularly interesting since the gene itself—as Nelkin and Lindee further argue—“began as a linguistic fiction, coined by Danish geneticist Wilhelm Johannsen in 1909 to describe a presumed cellular entity capable of producing a particular trait” (Nelkin/Lindee 3). Thus genetics may refer to fictional concepts and presumptions rather than to secure empirical facts.

The medical moral philosopher Giovanni Maio evaluated twenty-five German TV documentaries on cloning that were broadcast between 1996 and 2000.⁷ According to Maio’s analysis, the underlying message of the TV programmes is an ambivalent genetic essentialism. Whilst verbally explaining that the human being may not be solely genetically determined, they simultaneously demonstrate the opposite in the way they use images, graphics and metaphors. Maio argues that TV programmes on cloning tend to convey the following views: they make a mystery of the gene, they imply cloning is blasphemy, they depict those who experiment as

“mad scientists” who oppose common sense, and they contextualise cloning within a message of promise. Moreover, Maio argues that documentaries on cloning virtually “factualise fiction” since they make ideas, conceptions and prospects look like facts, depicting possible future developments as if they had already happened. Maio concludes that so-called documentaries on cloning carry some potential for enlightenment and education on the scientific issue. However, they often do not adhere closely to the comparatively few empirical facts that are actually known. Thus, they further “virtualise” the basis for discussion on genetics by “factualising” ideas and conceptions (Maio 39). This means genetics and the gene waver between fact and fiction. Addressing genetics involves hovering among biological, linguistic and performative aspects.

Bringing the Human Clone onto the Stage: Igor Bauersima’s *futur de luxe*

In the rest of this paper, I will use the play *futur de luxe* to study performative aspects of human body perception and the relations linking language, social interaction and biology. The play *futur de luxe* provides a particular example useful in investigating “performance of the human in the age of biotechnology and genetic engineering.” Its theatrical form combines traditional dramatic features, cinematic elements, and audience participation while making biotechnology and genetics its main topics. The “laboratory” aspect of theatre as a site for human self-reflection becomes obvious: while new biological/material forms of being human are puzzled out in scientific laboratories, theatrical and aesthetic “experiments” provide opportunities to reflect on the performative, societal and cultural aspects of these scientific developments, and on the current so-called Genetic Debate.

Written by Igor Bauersima, an award-winning young German-language playwright whose works are frequently performed, *future de luxe* was first staged at the Hannover State Theatre in 2002.⁸ The play presents the story of a family dinner on a Friday night in the year 2020. The members of the family who are dining together at the family home are Theo the father, Ulla who is the mother, the twenty-five year old daughter Uschi, and the twenty-four year old twin sons Felix and Rudi. At the beginning of the play, the audience/reader observes an apparently normal every-day situation as the family members arrive one after the other, sit down together and begin dinner. However, the conversation at the table develops into a forum characterised by a search for truth because the father,

who is a biochemist with an international reputation, tells his family about a unique experiment he performed twenty-four years earlier. As a scientist he had aimed to answer the question whether human good and evil are determined genetically or by other factors. For this reason he had produced his two sons by cloning, albeit illegally and without telling his wife the truth. He claims that he produced one embryo from his own DNA (as a sample of human good), whilst producing the second one by cloning the DNA of Adolf Hitler (as the essence of evil). The narration of the grotesque way Theo supposedly acquired Hitler's DNA then emerges as a major concern within the play. During the various horrendous revelations, the previous identities of the characters, as well as their self-images, are progressively destroyed. The events are marked by increasingly verbal and eventually physical violence. The dramatic plot plays through two versions of the course of the evening. The first version leads the family members to kill one another with the daughter the sole survivor. In the second, more fully designed version, the whole family survives except for Uschi who quietly commits suicide while Rudi uses armed force to make Theo swear to finish with science. The play closes with a scene that obviously takes place before the family reunion begins. The mother is standing on the terrace in the dawn; obviously unsuspecting, her monologue expresses her pride in her famous husband and her talented children.

Without a doubt, *futur de luxe* makes a contribution to recent debates on bioethics. However, despite being highly political, the play does not present an example of political documentary theatre. The play *futur de luxe* explores new technologies through the topics integral to the plot of the story and through the use of new technologies in the staging arrangements. The play touches on the relationships between language and media, between media and perception, by addressing science and technology in its form and content. The work also manages to express the full cultural significance of reproductive technology and genetics.

***Futur de luxe*—a Vivid Example of “Theatre in an Age of Media”**

In spite of being unconventional and “postmodern” in many ways, *futur de luxe* is not at all “post-dramatic.”⁹ In fact, aesthetically, *futur de luxe* is “dramatic” in a truly classical way. Significantly, the family's name is “Klein,” so that the play features the story of the Klein family. It also plays on the German phrase *Klein-Familie*, a phrase meaning in German the nuclear family. In this way the human clone enters the stage as part of a nuclear family drama.¹⁰

This can be considered a reflection of the way society values genetic and biological relations. In *futur de luxe* the significance of genetics seems to be overestimated, whilst the impact of social bonding is underestimated. Apparently the Klein family has been working satisfactorily for more than twenty years. However, it ends in strife and bloodshed, after particular genetic relations are questioned, precisely because the family members are emotionally conjoined.

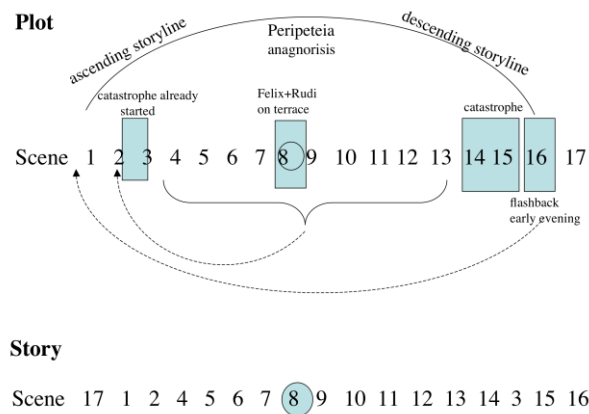
Futur de luxe clearly refers to bourgeois tragedy (*Bürgerliches Trauerspiel*). The form of the work closely links to the essential form of ancient classical drama. While centred on the crucial question of the meaning of knowledge (as in Sophocles' *Oedipus*), Bauersima's work features the Aristotelian "three unities" of place, time and action. Since the whole action occurs inside a house, most of it inside one room, unity of place is clear. In his own production of his play, Bauersima set this single room as a box on a stage accessible from two sides. He placed a terrace on both sides in front of the room with movable blinds and curtains serving as video screens on the walls. The audience was split into two, half of them sitting in front of the stage and in front of the box/room. The other part of the audience was sitting on the stage looking into the box/room from behind. This meant that while watching *futur de luxe* the audience was also observing itself/each other.¹¹

Igor Bauersima set not only the play itself on the theatrical stage but also part of the audience, thus making the audience part of the play. The presence of part of the audience on the stage lays the theatrical process bare by embracing the audience. It points to the anthropological essence of theatre as a cultural institution and practice where audience and actors embark on a joint adventure. Through each performance spectators and actors share the aesthetic and artistic experience of an artificial re-enactment, an artificial acting out and an artificial observation of people and their (potential) behaviour. Bauersima's style of production with the stage setting as a box, raises the implication that it resembles a glass case, as if an experiment in an anthropological laboratory is taking place, with the actors regarded as "laboratory animals."

Research on theatre and performance in cultural studies suggests that theatre in general and the theatrical observer in particular can be considered a "paradigm of modernity." As Johannes Friedrich Lehmann argues with reference to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's theory of society and identity, theatrical experience can be considered a model of human self-awareness and self-reflection caused by the fragmentation and alienation of life, especially under modern

conditions.¹² Following Rousseau, Lehmann further suggests that modern society is like a cohesive theatre of mutual observation by actors and spectators that inevitably engenders both self-love and the experience of non-identity.¹³ Lehmann argues the institution of theatre serves as a model for the human condition. The cultural practice of making theatre emphasises both the theatricality of the human condition and the anthropological significance of observation and observing each other (Lehmann 2003: 159). Humans are at the same time intellectual and social beings. Observation is a major aspect of their existence. In social interaction humans always find themselves both as observers of others and as observed by others. Emphasising the observational aspect of theatre by combining techniques of theatre and film Bauersima not only plays on the anthropological function of theatre, he also presents the theatre spectator as an observed observer, hinting at the theatricality of everyday life and at the relatedness of identity. Everything and everyone is related from a certain perspective.

Futur de luxe features unity of time since the action occurs during a period limited to one night. Furthermore, most of the play features a single-strand action. While observing Aristotelian categories of drama and theatre-making, Bauersima uses stage also as an aesthetic “laboratory” for theatrical “experiments.” He toys with the classical elements through his combination of traditional dramatic forms and cinematic elements:



In scenes 1 and 2 the siblings arrive at the parents' house one after the other to begin the family reunion. In Scene 3 (all of which is shown as a video projection), the catastrophe has obviously already taken place and the living room looks like a battlefield. At the end of scene 3 the fictional setting is disturbed when Rudi opens the blind and approaches the audience announcing that the characters on stage will retell the story—this time from the beginning and in chronological order. Scenes 4 to 14 are flashbacks showing the events that led to the catastrophe. At the end of scene 14 the plot is again in the narrative present. Scenes 15 and 16 feature the continuation of scene 3 and show how the catastrophe finally escalates. Chronologically, in regard to the story, scene 17 plays before scene 1.

The unity of the action follows the classical arc of tension. In the middle, we have a *peripeteia* (a sudden reversal of the characters' circumstances) combined with elements of the *anagnorisis* (the turning point at which some characters recognise the true state of affairs). The video projection in scene 10 showing Uschi committing suicide on the first floor of the house can be considered a kind of *teichoscopeia*—or *view from the wall*—and the telephone calls to the family during the meal serve as *messenger's news*. This modernised version of the ancient messenger's news is given greater importance as the whole trouble only begins when Felix picks up the phone and, because of confusion about the identity of voices on the phone, learns news that he was not meant to hear. The video projection featuring scene 10 shows events of the evening progressing differently radically disturbing the unity of action in a way that contradicts Aristotelian and Western logic. Bauersima plays with the Aristotelian categories from the perspective of a playwright and stage director who is influenced by "post-modern" theories. A fundamental aspect of this approach involves use of existing patterns for radical questioning of the claim to reliable "truth."

Fact and Fiction in *futur de luxe*

With its specific combination of the theatre stage and cinematic elements, *futur de luxe* raises the questionable relationship between reality and fiction, history and story. In the scene at the centre of the play Theo describes his clone experiment to his family revealing his sons are clones. Though the scene opens while the curtains are shut, via video camera the action on stage is screened on the curtain. When Theo narrates his family history, Ulla interjects,

claiming she already knows his story (87). When Theo denies this absolutely, Rudi begins to narrate a violent story about a fictitious baby he pretends to be murdering by driving a knife into the floor of the living room (89). When Uschi calls him “disgusting,” Rudi insists strongly on the difference between fiction and reality. Theo finally claims he wishes to conclude his story (*Geschichte*, 90). It becomes obvious that *futur de luxe* also plays with the double meaning of the German word *Geschichte* denoting both “story” as well as “history.”

Theo starts his narration with an anecdote about the way he allegedly received the DNA of Adolf Hitler:

Theo: Well. My problem was, I had to get hold of this evil ... And in those days, this rumour emerged. Herbert ... A policeman from Hitler's guards witnessed the last minutes in the bunker, he saw Hitler dead and before the body went up in flames he took one of Hitler's fingers as a souvenir. This story, I mean, it is interesting for various reasons, this story haunted me for quite some time, you remember Ulla.

Ulla: I think I preferred to forget it.

Theo: Yes. So I went off and searched for Herbert's loot. I finally came upon a collector of curios. We met, irony of history, at Café Einstein. I introduced myself as a collector as well and under false name. I wanted to buy the finger from him. But I was unable to convince him. In any case, he invited me to his home to marvel at the curios. Yes. And when the man had to go to the washroom, I stole for the first and hopefully the last time ... I pinched the finger and was off. (89/90)¹⁴

While Theo narrates his story the play turns into a black-and-white video clip featuring the scene in Hitler's bunker enacted in slapstick style.¹⁵ The scene when Theo explains his clone experiment deserves some special analysis for more reason than its crucial role in the usage of media technology in Bauersima's stage production of the play. A closer look at the text of Theo's narration quickly reveals that Theo's grotesque story resembles a kaleidoscope of allusions to well-known images and patterns from cultural history. Whilst almost every part of the human body contains the individual DNA, in *futur de luxe* it is the finger out of all body parts that provides the DNA. In cultural history, the finger is considered a magic part of the body. Biblical culture even considers the finger of God to have the power to create and give life. This is also why Michelangelo's ceiling fresco *The Creation of Adam* from the Sistine

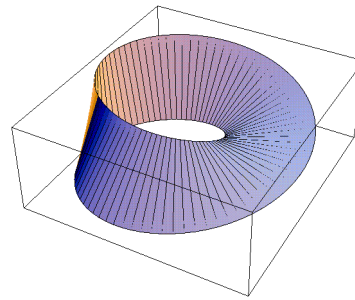
Chapel is omnipresent in the imagery of the debate on bioethics. Interpreting Bauersima's *futur de luxe*, it is also helpful to remember that, in fact, the idea of cloning Adolf Hitler, far from being original, is already a motif in contemporary popular culture.¹⁶ The latest sensational example of Hitler-clones is the media hype in 2001 when the biotechnology company "Clonaid" run by the Canadian sect of Rael announced that, in order to finally bring Hitler to trial, they were going to clone Adolf Hitler using a piece of his skullcap which is supposedly kept in the Russian State Archive in Moscow.¹⁷ The popular German gutter press newspaper *Bild* banner headlined: "Wide indignation about uncanny project. UFO sect going to clone Adolf Hitler! ... World in disgust at tasteless plan of UFO sect ... Can the clone-Hitler become a good person?"¹⁸ While theatre reviews pointed out that *futur de luxe* presents a bioethical statement opposing human cloning and provides a "test run" of the prospect of the technological possibility of cloning Adolf Hitler, the reading of the play presented here focuses on theatrical aesthetics and argues in a different direction.¹⁹ Rather than considering the play as an exploration of the ethical implications of cloning, whoever may be involved, this approach sees the play as mocking certain aspects of public bioethical debates, and as making explicit some of the cultural imagery involved in current debates on genetics.

As underscored by the dramatic irony of the comical video projection, Theo's story is obviously weird and implausible. However, none of the fictitious characters questions its trustworthiness. This is all the more remarkable as Theo explicitly indicates that the origin of his anecdote was a rumour. Bauersima's play in fact demonstrates the opposite of documentary theatre. While in the latter facts and authentic documents serve as the background of the theatrical action,²⁰ *futur de luxe* stages the precise "factualisation of fiction" and the "virtualisation" of the basis for discussion that Maio identifies in researching mass media addressing cloning and bioethics (Maio 39).

The Human Clone as Cipher of "Postmodernism"

Bauersima's *futur de luxe* centres on the relationship linking language, the body, media and identity. Issues of identity, particularly the questioning of identity are major concerns in debates on "postmodernism" and "post-modernity."²¹ Remarkably, debates on human cloning likewise present fear of the loss of identity as a predominant issue in the reproduction of individuals. Although the question of identity is omnipresent in *futur de luxe*,

identity becomes the crucial issue when Felix—shortly after learning that he is reportedly the clone of his father—calls himself a “moebius strip human being” (*Möbiusbandmensch*, 94). The metaphor of the *Möbiusbandmensch* refers to a topological object from mathematics:



22

The *Möbiusband* or Moebius strip is named after the German mathematician August Ferdinand Möbius who discovered it in 1858. A model of the Moebius strip can be easily constructed with a paper strip by gluing the ends together after giving the strip a half-twist. The Moebius strip has certain remarkable properties, arising from the fact that it has only one edge and one side. (The one-sidedness of the Moebius strip is comprehensible by marking a line down the middle of the glued paper strip. In the first instance, one gets back to the starting point but on the opposite side of the strip, by continuing the line it will eventually cover the whole surface of the band.)²³ Human clones can be considered as *Möbiusbandmenschen* as they are lost in an infinite loop. They have no possibility of recognising a beginning or an end of their own person and/or life. In *futur de luxe* Felix states:

But you cannot fall in love with your mother, it does not work, even if she is not your mother, but your wife, basically, since you have been sleeping with her for longer than you have been alive, because you are a *Möbiusbandmensch* coming back again and again, so you come and go through the same loophole in God's creation.²⁴

To Felix, having an endless history means having *no* history and thus no identity. One-sidedness in topology is also called non-orientability. Non-orientability of the Moebius strip means that a direction of rotation moving along the surface is reversed. Thus, the Moebius strip is defined by a paradoxical lag of direction

(Lawson 71). For the human clone as *Möbiusbandmensch* this means that their life points both forward and backwards to the life of the “original” human being who has been cloned. Consequently Felix says: “But you are not allowed to love where you are going to and you cannot love where you come from.” (94)

However, the most surprising aspect of the Moebius strip is its indivisibility. By cutting the strip down the middle, instead of coming apart in two strips the band turns into one long strip with a full twist. Amongst mathematicians there is even a limerick about this phenomenon:

A mathematician confided
That a Moebius band is one-sided,
And you'll get quite a laugh
If you cut one in half,
For it stays in one piece when divided.²⁵

If one cuts the longer fully twisted strip down the middle, it eventually comes apart into two strips, but these two are each even more twisted and entangled into each other. Thus, the human clone as *Möbiusbandmensch* can be read as a metaphor embodying the “postmodern” annulment of the individual. Rather than (pro-)creating new individuals, human cloning creates more and more twisted narcissistic extensions of the “original” human beings.

Cloning creates identity problems since the clone and the “original” get into trouble differentiating between each other, between the “I” and the other. Being a clone the subject stays in an ongoing Lacanian “mirror stage” by seeing itself where it actually does not exist. In the context of the grotesque action in *futur de luxe*, after the revelation of the clone experiment, the relationship between the clones and their parents looks like an ironical comment on the concept of the Oedipus complex, a triad of parents and child where the father somehow functions simultaneously as his own son can hardly be defined as a triad. In fact, Felix’s monologue about himself as a *Möbiusbandmensch* can be read as persiflage on the subject philosophy of Jacques Lacan where the mirror and the mirror stage play a major role in the development of a subject.²⁶ However, when experiencing himself as a clone, Felix does not face entirely new questions and problems. Rather the radical questioning of his own identity leads him to exactly those aporias about the chances and limits of identity, autonomy, autarchy and self-realisation that have been puzzling philosophers since René Descartes. The character of Felix

demonstrates that identity and self-image do not so much come from the interior of a person but are dependent on the environment and on the perceptions of others. Felix's identity is obviously created in a linguistic process. After managing successfully for twenty-four years, Felix experiences an identity crisis once he is identified as the clone of his father. He is not able to outrun the label. He now feels that he sees himself where in actuality he is not. He falls back into the mirror stage and loses himself in the spell of the mirror. However, actions on stage demonstrate to the audience the way that language creates perceptions even of our most "material" parts—(our) genetics.

Dramatising the Human Condition in an Age of Biotechnology

Contemporary plays such as Bauersima's *futur de luxe* suggest that in times of genetic engineering, cloning and assisted fertilisation the question of "nature or nurture" is more than ever topical. It is precisely artistic works such as *futur de luxe* that add specific aspects to actual debates on bioethics and questions about the way the community wants to deal with new technological challenges and opportunities. The play *futur de luxe* demonstrates the importance of language and linguistic sensitivity when it comes to the body and its relation to self-perception and identity. Theatre critics argued that *futur de luxe* represents a plea against human cloning and genetically manipulative therapies.²⁷ However, the present analysis considers the play rather as an ironic comment on recent public debates on genetics, debates which are widely dominated by a mixture of factual ignorance and titillating horror.

Bringing the human clone onto a theatre stage that resembles a glass case in a laboratory where the audience observes itself while watching the play/"laboratory animals," Igor Bauersima's *futur de luxe* reflects on theatre-making as an anthropological condition, concern, and as part of our life-world. To some extent, all aspects of life are performative. As sociological and philosophical concepts such as Symbolic Interactionism, Ethnomethodology and Social Constructionism indicate, our social reality and its meaning do not exist *per se* but are products of social interaction and perception. From this perspective, reality is a product a perception and interpretation, rather than a given. Being dramatically ironic, *futur de luxe* points to the playfulness and changeability of societal reality. It is our playfulness that makes us human and gives us the power to create and build culture. Human community can only stay human when society retains the space to "play"—the room to be creative

and reflective in arts and humanities. Human beings will only stay human when society maintains some leeway for discussion, allowing trials of ways to act and to deal with our own lives and with the lives of our fellow human beings. In Igor Bauersima's *futur de luxe*, theatre in an age of technology still remains a cultural institution of enlightenment and moral education—in Friedrich Schiller's sense:

For, to mince matters no longer, man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays.²⁸

NOTES

- ¹ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2004), 47.
- ² Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Geschichte des Dramas 1* (Tübingen/Basel: Francke, 1999), 3ff; *Theatralität und die Krisen der Repräsentation*, ed. Erika Fischer-Lichte (Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 2001), 1.
- ³ Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatisches Theater* (Frankfurt a. M.: Verlag der Autoren, 1999), 361ff, my translation. The original reads: "In keiner anderen Kunstform steht der menschliche Körper, seine verletzbare, gewalttätige, erotische oder 'heilige' Wirklichkeit so sehr im Zentrum wie im Theater. [...] Mit einem körperlichen Akt fängt bekanntlich alles an [...] Die kulturelle Vorstellung von dem, was 'der' Körper sei, unterliegt 'dramatischen' Wandlungen, und Theater artikuliert und reflektiert solche Vorstellungen." I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague Lucy Davey for linguistic support in writing this article.
- ⁴ See for example: *Artifizielle Körper —lebendige Technik. Technische Modellierungen des Körpers in historischer Perspektive*, ed. Barbara Orland (Zürich: Chronos, 2005); *Mediating the human body. Technology, communication, and fashion*, ed. Leopoldina Fortunati/James E. Katz/Raimonda Riccini (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003).
- ⁵ Christina von Braun/Inge Stephan, "Einführung. Gender@Wissen," *Gender@Wissen. Ein Handbuch der Gender-Theorien*, ed. Christina von Braun/Inge Stephan (Köln/Weimar/Wien 2005), 7–45 [25]. See also Birte Giesler, "Interdisziplinäre Standortbestimmungen: Aktuelle Geschlechterforschung zwischen Kultur- und Naturwissenschaften," review of *Gender@Wissen. Ein Handbuch der Gender-Theorien* in *Freiburger FrauenStudien. Zeitschrift für Interdisziplinäre Frauenforschung*, "Erinnern I," 19 (2006): 351–55.
- ⁶ Dorothy Nelkin/M. Susan Lindee, *The DNA Mystique. The Gene as a Cultural Icon* (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1995), 6.

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- ⁷ Giovanni Maio, "Das Klonen im öffentlichen Diskurs. Über den Beitrag der Massenmedien zur Bioethikdiskussion," *Zeitschrift für Medizinische Ethik*, 47 (2001): 33–52.
- ⁸ "Kritiker nennen die Höhepunkte der Saison 2000/01," *Theater heute Jahrbuch* (2001): 134–49 [144]. *Futur de luxe* was published in 2003. All in-text references refer to the following edition, Igor Bauersima, "futur de luxe", *norway.today*. 3 *Theaterstücke* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 2003), pp. 63–120.
- ⁹ On theories and practices of "post-dramatic" theatre where classical forms and features of drama tend to dissipate see Lehmann 1999; Anna Opel, *Sprachkörper. Zur Relation von Sprache und Körper in der zeitgenössischen Dramatik* —Werner Fritsch, Rainald Goetz, Sarah Kane (Bielefeld, 2002); Gerda Poschmann, *Der nicht mehr dramatische Theatertext. Aktuelle Bühnentexte und ihre dramaturgische Analyse* (Tübingen, 1997).
- ¹⁰ This paper is part of a larger research project on relevant contemporary drama. Amongst results evaluated so far is the observation that almost every play addressing biotechnology, genetic engineering and/or IVF does so in terms of a family story.
- ¹¹ This research would not have been possible without the generosity of Igor Bauersima and the Hannover State Theatre (Germany) who provided me with a video recording of Bauersima's production for research purposes. I would like to express my grateful acknowledgement of this assistance.
- ¹² This is in reference to the concepts of "modern" and "modernity" in historical enquiry and social sciences. These disciplines consider the late eighteenth century—the time of the political and industrial "double revolution"—as the beginning of the modern era. Karl-Heinz Hillmann, *Wörterbuch der Soziologie* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1994), 569ff.
- ¹³ Johannes Friedrich Lehmann, "Der Zuschauer als Paradigma der Moderne. Überlegungen zum Theater als Medium der Beobachtung," *Theater als Paradigma der Moderne? Positionen zwischen historischer Avantgarde und Medienzeitalter*, ed. Christopher Balme/Erika Fischer-Lichte/Stephan Grätzel (Tübingen: Francke, 2003), 155–65 [159].
- ¹⁴ Bauersima 89f, my translation. The original reads: "Theo: Ja. Mein Problem war also, ich musste irgendwie an dieses Böse herankommen. [...] Und damals tauchte dieses Gerücht auf. Herbert. [...] Ein Wachmann von Hitlers Garde hat die letzten Minuten im Bunker miterlebt, er hat Hitler tot gesehen und sich als Andenken einen Finger Hitlers mitgenommen, bevor der in Flammen aufging. Diese Geschichte, ich meine, die ist aus verschiedenen Gründen sehr interessant, diese Geschichte hat mich damals lange verfolgt, du erinnerst dich Ulla. // Ulla: Ich habe wohl vorgezogen, sie zu vergessen. // Theo: Ja. Ich hab mich also auf die Suche nach

- Herberts Beute gemacht. Schließlich gelangte ich an einen Kuriositätensammler. Wir trafen uns, Ironie der Geschichte, im Café Einstein. Ich stellte mich ebenfalls als Sammler und unter falschem Namen vor. Ich wollte ihm seinen Finger abkaufen. Aber nichts zu machen. Immerhin hat er mich zu sich nach Hause eingeladen, um die Kuriosität zu bestaunen. Ja. Und da habe ich, als der Mann kurz auf Toilette musste, da habe ich zum ersten und hoffentlich letzten Mal gestohlen... Ich habe den Finger geklaut und bin abgehauen."
- ¹⁵ *Futur de luxe* can be considered as an early example of the recent trend to make Nazism a subject matter of satire on theatrical stages. The latest example would be Mel Brooks's musical *The Producers*. On the controversy about Nazism as a subject matter of comedy and satire see *Lachen über Hitler—Auschwitz—Gelächter?* ed. Margrit Frölich, Hanno Loewy, Heinz Steinert (München: text+kritik, 2003).
- ¹⁶ The earliest well known example would be the feature movie *Boys from Brazil*, directed by Franklin J. Schaffner in 1978.
- ¹⁷ Werner Maser, *Fälschung, Dichtung und Wahrheit über Hitler und Stalin* (München: Olzog, 2004), 165.
- ¹⁸ J. Fischer/T. Lobe, "UFO-Sekte will jetzt Hitler klonen ... Die Welt ist empört über den widerlichen Plan der UFO-Sekte ... Kann der Klon-Hitler ein guter Mensch werden?," *Bild* 180/31, 4.8.2001, 1, 9.
- ¹⁹ Volker Oesterreich, "Was wäre, wenn man Hitler klonen könnte? Schön zynisch: Das Heidelberger Theater zeigt *Futur* [sic] *de luxe* im Werkraum," *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*, 25.11.2002, 2.
- ²⁰ On documentary theatre in general, see Brian Barton, *Das Dokumentartheater* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1987).
- ²¹ Peter V. Zima gives a brilliant overview on "modern" versus "postmodern" philosophical concepts of the subject and identity in *Theorie des Subjekts. Subjektivität und Identität zwischen Moderne und Postmoderne* (Tübingen/Basel: Francke, 2000). See also: Birte Giesler, review of *Theorie des Subjekts* in *Freiburger FrauenStudien. Zeitschrift für Interdisziplinäre Frauenforschung*, "Entfesselung des Imaginären?—Zur neuen Debatte um Pornografie," 15 (2004): 340–43.
- ²² "Plot eines Möbiusbandes", *Möbiusband*, 2/9/2009 <<http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Möbiusband>>.
- ²³ Terry Lawson, *Topology: A Geometric Approach* (Oxford: University Press, 2003), 71.
- ²⁴ Bauersima 94, my translation. The original reads: "Aber du kannst nicht in deine Mutter verknallt sein, das geht nicht, auch wenn sie nicht deine Mutter ist, sondern deine Frau, im Grunde, weil du schon länger mit ihr schläfst, als du überhaupt am Leben bist, weil du ein Möbiusbandmensch bist, der immer wieder kommt, durch dieselbe Öffnung Gottes kommst du und gehst und kommst."
- ²⁵ W. Lietzmann, *Anschauliche Topologie. Mit 217 Figuren* (München: Oldenbourg, 1955), 117.

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- ²⁶ Jacques Lacan, "Das Spiegelstadium als Bildner der Ichfunktion," *Schriften I*, ed. Norbert Haas/Hans-Joachim Metzger (Olten/Freiburg i. Br.: Walter, 1973), 61–70. See also Steven Levine, *Lacan Reframed: A Guide for the Anxious Arts Student* (London/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Gerda Pagel, *Jacques Lacan zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 2002).
- ²⁷ Jürgen Berger, "Familienfest mit Klonen," *Die Tageszeitung*, 26.2.2002, 16; Oesterreich; Ernst Schumacher/Renate Schumacher, "Utopien zum Aussuchen," *Berliner Zeitung*, 3.6.2003, 9; Gerhard Stadelmaier, "Wenn der Vater mit dem Klone: Fürs Theater ein alter Hut," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Nr. 37, 13.2.2004, 42.
- ²⁸ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man. In a Series of Letters*, ed. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson, L.A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 107. Original emphasis.

