



# Connotations

*A Journal for Critical Debate*



Volume 23 (2013/2014) Number 1  
Waxmann Münster / New York



## Editors' Note

We mourn for John Hollander, one of the founding members of our editorial board, who passed away last August. Being one of the undisputed masters in the art of exploring "Rhyme's Reason" in all its forms, he represented the spirit and idea of *Connotations* like few others did. Many years ago, his book on *The Untuning of the Sky* taught me to understand one of the basic ideas of Renaissance literature, and later I enjoyed the privilege of seeing him unravel the mysteries of *The Faerie Queene* in the classroom. We will remember him with gratitude.

Matthias Bauer

For the Editors of *Connotations*

# *Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate*

Published by *Connotations: Society for Critical Debate*

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Professor Matthias Bauer, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen,  
Department of English, Wilhelmstr. 50, 72074 Tübingen, Germany  
Email: [editors@connotations.de](mailto:editors@connotations.de) <http://www.connotations.de>

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*Connotations* is published twice a year. Private subscribers are welcome to join the *Connotations Society for Critical Debate*. Members receive the journal as well as invitations to the *Connotations* symposia. The suggested annual fee is € 40; reduced rate (e.g. for students) € 20. Please write to: *Connotations*, Professor Matthias Bauer, Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Department of English, Wilhelmstr. 50, 72074 Tübingen, Germany. Email: editors@connotations.de. Libraries and other institutional subscribers write to: Waxmann Verlag, Steinfurter Str. 555, 48159 Münster, Germany; or: Waxmann Publishing Co., P.O. Box 1318, New York, NY 10028, U.S.A. Email: connotations@waxmann.com. Annual subscriptions are in Europe € 40, in the U.S. and all other countries \$ 60, including postage.

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and *Connotations: Society for Critical Debate*

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Printed in Germany

ISSN 0939-5482

*Connotations* is a member of the Council of Editors of Learned Journals.  
Contributions are indexed, for example, in the *MLA Bibliography*, the  
*World Shakespeare Bibliography* and the *IBZ/IBR*.

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## “Undressed— / today’s role dangles / from a metal hanger”: Figurativity and the Economy of Means in Contemporary English Haiku\*

SVEN WAGNER

Critics routinely assert that the genre of haiku is characterised by an utmost “economy of means” (e.g. Harris 280; Hokenson 694; Takeuchi 7; Norton 81). Just as routinely, they fail to offer a precise definition of this term. Does *economy of means* signify that a haiku comprises a limited number of syllables (quantitative definition)? Does it mean that a haiku employs relatively simple language (qualitative definition)? Does it mean that the genre achieves much with little (relational definition)? If so, how are the terms *much* and *little* to be understood? In this paper, which considers the connection between figurativity and the economy of means in English-language haiku, I will adopt the third, relational definition. A version of this definition is provided by Peter Sprengel in his book *Literatur im Kaiserreich*. Commenting upon a work by the German (non-haiku) poet Otto Nebel, Sprengel notes: “[H]ier herrscht Ökonomie der Mittel, [...] hier gilt jenes ‘Prinzip von dem Minimum der anzuwendenden Kraft und dem Maximum des Leistungseffekts’” (195).<sup>1</sup> Sprengel thus defines *economy of means* in poetry as the principle of using *minimal means* to achieve a *maximum effect*.

If one applies this definition to the English haiku,<sup>2</sup> one can say that the genre strives for an utmost economy of means in that it employs minimal means with a view to producing a maximum of effect. Minimal means, in this context, is to be understood quantitatively: English haiku comprise no more than 17 syllables, typically fewer.<sup>3</sup> The question of how these syllables can be made to yield the maxi-

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\*For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debwagner02301.htm>>.



mum effect lies at the heart of much Anglo-American theorising about haiku (a substantial portion of which takes place in the virtual space of the internet—on haiku-related websites, open-access journals, blogs, etc.). If one distils the work of the most prominent theorists,<sup>4</sup> who are generally not averse to couching their poetics in normative terms, one arrives at something resembling a consensus, according to which a haiku achieves the maximal desired effect if it displays the following characteristics as fully as possible: concreteness, immediacy, affective appeal, affective polyvalence, semantic underdetermination, and (with some restrictions) intellectual appeal.

In the context of English haiku studies, these characteristics may be defined as follows. *Concreteness*: instead of offering abstract thoughts or epigrammatic reflections, the haiku presents concrete “images” —a term that, in haiku theory, denotes not only visual images but all sensory impressions of an object, event or action (see Higginson 115). Most theorists voice a preference for a combination of two images, one of which may be more sharply focused than the other (Higginson 116-19). *Immediacy*: the haiku is constructed in such a way that the images are quickly conjured up in the reader’s mind, requiring no lengthy process of interpretation (Willmot 211). *Affective appeal*: the conjured images do not leave the reader untouched but produce an emotional response in her (Harter 174).<sup>5</sup> *Affective polyvalence*: while creating an emotion in the reader, the haiku does not “tell [...] the reader *what* emotion to feel”; instead, it allows for a wide range of emotional responses (Harter 174, my italics; cf. Higginson 22). *Semantic underdetermination*: the haiku provides “only the bare essentials” of an image, thus allowing and demanding a maximum of readerly participation in the construction of the image (Heuvel x; cf. xv-xvi and British Haiku Society, sect. c). This aspect is neatly encapsulated in the notion of “the half-said thing”—a term that was introduced into the theoretical discourse on haiku by F. S. Flint in 1908 and has been common currency ever since (Pondrom 50). *Intellectual appeal*: when haiku critics speak in general terms, they tend to assert that “the appreciation of haiku should not be demanding intellectually” (British Haiku

Society, sect. e);<sup>6</sup> when they discuss individual haiku, however, they frequently laud them for a feature that, for lack of a better term, I call intellectual appeal through delayed reflection. Some haiku display the essential characteristics of concreteness and immediacy—they directly conjure up concrete images—, but beyond this, in a temporal and additive sense, they engage the alert reader intellectually. Such an intellectual engagement may be achieved in various ways: a haiku may present two disparate images that induce the reader to reflect on the relation between them (Higginson 116-18, 137-38); it may contain an ambiguity that calls for a resolution (British Haiku Society, sect. c); it may relate intertextually to a literary pretext (Higginson 123-24), etc.<sup>7</sup> A haiku that displays the features listed in this paragraph as fully as possible produces a maximum effect with minimal means; that is to say, such a haiku is characterised by an utmost *economy of means*.

Anglo-American theorists of the genre persistently argue that figurative language diminishes the concreteness and immediacy of a haiku. Thus, Michael Dylan Welch instructs the haikuist to “[a]void [...] metaphor, simile, and most other rhetorical devices” as “they are often too abstract or detours around the directness exhibited in most good haiku” (Welch); Penny Harter advises haiku initiates to ask themselves whether their poems “present one or two clear images, with no metaphors or similes” (173); Karen Peterson Butterworth notes that figurative language “threatens to corrupt the directness of haiku”; Cor van den Heuvel casts the same point more poetically by observing that “a bejewelled finger distracts from what it is pointing at” (lxvi; cf. xxix). According to this common viewpoint, tropes prevent a haiku from reaching a maximum effect in terms of concreteness and immediacy, thus reducing the *economy of means* in the poem.

The present paper takes issue with this viewpoint in a twofold sense. As I will argue, such devices as metaphor, metonymy, and allegory need not diminish the concreteness and immediacy, hence the economy of means, in a haiku. On the contrary, tropes may heighten the economy of means by allowing a haiku to reach its full potential in terms of the other crucial characteristics: semantic

underdetermination, affective polyvalence, affective and intellectual appeal. If this argument holds, the use of figurative language, which is “generally considered to be taboo in English-language haiku” (Shirane),<sup>8</sup> should be encouraged rather than discouraged.

The following poem by Lorraine Ellis Harr may serve as an illustration of the basic claim that a metaphorical haiku can be highly concrete and immediate:

The sparkler goes out  
and with it—the face  
of the child.

Harr’s poem contains what could be called an elliptical metaphor: as the “sparkler goes out,” the face of the child—which was sparkling, filled with light—goes out, too. On reading the poem, we immediately see two concrete images: a sparkler that loses its light and a child’s face that changes accordingly. The elliptical metaphor by no means diminishes the immediate concreteness of the haiku. On the contrary, it is hard to see how that vivid image of a changing expression in a child’s face could have been conveyed without resort to metaphor.

The following one-line haiku, a subgenre that flourished in the 1980s but fell largely out of favour afterwards (see Heuvel xxviii), takes us a step further:

touching the ashes of my father

Literature students who were confronted with this haiku by Bob Boldman immediately saw or felt either of two things: the touching of ashes or the touching of an urn.<sup>9</sup> This bifurcated response indicates that Boldman’s haiku is concrete and immediate, but crucially underdetermined on the semantic level. This results from the presence of a potential metonymy: the word “ashes” can designate the ashes themselves (literal reading) or it can refer to an urn with ashes enclosed inside (metonymic reading). In everyday discourse, we encounter this type of metonymy fairly frequently, for example when

somebody asks us to “pass the water.” Without the use of the (potential) metonymy, the same degree of underdetermination, which produces a crucial ambiguity, could not have been achieved.<sup>10</sup> By augmenting the poem’s semantic underdetermination, the metonymy also heightens its affective polyvalence; for the alternative visualisations open up different spectrums of emotional response. Whereas the touching of a dead man’s ashes is likely to elicit anything from a simple “Yuk!” to a sublime mixture of the awesome and the awful, the touching of an urn may evoke feelings of sadness, solemnity, or quiet closeness—to name only a few. Finally, by broadening the range of conceivable responses (both visual and emotional), the metonymy indirectly enhances the emotional appeal of the poem.

A similar combination of effects can be observed in this haiku by Alexis Rotella:

Undressed—  
today’s role dangles  
from a metal hanger.

Despite the metonymy in the word “role,” Rotella’s haiku is readily understandable. Upon reading this poem, students stated almost unanimously that it conjured up two concrete images in their minds: an undressed person and a piece of clothing dangling from a metal hanger. On the downside (as measured against the criteria set out above), the metonymy reduces the immediacy of the haiku slightly, though not unduly. On the upside, it significantly increases the poem’s semantic underdetermination. Even more so than Boldman’s poem, which contains a semantic ambiguity that enables the reader to visualise the image in two different ways, Rotella’s haiku affords an active role to the reader, allowing him to insert any item of clothing into the gap created by the metonymy. Being asked what exactly they saw, students gave such diverse answers as a suit, a waiter’s dress worn during a part-time job, and a short-skirt disco outfit. By provoking such disparate visual responses, the haiku allows for a wide range of emotional responses—people associate different feelings with suits

and disco outfits. To put it more technically: by increasing the poem's semantic underdetermination, the metonymy heightens its affective polyvalence. The metonymy also heightens the affective appeal of the poem; for while the reader may not care about the image of, say, "a suit that dangles from a metal hanger," she is bound to care for an image that she (co-)created herself. All three characteristics—semantic underdetermination, affective polyvalence and appeal—are further enhanced by the possibility of a literal (mis)reading of the poem. In four of the classes in which this haiku was put to the test, at least one student saw not a piece of clothing, but a toilet roll dangling from a metal hanger; for them, this was a haiku about diarrhoea. Of the colleagues and friends to whom I read the poem, some also understood it in this way, visualising an undressed person on a toilet and a dangling paper roll. While the poem does not allow for such a *reading* (the spelling clearly indicates the social *role*, not the toilet *roll*), it does, thanks to the homophony of the words, allow for such a *hearing*. Considering that the genre of haiku is closely associated with oral culture—particularly through the tradition of the "hokku party," an event where poets gather to listen to each other's poems (Hoyt 180-82)—the notion of a literal acoustic meaning as opposed to a metonymic visual meaning is not far-fetched and may well be applied to Rotella's richly textured haiku. It should perhaps be added that a metonymic reading of the word "role" in the second line leads to a partial, retrospective metaphorisation of the word "undressed" in the first line. As "today's role dangles from a metal hanger," the speaker is unclothed in a dual sense: (s)he is without literal garments, but (s)he is also without the figurative garment of a social role, which has been shed or not yet donned. By inviting reflections like these, the metonymy at the heart of Rotella's poem proves an intellectual stimulus to the reader.

An analogous stimulus is provided by the following haiku, penned by Tom Clausen:

sidewalk sale—  
wind twists a lifetime  
guarantee tag

Clausen's poem immediately presents two concrete images, which are connected by what Higginson calls the "zoom-lens" technique (116). The first image depicts a general scene: a sidewalk sale. The second image provides a close-up of a minute part of that scene: a lifetime-guarantee tag (on a backpack or some other item) that is being twisted by the wind. If the poem were written in one line, as Japanese haiku customarily are, there would be little incentive for a metaphorical reading. As it is—the poem being presented in the tripartite manner of the English haiku—, it is difficult not to read the second line metaphorically. "[W]ind twists a lifetime": human lives are changed in unforeseen ways by powerful, invisible forces. This metaphorical affirmation of change and uncontrollability stands in stark contrast to the literal image of a "lifetime guarantee tag," which emblematises the human wish for constancy and control. At the same time, the metaphor reinforces the symbolic significance of the fact that the guarantee tag is twisted and turned by the wind. Metaphor and symbolism thus combine to launch a powerful attack on the notion, crystallised in the image of the guarantee tag, that human beings have complete mastery over their lives. Whereas Rotella's poem employs a metonymy, Clausen's haiku uses a metaphor to engage the alert reader intellectually.

Two frequently anthologised poems by J. W. Hackett, one of the fathers of American haiku, achieve the same effect through yet another trope, allegory:

Wind gives way to calm  
and the stream smoothes, revealing  
its treasure of leaves.

Deep within the stream  
the huge fish lie motionless  
facing the current.

Unlike the haiku discussed so far, which consist of nine to thirteen syllables, Hackett's poems comprise the traditional seventeen syllables. These provide room for more complex images. In the first haiku,

the wind abates, the stream smoothes, many beautiful leaves become visible. Despite the weak metaphor of the “treasure,” which I take to mean plenty and/or pretty, and the implicit personification of the wind and calm entailed by the verb “gives way,” the haiku presents concrete images with great immediacy. The same is true of the second haiku, which conjures up large motionless fish at the bottom of a running stream. In order to decipher the allegorical dimension of the poems, one needs to know that the genre of haiku has frequently been linked to Zen Buddhism and that Hackett himself was a lifelong practitioner of Zen.<sup>11</sup> Both facts are well known to the haiku aficionado. Readers who approach Hackett’s poems without this knowledge in mind receive assistance from the paratext, at least if they encounter the poems in their standard context, *The Zen Haiku and Other Zen Poems of J. W. Hackett*. While overtly depicting a natural scene, the first haiku covertly allegorises the process of zazen meditation. Ideally in such meditation, mental activity (“wind”) gives way to a state of quietness (“calm”); the “stream” of consciousness “smoothes,” resulting in a clear vision of reality (“revealing its treasure of leaves”). In his book *Haiku: A Poet’s Guide*, Lee Gurga offers a similar reading of the second haiku, identifying a Zen allegory underneath the surface of the pastoral image:

The fish can be seen as people who have developed a Zen approach to life. Moving, yet motionless, in the stream of life, but unaffected by the currents that carry others away; facing upstream in a world that is moving downstream. (Gurga)<sup>12</sup>

Whether one accepts Gurga’s reading or not, it shows that the inclusion of a trope may significantly enhance the intellectual appeal of a haiku.<sup>13</sup>

According to Shakespeare’s Polonius, “brevity is the soul of wit” (*Hamlet* 2.2.91). Since this dictum applies not only to haiku but also to critical writings on haiku, which tend to be short, I shall refrain from providing further examples and conclude my argument. The poems by Harr, Boldman, Rotella, Clausen, and Hackett illustrate that, while

figurative language need not decrease the concreteness and immediacy of a haiku, it may well increase its semantic underdetermination, affective polyvalence, affective appeal, and/or intellectual appeal. Instead of diminishing the *economy of means* in a haiku, tropes may thus heighten that economy by bringing the poem closer to the ideal of a maximum effect achieved through minimal means. Consequently, the prevalent taboo on tropes in haiku should be lifted and their skilful use encouraged.

Let it be added in the manner of Polonius (who carries on happily after extolling the virtue of brevity) that the widespread, skilful use of tropes may produce two other desirable effects. First, it may result in an implicit metaphorisation of the English haiku canon. We witnessed a version of this phenomenon further above: in Rotella's poem, the metonymy in line two ("role") leads to an implicit metaphorisation of the word "undressed" in line one. The same phenomenon occurs not only on the microlevel of an individual poem, but also on the macrolevel of the poetic canon. Towards the end of a poetry seminar based on the Norton *Haiku Anthology*, two students—who had by then encountered a small number of figurative haiku, alongside an overwhelming number of "literal" haiku—surprised me by offering a metaphorical reading of this poem by Vincent Tripi:

Staring at me  
from the roar of the river  
a wild horse

While the majority (including myself) visualised a wild horse, the said students visualised a muscular man fixating them "from the roar of the river." Though surprising at first sight, such a metaphorical reading of the haiku is both possible and plausible. The reading is conceivably sparked off by the verb "[s]taring," which is more commonly applied to humans than animals.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the virile image of the roaring river interacts as dynamically with the image of a powerfully built man as it does with the image of a wild horse.<sup>15</sup> The implicit metaphor detected by the students significantly heightens the



poem's semantic underdetermination (two alternative visualisations), intellectual appeal (how do the visualisations relate to each other?), affective polyvalence (wild men and wild horses elicit different reactions), and affective appeal (some readers may care for wild men, but not for wild horses). An increase in the number of haiku that employ tropes (semi-)explicitly is likely to sensitise readers, as it sensitised these students, to the presence of implicit metaphors in ostensibly literal haiku.

Second, the widespread, skilful use of figurative language would contribute to a complexification of the English haiku as a genre. As Shirane points out, the Japanese haiku is, by comparison, more complex. This is partly due to the fact that Japanese haiku are embedded in an intricate web of literary-cultural references and associations that engage the reader's intellect beyond a mere appreciation of the imagery presented in the poem (see Shirane). Another reason for the heightened complexity of Japanese haiku lies in their figurative dimension: "the seasonal word in Japanese haiku tends often to be inherently metaphorical" and the greatest practitioners of haiku, most prominently Bashō, make explicit use of metaphor and allegory (Shirane).

In Japan, the haiku is an immensely successful genre. It is not only an important object of literary study, it is also a widespread social phenomenon:

The writing and sharing of haiku engage hundreds of thousands of Japanese today, not just a few haiku masters. There are a number of large, national-circulation magazines in Japan with titles like *Haiku*, *Haiku Study*, and *Haiku and Essays*. There are hundreds of haiku-club magazines, also issued monthly. [...] [T]he essence of haiku activity in Japan is in the small haiku clubs, where people from diverse backgrounds meet to compose, discuss, and publish their own and one another's haiku. (Higginson 42)

If the English haiku, which is as yet too often perceived as "a small puddle far from the mainstream of poetry" (Heuvel xxxix), is to acquire anything resembling that kind of recognition, it must strive for a similar degree of complexity as its parent genre. One way of achieving this complexity, as I hope to have shown in this paper, is by

breaking with an established convention.<sup>16</sup> Anglo-American haikuists should actively seek to invest their work with a figurative dimension, thus creating the kind of poetry that satisfies the senses *and* the intellect—that is to say, “the kind of poetry that can break into the mainstream and can become part of a poetic heritage” (Shirane).

Ruhr-Universität  
Bochum

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>“Here prevails economy of means, here [...] obtains the ‘principle of the minimum force to be applied and the maximum effect to be achieved.’”

<sup>2</sup>Readers who wish to learn more about English-language haiku are referred to William J. Higginson’s *The Haiku Handbook*. Although published as early as 1985, this book still represents the standard introduction to the topic (in 2010, a “25th Anniversary Edition” appeared, with a new foreword by Jane Reichhold). In chapters 4 and 5, Higginson traces the complex process by which the genre of haiku entered the English-speaking world. Chapters 7 and 8 explore some of the transformations undergone by the genre, as it was transplanted to a new linguistic and cultural context: English haiku tend to contain fewer syllables than Japanese haiku; they are generally written in three lines, not in one; they frequently omit the seasonal word (*kigo*) that is so crucial in Japanese haiku; etc. One transformation that has come to the critical fore in the past two decades, and that partly relates to the omission of the seasonal reference, is not discussed in any satisfactory manner in Higginson’s book. Japanese poets traditionally draw a sharp line between two genres that share a common form but differ in subject and tone: whereas *haiku* focus on the natural world and are serious in tone, *senryu* focus on human actions and are predominantly humorous/satirical in tone (see Shirane). Anglo-American haikuists routinely ignore this traditional distinction, by producing poems that combine a focus on the human realm with a largely serious tone. In this article, I follow the common practice of subsuming such haiku-senryu hybrids under the general category of the English haiku (cf. Shirane and British Haiku Society).

<sup>3</sup>“A[n English] haiku can be anywhere from a few to 17 syllables, rarely more. It is now known that about 12—not 17—syllables in English are equivalent in length to the 17 *onji* (sound-symbols) of the Japanese haiku” (Heuvel xv). As a result of this insight, poets (including the majority of those cited in this article) have increasingly come to produce ten- to fourteen-syllable haiku.

<sup>4</sup>These include, among others, Cor van den Heuvel, William J. Higginson, Rod Willmot, and Michael Dylan Welch.

<sup>5</sup>Needless to say, affective appeal is no exclusive domain of haiku—as Moreland Perkins observes: “A poem is (commonly) meant to elicit a certain emotion, to have an emotional impact” (99-100). Due to the extreme brevity of the genre, however, haikuists appear to be particularly aware of the danger of penning a poem that fails to reach the reader emotionally, “one of the dreaded ‘So What?’ haiku” (Marsh, “Metaphor”).

<sup>6</sup>The anti-intellectualist strain in Anglo-American haiku theory stems in part from the perceived connection between haiku and Zen Buddhism; for an exploration of this connection, see n12 below.

<sup>7</sup>A well-known example of an intertextual haiku is Frank Robinson’s “the elevator / opens ... / vacant masks / ... closes,” which offers an allusive variation on Jack Cain’s frequently anthologised haiku “an empty elevator / opens / closes.”

<sup>8</sup>As I was unable to procure a hard copy of Haruo Shirane’s prize-winning article “Beyond the Haiku Moment,” I am following Harris (292) in citing the online version of this article made available on *haikupoet.com* (accessed 28 Nov. 2013). Unfortunately, this version does not contain page numbers.

<sup>9</sup>This and subsequent claims about student reactions to particular haiku are based on five literature classes, including a haiku seminar, that I taught at Bochum University between 2005 and 2009.

<sup>10</sup>Due to their conciseness, all haiku are semantically underdetermined in the sense that the information we receive is highly limited and selective. Nevertheless, some haiku are more underdetermined than others. It is one thing for a poem not to specify the colour, smell or texture of an object; it is another thing not to specify the object itself. In the latter case, the degree of underdetermination, and consequently of readerly participation in the construction of the image, is higher.

<sup>11</sup>In his *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, D. T. Suzuki defines the essence of Zen as follows: “Zen defies all concept-making. [...] Zen perceives or feels, and does not abstract nor meditate. Zen penetrates and is finally lost in the immersion” (42). In other words, practitioners of Zen aim to move beyond conceptualisation, beyond the constant intellectual web-spinning of the mind, to immerse themselves in the here and now. Following the pioneer British haiku critic R. H. Blyth, who “believe[d] that Zen Buddhism was the dominant influence on [...] haiku,” Anglo-American critics have repeatedly “stress[ed] the sources of haiku in Zen consciousness” (Higginson 57, 67; cf. Amann; and Heuvel liv-lv). Some have gone so far as to suggest that “a true haiku [...] is a moment of total and genuine awareness of the reality of the Now” (Spiess 10) and that the reading of haiku produces “little flashes of enlightenment” comparable to the ones experienced by the Zen adept (Marsh, “Haiku”). Japanologists such as Hiroaki Sato and Haruo Shirane have launched vociferous attacks on this spiritualised and, in effect, anti-intellectualist conception of the genre, arguing that the connection between Zen and haiku is largely a Western construction (cf. Sato 129-31; and Shirane). Nevertheless, this conception has influenced the shape of English haiku, by

inducing many poets to focus exclusively on concreteness and immediacy (the here and now) at the expense of intellectual stimulation. We are thus confronted with the paradoxical situation that the English haiku has been more strongly influenced by a Japanese religious tradition, Zen Buddhism, than the Japanese haiku.

<sup>12</sup>Since I was unable to procure a copy of Gurga's book, I am forced to cite an unpaginated excerpt. This excerpt is provided by Dr. Gabriele Greve (Daruma Museum, Japan) in her well-established blog on haiku-related topics: *wkdhaikutopics.blogspot.com* (accessed 28 Nov. 2013).

<sup>13</sup>Interestingly, Hackett's poems use the connection to Zen, which, on a macroscopic level, has a tendency to weaken the intellectual dimension in English-language haiku, as a means of strengthening that dimension.

<sup>14</sup>The *OED* lists more than twenty modern instances of "stare, *v.*, 1. *a. intr.* To gaze fixedly and with eyes wide open"; only one of these applies the verb to animals.

<sup>15</sup>It may not be a coincidence that the students who visualised a man were both female. In my teaching experience, some haiku produced a noticeably gendered response. Rotella's "Undressed—," for example, led the majority of male students to visualise some item of clothing associated with work, such as a business suit; the garments visualised by the female students could not be so clearly assigned to one field of experience. This and related observations suggested that the genre of haiku may prove a fruitful ground for a gender-oriented reader-response study.

<sup>16</sup>For other suggestions on how the English haiku may increase its complexity, without losing its original character and appeal, see Shirane; note particularly his notion that a haiku should connect its "horizontal axis" (the concrete, immediate images of the poem) to the "vertical axis" of tradition (past events, texts, etc.).

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## Poe's Faltering Economies: A Response to Hannes Bergthaller\*

DENNIS PAHL

As a writer associated with Gothic tales of terror and obsession as well as with critical essays detailing, in an almost scientific way, how he creates his poetic "effects," Edgar Allan Poe has always had the reputation for being as much a romantic artist as a pragmatic craftsman. How is one to sort out such differing images of the author? Is Poe the dreamy, melancholy poet (perhaps as hypersensitive as some of his characters) caring only for supernal Beauty and Truth? Or is he more the clever manipulator of emotions, the "coldly-calculating literary hack" (Bergthaller 14), shaping his aesthetic commodities to gain as large a readership as possible? In his essay "Poe's Economies and 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" Hannes Bergthaller argues that the "the striking contradictions that have always confounded scholars of Poe's work"—contradictions, as he sees it, between Poe's "aggressive commercialism and his haughty aestheticism" (14)—stem from "two distinct inflections of the notion of poetic economy," one oriented toward the literary marketplace and the other revolving around art as an approximation of "divine natural order" (15).<sup>1</sup> Focusing on these "economies" in Poe's work, Bergthaller tries to show how "Poe's reflections on his craft bear traces of his struggle to make these two different sets of constraints congruent, to establish the economy of the work of art as a kind of common denominator between the commercial and the divine" (15). Bergthaller's prime example of Poe's ability

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\*Reference: Hannes Bergthaller, "Poe's Economies and 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" *Connotations* 22.1 (2012/2013): 13-31. For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debbergthaller02201.htm>>.

to establish a sense of unity, of congruence, between the two economies is the Gothic tale "The Fall of the House of Usher," which Bergthaller analyzes toward the end of his essay.

Obviously inspired by the historicist turn in Poe criticism and especially by Terence Whalen's *Edgar Allan Poe and the Masses* (1999), which reconnects the romantic Poe to his cultural-historical world and attempts to see Poe's writing within the context of the nineteenth-century literary marketplace, Bergthaller makes use of "economy" as a term enabling him to draw together, and offer insight into, both the divine and commercial implications of Poe's aesthetics. Finding evidence of Poe's romantic idealism, of his divine economy, is not difficult, especially in Poe's "poetological essays" (18), where his theoretical remarks, taken at their face value, convey a view of literary art that is amoral and ahistorical and that mainly concerns the abstractions of Beauty and Truth. To detach the cultural-historical implications, the commercial aspects of Poe's art, from his purely aesthetic concerns, however, requires more maneuvering on Bergthaller's part. And in this regard his method is to demonstrate Poe's hoaxing nature, his making seemingly "ludicrous" (18), "quasi-scientific" (19) pronouncements about his "philosophy" of composition, as a vehicle for *selling* his science of writing. Furthermore, as Bergthaller asserts, Poe's artistic interest in "brevity" and "unity of impression" (18)—aesthetic principles articulated both in Poe's Hawthorne review and in "The Philosophy of Composition"—has mainly to do with capturing readers who could experience aesthetic pleasure with the least cost in terms of time spent away from their working schedules. That Bergthaller uses for this argument Poe's critical essays on poetry is a bit daring, given that Poe, as Whalen has pointed out, initially turned to writing tales rather than poetry for strictly commercial reasons, so as to reach a wider audience (Whalen 9). This does not of course negate some of the commercial implications of his "poetological" essays; but one wonders if the argument being made for Poe's commercial poetics becomes somewhat strained, and if it does not obscure the more crucial features of an aesthetics that, while profoundly mate-



rialist, is not so thoroughly guided by the forces of the marketplace as one might believe.

To understand Poe's scientific pronouncements, as Bergthaller does, as a kind of "intellectual grandstanding" (18) for the purpose of gaining commercial respectability is to overlook the fact that behind the posing is a serious aesthetic intention—one inclined less toward the spiritual or the cosmic (the second "economy" Bergthaller discusses) than toward empirical interests. One may scoff at the so-called "grandstanding," or may even think of Poe's intellectual pose as a way for him to market his works better, but this is to fail to recognize the philosophical sources of Poe's writing. For throughout his essays, he is echoing the aesthetic principles of the eighteenth-century philosopher Edmund Burke, whose empirically defined categories of the Beautiful and the Sublime become important to Poe's literary aims. However "hyperbolic" (18) Poe's scientific-sounding statements may be, his compositional theory has its basis less in a commercial desire for a mass audience than in a devotion to Burkean aesthetics. His artistic consciousness, one might say, is geared more toward producing sensory effects than toward producing saleable commodities, even if sensationalism, as a byproduct of his aesthetic viewpoint, becomes an important aspect of his public appeal.

Poe's call for brevity in literary art, then, is not to appeal to his busy readers' limited leisure time or to short attention spans but to create certain emotional and psychological effects—such as feelings of melancholy, suggestive of Burke's category of the Beautiful; or a sense of nerve-wracking terror that occurs when melancholy (such as that which we observe in the narrator of "The Raven") gradually turns into mad obsession and sublime self-torture. Intended mainly to produce "true poetical effects," such as "intense excitements" ("Philosophy" 62), Poe's aesthetic principles cannot be reduced simply to a set of commercial ploys. To suggest that they are mainly market-directed would be not only an overstatement but also a distortion of Whalen's cultural-historical assessment of Poe. As Whalen points out, while Poe might have considered profits and public taste, he "never-

theless took pains to distinguish between the mass of readers who made a text popular and the small group of critical readers who appreciated “true literary merit.” Moreover, Whalen notes that Poe’s concern with the literary work’s “unified effect” is not necessarily related to his desire for mass appeal, since, after all, his readership, being a “divided and deeply stratified audience,” precluded any sense of unity: “Poe assumed a great and permanent division among readers, as if the permanence of this division might somehow protect him from being sullied or engulfed by the literate masses” (95-96).<sup>2</sup>

If one feels compelled to link Poe’s poetic theory to the economic-industrial world, however, one need look no further than Poe’s statements about his own labor as a poet who proceeds, not by some “fine frenzy” (“Philosophy” 61), but by the painstaking efforts to employ verbal imagery and musical rhythms that would help create the most potent emotional effects. This aesthetic interest, however oriented toward affecting the reader, need have nothing to do with salesmanship. In “The Philosophy of Composition,” Poe cordially invites the reader into his literary laboratory to view the way his science, the product of his intellectual labor, at once serious and playful, forever keeps the reader off balance with an irony and power of language that prove disturbing, dizzying, and finally self-subversive.<sup>3</sup> As I’ve shown elsewhere, his “Philosophy of Composition” is its own poetically charged text, assuming the role of Poe’s most important poetic statement about his art while, at the same time, dramatizing such undercurrents of meaning that make problematic any clear distinctions between Poe the romantic poet and Poe the empirical scientist and laborer-craftsman.<sup>4</sup> His “Philosophy,” with its wit and slippery language, *enacts* Poe’s aesthetics, mirroring, in a disorienting way, the very poem (“The Raven”) it is supposed to master. Even if Poe’s essay is partially constructed for the purposes of commerce, and even if his writing in general sometimes takes on the aspect of a “literary commodity” (19), its inscription in the marketplace seems, in an uncanny way, to depend on a wholly other economy from which it cannot detach itself—the economy of pure aesthetics that Bergthaller opposes

to the marketplace economy and that he views in divine or cosmic terms. Only seeming to be spiritual and “inaccessible to the physical senses” (21), this economy of so-called “pure” aesthetics is actually steeped in the physical world, its material impulse having its source in what Burke, in his *Philosophical Enquiry*, calls “the natural and mechanical causes of our passions” (139). What Bergthaller sees as Poe’s “divine” art, or cosmic economy, incorporates the very empirical, mechanical, labor-intensive processes that Bergthaller would quickly dismiss as part of Poe’s “ludicrous” scientific pretensions.

However Bergthaller would like to characterize the economy of pure aesthetics, of poetry on a cosmic order, it nevertheless becomes, in Poe’s critical essays, but another economy that turns out to be unstable, faltering as it does under the pressure of a stubbornly materialist aesthetics that associates itself with the sensory-emotional power of Poe’s literary language. Bergthaller’s contention is that Poe’s interest in unity of effect and symmetry (as outlined especially in *Eureka*) indicates his desire to create a literary art that is analogous to a natural or divine order. But while such “poetological” essays as Poe’s review of Longfellow’s *Ballads* and “The Poetic Principle” specifically refer to Poe’s metaphysical inclinations, his supposed interest in the cosmic harmony of the natural world would, in Bergthaller’s analysis, put Poe in practically the same camp as the very New England Transcendentalists whom Poe satirized and whom he often humorously referred to as “frogpondians.”

As Joan Dayan convincingly argues, Poe, in his aesthetic essays, is actually “parodying the Emersonian sublime” (13).<sup>5</sup> Even if such metaphysical rhetoric is employed, it is, as Dayan shows, fraught with contradictions. Poe’s seeming idealism is couched in an ironically earthly desire for heavenly fulfillment. Alluding to the poetic sensibility in terms of a “burning thirst,” a “prescient ecstasy” and a “wild effort to reach the Beauty above,” Poe views poetry as an art born of raw emotion and passion, even as the poet searches for “those divine and rapturous joys, of which *through* the poem, or *through* the music, we attain to but brief and indeterminate glimpses” (“Poetic Principle”

184). Bergthaller does well to point to Poe's awareness of the material world's fallibility, of its inability to become symmetrical to God's laws. Unfortunately, he stops short of acknowledging Poe as a serious empiricist who, as Dayan argues, "attempts to disclose a manner of speaking *about* God, of translating divinity into language" (48). Viewing language as matter, as substance, and recognizing that word-images and word-sounds possess sensory power, Poe, it should be emphasized, defines his cosmology, and particularly the apocalyptic return to "Original Unity," in decidedly materialist rather than spiritual terms. According to Dayan's interpretation of the prose-poem *Eureka*: "The end of all things Poe defines paradoxically as '*Matter no more,*' thus affirming his stubborn refusal to wipe out matter in any privileged sign of spirit" (48-49).

Bergthaller does, quite admirably, point to Poe's "ambivalence" (23) toward the principle of symmetry, which Bergthaller sees as important to Poe's divine economy. If overused, as Bergthaller eloquently puts it, "Mere physical symmetry may [...] seduce the soul into being content with the beauty of earthly, temporal forms, rather than reaching for supernal beauty. It may tether the soul to the realm of mere matter" (23). Here Bergthaller invokes Poe's metaphysical perspective, but without showing some of the ironic undercurrents in his language that actually emphasize "mere matter." It is perhaps no accident that Bergthaller relates the issue of flawed symmetries to "scientific music" (24), a concept referred to in "The Rationale of Verse," one that Bergthaller believes Poe disparages for its potential excesses whereby the "sentiment is overwhelmed by the sense" (24). Although Bergthaller is, as he says in a note (30n10), unable to sort out the meaning of "scientific music," the term is nevertheless suggestive of the empirical and the sensory, precisely the concepts which Bergthaller downplays (or tries to assimilate into the commercial economy) but which Poe finds essential to his poetics. It is in "The Rationale of Verse," for example, where Poe underscores the empirical-sensory side of poetry, the rational, material *sense* of the rhythms and sounds of musical verse.<sup>6</sup> Poe's notion of poetry as a kind of

“scientific music” (“Rationale” 88) can be seen in his belief, articulated early in the essay, that the subject of poetry, far from residing within the “cloud-land of metaphysics,” is far simpler and more commonsensical, and that “nine tenths” of it “appertain to the mathematics” (“Rationale” 81).

Science and music are also linked in “The Fall of the House of Usher,” and the concept of “musical science” (116) refers in this case to Roderick Usher’s penchant for creating and reciting rhapsodic poetry. Poe does not, as Bergthaller contends, disparage scientific music *per se*, just its excesses. In pointing to the flaws of Roderick’s musical science, Bergthaller tries to advance his theory that Poe’s character overuses the principle of symmetry, developing as he does an “excessive sensitivity” to it, which then leads to “a form of pathological self-reflexivity” (26). According to Bergthaller, Roderick loses his sense of the cosmic order, of God’s symmetries, while being subject to the house’s “corrosive effect” (26) as well as (he might have added) to the house’s ever affecting “sentience” (“Usher” 124).<sup>7</sup> Although Bergthaller reads “Usher” as a “cautionary tale which dramatizes the danger of confusing poetic and cosmic economy” (28), and which also represents the failure to locate divine symmetry, the opposing and yet strangely interfused structures in the story do not bespeak a moral lesson as much as they put Poe’s deconstructive, sensory poetics on dramatic display. If the Usher mansion “fails to rise above the material world,” it does so not because its “composition” (26) conflicts with Poe’s supposed moral or spiritual aims, but because, exactly in line with Poe’s materialist poetics, the house as verbal artifact is grounded in a sensory language designed to create intense, disturbing, and disorienting effects.

At issue here are the economies of the real and the imaginative coming into forceful conflict, as Roderick and the reader find themselves in a house of mirrors, a world of art and language that begins to confuse itself with the real—a world in which language (or art) proves to be just as substantial a force as so-called reality. Roderick’s metaphysical interests, not to be mistaken for Poe’s own, collide with the

power of the physical world, that is, with the house and its environment. If there is any cosmic order to reckon with, it all but vanishes, swallowed up by the material substance of the house. And what Bergthaller refers to as Poe's other economy, the commercial economy, seems here beside the point (except in what Bergthaller sees as the crowd-pleasing "unity" of Poe's story). More central to the story, and making a fuller impression, is Poe's science of poetics, as the terrifying, sublime sounds in the house reveal the material power of representation, of language, of art—the story inside the narrative proper, "The Mad Trist," being figured as having enough force, enough power to mobilize events and to inspire the house's collapse. With the confusion of science (the empirical reasons for the events) and poetry, of the real and the representation, of the material and the spiritual, it is somewhat hard to see how the story becomes, in Bergthaller's words, a "struggle to reconcile the commercial and the aesthetic imperatives" (28). Even more difficult to understand is Bergthaller's final, unsubstantiated argument that Poe's narrative, despite its faulty symmetry and its images of structural disorder, reconciles these imperatives after all.

Perhaps more to the point is the way "The Fall of the House of Usher," as an allegory of Poe's aesthetic theory, illustrates how the power of language, far from reconciling opposing structures or economies, operates instead to shatter them, leaving them in the same condition as we find the Usher mansion: faltering and in a state of fragmentation. Indeed, like the house itself, the story demonstrates the material effects of language, as constructed by Poe's "scientific music." Here Poe's poetic language, with its disruptive force, precludes any sense of cosmic harmony. The Usher house may disappear into the tarn, but its disappearance does not resolve its alienating effects, nor does the narrator ever find a sense of wholeness and relief. The narrator, on the contrary, is left shaken and staring into the watery abyss, presumably into his own mirror image, his own split self, his re-presentation. And the fragments of the story itself, of "The House of Usher" ("Usher" 131), are finally all that remain, as language asserts

itself in all its stubborn materiality. Such fragments, embodied in the fragmentary sentences at the end of the story, suggest that in Poe's sublime, disorienting poetics, sensory language does not vanish into some natural or transcendent realm. Moreover, as an eruptive and destabilizing force, it does not easily surrender to the "mystification" ("Rationale" 80) of organic unity, structural wholeness, or economic reconciliation.

Long Island University  
Brookville

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>While it is unclear whether Poe considered his own works in economic terms, we know that another American writer, Henry James, used precisely this language, referring in one of his prefaces to the New York edition of his fiction to the way an author must exert "perfect economic mastery." For James, the author must keep in mind "the general sense of the expansive, the explosive principle in one's material thoroughly noted, adroitly allowed to flush and colour and animate the disputed value, but with its other appetites and treacheries [...] kept down" (278). Although James is alluding here to the expansive quality of his own writing, which must be managed carefully and "kept down," his metaphorical language is suggestive for understanding the eruptive forces within Poe's very different kind of poetics. Despite Poe's concern with aesthetic unity, we find in his writing irruptive ironies and "under-current[s] [...] of meaning" ("Philosophy" 70), which, inasmuch as they cannot be contained or "kept down," result in enriching, while at the same time making problematic and unstable, his otherwise unified narrative structures. Hence "Poe's economies," despite Bergthaller's attempt to define them as coherent identities, are less unified and less stable than one might imagine.

<sup>2</sup>Whalen points out that, aside from the principle of "unified effect," "suggestiveness," as another principle in Poe's theory of poetics, is also something Poe refuses to compromise for the sake of the public taste: "The surplus meaning or 'suggestiveness' associated with symbolism may therefore be seen as a subversion—however petty and ineffectual—of the Capital Reader's insistence that [Poe] 'lower himself' to the intellectual level of the masses" (98).

<sup>3</sup>See Pahl, "Sounding the Sublime" (52-55), where Poe's works are shown to represent the material, sensory power of language—and thus the way in which "pure aesthetics" and material sensation begin to have more in common than one might expect.

<sup>4</sup>See Pahl, "De-Composing" 10-15.

<sup>5</sup>See also Carton, 98-105, for other examples of the way Poe parodies the romantic sublime and "puncture[s] his own metaphysical ideals and pretensions" (17). My own reference to "the sublime" in Poe pertains not to Emerson's views but rather to Burke's understanding of the concept and to Poe's remodeling of it according to his notion of the Gothic sublime.

<sup>6</sup>This emphasis on the *sense* of rhythms and sounds is as true for Poe's review of Longfellow's *Ballads* as it is for "The Rationale of Verse."

<sup>7</sup>Bergthaller misspells "sentience," substituting for it the word "sentence." This leads to a misinterpretation of the word's meaning in his story, which has some consequences for the argument of the essay. It should be pointed out that Poe's middle name is also spelled incorrectly in the printed version of the essay.

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## Echoic Effects in Poe's Poetic Double Economy—of Memory: A Response to Hannes Bergthaller and Dennis Pahl\*

WILLIAM E. ENGEL

The words of one of these rhapsodies I have easily borne away in memory. I was, perhaps, the more forcibly impressed with it, as he gave it, because, in the under or mystic current of its meaning, I fancied that I perceived, and for the first time, a full consciousness on the part of Usher, of the tottering of his lofty reason upon her throne. The verses, which were entitled "The Haunted Palace," ran very nearly, if not accurately, thus [...].  
E. A. Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher" (148)<sup>1</sup>

This epigraph contains a subtle echo of a theme at the heart of Poe's aesthetic practice, mentioned among other places in "The Philosophy of Composition," regarding how melodic verse can elevate the soul through "the under or mystic current of its meaning." We do well to recall that Poe defines "the Poetry of words as *The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty*" ("The Poetic Principle" 185; Poe's original emphasis). Alert to the importance of this theme, Dennis Pahl refers to it in the first note of his response to Hannes Bergthaller's essay on the putative tension between Poe's "two distinct inflections of the notion of poetic economy" (Bergthaller 15). Pahl counters that, "[d]espite Poe's concern with aesthetic unity, we find in his writing irruptive ironies and 'under-current[s] of meaning' ("Philosophy" 70), which, inasmuch as they cannot be contained or 'kept down,' result in enriching while at the same time making problematic and unstable his otherwise unified narrative structures" (Pahl 24n1). These under-currents of meaning,

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\*Reference: Bergthaller, Hannes. "Poe's Economies and 'The Fall of the House of Usher'," *Connotations* 22.1 (2012/2013): 13-31. Dennis Pahl, "Poe's Faltering Economies: A Response to Hannes Bergthaller," *Connotations* 23.1 (2013/14): 16-25. For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debpahl02301.htm>>.

which in the lines leading up to “The Haunted Palace” are qualified further as being “mystic,” deserve closer scrutiny. For, as Pahl argues, “‘Poe’s economies,’ despite Bergthaller’s attempt to define them as coherent identities, are less unified and less stable than one might imagine” (Pahl 24n1). Less stable indeed because Poe maintained, as will be argued in what follows, that his experiments in verse moved his project beyond the sentimental and moral-infused poetry of his day which, as Bergthaller correctly observes, he regularly derided in print even going so far as to take on New England luminaries such as Emerson and Longfellow. Less stable still because on several occasions Poe inserted a previously published lyric into a new story, and not simply to assure that his poems reached a wider audience. After all he made the choice to remove the poem originally called “Catholic Hymn” (and later simply “Hymn”) from “Morella” (1839), a textual decision that even Rufus Griswold honored in his 1850 edition of *Poe’s Works*.<sup>2</sup>

“The Haunted Palace” is a suitable place to launch my investigation, building on Bergthaller’s apt focus on “The Fall of the House of Usher,” because of what it can tell us about Poe’s poetic economy by virtue of its having been resituated within the tale, as well as for what it has to reveal about the “under or mystic current of its meaning” as regards the dynamics of loss and memory. My critical engagement with Poe’s work seeks to clarify how Poe, as a self-conscious *litterateur*, at once literally and emblematically went about “house management,” as the etymology of the word “economy” historically denotes. Economy concerns the management of expenditure, and so I shall be discussing how this applies to Poe’s special cache of treasured up linguistic resources and emblematic associations in a special House or Palace of Memory from which he drew his carefully stored and fastidiously husbanded materials as time and opportunity permitted. He did this, I will argue, to achieve a very particular end with respect to his thrifty use of key terms and images; namely, to depict and set in place a mirror world of ideas focused on drawing out and projecting his special understanding of “the contemplation of the Beautiful”

which “alone” makes it “possible to attain that pleasurable elevation, or excitement, of *the soul*, which we recognize as the Poetic Sentiment” (“The Poetic Principle” 185; Poe’s original emphasis).

Therefore, taking as a point of departure Bergthaller’s suggestive reading of “The Fall of the House of Usher” and guided by Pahl’s judicious sense of Poe’s work as being never quite as settled and orderly as might at first glance appear, my response concerns unpacking the contents of the poetic economy to catch a glimpse of his larger aesthetic aims. For, as will be shown in what follows, Poe traded in tropes of doubling, especially echoic conceits (ranging from depictions of the figure of Echo to aural representations of echoes) and metaphors that carried implications of their own mimetic duplication but always with a signifying difference. His poetic economy thus is an economy that always is doubled, where memory itself is what initiates and guides Poe’s management of his carefully managed resources—including (and especially) those of his favorite emblematic associations to which he returned time and again in his oeuvre. The operations of this poetic economy are put on display exemplarily through the image and also the idea of the *doppelgänger*, and can be traced through the mirroring figure of chiasmus, where the representation is understood to be an imperfect reflection—indeed a refraction or even distortion—of the original. It is here that melancholy takes center stage in Poe’s poetic economy insofar as the resulting double obviates but does not cancel out the original for which one can only mourn its having passed from the world—but not from memory.

This is the economy then, the management of the “household” and its resources in every sense of the term, with which my response to Bergthaller and Pahl is concerned. It is offered in the interest of showing the extent to which Poe’s poetic economy is always doubled as an economy of memory consistent with his declaration that the Raven in his celebrated poem is “emblematical of *Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance*” (“Philosophy” 70; Poe’s original emphasis). Emblems by their very definition call other values to mind and, in this case and elsewhere in Poe’s oeuvre, what is being called back to mind is the

relentless operation of memory itself. Insofar as echoic effects are the trademark of this poetic double economy, putting specific poems into select stories was one of the ways Poe incited his readers to approach and appreciate his innovative literary practice. “The Haunted Palace,” first printed in *American Museum* (April 1839), almost immediately found a renewed life in what was to become one of Poe’s most often reprinted stories, “The Fall of the House of Usher” (September 1839). And so my contribution to the on-going *Connotations* discussion focused on “The Fall of the House of Usher” begins with further consideration of the aesthetic determinations underlying Poe’s insertion of a previously published poem into a prose work. Closer scrutiny of “The Haunted Palace” affords the careful reader more subtle insight into the character of the narrator (who self-consciously comments on why he is able to recite it from memory); and also, by virtue of “the under or mystic current of its meaning,” into the mind of Roderick Usher. Moreover, the poem’s very title evokes a classical-turned-Gothic Memory Palace in which, instead of finding images situated in an orderly fashion for easy recognition and apprehension,<sup>3</sup> we discover in the final stanza indistinct and unsettling traces—perhaps spirits—of the departed whose presence is a reminder of what now is irreparably gone and beyond recovery:

And travelers now within that valley  
 Through the red-litten windows, see  
 Vast forms that move fantastically  
 To a discordant melody;  
 While, like a rapid ghastly river,  
 Through the pale door,  
 A hideous throng rush out forever,  
 And laugh—but smile no more. (149)<sup>4</sup>

And what is it that brought about this change that assailed the monarch’s high estate? We are told simply if vaguely: “evil things, in robes of sorrow.” During the heyday of the “stately palace,” which incidentally is anthropomorphized much as is the House of Usher (“Once a [...] snow white palace—reared its head”), there could be found “a

troop of Echoes whose sole duty / Was but to sing, / In voices of surpassing beauty, / The wit and wisdom of their king." And the king, "the sovereign of the realm," the lord of the dominion "in the greenest of our valleys" was, of course, "Thought," now overthrown; "the glory" gone "that blushed and bloomed," now "but a dim-remembered story." Remember this word "glory" for, as outlined at the outset as regards Poe's thrifty and effective management of his emblematical resources, it will be integral to the conclusion of my treatment of his poetic double economy of memory, especially as pertains to the key terms he kept in circulation within it.

Something clearly still resides inside what might be thought of as a Haunted Memory Palace, even as it does within the House of Usher. What remains now and ever after will dwell in that structure following its decline and fall ("Vast forms that move fantastically / To a discordant melody") weirdly embodies the opposite of that which animates or brings renewed life as initially and previously had been described ("Spirits moving musically / To a lute's well-tuned law"). Like a *doppelgänger* of what once was "by good angels tenanted," we now find some sort of indistinct dark double; the voices of surpassing beauty, the "troop of Echoes whose sole duty was but to sing," now a "hideous throng" cackling with hollow laughter. This "hideous throng," by virtue of Poe's deft poetic sleight of hand, paradoxically takes on a renewed life of its own within the world of the poem; and, moreover, is re-animated in a still more encompassing way by virtue of its being breathed back into life within the larger narrative; namely, through the voicing, through the recitation, of the poem both with respect to Usher's utterances and also, more significantly and with redouble vigor, through the narrator's calling it back to mind and having written it down—from memory.

In every sense then, this situation (the incantatory double recitation of the poem described in the story and reproduced on the page) echoes both the back-story and the dénouement of "The Fall of the House of Usher." For, whatever indistinct thing it is that "like a ghastly river" now abides there, it has been biding its time, waiting for the

moment when the House at last, inevitably, will fall—out of memory. In this respect “The Haunted Palace,” consistent with what I have been calling Poe’s double poetic economy, is a mirror in miniature of the tale, emblematically echoing the world of the story from within, while at the same time projecting a self-contained if melancholy (because doomed) world of fragile beauty. And “the contemplation of Beauty,” we will recall, is fundamental to Poe’s sense of the “elevation, or excitement, of the soul, which we recognise as the Poetic Sentiment” (“The Poetic Principle” 185). The references to music in “The Haunted Palace” thus take on added resonance with respect to Poe’s declaration that “[i]t is in Music” that “the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired by the Poetic Sentiment, it struggles—the creation of supernal Beauty” (“The Poetic Principle” 184). Such lyrical irruptions in Poe’s prose therefore clearly betoken a larger aesthetic plan and purpose. “The Haunted Palace” thus refracts (I would say reflects, but there is no simple symmetry at work here, for Poe is far too clever for that kind of facile one-to-one correspondence), from within the world of the story, the larger aesthetic implications of the tale, while at the same time projecting a kind of literary *doppelgänger*, a self-contained mirror-world redolent with the disorienting beauty associated with the sublimity of the sadness of loss. Such are the terms of the double economy of Poe’s echoic effects with which my response to Bergthaller is concerned. And, in this regard, I concur with Pahl that: “If the Usher mansion ‘fails to rise above the material world,’ it does so not because its ‘composition’ (Bergthaller 26) conflicts with Poe’s supposed moral or spiritual aims, but because, exactly in line with Poe’s materialist poetics, the house as verbal artifact is grounded in a sensory language designed to create intense, disturbing, and disorienting effects” (Pahl 22).

A brief glance at a parallel example of another poem within a tale will help to clarify what is at stake in Poe’s subtle, echoic, and affective approach to aesthetics, and which will serve further to illustrate the operations of his poetic double economy of memory. “The Conqueror Worm” can be read as a typical *memento mori* poem gro-

tesquely elaborating the theme of *contemptus mundi*; however, upon closer examination we see that it mimics and recalls and puts to new uses the metaphysical tropes and poetic contortions characteristic of the seventeenth-century emblemist Francis Quarles (see Engel, *Early Modern Poetics* 87). What Poe admired about this poet is made evident in his review of an anthology of English verse in which Quarles is mentioned twice and singled out among those poets worthy of special consideration and commendation (see Poe's review of C. S. Hall). Poe projects a hypothetical reader who, if called upon to give an account of what was worthwhile and pleasing in such a poem, "would be apt to speak of the quaint in phraseology and the grotesque in rhythm. And this quaintness and grotesqueness are, as we have elsewhere endeavored to show, very powerful, and if well managed, very admissible adjuncts to Ideality" ("Review" 585). Poe further indicates his affinity for Quarles's emblematic method by using this name as his pseudonym in the first printing of "The Raven" (see Engel, "Poe's Resonances" 1-2). Keeping in mind these attributes of "the quaint in phraseology and the grotesque in rhythm" that are characteristic of Quarles's poetry, let us turn to "The Conqueror Worm," published in *Graham's Magazine* (1843) but later associated almost exclusively with the macabre *doppelgänger* story entitled "Ligeia" (1845) in which it figures prominently. Its appearance in the narrative takes on a very special set of additional associations because it is reported to have been composed by the mystically-oriented Ligeia who, in her fading away toward death, recites it to instruct her opium-addled husband who then reproduces the poem in the context of telling his own story. The poem thereby takes on an ironic subtext that it does not have when standing on its own in an anthology; indeed, in "Ligeia," it is made to parody the poetic conventions of the day by desacrilizing the notion of death in favor of reincarnation, specifically Pythagorean metempsychosis. Moreover this poem uses the word "evermore," even as "The Haunted Palace" ends with the words "no more," which in hind-sight we can see anticipates Poe's now-immemorial echoic refrain of "Nevermore" in "The Raven" (1845). This is precisely the

sort of thought-image, through its several though closely related articulations, that finds a special niche in the Palace of Memory of Poe's emblematically charged inventions and which found expression through his poetic double economy.

But what is the constitutive nature of this "under or mystic current of its meaning" that runs through Poe's echoically oriented aesthetic practice? While there is clearly a double register of thought set in motion by the lyrical irruptions within select tales, and Poe of course had recourse to other ways of achieving the same end, it is not the result of a dialectical tension along the lines projected by Bergthaller between the anticipated demands on a reader's leisure time and the demiurge creator of a poetic order. Rather, Poe's operative poetic double economy builds decisively on the sense of order apt to collapse at any moment that is evoked by and which partakes of what Dennis Pahl, both in his response to Hannes Bergthaller and elsewhere, astutely has identified as a version of Burke's notion of the sublime.<sup>5</sup> It is a double economy in that it takes account of and accounts for a work of art and its unlooked-for shadow. The surprise, even the shock of recognition as discussed by Burke in his treatment of the beautiful and the sublime, of discovering that shadow, that reflection of the self in and as the abyss, is fundamental to Poe's creating the conditions making possible the "elevation, or excitement, of the soul" ("The Poetic Principle" 185).<sup>6</sup> Another way to think of this unlooked-for shadow is as what one expected least to find and, upon finding, cannot help but see it over and against, indeed over-shadowing, the original. From within Poe's double economy it takes form and materializes just outside one's field of normative perception by virtue of the affective poetic order itself having called it into being. Poe therefore is adamant that passion, duty, and truth need not have anything to do with the composition or content of a proper poem, whose sole aim is to elevate or excite the soul of the reader so as to achieve that special mode of pleasure derived from the contemplation of the Beautiful which encompasses the sublime:

*That* pleasure which is at once the most pure, the most elevating, and the most intense, is derived, I maintain, from the contemplation of the Beautiful.



In the contemplation of Beauty we alone find it possible to attain that pleasurable elevation, or excitement, *of the soul*, which we recognise as the Poetic Sentiment, and which is so easily distinguished from Truth, which is the satisfaction of the Reason, or from Passion, which is the excitement of the heart. I make Beauty, therefore—using the word as inclusive of the sublime—I make Beauty the province of the poem [...]. It by no means follows, however, that the incitements of Passion, or the precepts of Duty, or even the lessons of Truth, may not be introduced into a poem, and with advantage; for they may subserve, incidentally, in various ways, the general purposes of the work. (“The Poetic Principle” 185; Poe’s original emphasis)

What we can take away from this initial response to Bergthaller’s singling out “The Fall of the House of Usher” as a focal point for exploring Poe’s poetic economy, and from Pahl’s apt pointing to Burke’s notion of the sublime as the groundwork of Poe’s understanding of his own aesthetic practice, is that the house itself is emblematic of the decline, decay, and dissolution implicit in all mortal artifice—a theme that both Poe and Quarles returned to with some frequency. Usher’s House, like the story itself, collapses in on itself. In much the same way Poe looked back to and used for his ends an earlier baroque approach to emblematic designs and images, so too he reached back farther still to the classical world. There he recovered two extremes and, although seemingly apposite, both converge in his poetic double economy of memory. On the one hand he found an ideal of absolute beauty unsullied by the taint of mortality; and, on the other, dilapidated monuments and colossal ruin. As for the latter, he sought to revive them (reminiscent of his re-animation of bodies such as Valdemar, and spirits such as Morella) in what I will discuss as being a sublime and terrifying and hence Beautiful way. For these inarticulate and seemingly inanimate fragments of the past become for Poe emblems of an attitude about life and art that is essentially melancholy and which, typical of baroque artifice (with its quaint phraseology and grotesqueness of rhythm), tends to fold in on itself.<sup>7</sup> Before addressing the more sublime versions of this practice (with its quick shifts in perspective and point of view), it is fitting first to look at the seemingly more benign expression of this recuperation of

classical codes of beauty and wonder that mark Poe's lyrical irruptions in a benighted world of weariness and wandering. Reviewing his allusion to "the grandeur of old Rome" is an ideal place to continue this formal inquiry into his echoic—and entropic—art:

Helen, thy beauty is to me  
     Like those Nicean barks of yore,  
 That gently, o'er a perfum'd sea,  
     The weary way-worn wanderer bore  
     To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,  
     Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,  
 Thy Naiad airs have brought me home  
     To the beauty of fair Greece,  
 And the grandeur of old Rome.

Lo! In that little window-niche  
     How statue-like I see thee stand!  
     The folded scroll within thy hand—  
 A Psyche from the regions which  
     Are Holy land! ("To Helen," *Poems* 39)<sup>8</sup>

Helen's beauty is linked to a series of easily recognized classical features that collectively constitute the catalyzing agency that brings the poet, as it were, home—where home is understood not as house to be managed but as the "beauty of fair Greece, / And the grandeur of old Rome." Her features, "hyacinth hair" and "classic face," both reflect and instigate a nostalgia, literally a "home-coming," tinged with melancholy and suffused by remembrance. It is this nostalgic mode directed toward Ideality that we will find similarly energized in Poe's "The Coliseum" with which this essay will conclude. But before we can arrive at that understanding, we must first attend to what Helen signals in Poe's aesthetic economy, as a thought-image securely stored among his other favored resources which he manages so thriftily and handily in his effort to bring about the contemplation of the Beautiful and hence the excitement of the soul.

Helen here, at once alluding to the paragon of beauty in mortal form, the ancient Greeks' *casus belli*, also draws upon the etymological underpinnings of the name itself, meaning "light" or "bright."<sup>9</sup> In fact in the revised version for *The Raven and Other Poems* (1845), "in that little window-niche," becomes "in that brilliant window-niche," thus reinforcing the sense of beauty as a shining that cuts through the drabness of things of this world. The other key aspect of Helen's beauty, which is the most relevant here in the present context and which provokes further analysis, involves memory—in a double sense. First, she is described (in the first printed version of the poem) as the allegorical figure of Memory, easily identified as such owing to her iconographic attribute of the scroll signaling her role as recorder. Mnemosyne was the mother of the muses and thus of the arts.<sup>10</sup> And second, within the context of the three-stanza poem, Helen stands as the focal mnemonic marker in a larger Memory Palace along the lines discussed in classical rhetoric for grounding one's composition: "an idea which is to lead by association to some other idea requires to be fixed in the mind with more than ordinary certitude" (Quintilian 221). Poe was extremely familiar with such schemes. For example, Roderick Usher's library contains volumes by esoteric writers who used and commented explicitly on place-mnemonics (where items are arranged in a predetermined structure and retrieved as required), such as Tomasso Campanella's *The City of the Sun* and Robert Flud's *Chiro-mancy* ("Usher" 409). Moreover Poe published a lengthy and glowing review of Francis Fauvel-Gouraud's *Phreno-Mnemotechny; or The Art of Memory*.<sup>11</sup> With uncharacteristic geniality he lauded this book as being "beyond doubt, one of the most important and altogether extraordinary works which have been published within the last fifty years" ("Notices of New Works" 326). The Art of Memory, for many reasons, appealed to Poe.

"Statue-like" Helen, like the bust of Pallas in "The Raven," draws on the principles of the classical Art of Memory where one is instructed to be mindful "even to the care of statues" (Quintilian 223). And further, quoting Fauvel-Gouraud, Poe clarifies succinctly that "by

Artificial Memory we understand, simply the power of recollecting facts and events, by means of *conditional associations*, which must first be called for, in order, by their assistance, to get at the facts associated with them" ("Notices of New Works" 326; original emphasis). There is a remarkable sympathy between what Poe claims about the use of stirring imagery "to produce continuously novel effects" ("Philosophy" 64), and Fauvel-Gouraud's emphasis on the systematic, rigorous, and rational use of fanciful inventions and grotesque images in the service of some greater purpose:

In order to remember a series of words, they are put in the several squares or places, and the recollection of them is assisted by associating some idea of relation between the objects and their situation; and as we find by experience that whatever is ludicrous is calculated to make a strong impression upon the mind, the more ridiculous the association the better. (Fauvel-Gouraud, *Phreno-Mnemotechny* 76)

Statues in niches then, like other images set within a mnemonic framework and calculated to make a strong impression, are essential elements in the internal decorum of the Memory Palace. And "The Haunted Palace" functions in much the same way in "The Fall of the House of Usher," namely as a special kind of Memory Palace (after all, the sovereign of the realm is named "Thought"), one that invokes the implied former presence of a House (in all senses of the term: architectural, mnemonic, domestic, and dynastic) which now is a shadow of its former self. This jarring play of memory and fixed imagery, of absence and presence, provokes the contemplation of the Beautiful, which Poe characterizes as being "prognostic of *death*" ("Arnheim" 1274; Poe's original emphasis). He explains this in greater detail in his rhetorically self-conscious reconstruction of how he came to pick the tone and subject of "The Raven":

Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones. [...] "Of all melancholy topics, what, according to the *universal* understanding of mankind, is the *most* melancholy?" Death—was the obvious reply. "And when," I said, "is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?" From what I have already explained at some length, the answer, here

also, is obvious—"When it most closely allies itself to *Beauty*: the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world." ("Philosophy" 64-65; Poe's original emphasis)

With this in mind Walter Benjamin's study of baroque aesthetics can help advance our inquiry into how the beauty of the sadness of loss fits in with Poe's poetic double economy because allegories of ruined structures are central to Benjamin's thesis. Specifically he takes allegory itself to be an emblem of ruin: "History does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay. Allegory thereby declares itself to be beyond beauty. Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things" (Benjamin 178). As regards Poe's aesthetics, however, architectural ruins are, in the realm of things, what the death of a beautiful woman is in the realm of thoughts.

Poe frequently alludes to the way ruin—whether the decay and collapse of a house or the decline and death of a beautiful woman—can function to excite the soul, by virtue of the melancholy remembrance of the Beautiful. But as Poe is quick to clarify: "It is no mere appreciation of the Beauty before us—but a wild effort to reach the Beauty above" ("The Poetic Principle" 184). And so, beyond the melancholy sentiment evoked by the death of a beautiful woman, "unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world" ("Philosophy" 65), there are still other kinds of melancholy to be considered in Poe's larger aesthetic project that likewise hinge on loss and the effort to recuperate—through art—something of what is recognized as being past and gone. And part of what is remembered as having been lost is caught up in the experience of our remembering that something, we cannot quite say what exactly, has slipped away from memory (as with the "Vast forms that move fantastically / To a discordant melody" in "The Haunted Palace"); hence our "impatient sorrow at our inability to grasp *now*, wholly, here on earth, at once and for ever, those divine and rapturous joys of which *through* the poem, or *through* the music, we attain to but brief and indeterminate glimpses" ("The Poetic Principle" 184; Poe's original emphasis).

Moving on then from Poe's treatment of the beauty of the sadness of loss with respect to the physical body, we can find a parallel expression in his treatment of what can be redeemed through reflection on monumental loss in the world, especially as regards all that architectural ruins came to stand for in Poe's poetic double economy of memory. This can be seen—and, as it were, heard—in "The Coliseum," a poem that showcases Poe's sly method of tapping into and transforming the themes and tropes typical of baroque conceits, most notably negative attributes and antithetical parallels. As such this brings us back to what was mentioned earlier about "The Conqueror Worm" as well as to the whole context of Poe's resonance with the emblematic conceits of Francis Quarles, especially as pertains to seeing the world as ruin and thus all human endeavors as subject to decay and inevitable oblivescence.

Monuments reduced to ruins unmistakably are emblematic mirrors of our mortality. As such they achieve a similar effect as would a *memento mori* emblem. Thus the stones scattered about the derelict coliseum are tinged with melancholy because, through such tokens of transience, we are put in mind of our own future passing. Consistent with the echoic practice associated with Poe's poetic double economy, the gray stones of the coliseum are made to shimmer with a secret and hidden life brought back to presence from oblivescence by virtue of being made to speak in a way that reverses the usual rhetorical decorum of the apostrophe (an address to some object or entity that motivated the poet's lyrical expostulation). The spirit underlying these gray stones, these ruins with which the poem is concerned and from which the other-worldly dialogue emerges, finds other echoes in Poe's work (carefully selected from his private Memory Palace of stored images and sounds linked one to the other), which likewise emphasize imagistic resonance and sonic repetition. For example, the episode in "Berenicë," when Egæus enunciates his beloved cousin's name conjuring her back to presence through incantatory repetition, sets off a chain of mnemonically linked associations: "she, roaming carelessly through life, with no thought of the shadows in her path, or the silent

flight of raven-winged hours. Berenicë!—I call upon her name—Berenicë—and from the gray ruins of memory a thousand tumultuous recollections are startled at the sound! Ah, vividly is her image before me now” (*Collected Works* 1: 210).<sup>12</sup> It is as if Egæus has stumbled into an internally resonant Memory Palace and accidentally activated the mnemonic cues that revive and bring back to presence the previously deposited memory image. Ever one to return to and use an evocative phrase taken from his reading as well as from his own work (especially those emblematically resonant images and key words stowed away and ready to yield their contents for his compositions), Poe mentions Berenicë’s “raven-winged hours.” This image of time’s rapid and ominous passage unmistakably echoes the epithet used to describe Ligeia’s quasi-mystical beauty in terms of her “raven-black” tresses, which in its own turn calls to mind Helen’s “hyacinth hair,” an attribute of extreme classical beauty: “the raven-black, the glossy, the luxuriant and naturally curling tresses, setting forth the full force of the Homeric epithet, ‘hyacinthine!’” (“Ligeia” 312). All three of these idealized women thus are bound up in the same field of evocative language appertaining to Poe’s cache of thought-images designed to cue the Poetic Sentiment. While the word “raven” is used adjectivally here, Poe elsewhere explains its broader implications as a noun imbued with special undercurrents of meaning—it is “emblematical of *Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance*” (“Philosophy” 70). As such, what the Raven is said to emblemize functions in its own right as a proper memory image in Poe’s own literary storehouse, his private Memory Palace. Moreover Egæus’s “gray ruins of memory” amplify and call attention to the ways words can take on a life of their own, going so far as to say they have a material presence along the lines Poe explores in his mock-Socratic dialogs like “The Power of Words” and “The Colloquy of Monas and Una.”<sup>13</sup> Many of the other terms that came to signal “Never-ending Remembrance” for Poe can be found piled up in “The Coliseum” (1833).

Poe’s emphatic use of “not all” functions as an echoic refrain in his unrhymed but steadily rhythmical meditation on the fall of empires

and the vanity of all human striving. But what keeps “The Coliseum” from being merely an expostulation on the futility of mortal artifice is the sense of something having been redeemed by art—or, more correctly, by the Art of Memory. Like “the pallid bust of Pallas” in “The Raven,” and like “the ramparts plumed and pallid” in “The Haunted Palace,” the gray stones in “The Coliseum” are described as being “pallid,” a term often associated with allegorical figurations of death (for example, *pallida Mors* is the Latin phrase used in Hans Holbein’s celebrated *Dance of Death*). Pallid means pale, wan, shade-like; and, like the raven that perches upon the pallid bust of Pallas, the stones in “The Coliseum” are not silent. Playing off many of the same tropes and themes that characterize the baroque approach to colossal ruin and inevitable mortality (reminiscent of, for example, John Donne’s “self-consuming” metaphysical conceits), Poe takes the next step, namely to use artifice to overturn the terms of the very thesis that the poem ostensibly set out to prove.<sup>14</sup> In the last stanza the “pallid stones” speak, in blank verse no less—a form that was new to Poe.<sup>15</sup> But they do not speak as might be expected in a traditional echo poem, where the carefully arranged repetition of terminal sounds is a reflection of the poet’s supple wit (such as Sir Philip Sidney’s celebrated lament of the melancholy shepherd, Philisides—a playful reconfiguring of the author’s name and thus a clever doubling of himself echoed back to the knowing reader).<sup>16</sup> Instead the anaphoric refrain of “Not all,” echoed and re-echoed at the beginning of the key lines of the final stanza, functions as an aural *doppelgänger* of the poet’s assertion of his will in the world through art. Listen—the stones get to have the last word:

But stay!—these walls, these ivy-clad arcades,  
 These mouldering plinths, these sad and blackened shafts,  
 These vague entablatures, this crumbling frieze,  
 These shattered cornices, this wreck, this ruin,  
 These stones—alas, these grey stones—are they all—  
 All of the grand and the colossal left  
 By the corrosive hours to Fate and me?



"Not all"—the echoes answer me—"not all.  
 "Prophetic sounds, and loud, arise forever  
 "From us, and from all ruin, unto the wise,  
 "As melody from Memnon to the sun.  
 "We rule the hearts of mightiest men—we rule  
 "With a despotic sway all giant minds.  
 "We are not impotent—we pallid stones.  
 "Not all our power is gone—not all our fame—  
 "Not all the magic of our high renown—  
 "Not all the wonder that encircles us—  
 "Not all the mysteries that in us lie—  
 "Not all the memories that hang upon  
 "And cling around about us like a garment,  
 "Clothing us in a robe of more than glory."  
 ("The Coliseum—A Prize Poem")<sup>17</sup>

Recalling the nature of a backdrop in an artificial memory system, this poem establishes designated places, but whose content long ago has been depleted of its original meaning. And yet "not all the wonder" is gone; something further is said to remain of "the memories that hang upon / And cling around about us as a garment." These memories are access points which permit something to be recovered and, in some measure, redeemed: "a robe of more than glory."

In the final line, indeed the final word of the poem, there is an uncanny echo among these echoic and echoing stones that calls back to mind a key phrase in "The Haunted Palace" and one which is said to be conditioned by hazy recall at best: "the glory / That blushed and bloomed / Is but a dim-remembered story / Of the old time entombed." As "The Coliseum" was published in 1833 and "The Haunted Palace" in 1839, it would seem that this earlier poem served Poe as a kind of repository—or quarry—to which he might return, borrow, and reanimate what previously he had deposited there for safe keeping, in that poem. "The Coliseum" becomes for Poe a pre-designed place in his own private Memory Palace from which he might retrieve what was needed to outfit a self-contained and differently conceived poetic rendition of his strangely evocative theme involving sublime evanescence. More specifically, Poe seeks here to evoke a yet

still prevailing sense of glory despite its ruin which, like the House of Usher, has fallen in on itself under its own colossal weight. For the ideational components of "The Haunted Palace," Poe returns to "The Coliseum" and retrieves what amounts to the building blocks of something from the past that now is ruined and gone, and yet which in some measure can be recuperated through poetry—poetry made all the more sublime owing to how it thereby evokes the beauty of the sadness of loss.

A key to understanding how these echoes work within the poem as well as how they inform Poe's mnemonically oriented craft and thus his poetic double economy is contained in the phrase "*Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance*." This telling tag-line from "The Philosophy of Composition," as a kind of poetic axiom, must serve in lieu of any specific event or once notable deeds that the Coliseum site otherwise would have conjured up from an earlier time. As with "The Haunted Palace," vagueness, not specificity, is part and parcel of the poetic order, because what matters most in Poe's poetic double economy is the overall tone and affect, the Ideality, evoked through "*the Rhythmical Creation of Beauty*" ("The Poetic Principle" 185). The narrator of "The Coliseum" encounters, as if by supernal aid activated by the beauty attending the sadness of loss, the essence of the thing, though not the thing itself, which is recalled back into being but only as an impression of something now substantially lost.

And so, consistent with Poe's philosophy of composition, never-ending remembrance always needs must be mournful. Indeed although Poe's meditations on loss, decay, and the slipping of things into oblivescence show up in a wide range of his works, most notably as discussed initially in "The Fall of the House of Usher," something eerie is afoot in his treatment of abandoned classical ruins, similar in kind but different in degree from the classical features of Helen, whose beauty revives in the poet the elevation of the soul associated with recovering, at least through the Poetic Sentiment, "the grandeur of old Rome." Many of the key words and images that came to signal "never-ending remembrance" for Poe (words such as "echoes," "pal-

lid," and "glory," all of which appear in "The Haunted Palace") are integral to shoring up the mnemonic architecture of "The Coliseum."

Playing off many of the expected tropes and themes associated with transmogrification and ruin, Poe moves on to use artifice itself to overturn and, in so doing, to recuperate the illusion of authorial control over the words of the "gray stones" and all that they are charged with signifying (the very phrase being evocative of Egæus's "gray ruins of memory"). As already mentioned, the stones have the last word, thus activating a chiasitic turn-about with something left over to be considered. In effect, the anaphoric refrain of "Not all" strangely mirrors and puts in place a poetically engineered *mise en abîme* (another kind of doubling to be sure) characteristic of Poe's own aesthetic practice concerned with the emblematic redemption of the beauty of the sadness of loss through art—but most especially through the Art of Memory. And so, in the end, it is within Poe's carefully crafted if haunted Memory Palace that poetry's terrifyingly beautiful *doppelgänger* has taken up residence.

The University of the South  
Sewanee

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>This and other quotations from first editions of Poe's works follow the remarkable online resource provided by the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore (<http://www.eapoe.org/index.htm>) thanks, in large measure, to the meticulous efforts and indefatigable labor of Jeffrey Savoy.

<sup>2</sup>The last time "Morella" appears *in situ* within the tale is *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* 5 (November 1839): 264-66. For a critical assessment of the probable reasons Poe excised the poem from printings after 1842, see Amy Branam: "'Morella' demonstrates the unlikelihood of Poe's endorsement of any type of Mary worship, even though he includes a prayer to her in the first version of the tale" (30).

<sup>3</sup>See for example Quintilian's, *Institutio Oratoria* XI.ii.18: "Some place is chosen of the largest possible extent and characterized by the utmost variety, such as a spacious house divided into a number of rooms. Everything of note therein is

carefully committed to the memory, in order that the thought may be enabled to run through all the details without let or hindrance" (221).

<sup>4</sup>Owing to some slight changes in the wording in later editions, I have elected to follow the printing of the poem as it appeared in the tale for the first time (1839), rather than the copy text prepared by Mabbott from the 1845 version (most notably the later version substitutes "sweet duty" for "sole duty" in stanza IV); cf. *Collected Works* 407.

<sup>5</sup>See, e. g., Pahl, "Sounding the Sublime".

<sup>6</sup>For a critical treatment of Poe's conception of the sublime as combining "wondrous attraction with overwhelming terror," and with special relevance to its place in "The Fall of the House of Usher," see Moreland esp. 53 and 59-60.

<sup>7</sup>On this seventeenth-century understanding of the world as being a place not of surface and content but as "pure events on a line or point," in which time and space are generated by folding, expanding and refolding, where bending and inflection are the ideal basic elements, see Deleuze.

<sup>8</sup>As will become clear in what follows, this version contains special imagery pertinent to Poe's conception of Helen as a metonymy for Memory personified that drops out of later versions.

<sup>9</sup>See Poe, *Complete Poems*, 331. Poe wrote several poems "To Helen" directed to and intended for different addressees—and there were more than a few.

<sup>10</sup>Elsewhere Poe likewise will invoke "man's sense of perfection in the beautiful, the sublime, or the picturesque" in which resides "the soul of Art" (Poe, "The Domain of Arnheim" 1274).

<sup>11</sup>See Edgar Allan Poe, "Notices of New Works."

<sup>12</sup>Given Poe's insistence on retaining the diacritical marker above the terminal letter of Berenicè, it is probable he was inviting his more informed readers to hear echoed in their mind's ear the name of Dante's divinely poetic and supremely beautiful (and dead) beloved, Beatrice, which in Italian bears the same cadence and vowel sounds. Such an aural link, which thereby evokes the beatific vision of Dante's Mystic Rose, serves to make more poignant the irony and pathos of the denouement of the tale—exquisitely beautiful in its steady and quickening first-person narrative movement toward *anagnorisis*, or fatal recognition, worthy of a Greek tragedy to match the antagonist's own name.

<sup>13</sup>Cantalupo argues convincingly that the character of Oinois, used first as the narrator in "Shadow" (1835) and later as the student-angel in "The Power of Words" (1845), prepares the foundation for the philosophical constructs found in *Eureka* (1848).

<sup>14</sup>See for example, Donne's Holy Sonnet which begins by personifying Death as a tyrant, "Death be not proud, though some have called thee / Mighty and dreadful," and ends with the deflating turn-about, "One short sleep past, wee wake eternally, / and death shall be no more, Death thou shalt die" (Donne 342). This typical display of wit associated with baroque artifice has been discussed critically in terms of "self-consuming artifacts"; by Fish. More specifically the logically

controlling use of “not” in one of Donne’s sermons (and this has special relevance for Poe’s insistent use of “not all” in “The Coliseum” and “nevermore” in “The Raven” among other works turning on the evocation of a negative directive) “is subverted by the very construction in which it is embedded; for that construction, unobtrusively, but nonetheless effectively, pressures the reader to perform exactly those mental operations whose propriety the statement of the sentence—what it is saying—is challenging” (Fish 396).

<sup>15</sup>See Mabbott’s commentary on this poem, which he considers “atypical of Poe’s work,” among other reasons because it is “extremely rhetorical” (*Complete Poems* 226).

<sup>16</sup>The opening lines make clear the expected decorum of an echo poem (Sidney 427):

Fair rocks, goodly rivers, sweet woods, when shall I see peace?	<i>Peace.</i>
Peace? What bars me my tongue? Who is it that comes me so nigh?	<i>I.</i>
Oh! I do know what guest I haue met; it is Echo.	<i>'Is Echo.</i>
Well met echo, approach; then tell me thy will too.	<i>I will too.</i>
Echo, what do I get yielding my sprite to my griefs?	<i>Griefs.</i>
What medicine may I find for a grief that draws me to death?	<i>Death.</i>

<sup>17</sup>I have used this version of the poem because it the first time Poe edited it since its original appearance in 1833. In addition to alerting the reader to its status as a prize winning poem, this version includes quotation marks at the left margin of each line of the stones’ speech, thus emphasizing doubly that it is the stones who speak (an editorial decision incidentally that Griswold respected in his 1850 *Works* even though there were other extant versions of the poem without the additional quotation marks).

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## Keeping You Unnatural: Against the Homogenization of Second Person Writing.

### A Response to Joshua Parker\*

BRIAN RICHARDSON

I read Joshua Parker's "In Their Own Words: On Writing in Second Person" with great interest and enjoyment. Parker deftly covers a vast swath of second person narratives as well as corresponding narrative criticism and theory in this impressive article, bringing in new material and casting fresh light on older pieces. Especially fascinating are the many accounts he has assembled by authors explaining their decision to employ the second-person form. He also packages the various scattered uses of this technique into a single, plausible, unified position. Unfortunately, the very virtues of Parker's approach also lead to what I see as its limitations. The homogenization of these disparate texts can be questioned on three counts, concerning their reception, production, and theoretical conceptualization.

#### Reception

Drawing on Helmut Bonheim's "open definition" (or, rather, loose account) of the subject, Parker presents second-person narration as part of a continuous spectrum of other uses of the second person, such as the apostrophe or direct address to readers or narratees. This allows him to compile and juxtapose a wide range of material with a considerable historical reach. My own sense, however, is that there is

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\*Reference: Joshua Parker, "In Their Own Words: On Writing in Second Person," *Connotations* 21.2-3 (2012/2013): 165-76. For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debparker02123.htm>>.



a tremendous difference between established, conventional uses of the second person and what I have called “unnatural” uses that do not occur in ordinary discourse and are only found in innovative fiction (*Unnatural* 18-19; 134-40).<sup>1</sup> Consider the difference between the following passages; first, the beginning lines of Robert Penn Warren’s *All the King’s Men*: “You follow Highway 58, going north-east out of the city, and it is a good highway, and new. Or was new, that day we went up it. You look up the highway and it is straight for miles” (3). This is a conventional deployment of “you” to mean “one.”

Now compare your experience reading those lines with the following: “You are the second person. You look around for someone else to be the second person. But there is no one else. Even if there were someone else there they could not be you ... You make a pathetic effort to disguise yourself in all the affectations of the third person, but you know it is no use. The third person is no one. A convention” (116). The second passage, by W. S. Merwin, is unconventional and much more jarring. It is disorienting, seeming to address the reader and then (perhaps) using this form of address to depict a character’s thoughts, producing what David Herman has called “double deixis,” something that does not occur in natural discourse and therefore is perceived either as mistaken, unnerving, or ludic. In fact, I would argue that this destabilization of the standard communicative frame is one of the most powerful effects of second-person narration and the reason why many innovative authors choose to use it. I strongly believe that the uniqueness of this effect should be foregrounded and appreciated. The distinction between conventional and nonconventional second-person forms also extends to digital fiction, as Alice Bell and Astrid Ensslin have convincingly shown: second-person narration in some hypertext fictions “ask for reader input, but they also limit the involvement of the reader by preventing her from identifying with ‘you’ completely” (313). This distinction is in fact also central in Joyce Carol Oates’s story, “You,” which at first seems to be an unnatural second-person narration but then is revealed to be simply the apostrophe of a disappointed daughter addressing her absent mother.

## Production

Parker does an excellent job uncovering authors' statements concerning their decision to use the second person and seems to suggest that the second-person form is typically or especially used to disguise or distance what is essentially a first-person discourse. This is no doubt often the case, and Parker deserves credit for establishing this connection. But often it is not the case, and the authorial "I" is resting far away from the textual "you." I find it difficult to think the salesman in *La Modification* is some version of Butor, or to view the Reader as an image of Calvino in *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*. Neither, I'm sure, is the actual John Hawkes hovering behind these lines: "The newspaper—it was folded to the listings of single rooms—fell from your pocket when you drank from the bottle" (5). We may profitably return to Merwin's text and agree with its speaker: "No, you insist, it is all a mistake, I am the first person. But you know how unsatisfactory that is. And how seldom it is true" (117).

## Theory

As I understand him, Parker takes the position that second person narration is primarily or essentially a disguised first person narration. My reservations about this stance are two: it does not fit the facts of the case and it tends to minimize or partially ignore the existing theoretical debate over the nature and status of second-person narration (see Reitan). As just noted, it is hard to imagine the authors mentioned above caching themselves within those fictional figures, however remotely; it is also difficult to see many "you" characters as directly or indirectly addressing themselves. Italo Calvino is clearly not using the second person as a disguised form of the first person in *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*: his "tu" rapidly is transformed into an "il." Let's look at a passage from Michel Butor. As I note in my chapter on this subject, many sentences in *La Modification* resist

reduction to any first-person figure. The book's second sentence includes the lines: "votre valise couverte de granuleux cuir sombre couleur d'épaisse bouteille, votre valise assez petite d'homme habitue aux longs voyages, vous l'arrachez" (9), ("you lift up your suitcase of bottle-green grained leather, the smallish suitcase of a man used to making long journeys" [1]); it is very difficult to imagine a veteran salesman muttering these words to himself, and in the formal, rather than informal second person form at that, no matter how hard a day he has had. When a Frenchman speaks to himself, he always says "tu."

Parker seems uninterested in the considerable "theoretical wrangling" that surrounds the question of whether second person narration more resembles first- or third-person discourse. But perhaps one cannot or should not avoid this wrangling; the confusion the debate discloses may be revealing. After all, nearly every earlier narrative theorist claimed second person narration was one of the two prominent forms. Revealingly, however, the theorists couldn't agree on which form it belonged to. Franz Stanzel affirmed that in "the novel in the second person [...] the 'you' is really a self-dramatization of the 'I,' and the form of the monologue prevails here" (225). Discussing *La Modification*, Mieke Bal states categorically that "the 'you' is simply an 'I' in disguise, a 'first person' narrator talking to himself; the novel is a 'first person' narrative with a formal twist to it that does not engage the entire narrative situation" (29). Parker seems to align himself with this camp. But Genette has taken the opposite position; for him, this "rare and simple case" is readily situated as heterodiegetic narration (133). Brian McHale similarly believes that "'you' stands in for the third-person pronoun of the fictional character, functioning in a kind of displaced free indirect discourse" (223). We need to ask why it is so difficult to make a convincing determination, and what is at stake in doing so.

This confusion displayed by the older narratologists is inevitable, I believe, because unnatural second person narration is situated between but irreducible to the standard binary oppositions of either

first and third person or hetero- and homodiegetic narration, both of which have been around for millennia and are entirely conventional.<sup>2</sup> Instead, second person narration oscillates irregularly from one side to the other and cannot be convincingly “naturalized” to either conventional practice. Its nature is to elude a fixed nature. Monika Fludernik has accurately described the curious function of this kind of narration: “second-person fiction destroys the easy assumption of the traditional dichotomous structures which the standard narratological models have proposed, especially the distinction between homo- and heterodiegetic narrative (Genette) or that of the identity or nonidentity of the realms of existence between narrator and characters (Stanzel)” (226; see Reitan for the latest moves in this debate). Narrative theory can help us identify the fundamental ambiguity of writing fiction in this manner. This points once again to the ultimate alterity of this relatively new kind of narration. Thus, when I read Parker quoting Martin Buber on “I and Thou” relations, I want to protest that Buber’s communicative “Thou” is very different from Calvino’s playfully polysemic “tu.” In the end, I don’t see the value in gliding over categories and homogenizing very different kinds of discourse. Second person narration is still too rare, too unusual, and too discordant to be conventionalized or domesticated; it still has the power to produce a bracing sense of estrangement as standard distinctions between narrator, character, narratee, and actual reader are conflated. *You* is still unnatural.

The University of Maryland  
College Park, MD

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See also my chapter “At First You Feel a Bit Lost: The Varieties of Second Person Narration” in my *Unnatural Voices* (17-36).

<sup>2</sup>Free indirect discourse, which once was comparably unsettling, has now become entirely conventional and is hardly noticed.

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## The Influence of Narrative Tense in Second Person Narration: A Response to Joshua Parker\*

MATT DELCONTE

In his recent article, "In Their Own Words: On Writing in Second Person," Joshua Parker argues that authors employ second person narration to distance themselves from certain events in their stories, namely those that might seem embarrassing or shameful; this is most noticeable in works that contain oscillating narrative voices, when the second person appears during those potentially embarrassing events. Parker's primary support comes from authors' own testimonies. By focusing on *why authors use* second person, Parker redirects the more common rhetorical interest in *how readers respond* to second person. Although the authors' anecdotes that Parker cites suggest that second person narration has the potential to separate the teller from the tale, they do not account completely for how second person positions the speaker relative to the events: once we consider the influence of narrative tense, we also recognize second person's potential to connect the narrator to his/her story.

Before I turn to Parker's specific claim about the function of second person, I would like to address a more foundational issue raised in Parker's essay that influences how we relate an author to his or her work. Based on their "own words," the catalyst for using second person is these authors' concern that they will be associated with the events that their narrators tell, a concern that erodes the distinction between author and narrator. Yet, in works of fiction, there exist at

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\*Reference: Joshua Parker, "In Their Own Words: On Writing in Second Person," *Connotations* 21.2-3 (2011/2012): 165-76. For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debparker02123.htm>>.

least three different layers of ontology: that of the narrator, the implied author, and the flesh-and-blood author. Moreover, in many cases of heterodiegesis, we add a fourth layer, for an extradiegetic narrator and intradiegetic characters will also reside on different planes of existence. If readers and critics do sidestep these ontologies to connect an author to a work, they seem to blur the author/narrator distinction rather than the author/story distinction (the latter being the concern of the authors whom Parker references), even in homodiegesis. For example, Nabokov wasn't so much accused of being a pedophile as he was accused of telling about pedophilic events with a discomfiting zeal; that is, (certain) readers didn't associate Nabokov with Humbert the character as they did with Humbert the narrator. In such instances, the difference between the narrating and experiencing functions is more significant than the fact that they both belong to the same person. Ultimately, the concerns of the authors in Parker's study are much more psychological than narratological, given the extent that the narrative structure buffers authors from their creations.<sup>1</sup> In the final analysis, however, the distinction between authors and their narrators, crucial among many critics, might be moot when considering Parker's specific concern: because Parker (prompted by authors themselves) conflates author and narrator, to ask if second person distances the author from the story (Parker's version) is equivalent to asking if second person distances the narrator from the story (my version). The overarching question becomes, does second person narration distance the teller from the tale?

The answer is "yes and no"—depending on the tense of second person narration. What we find is that second person written in past tense as well as historical and simultaneous present tense has the potential to distance the narrator from the events and from the "you" narratee (as Parker claims); however, second person written in the future subjunctive mood (what I've elsewhere labeled "How-to narration"), an increasingly popular form, conversely tightens the connection between narrator and events.

One of the primary differences between past and present tense second person and subjunctive second person is the level of realness of the narrated events. Second person narration told in the past and present tenses contains “real” events (at least “real” within the ontology of the fiction, a crucial distinction made by Peter Rabinowitz in “Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audience”) that have happened or are happening. For instance, the narrator in Butor’s *La Modification* (a seminal second person text) reports that “She had shut the door of the apartment before you started down the stairs, thus missing her last chance of touching your heart, but it’s obvious that she had no desire to do so” (10). Some critics have claimed that ultimately readers will assimilate the “you” into an “I” and interpret the narrative as a disguised first-person account; this might be the de facto response of certain flesh-and-blood readers who resist the second person address. However, other readers are able to suspend disbelief and imagine themselves addressed and, consequently, enacting the story of the “you.” And here there might exist a difference in degree between past and present tense second person. That is, readers might accept that they are the “you” more readily in past tense than in present tense, because past tense second person does not require them to disavow their current status. For example, when the narrator of *Bright Lights, Big City* tells us

You are at a nightclub talking to a girl with a shaved head. The club is either Heartbreak or the Lizard Lounge. All might become clear if you could just slip into the bathroom and do a little more Bolivian Marching Powder. Then again, it might not (1),

our knee-jerk flesh-and-blood response might be: “but I’m not; I am in my living room in Syracuse, New York currently reading a book by Jay McInerney.”<sup>2</sup> Yet the multiple ontologies within fiction remind us that the narrator (a fictional construct) is not meant to be speaking directly to the reader; rather, the narrator reports to a narratee (also a fictional construct). Because of these distinct ontologies, ultimately the extent a reader accepts the second person address is inconsequential when we are considering the relationship between a narrator and a



“you” narratee. Likewise, there is nothing from our flesh-and-blood world that challenges the narratee from being the one who experiences the story-events.

Ultimately, Parker’s essay invites us to examine the distance between the teller and the tale, which can hinge on the distance between the tale and the audience: the more a narratee is associated with the events, the less the narrator becomes responsible for them. The logic, at least of the grammar, is that because “you” have done or are currently doing something, “I” am not. Importantly, because the events are “real” and connected to an Other, the narrator (read “author” for Parker) can maintain the exclusive function of reporting, allowing the experiencing to reside in the distinct “you.” As Parker notes (again conflating author with narrator), “by creating a narrator who directly addresses ‘someone else,’ a writer is in these cases able to put himself more ‘in the place’ of the story’s ‘telling’ position rather than in that of the ‘experiencing’ position” (172). Assigning the events to an Other also occurs in standard heterodiegesis, in which a “he” or “she” is doing the experiencing. However, second person might seem to create even more distance than third-person because “you” serves more of a binary opposition to “I” than does “he” or “she”: at least in terms of linguistic relationships, I/you creates a sharper opposition than I/he or I/she. This distance, which I locate completely within the ontology of the fictional world, might in fact affect the psychology of a flesh-and-blood author; it provides a narratological explanation for why the authors in Parker’s research might find comfort in using second person to narrate what they consider shameful events.

Unlike the “real” events of past and present tense second person, the events within subjunctive mood second person are conditional and hypothetical (even within the ontology of the fiction): what we read in these texts is “If you were to do x, you might start by doing y” (which is why Brian Richardson has compared this mode to recipes and instruction manuals). Strictly speaking, nothing has happened in these texts: by definition, the subjunctive mood describes events that have not occurred. Thus, second person subjunctive does not contain

a story or fabula, at least not in the traditional sense. Pam Houston's "How to Talk to a Hunter" exemplifies the mode:

A week before Christmas you'll rent *It's a Wonderful Life* and watch it together, curled on your couch, faces touching. Then you'll bring up the word "monogamy." He'll tell you how badly he was hurt by your predecessor. He'll tell you he couldn't be happier spending every night with you. He'll say there's just a few questions he doesn't have answers for. He'll say he's just scared and confused. Of course this isn't exactly what he means. (100)

The narratee (the "you" with whom the audience might associate, at least grammatically) hasn't yet experienced the events (and might not ever), so an attempt to locate the events within an experiencing other, i.e. someone outside of the teller, becomes difficult if not narratologically impossible. Instead, it is the experience of the narrator that forms the basis of the advice/instruction. Even though the narrator is not performing *these* events because *these* events are only conditional, the narrator presumably experienced parallel events in the past in order to gain the authority to speculate on these potentially-future events; a major theme in how-to narratives is that the scenario is so predictable and uniform that anyone (even a potential reader) who finds him-/herself within that scenario detailed by the narrator will experience the same basic story.<sup>3</sup>

That many how-to narratives include forking paths and multiple scenarios makes the narrator seem even more knowledgeable and experienced, further tying that narrator to the events. Consider the following passage from Junot Diaz's "How to Date a Browngirl, Blackgirl, Whitegirl, or Halfie":

Get serious. Watch TV but stay alert. Sip some of the Bermudez your father left in the cabinet, which nobody touches. A local girl may have hips and a thick ass but she won't be quick about letting you touch. She has to live in the same neighborhood you do, has to deal with you being all up in her business. She might just chill with you and then go home. She might kiss you and then go, or she might, if she's reckless, give it up, but that's rare. Kissing will suffice. A whitegirl might just give it up right then. Don't stop

her. She'll take her gum out of her mouth, stick it to the plastic sofa covers and then move close to you. You have nice eyes, she might say. (147)

Not only does Diaz's narrator possess the authority to speak on a single course of action, his expertise is such that he can predict and negotiate multiple possibilities. With these iterative scenarios, how-to narration in fact seems to assign the experience and attending ethical judgments to the narrator even more powerfully than would occur with homodiegetic narration, whose narrators experience and recount only a singulative event. The ontological separation between author and narrator that I discussed earlier proves significant here. The more a narrator is tied to the events, the more he/she moves beyond simply a "telling" function, the more he/she is grounded in the ontology of the fiction, the more distinct he/she becomes from the implied author's ontology. So, in a sense, how-to narration does confirm Parker's claim, but not in the terms Parker establishes: it doesn't separate the teller from the tale; instead, it separates one teller (a narrator who speaks to a narratee) from another teller (the author who communicates to a reader).

The rhetorical distance created by assigning experiences to a "you" only exists when we narrate those experiences in the past or present tense (having already happened or currently happening). When we narrate in the future conditional, the tense specifies that the "you" hasn't yet done (and might never do) these things; the experience, then, lies with the narrator (regardless of how much or little a reader might feel addressed and imagine him/herself in the hypothetical scenario). The difference relies on function: narrators in past and present tense second person are reporters (i.e. *I'm just telling you what you're doing*), whereas narrators in subjunctive second person are instructors and predictors (i.e. *I'm explaining what you will probably encounter and advising how you should act because I've been through it myself*). Ultimately, that second person narration enables such varied rhetorical effects testifies to its complexity as a narrative device, especially when we recognize how it works in conjunction with other aspects of the narrative delivery, such as tense. In fact, it might be this

very versatility that attracts authors to the mode. In a recent conversation between Mohsin Hamid and Jay McInerney, Hamid explains (“in his own words”) his interest in the flexibility of second person, which he uses in his *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*:

I really like the second person because [...] it allows a movement from a very intimate first-person, like “you” can be “I” or “you” can be the person sitting next to me; it can be very close and very immediate or you can zoom back to a sort of cosmic, almost-religious text. You know, “thou shall not.” So there’s a wonderful ability to move in second person.

Le Moyne College  
Syracuse, New York

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Although she doesn’t use a narratological explanation, Toni Morrison identifies a similar distance between an author and his/her characters’ actions. In *Playing in the Dark*, she claims that authors are *responsible* for their characters’ action (because they created those actions), but authors are not *accountable* for those actions (because they didn’t actually perform them) (86).

<sup>2</sup>Calvino addresses this issue of mimesis by having the “you” of *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler* be a reader who has just started Italo Calvino’s book called *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler*.

<sup>3</sup>Given the scope of Parker’s original article, I’ve in turn limited my analysis of the relationship between narrator and story/events to grammar (the presence of a “you” narratee and the tense of the narration); the actual content of these stories has been inconsequential. We might, however, adopt James Phelan’s analysis of unreliability, which requires us to address story-events, to understand a number of relationships: that between the narrator and the events, between the implied author and the narrator, and ultimately between the implied author and the authorial audience.

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## Studying Writing in Second Person: A Response to Joshua Parker\*

JARMILA MILDORF

In his article "In Their Own Words: On Writing in Second Person," Joshua Parker reflects on second-person narration and looks at the issue from the perspective of authors who use such narration in their works. In Parker's view, authors' self-commentaries may help us understand better the possible functions of second-person narration in fictional texts. Parker's main claim is that these authors are men and women "with professional experience as writers, who are capable of speaking quite eloquently on their own reasons for writing in second person" (167). One argument that seems to follow from this, although it is not expressly mentioned in the text, is that authors' viewpoints ought to be favored over narratological or other literary-theoretical approaches or ought at least to be taken more seriously than has hitherto been the case. As Parker puts it, there is "a surprising dissonance between what theorists often tend to assume about the form and what authors themselves experience in creating it" (167). He even proposes, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, a "writer response theory" in analogy to reader response theories (167). Parker presents authors' self-reflexive comments, quoting writers such as, among others, Chuck Palahniuk, Denis Johnson, David Foster Wallace, Pam Houston, Lolo Houbein, Peter Bibby, and John Encarnacao, who talked in interviews or wrote in non-fictional writing about their use of second-person narration. The main result of Parker's survey of these com-

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ments and of a number of texts written in second person is the following: "Seeing the self as 'other' often only takes place during descriptions of certain events or over periods of text. This self, like its experiences, is unstable. What is inscribed in second person, then, is the author's relationship to this self, a relationship often in flux" (171). Before I address Parker's main claims in more detail, I will outline four aspects that, to my mind, need to inform any research on writing in second person not only because they already appear individually or in combination in most scholarly work addressing this type of narration (e.g., Fludernik, "The Category of 'Person'"; Kacandes; Richardson) but also because they allow for interdisciplinary approaches to the topic (see Mildorf): 1. the anthropological dimension; 2. generic distinctions; 3. structural typologies; 4. functions and effects. Parker mixes up these aspects or does not follow them up assiduously enough, which explains why some of his claims are essentially flawed.

### 1. The Anthropological Dimension

Parker begins his article with the example of the cave paintings at Lascaux, arguing that "their author conceived of an experiencing point of view other than his own" and that he created these paintings "with the consciousness of designing images [...] for an Other" (165). This is then linked by Parker to "what any writer working today might likewise pursue" (165). One can object to this associative connection by quoting Denis Dutton, who said that "[t]he state of the arts today can no more be inferred from looking inside prehistoric caves than today's weather can be predicted from the last Ice Age" (Dutton 3). It is also not unproblematic to link painting and writing without paying due attention to their respective medial expressivity. And one may question the underlying presupposition that art is always created for an "other." Could I not simply paint or write for my own pleasure, without having any specific audience other than myself in mind?

Leaving these points of criticism aside, however, one can see in Parker's argument an attempt to bring into sharper relief something more fundamental concerning the relationship of human beings to

fellow human beings, which is also expressed in the very use of the personal pronouns “I” and “you”: namely, that we are ultimately “relational beings,” as psychologist Kenneth J. Gergen has it. Gergen argues that “there is no isolated self or fully private experience” and that instead “we exist in a world of co-constitution” (xv). Somewhat paradoxically Gergen further claims that “even in our most private moments we are never alone” (xv) because we orient ourselves to what others say, presumably think or expect. The only trouble is (and here Gergen’s argument also becomes political) that we are taught to think of ourselves as “bounded beings,” as isolated individuals. Applied to narrative theory, Gergen’s approach seems to support the idea that literary as well as non-literary stories are always directed at (real or imagined) recipients, thus confirming the relationality of human beings.<sup>1</sup> In this context, we might expect *you*-narration to be(come) more of a norm rather than the exception. The fact that this is not the case perhaps points to the predominance of what Gergen calls the “boundedness” of selves in Western thought and indeed to the predominance of self-centredness.<sup>2</sup>

Other theorists in various disciplines have reflected on the relationship between “you” and “I,” and a comprehensive study of second-person narration would have to take these theories and positions into account. In this regard, linguistic approaches promise to be fruitful for analyzing the forms and functions of address terms and audience design (cf. Coupland 54-81; Mildorf “Second-Person Narration”), while psychological, anthropological and philosophical accounts may be helpful for the actual interpretation of these texts. However, one needs to be careful not to further muddy the waters, as it were. Parker himself refers to philosopher Martin Buber (who is also mentioned by Gergen when he reflects on writing as relationship, Gergen 221). This is not surprising as Buber’s treatise “Ich und Du” (“I and You”) ponders on the inextricable co-existence, interdependence and reciprocity of “you” and “I.” Parker’s reading of Buber leads him to describe the relationship between “you” and “I” in second-person narration as follows:



To write “I” in a text is not necessarily to underline a narrator’s own existence as an enunciating source (an “I” can just as easily refer to the historical character of the first person narrator in the diegesis, described—at a distance—by the narrating voice). But when an author writes “you,” he insists on both a reader’s existence and on his own, putting his narrator in relation to an Other, and defining his position as narrator by this relationship. (172)

This and other passages in Parker’s article are difficult to understand not so much because of the complex theoretical issues implied but because Parker sometimes apparently uses technical terms such as “narrator” and “author,” “narratee” and “reader” interchangeably, or because he disentangles “narrator” from “narrative voice” (does he mean the distinction between “narrating and experiencing persona” here?). This conflation of categories is most visible in Parker’s repeated claim that author and narrator are or become identical. For example:

A “you” addressed to the self creates alterity between a described situation and the enunciating voice, fortifying the **author’s** identification with an *extradiegetic* narrator, helping to guide the story along during descriptions of trauma. (172; bold type my emphasis)

Of course the conflation of “author” and “narrator” matches Parker’s quotations from various writers, in which they claim that they use second-person narration in order to distance *themselves* from what they write. However, Parker’s argument along these lines not only suggests slippages in the use of theoretical terminology but also a lack of differentiation among generic categories. What kinds of primary text does Parker take into focus? This leads me to the next point.

## 2. Generic Distinctions

Another scholar Parker draws upon is Philippe Lejeune. This is surprising since Lejeune is mostly known for his work on autobiography. In his groundbreaking study *Le pacte autobiographique*, Lejeune argues that an absolute criterion for autobiographical writing, whatever form

it takes, is complete identity of author, narrator and the person whose life is told.<sup>3</sup> This criterion separates autobiographical writing from, say, biographies or novels. Of course there are texts which play with generic categorization, e.g., when novels are cast as autobiographies or autobiographies turn out to be fictitious. The main difficulty in analyzing such texts, Lejeune says, is that one has to be careful to differentiate between “identity / identité” and “resemblance / ressemblance” (the latter is captured by Lejeune under the term “copie conforme,” 35). Interestingly, the primary texts Parker presents are not autobiographies per se. Some of them may contain autobiographical material if one can trust the self-reflexive statements made by Peter Bibby and John Encarnacao (Parker 171), for example. This does not make the texts autobiographical, though, and therefore to argue that writers use the technique of second-person writing to distance themselves from what they wrote (rather than saying that they distance their narrators from what is depicted in the storyworld) is imprecise, if not incorrect.

Parker refers to Lejeune’s book *Je est un autre* in order to mount his argument about this distancing function of the second-person pronoun:

For many authors writing in second person seems to provide a middle-ground, as Philippe Lejeune has conceived it (36-37), between the “owning” of an experience by writing in first person, and the stance of complete alterity from it implied by third person. [...] Authors may use second person to treat subjects closely drawn from personal experience simply because second person allows themselves [sic] to hold an experience at a certain distance. (170)

Lejeune describes in the mentioned pages the various effects created through the use of different personal pronouns in *autobiographies*. He maintains that the first-person pronoun, like the second-person pronoun (!), seemingly glosses over the gap between “narrating I” and “narrated I” (for this terminology, see Smith and Watson): “Le ‘je’ (comme le ‘tu’) masque d’autre part l’écart qui existe entre le sujet de l’énonciation et celui de l’énoncé” (Lejeune, *Je est un autre* 37). Never-

theless, he continues to argue, we are not really duped by this play of pronoun use and still recognize author/narrator and character for who they are: "Naturellement nous ne sommes pas vraiment dupes de cette unité, pas plus que nous ne le sommes de l' 'altérité' dans le cas de la narration autodiégétique à la troisième personne" (37). It is significant that Lejeune uses the term "alterity" with quotation marks, thus indicating that the distancing created through third-person pronoun use in autobiographies only functions as a mask but does not change the ultimate personal union among author, narrator and narrated persona. It becomes obvious that Parker's argument is flawed not only because he partially misconstrues what Lejeune writes but because he does not attend to the fundamental generic differences between the texts he discusses and the ones analyzed by Lejeune. Fiction written in the second person is a far cry from autobiographical texts and even from (fictional) texts employing (semi-) autobiographical material and must not be confused in a narrative-theoretical account.

So what can one take away from this discussion? A more comprehensive study of second-person narration has to flesh out the ways in which functions and effects of second-person narration are related to genre conventions and expectations. Second-person narration can be found in fictional and non-fictional texts; arguably, it also exists in conversational storytelling (Mildorf, "Second-Person Narration"). These different text types require attention to their specific design and to the ways in which they employ second-person narration, whether as a sustained mode of telling or only in passages. First and foremost, however, a study engaging in this subject matter would have to demarcate the kinds of text that are taken into focus and at least attempt to give a definition. Parker quotes Helmut Bonheim in order to delineate his object of study:

This article will not take up the traditional field of full-length "second-person fiction" texts [...] but instead deal with cases falling under Helmut Bonheim's more open definition of second-person narration: narration in which "the 'you' is frequent enough in a section of text that the narrative effect is essentially modified" (168)

So when is the “you” frequent enough in a text to “essentially modify” it? And modify in what way? This is rather vague, and so is the range of historical textual examples Parker offers as predecessors of second-person narration at the beginning of his article: *Beowulf* is mentioned as well as Sterne and Fielding and, in a footnote, Francis Kirkman’s *The Unlucky Citizen* (1673), Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “The Haunted Mind” (1835), and Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* (1851). It is not difficult to recognize that Parker here lumps together kinds of *you*-narration which, if subjected to a rigorous typology, would not necessarily be all in one category. Not only does Parker ignore generic differences in his discussion but he also fails to base his examples on a stringent typology (let alone offer a conclusive typology himself), which, I think, is of the essence in a survey of second-person narration.

### 3. Structural Typologies

When Parker describes the above-mentioned historical examples as literature containing narrators that “have underlined both their own and readers’ participation in texts by addressing us through apostrophe” (165), one is reminded of Irene Kacandes’s concept of “Talk fiction” (see n1). Kacandes begins her book with the observation that there are literary texts which seem to engage their readers in much the same way as speakers in conversations interact<sup>4</sup>: they ask their readers to “listen” to them and somehow expect or generate a “response.” Kacandes then investigates four modes of Talk in a range of (contemporary) literary texts and in relation to formats known as “talk radio” and “television talk shows” (12) as well as computer hypertexts and interactive video: “storytelling,” “testimony,” “apostrophe” and “interactivity.” It seems to me that the textual examples Parker provides throughout his contribution could be distributed across at least the first three of these categories, with the historical examples fitting the “storytelling” mode. This or any such typology would have made Parker’s discussion more systematic and would potentially have strengthened his claim that writers implicate themselves in their texts

and that they address themselves to an implied audience by means of the second-person pronoun.

In a footnote, Parker refers to David Herman's ("Textual *You*") notion of "double deixis." However, he presents an extremely simplified account when he explains the term as meaning that "the pronoun 'you' simultaneously refers to both a character and the narratee" (174n2). In fact, Herman assigns five possible functions to the second-person pronoun: 1. generalized *you* (like German "man" or French "on"); 2. fictional reference (to a character); 3. fictionalized (=horizontal) address (to a narratee); 4. apostrophic (=vertical) address (to the reader); 5. doubly deictic *you* (which combines at least two of the previously mentioned possibilities and thus creates ambiguity). What function the "you" assumes in a given text will ultimately also depend on who is (potentially) addressed by this "you." It seems to me rather reductive to say that second-person narration often supports a distancing function merely because authors rationalized their own use of the technique in these terms. I will come back to this point below.

Even though Parker's main objective is precisely not to present types of second-person narration but instead what authors of such narrations say about their writings, at least some narrative-theoretical considerations might have helped Parker to avoid some of the terminological imprecision I mentioned above. Other typologies and explanatory accounts might have been useful in this context, e.g., James Phelan's ("Self-Help") rhetorical approach with its differentiation between a textual "narratee" and a wider "narrative audience" and Monika Fludernik's ("Second-Person Fiction") classification of second-person narratives into "homocommunicative" (i.e., members of the communicative level such as narrator and narratee are also protagonists) and "heterocommunicative" (i.e., the communicative and storyworld levels are kept separate). More recently, Fludernik ("The Category of 'Person'") has further specified her typology and has provided useful graphic presentations for the various kinds of relationships between "you" and "I" on the discourse and story levels.

Although she in the end admits that “texts deploy a variety of constellations that suggest a sliding scale between *you* and *we* narratives” (“The Category of ‘Person’” 122), she identifies six basic types of *you*-narration: 1. reflectoral *you* narrative; 2. non-communicative *I-and-you* narrative; 3. first-person narrative with *you* protagonist; 4. homodiegetic *you* narrative; 5. self-address narrative; 6. communicational *I-and-you* narrative (107-13).

One may debate whether it is possible, as Fludernik suggests, that there is narration without a communicative level.<sup>5</sup> This will depend on whether one is willing to embrace a poststructuralist paradigm that allows for “narratorless” narration. What this typology makes sufficiently clear, however, is that one cannot operate on the level of narration and on the level of communication between author and reader (whatever that may be) at the same time. For theoretical but also practical, analytical purposes these levels need to be considered separately. Having said that, narratologists do of course think about what potential effects techniques such as second-person narration may have on readers, and some even consider the role real-life authors play in the conception and anticipation of such effects.<sup>6</sup> I will explore these points in the next section.

#### 4. Functions and Effects

In her 2011 article, Fludernik also comments on the ways in which readers may respond to *you*-narration:

[I]n many *you* texts the foregrounded address function implies the existence of a person who utters these exhortations, comments and commands. To the extent that the (real) reader initially feels directly implicated, he or she will also take that voice as emanating from a real person, i.e. the author. Only when the fictionality of the text has been established does the reader move on to a reinterpretation of a text-internal, though extradiegetic, communicational set-up, recognizing the speaker as a narratorial speaker without an existential link to the real world. (119)

The assumption that real readers may at least to some extent feel addressed through the pronoun “you” features in most, if not all, accounts of this narrative technique. One may object to Fludernik’s comment that not every reader will initially feel implicated and will take the narrative voice to belong to the author. Second-person narration is, after all, still a marked narrative technique and therefore potentially alienating for readers. At the same time, not every reader who did initially feel “spoken to” by the author will necessarily reinterpret the communicative situation as located on the storyworld level and identify a story-internal narrator as soon as markers of fictionality become obvious. How different readers respond to *you*-narration is likely to depend on their expectations, their previous reading experiences and perhaps training. Kacandes’s book *Talk Fiction* suggests that quite a number of readers (and not only “naïve” ones) will feel “talked to” by certain fictional texts and that, moreover, there are types of text which invite this kind of response. Kacandes’s initial anecdote of a student who read Calvino’s *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveller* as being “about him” also points out the possibility of a more sustained sense of “identification” in readers. Parker argues along similar lines when he writes:

It is always a memorable moment when we, as readers, identify with something in a literary text. Perhaps even more memorable is the moment in which we can say not, “That’s me!” but instead “it *could* be ...”—something which second person texts, much like slips into second person in oral narration, would seem to promote. (173)

I would contest the rather imprecise, everyday use of the term “identification,” though. Is it really true that (adult) readers *identify* with characters? In other words, do we suspend our awareness of being in the process of reading and then merge with the presented characters in our minds? What rather seems to be the case is that we enjoy being allowed to imaginatively peep into other “people’s” lives, to empathize with or feel sympathetic towards characters’ predicaments (see Sklar) and, yes, perhaps to see some of our own feelings or circumstances reflected in the novelistic presentation, which in turn may

make us think about our own lives and so on. This, however, is not the same as “identification.” In that sense, I also disagree with Parker’s contention that readers “imagine the other *as self*” (173; my emphasis). Admittedly, the term “identification” has been widely used in literary studies when discussing readers’ responses to characters. However, it has also been criticized for being misleading and imprecise (see Schneider 613; and also Eder, Jannidis and Schneider 47). Perhaps a better term to use is “immersion,” which captures the way in which readers can become engrossed in storyworlds spatially, temporally and also emotionally (see Ryan 89-119). I also disagree with Parker’s assumption that second-person narration promotes identification “much like slips into second person in oral narration.” The real-world deictic and referential frameworks in conversational settings lend those conversations a fundamentally different ontological status. Especially when interlocutors share the same time and space and talk face to face (and even when they do not as, for example, in email communication), the ascription of the personal pronouns “I” and “you” is quite different from a situation in which I take a book into hand and may not be able to decide with certainty whom the “you” addresses. Kacandes’s “Talk” as metaphor makes sense, taken literally it does not.

Even though it is not unproblematic to guess what *the* reader (this construct of an idealized reader whose reading experience in most cases is based on the scholar’s own reading) feels or thinks in relation to the narrator and/or author, Fludernik’s comment above is instructive insofar as it demonstrates that the onus of making sense of a text and of attributing or not attributing the text’s message(s) to (an image of) a real author is on the reader. This is presumably the kind of theorizing—which concentrates on reading responses—that Parker implicitly criticizes. However, there are literary-theoretical studies which reinstitute the author in an analytical framework. A somewhat radical attempt is made by Andreas Kablitz, for example, who argues that one should give up the strict usage of the term “narrator” in lieu of “author” in narrative analysis except where it is obvious that a narra-



tor persona has been created. However, Kablitz cautions us against sliding back into what he calls “biographism” / “Biographismus” (42), a danger I see in Parker’s approach. James Phelan’s work is another case in point. In his book *Living to Tell about It*, for instance, Phelan explores what he terms “character narration” by paying attention to textual design and its possible effects on readers. He uses the theoretical concept of “implied author” to unravel the ways in which literary texts can give out discrepant messages to readers or contain seemingly redundant information addressed to the narratee, thus displaying the “*author’s need to communicate information to the audience*” (Phelan, *Living to Tell* 12; italics original). Still, one cannot “know” the real-life author and his or her intentions, Phelan argues, and his discussions of fictional and non-fictional texts show that textual effects are subject to interpretation. This is why his approach is ultimately also an exercise in reader response (as all literary analyses presumably are).

So, is Parker justified then in arguing for a “writer response” approach? Writers’ own comments have been used in author-centered, historical literary studies, where interpretations of texts are triangulated with what authors and others wrote in letters, essays and diaries about those texts. Such commentary may also be interesting from the perspective of the sociology of literary texts. However, even in these lines of research, to merely collect author statements and to take them at face value, disregarding the contexts in which such comments were made, would be naïve. And unlike Phelan, for example, who observes narratological distinctions in his analyses, Parker does not treat “narrator” and “author” as discrete theoretical categories when he talks about authors’ intentions. This can be observed in Parker’s discussion of Pam Houston’s self-commentary: “Admitting *her place as narrator* to her public, while psychically avoiding it herself, she transforms her own experience into something ‘fictional,’ an ironic disguise, frighteningly close, but othered” (170; italics my emphasis). I think it is important to distinguish between author and narrator since the two need not coincide. Even if authors use autobiographical material or inscribe

themselves into their works, as it were, there is still the creative process which transforms such material into an artifact. The artifact offers an aesthetic experience, and this experience can be very different for different readers. To interpret a literary text does not mean to boil it down to one conclusive meaning, quite on the contrary. Within the overall economy of a novel,<sup>7</sup> the use of second-person narration can assume a whole range of functions and create numerous effects not anticipated by the author. Is it helpful to say that these functions and effects do not exist merely because the author does not mention them? Can authors' self-commentaries really help us interpret texts, or do they rather limit us in our interpretative vision? It is perhaps not necessary to recapitulate Wimsatt and Beardsley's warning against the so-called "intentional fallacy" here, nor the debate their article engendered.<sup>8</sup> I do not think that a "writer response theory" could take us very far when thinking about fictional texts because artistic expressivity is likely to encompass more than what may be in the conscious grasp of a writer and is certainly as much related to what readers make of a text as what authors may or may not have intended.<sup>9</sup>

Universität Paderborn

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>This idea is explored, for example, by David Herman when he talks about "situatedness" as one basic element of narrative (37-74) and is found in Irene Kacandes's concept of "Talk fiction" (with a capital "T"), i.e., fiction which "creates relationships and invites interaction" (23). For more on Kacandes, see below.

<sup>2</sup>It would be extremely interesting to conduct a cross-cultural narratological study to find out whether second-person narration is perhaps more prevalent in other, non-Western cultures, and whether factors such as the status of orality and writing play a role in this regard.

<sup>3</sup>The original reads: "Pour qu'il y ait autobiographie (et plus généralement littérature intime), il faut qu'il y ait identité de *l'auteur*, du *narrateur* et du *personnage*" (Lejeune 15; italics original).

<sup>4</sup>Russian formalists, notably Boris Éjchenbaum, already attended to the conversational quality of certain fictional texts and called this phenomenon *skaz* (see Éjchenbaum; and also Schmid 170-81).

<sup>5</sup>One scholar who insists on literature being a kind of communication between author and reader is Roger Sell (*Literature as Communication*). For Sell, literature in a wider sense (including autobiography, for example) is dialogical to the extent that it invites a “dialogical comparing of notes” (“Dialogicality and Ethics” 87) between writer and reader. However, Sell’s concept of “dialogicality,” like Kacandes’s concept of “Talk fiction,” ultimately remains metaphorical (see Mildorf, “Exploring” 312).

<sup>6</sup>Christine Gölz offers a highly informative overview of early narratological author theories in her article “Autortheorien des slavischen Funktionalismus.”

<sup>7</sup>For definitions of the term “economy” in the context of literary texts, see Bergthaller 13.

<sup>8</sup>For an interesting critical discussion of Wimsatt and Beardsley’s article from an art critical and evolutionary perspective, see Dutton 167-77.

<sup>9</sup>This clearly differentiates literary texts from more pragmatic texts such as instruction manuals or legal documents, for example, where it is essential that I understand what the writer intended so that I can *use* the text correctly.

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## Gulliver as a Novelistic, Quixotic Character? A Response to Aaron R. Hanlon\*

DAVID FISHELOV

Hanlon's article on Gulliver as a quixotic character calls attention to several interesting aspects of *Gulliver's Travels* (hereafter *GT*) and succeeds in opening up Swift's work "to readings attentive to its quixotic elements" (Hanlon 285) which, as the author points out, have not received sufficient critical attention. Hanlon reminds us of Swift's complex, multi-faceted art and offers a counterbalance to the critical preoccupation with Swift's politics. While acknowledging their usefulness, in my view Hanlon's emphases need a few qualifications on four issues: (1) Gulliver as a novelistic, complex character; (2) Gulliver as a Quixote; (3) satirical and novelistic elements in *GT*; and (4) exceptionalism in *GT*.

### (1) Gulliver as a novelistic, complex character

By calling attention to certain life-like qualities of Gulliver and a few background details that Swift offers us (e.g. about Gulliver's training as a doctor), Hanlon highlights the fact that Gulliver is not merely a two-dimensional, transparent vehicle for performing Swift's satirical goals. Still, there is a long way between acknowledging the existence of certain life-like qualities in a character and assigning to that character the status of a novelistic character, "indeed a complex character"

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\*Reference: Aaron Hanlon, "Re-reading Gulliver as Quixote: Towards a Theory of Quixotic Exceptionalism," *Connotations* 21.2-3 (2011/2012): 278-303. For the original article as well as contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debhanlon02123.htm>>.

(Hanlon 285). Character complexity does not automatically arise from possessing certain life-like qualities, and it is not even a function of the number of such life-like traits (i.e. the more the traits, the more a character achieves complexity). Rather, a character gains individuality and complexity if, first, during the process of getting to know that character we detect uncommon *relationships* (e.g. tension, incompatibility, contradiction) between his/her different traits; and if, second, we encounter a character who has a multi-layered psyche with thoughts, emotions, memories, and awareness. A villain who only performs evil deeds is not a complex character even when we are given many details about his/her physical looks, daily routines or educational background; whereas a villain who suddenly acts mercifully because of guilt or remorse gains complexity. A benevolent character who donates generously to charity is not complex, even when we know many details about his/her taste in clothing or family life; whereas a good-guy who commits a crime because he has been momentarily tempted by lust or greed gains in complexity. To avoid a type-cast and to confer individuality and complexity we need to establish an unusual relationship between the allotted traits and to construct a multi-layered, yet coherent psyche of the character.<sup>1</sup>

Gulliver may seem to qualify for the title of a complex character because in different situations he behaves differently, sometimes even expressing conflicting attitudes. At one point, for example, Gulliver defies the King of the Lilliputians' imperialist scheme to use Gulliver's overwhelming strength in order to subdue the kingdom of Blefuscu (I.v). In this situation Gulliver is presented as a magnanimous defender of freedom: "And I plainly protested, that I would never be an Instrument of bringing a free and brave People into Slavery" (35).<sup>2</sup> In Book II, however, when he is confronted with the harsh critique of the human race by the king of Brobdingnag (II.vii), Gulliver bursts out into a vehement speech in which he offers to teach the king the secret of gunpowder, being highly enthusiastic about the destruction that can be caused by this invention. The gentle, peace-loving giant has turned into a belligerent, malicious pigmy.

We can also detect certain inconsistencies in Gulliver's behavior within one book: in Lilliput, Gulliver is very embarrassed by his natural needs and crawls to the depths of his dwelling to relieve himself (I.ii)—a behavior consistent with cultural inhibitions regarding man's baser needs—but only a few chapters later (I.v) he will shamelessly use his organ as a fire hose to extinguish the fire in the queen's palace, adopting this time a purely functional attitude to these lower aspects, ignoring cultural inhibitions altogether.

I would like to argue, however, that despite such inconsistencies Gulliver is not a complex novelistic character, at least not in the sense that we attribute the term to characters like Elizabeth Bennett or Emma Bovary or Raskolnikov or Leopold Bloom. The reason is that, despite certain life-like qualities and despite certain inconsistencies in his behavior (i.e. necessary conditions for individuality and complexity), we do not detect in him a multi-layered yet coherent psyche that remembers, learns, evolves, and attempts to integrate such inconsistencies. In most cases Gulliver acts as a "sponge" that uncritically absorbs the point of view of his environment: when accused of having a secret liaison with the wife of the Lilliputian treasurer he will seriously defend himself against these accusations (I.vi), without even questioning the physical possibility of such an alleged act; and, by the same token, he will adopt *in toto* the Houynhmns' equation of the whole human race with the Yahoos. On the few occasions when he confronts the point of view of his surrounding society, it is mainly because his pride is hurt (e.g. his speech re the gunpowder). In both cases, when he acts like a chameleon and when his pride is hurt, there is no sense of psychological depth, and it is clear that Swift is simply using him to enhance his satirical goals in a manner appropriate to the situation at hand. There is no sign of soul-searching or even awareness of his shifting attitudes, characteristic of a truly complex character.

It is true that Gulliver's reactions in many situations do not violate basic psychological plausibility (e.g. his belligerent response to the King of the Brobdingnags is an understandable, desperate attempt to



save face), but there is no sense of accumulation, of learning, of growing up, of self-awareness. Gulliver is ready to respond to any situation in ways that may conform to the general, flexible category of “an Englishman” (or “a European”). Swift was using different, sometimes conflicting, traits associated with this umbrella-like category precisely because he was not interested in constructing a truly complex individual. Gulliver is a man for all seasons or a man without (true, unique) qualities, presenting different aspects of the diffuse category of “an Englishman” as required by the specific occasion. This chameleon-like figure can be best described as an *ad-hoc character*.

In arguing for Gulliver as a novelistic, complex character, Hanlon highlights the “important phase-changes” (289) that Gulliver goes through: from the first phase “marked by an aloof, anthropological approach,” to a phase marked by “nationalist defense of England and wider Europe as particularly enlightened nations” in Book II (297), and then to the final phase of uncritically embracing the Utopian society of the Houynhmns. Granted that Gulliver expresses different attitudes towards England and European societies and ideals in different Books, there still remains the question of whether such changes take place within the psyche of a true novelistic character, i.e. a character that remembers, learns, is occupied in soul-searching, and evolves. Swift seems to be more interested in examining and exposing different aspects of life than in developing Gulliver as a true, complex, individual.

Thus, despite the fact that we can detect in Gulliver’s behavior different attitudes towards English conduct and ideals and those of humankind—a fact that Hanlon nicely highlights in his discussion—it does not necessarily prove that he emerges as a complex, novelistic character. I conclude this section by quoting Rawson’s objections to portraying Gulliver as a novelistic character, which I find quite convincing:

It is wrong, I think, to take Gulliver as a novel-character who suffers a tragic alienation, and for whom therefore we feel pity or some kind of contempt, largely because we do not, as I suggested, think of him as a “Character” at

all in more than a very attenuated sense: the emphasis is so preponderantly on what can be shown through him (including what he says and thinks) than on his person in its own right, that we are never allowed to accustom ourselves to him as a real personality despite all the rudimentary local color about his early career, family life and professional doings. An aspect of this are Swift's ironic exploitations of the Gulliver-figure, which to the very end flout our most elementary expectations of character consistency: the praise of English colonialism in the last chapter, which startlingly returns to Gulliver's earlier boneheaded manner, is an example. The treatment of Gulliver is essentially external, as, according to Wyndham Lewis, satire ought to be. (Rawson 79-80)<sup>3</sup>

## (2) Gulliver as a Quixote

When Hanlon calls attention to several similarities between Cervantes's and Swift's characters, he enriches our understanding of Gulliver and also reminds us of the important role played by Cervantes's work in eighteenth century English literature in the form of English translations (Jarvis's in 1742 and Smollett's in 1755) and also as an inspiring literary model, most notably in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, "told in the manner of Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote*" (as stated in Fielding's title). The suggestion to see Gulliver as a Quixote, however, raises an interesting methodological, or terminological, or philosophical question: When is it useful to describe one character as a version of another? I would suggest that detecting a few characteristics shared by two characters is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for such a move. To describe character B as a version of A, we need to detect in B the conspicuous and central characteristics of character A. Only then is it justified or useful to describe B "as" A.

My insistence on the specific nature of the analogy between Quixote and Gulliver may look like hair splitting or a scholastic exercise, but what I am interested in here is quite the opposite: namely, to draw attention to the broader picture wherein we apprehend and describe literary characters. I would like to argue that the analogy between Gulliver and Quixote is *not* based on the latter's conspicuous and central traits. Thus, to move from a useful articulation of a few Quixote-like aspects in Gulliver to portraying Gulliver "as" a Quixote

takes the argument one step too far. By the same token, Gulliver may share certain traits with Robinson Crusoe (e.g. the compulsion to set sail despite recurring catastrophes), but it would be a bit hasty to describe Gulliver as Swift's version of Crusoe. Gulliver may also share certain traits with Raphael Hythlodæus in More's *Utopia* (e.g. a European who recounts his visit to a strange, allegedly utopian country), but it would be a stretch to describe him as Swift's version of Raphael. Gulliver also shares certain traits with Homer's Ulysses and with Lucian's voyageurs in *True Story*, but he is not simply Swift's version of any one of them. In composing *GT*, Swift used a diversity of motifs, narrative structures, literary models and characters, but this does not make *GT* or its main character a mere version of any one specific source. I advise terminological caution precisely because Swift has succeeded in shaping from many sources quite a unique blend, and to call Gulliver a Quixote (or a Raphael or a Crusoe), while highlighting a few relevant aspects of Gulliver, may also restrict our appreciation of Swift's achievement.

Hanlon uses the term "quixotic" more than sixty times in his article, but the profuse use of the term may have a boomerang effect or, to use another metaphor, it may make us lose sight of the wood for the trees. I will discover nothing new if I say that what makes the hidalgo "a Quixote" is the fact that he has read too many chivalric romances, has been too deeply impressed by them to the point of blurring the line between fiction and reality, and has decided to enact fictional tales in his life. This is what makes the character tick, and this is what makes the novel evolve. Thanks to these conspicuous traits it makes sense to talk about Emma Bovary, for example, as a Quixote, despite the fact that these two have very little in common (in terms of gender, social background, specific story, and even the kind of literature they read). To be an avid reader of fiction, to blur the lines between fiction and reality in an attempt to enact fiction in reality is what makes a post-Quixote literary character a member of the Quixote club. Gulliver, however, is nothing of the sort: he has read books for sure, but there is no indication that his journeys are intended to enact a specific, pre-

conceived fictional scenario or that his reading has made him blur the line between fiction and reality. Thus, when we think of the most conspicuous characteristic of Quixote (what I may even dare to call his essential characteristic), Gulliver does not seem as a good candidate to join the Quixote club.

Furthermore, in making the case for a quixotic Gulliver, we may lose sight of the significant differences between the two. Whereas Quixote leaves his home to fulfill a very peculiar, out of the ordinary, lunatic mission (i.e. his “chivalric calling”), there is nothing out of the ordinary in Gulliver’s motivations for leaving home (e.g. love of travel, making money). Moreover, whereas Quixote embarks on his way well-equipped with fantastic scenarios, which will unavoidably be crushed by reality, dissolved into real, mundane places and people,<sup>4</sup> Gulliver’s travels illustrate just the opposite: an encounter between a relatively ordinary Englishman, equipped with a set of common beliefs and expectations, and strange, fictional, bizarre places and creatures (which are still representative, in a satirical manner, of our world). We have a twisted, fantasy-driven mind that bumps into reality (Quixote), on the one hand, and a basically normative mind that encounters fantasy (Gulliver), on the other. Another important difference is that Quixote comes as “a package deal” together with Sancho Panza—the former represents elevated aspirations and ideals, the latter corporeal, down-to-earth interests—whereas Gulliver is a loner, traveling and experiencing the encounter with strange countries and creatures all by himself.

By highlighting the few traits shared by Quixote and Gulliver, we may be led into downplaying important differences between the two, while using formulations that need further clarification. At one point, for example, Hanlon defines the quixotic character in terms that he perceives as allegedly also applicable to Gulliver: “The quixote is at once a madman who does material wrong and a well-meaning, sympathetic character capable of drawing attention to the flaws of the people and societies around him” (Hanlon 288). Quixote may indeed be a madman (for sure according to the Diagnostic and Statistical

Manual of Mental Disorders [DSM]), but Gulliver is presented to us for the most part of *GT* (except at the ending) as basically a very normal person who finds himself in abnormal circumstances; and whereas Quixote is indeed a basically well-meaning, sympathetic character, this is not always true of Gulliver, at least not in those parts where Swift makes him the butt of the satire (e.g. the vehement speech to the Brobdingnag king mentioned earlier).<sup>5</sup> In another place Hanlon argues that "Gulliver's quixotism is best characterized by his wanderlust, which is not only a desire to travel for its own sake, but an understanding of travel as his pre-ordained means toward amassing personal fortune and worldly knowledge, and ultimately locating a foreign utopia" (294). It is true that Gulliver is characterized by his wanderlust (so too is Robinson Crusoe), and it is equally true that he seeks fortune and worldly knowledge (true of almost any traveler), albeit mostly the former: the recurring motive in Gulliver's explanations for setting sail is money (I.i; III.i; IV.i). Is he truly looking for Utopia, however? I believe it would be more accurate to say that he involuntarily bumps into one (or an alleged one). In fact, when Gulliver offers his common (quite superficial) explanations for setting sail again and again we get the impression that Swift is simply looking for an excuse to move Gulliver on to the next adventure so that he (i.e. Swift!) will be able to unfold another fantastic story, describe another bizarre place, and exercise his satirical temper.

To conclude: we should accept Hanlon's suggestion to bear Quixote in mind when discussing Gulliver. I would like to suggest, however, that we should also bear in mind Ulysses and Raphael and Crusoe (among others) and, while acknowledging the Quixotic motives in *GT*, not over-state them and read Gulliver as Swift's version of Quixote.

### (3) Satirical and novelistic elements in *GT*

Hanlon's emphasis on the novelistic elements in *GT* goes hand in hand with his arguing against paying too much attention to its satiri-

cal dimension. Hanlon criticizes readings that ignore *GT*'s novelistic dimension, because such an approach: "not only classes *Gulliver's Travels* outside the realm of the quixotic narrative, but also threatens to reduce it to mere political allegory and to minimize its novelistic elements" (282). As part of his emphasis on the novelistic elements, Hanlon (282-84) criticizes Sheldon Sacks's argument that *GT* should be read as a satire—namely a work "organized so that it ridicules objects external to the fictional world created in it" (Sacks 26). Satire is opposed in Sacks's typology of fiction to "action" (or novel): "a work organized so that it introduces characters, about whose fates we are made to care, in unstable relationships which are then further complicated until the complication is finally resolved by the removal of the represented instability" (Sacks 26).<sup>6</sup> Hanlon is right in calling attention to several novelistic elements in *GT* and in criticizing Sacks's contention that *GT* should be read only as a satire.<sup>7</sup> Hanlon seems, however, to tacitly embrace Sacks's argument that satire and novel are mutually exclusive categories, or at least that to read a work as satire and to read it as novel are necessarily competing: the more one detects novelistic elements in *GT*, the less it becomes a satire (or satirical allegory) and the more one pays attention to Swift's contemporary, satirical references ("Swift's politics" in Hanlon's terms), the more one is likely to miss the work's novelistic dimension that Hanlon wishes to rescue.

This assumption should be re-examined. Even if we accept Sacks's definitions of satire and action (or novel), I would like to argue that the two do not necessarily pose to writers and readers an either/or-situation: an author can invest in building verisimilar fictional characters, in creating a plausible plot with complications that are finally resolved, and at the same time write a highly effective satire, ridiculing and criticizing certain real people, social institutions, and politics ("external to the fiction world" in Sacks's terms). We can find mixtures of novelistic and satirical elements in eighteenth-century literature, when the novel was taking its first steps on the literary scene, as well as in nineteenth-century literature and onward, when the novel had developed into a fully-fledged, respected literary genre. A reader

can be very much absorbed in the fate of Dickens's characters, for example, follow with great interest developments in the story-line, build expectations about possible resolutions to complications in plot, and at the same time be keenly aware of the satirical exposure of contemporary English society.

In a complementary manner, even when an author writes a thinly veiled satirical allegory for which the reader is expected to "translate" the fictional characters and developments into real people and historical events, there is still an important level of the reading in which we follow the fictional plot, develop expectations regarding the next move, built up sympathy towards some of the characters, and distance ourselves from others. Orwell's *Animal Farm*, for example, aims to satirize communist totalitarianism, but this does not mean that while reading the story we are indifferent to various aspects of the fictional world: we do develop emotional responses towards the fictional characters (e.g. rejecting Napoleon, feeling sorry for Boxer), carefully follow the story-line, and build up expectations about how certain instabilities might be developed in the fictional world and be finally resolved.

Needless to say, satire and the novel do not always co-exist. There are many novels devoid of satirical elements (or with negligible ones), and there are many satirical texts which have nothing to do with the novel. Swift himself wrote a few powerful satires that have no novelistic elements whatsoever (e.g. "A Modest Proposal"). The decision to adopt the form of a travel story and to develop certain life-like qualities in its main character, however, does not mean that the satirical dimension is necessarily watered down. Personally, I believe *GT* to be the greatest satire of all times, but regardless of personal taste, there is no question that *GT* is one of the most powerful, haunting satires ever written according to any standard understanding of the term "satire" (or Sacks's specific definition): a satire that succeeds in exposing both contemporary individuals, institutions, and norms as well as several perennial human traits.

Both in theory and in practice there is no contradiction between satirical and novelistic elements, and when they co-exist in a specific text (and they do not have to), this co-existence can take different shapes or proportions: sometimes the satirical elements are more dominant than the novelistic ones, sometimes it is the other way around; sometimes they work together, even reinforce one another, and sometimes they can compete for the reader's attention. Literary forms, modes and genres are flexible and dynamic, allowing for different ways of collaboration and even hybridization, rather than rigid, mutually exclusive pigeon-holes. Generic labels call attention to certain conspicuous characteristics (formal, structural, thematic) and evoke pertinent prototypical members of a generic tradition (e.g. "tragedy" evokes *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet*; "comedy" evokes *Twelfth Night* and *L'Avare*<sup>8</sup>) and hence certain expectations, but they should not be viewed as mutually exclusive categories. Even when there is a conspicuous opposition between two generic traditions (e.g. tragedy and comedy), this does not mean that specific authors cannot mix them in certain ways (e.g. tragi-comedy).<sup>9</sup>

This brief diversion to genre theory is meant to remind us that we should not treat satire and the novel as generic frameworks inherently competing with one another, especially because they are both known for being quite flexible and open literary forms. Thus, when Hanlon rightly calls attention to certain novelistic elements in *GT*, there is no reason to link this argument to an attempt to weaken the text's satirical power or to downplay Swift's politics and topical allusions. If asked to describe the specific relationship between the satirical and novelistic elements in *GT*, I would suggest that the satirical ones are much more dominant than the novelistic ones. To play a second fiddle, however, does not mean that you are not heard or should not be heard. In literary texts a second fiddle does not even mean that you are totally subordinated to first violin (as Sacks argues): each textual dimension (satirical or novelistic) may keep its degree of autonomy and should not be viewed as necessarily competing (as Hanlon argues) or participating in a zero-sum game.



(4) Exceptionalism in *GT*

Hanlon's article develops two major arguments: first, it highlights Gulliver as a novelistic, quixotic character; and second, it calls attention to Gulliver's "exceptionalism," and on more than one occasion the author connects these two arguments. In the very first section of his article, for example, he states that "Gulliver's quixotism is marked not merely by immediate allusions to Cervantes or to *Don Quixote*, but by the use of exceptionalist arguments to justify fantastic ideological conclusions in the face of demonstrable counter-evidence" (279). I believe a few clarifications or qualifications would be useful for a better understanding of the relevancy of "exceptionalism" with regard to both Quixote and Gulliver.

Let us first be reminded of the meaning and use of the term. According to the *OED*, "exceptionalism" is a relative newcomer to English, first documented in 1928 as part of an economic and political argument contending that the USA has its own, exceptional economic laws. The term's ideological roots can be traced back to German Romanticism, with the idea that each nation (*Volk*) has an essential, unique character.<sup>10</sup> During the past few decades the term has also been used in a general sense not necessarily connected to economic issues: "The belief that something is exceptional in relation to others of the same kind; loosely, exceptional quality or character."

As for Quixote, one may wonder to what extent the term is applicable to the fantastic adventures of the hidalgo or in what sense Quixote should be regarded as representative of an exceptionalist way of thinking. There is no question that Cervantes's hero is Spanish to the bone: he was born and raised in Spain, and a great part of the chivalric literature on which his lively imagination was fed is Spanish.<sup>11</sup> Note, however, that Quixote is not a Spanish "exceptionalist," and the chivalric romances that he wants to act out are not necessarily or uniquely Spanish: the genre had many manifestations all over Europe and Cervantes explicitly alludes to a few famous non-Spanish works (e.g. *Orlando Furioso*). True, Quixote tries to use "arguments to justify fantastic ideological conclusions in the face of demonstrable counter-

evidence" (279)—as Hanlon aptly formulates the point—but it is not altogether clear in what sense Quixote's arguments might be described as exceptionalist. According to Quixote, all reality should conform to his beloved fictional stories, heroes, and codes. One may even be tempted to stretch the argument and claim that in one particular sense Quixote can be described as representing an *anti*-exceptionalist way of thinking: after all, according to him, everything should conform to chivalric rules, with no exception. Though one might argue that chivalric rules are very special, valid only in a specific time and place (e.g. medieval Europe) but not in other times and places (e.g. Quixote's time), neither Quixote nor Cervantes make such a claim. In fact, Cervantes satirizes in *Don Quixote* any realistic claims of chivalric romances and, of course, Quixote's uncritical acceptance of such claims. I shall shortly discuss how and to what extent exceptionalism is relevant to *GT*, but even if we conclude that it is highly relevant, it is still not altogether clear what Quixote's alleged "exceptionalism" contributes to our understanding of Gulliver's exceptionalism.

Regarding exceptionalism in *GT*, Hanlon persuasively points out that different characters in *GT* use a line of thinking that can be described as exceptionalist. We often encounter characters who think that their country, their society, their rules are very special (hence, exceptional) and also stand above those of everybody else. Let me quote one of the funniest examples of this line of thinking—the introduction to the "contract" between the Lilliputian king and Gulliver (I.iii):

GOLBASTO MOMAREN EVLAME GURDILO SHEFIN MULLY ULLY GUE, most Mighty Emperor of *Lilliput*, Delight and Terror of the Universe, whose Dominions extend five Thousand Blustrugs, (about twelve Miles in Circumference) to the Extremities of the Globe: Monarch of all Monarchs: Taller than the Sons of Men; whose Feet press down to the Center, and whose Head strikes against the Sun: At whose Nod the Princes of the Earth shake their Knees; pleasant as the Spring, comfortable as the Summer, fruitful as Autumn, dreadful as Winter. His most sublime Majesty proposeth to the *Man-Mountain*, lately arrived at our Celestial Dominions, the following Articles, which by a solemn Oath he shall be obliged to perform. (25)

These pompous words, which seemingly place Lilliput and its king in a very special, unparalleled position, are ridiculous because the reader knows, among other things, that the king whose head “strikes against the Sun” is actually “not six Inches high” (5). As far as the king thinks of himself and of his kingdom as quite special, his words may be described as an exaggerated version of an “exceptionalist” way of thinking. Gulliver himself sometimes portrays England as a country that possesses certain special qualities, unlike the country where he is staying: e.g. when he describes England to the Brobdingnagian king (II.vi), and when he tries to explain the customs of his native land to his Houyhnhnm master, emphasizing the difficulties he has in explaining certain things: “I doubted much, whether it would be possible for me to explain my self on several Subjects whereof his Honor could have no Conception, because I saw nothing in his Country to which I could resemble them” (210). Thus, England is exceptional from the Houyhnhnms’ point of view, as much as the Houyhnhnms are truly exceptional from the point of view of an Englishman.

We can even offer the generalization that, when a character in *GT* makes an “exceptionalist” claim (Gulliver himself or an inhabitant of a strange country he visits), the chances are that Swift will smile behind that character’s back and hint to us that such a claim is groundless. The ridiculous rhetoric of the Lilliputian king about himself and his country’s “unique” position on the globe is but an exaggerated version of the elevated, pompous phrases used by countless kings from the dawn of history. Lilliput is, after all, a thinly veiled satirical representation of England, and once we ignore the satirical distortions there is nothing truly special or unique about it. In a similar manner, when Gulliver claims that it is difficult for him to describe the customs of England to his Houyhnhnm Master “because I saw *nothing* in his Country to which I could resemble them” (210; my emphasis), we are fully aware that just a few lines earlier he had described how horses are treated in England in a similar way to the Houyhnhnms’ treatment of the Yahoos (e.g. the sense of superiority of the ruling race towards the enslaved).

Granted that Swift critically exposes an “exceptionalist” way of thinking by calling attention to similarities between societies, no matter how different they may seem at first sight, I would still like to argue that it is not “exceptionalism” per se that mostly bothers him. In the words of the Lilliputian king, for example, we can discern two related but not identical aspects: first, he believes that he and his country are very special; and second, that he and his nation are on the top of the world—and it is the latter aspect that triggers Swift’s satirical temper. In other words, Swift’s harshest satire aims at exposing any self-aggrandizing tendency in his characters or, in more plain terms, he will critically expose anything that smells of human pride.<sup>12</sup> Swift’s criticism of “exceptionalism” stems from what can be described as a Universalist position: mankind is basically the same everywhere and in all periods. Human beings not only think of themselves as special but also pride themselves on being the crown of creation, while they perform acts of stupidity and of vile cruelty that put them below the lowest of animals. To focus attention on Swift’s critique of “exceptionalism” is not necessarily wrong, but it may unnecessarily diminish some of the most powerful, universal, and haunting aspects of Swift’s satire.

\* \* \*

To conclude: Hanlon’s article succeeds in raising several interesting issues related to Swift’s art in *GT*. My modest proposal to qualify and clarify certain points in Hanlon’s thoughtful article is intended to illustrate why Swift’s work continues to generate different readings from readers and critics alike. There is no question to my mind that W. B. Yeats’s words are as relevant today as when they were written eighty years ago: “Swift always haunts me; he is always just around the next corner” (Yeats 7).

The Hebrew University  
Jerusalem

## NOTES

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer of my response for offering useful and knowledgeable comments.

<sup>1</sup>From a reader-oriented perspective, the unusual relationship between a character's traits can be described as surprising, unpredictable elements. For the role of the *relationship* between a character's traits in the emergence of individual, complex characters, see Fishelov, "Types of Characters, Characteristics of Types." The dual criterion offered here for constructing a complex character (unusual relationship between traits and assumed multi-layered yet coherent psyche) could also be applied to the way we construct and perceive complexity in the real-life people that we encounter; but this goes beyond the scope of the present discussion.

<sup>2</sup>All quotations from *GT* are taken from the edition by Greenberg and Piper; page numbers are given in parentheses after each quote.

<sup>3</sup>Whereas I do not necessarily concur with Rawson's belittling of Swift's criticism of the Houyhnhnms (Fishelov, *Dialogues with/and Great Books* 165-68), Rawson is undoubtedly the critic best attuned to the most haunting aspects of Swift's satirical temper.

<sup>4</sup>Even when we encounter strange, extravagant people (e.g. the Duke and Duchess in the Second Part), they are still part of this world.

<sup>5</sup>For an insightful analysis of some examples, including Swift's Gulliver, in which characters who voice satirical criticism are themselves satirized, see Elliott, *The Power of Satire* 130-222.

<sup>6</sup>In addition to "satire" and "action" (or novel) Sacks suggests a third category, "apologue," defined as "a work organized as a fictional example of the truth of a formulable statement or a series of such statements" (Sacks 26), a category Sacks illustrates with Johnson's *Rasselas*.

<sup>7</sup>Another issue is that of whether Sacks is to blame for a true logical fallacy, a *petitio*, as Hanlon claims (see 283): it would be more accurate to describe Sacks's argument as an hermeneutical, not a logical (or vicious) circularity: interpreting the whole based on the parts and these parts are in turn interpreted based on the whole. I am indebted to Menakhem Brinker for this distinction.

<sup>8</sup>For the place and role of prototypical members in generic categories, see Fishelov, "The Structure of Generic Categories."

<sup>9</sup>By pointing out the flexible and dynamic nature of literary categories I do not argue that they are totally diffusive. For a balanced view on this issue, see Fishelov, *Metaphors of Genre*, especially 8-17, 55-68.

<sup>10</sup>"Exceptionalism is the perception that a country, society, institution, movement, or time period is "exceptional" (i.e. unusual or extraordinary) in some way and thus does not need to conform to normal rules or general principles. Used in this sense, the term reflects a belief formed by lived experience, ideology, percep-

tual frames, or perspectives influenced by knowledge of historical or comparative circumstances" (Wikipedia).

<sup>11</sup>See, for example, the list of books discovered in Quixote's library (*Don Quixote* I.vi).

<sup>12</sup>For a thorough discussion of Swift's critical exposure of human pride, including Gulliver's, see the classical essay by Monk, "The Pride of Lemuel Gulliver."

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## Telling Differences: Complicating, Challenging, and Expanding Amit Marcus's Discussion of Clones and Doubles\*

NICOLE A. DIEDERICH

Amit Marcus's "Telling Difference: Clones, Doubles and What's in Between," an exploration of the differences between clones and doubles in Romantic and post-Romantic fiction—most notably twentieth and twenty-first century science fiction—thoughtfully distinguishes the intra- and intersubjective dynamics of double and original from the more exclusively intersubjective relationship of clone to original. Although the existence of a clone, an "approximately genetically identical" individual (Marcus 363), leads the original to question self-identity, the physical existence of both clone and original is not questioned; thus supernatural explanations for the existence of clones are not involved in such narratives. For Marcus, this distinguishes clones—for which a scientific and therefore rational explanation is accepted by narrator, characters, and readers—from doubles. Double narratives written in the nineteenth century, before cloning was a scientific possibility, allow for the double's identity as separate from the original to be questioned. As Marcus asserts, this intrasubjective aspect of doubles means that they "are fictional entities that most likely cannot actually exist" (364). For these doubles, not only is an intrasubjective explanation possible for narrator, readers, and characters including the protagonist (the double may be a figment of the protagonist's imagination), but so too is an intersubjective and possibly supernatural explanation.

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\*Reference: Amit Marcus, "Telling the Difference: Clones, Doubles and What's in Between," *Connotations* 21.2-3 (2011/2012): 363-96. For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debmarcus02123.htm>>.

Marcus's discussion of the clone narratives and their differences from double narratives is an asset of the essay. Marcus provides examples from clone stories written by men and women in the mid-twentieth to early twenty-first centuries. Using both Tzvetan Todorov's theory of the fantastic and Otto Rank's 1925 *Der Doppelgänger*, Marcus emphasizes that clone narratives do not portend death as doubles do; rather, clones represent immortality, though this representation is "delusional" (381) since neither clone nor original can live forever. In Todorov's theory of the fantastic, a sense of the uncanny develops as readers question the double as internal projection or external supernatural phenomenon. Clones' decidedly external existence removes that sense of uncertainty. Furthermore, Rank's theory eliminates this sense of uncertainty by defining the double as an exclusively internal projection of the original's rejected self, engendering a loathing and disgust in the original that spirals both the original and the double toward death. Thus, Rank's natural psychoanalytic explanation for the fear associated with doubles does not extend to clones and undercuts Todorov's more supernatural explanation for the uncanny element of double narratives.

Given Marcus's interest both in Todorov and in Rank's psychological explanations for fear of copies, my recommendation for this portion of his essay is that he consider applying a more contemporary theorist in addition to Rank—one whose concepts could connect fear of clones to fear of death, bringing this element of the uncanny more deliberately into his analysis of clone narratives. Psycholinguist Julia Kristeva offers a contemporary and psychoanalytic approach to the effect of the uncanniness of the other, such as a clone or double, on the individual. Like Todorov, she focuses her explanation on the mind; like Rank, she notes how death leads the individual to question one's existence as a subject. For Kristeva, the subject encountering something disturbing, uncanny, or abject, is disrupted to the extent that self-fragmentation—reminiscent of the splitting of the self at the mirror stage—occurs. As Kelly Hurley summarizes, the Kristevan subject's response to abject phenomena "disturbs identity, system,



and order” and “elicits queasiness and horror because it reminds one of traumatic infantile efforts to constitute oneself” (138). The subject reaction that Kristeva articulates aligns both with Marcus’s analysis of the intrasubjective fragmentation of original and double and with his explanation of the self-identity crisis that occurs with original and clone.

Kristeva’s theories, however, associate such reactions with death, which Marcus could use to explore his contention that, while clones do not invite an association with death, their “promise of immortality” (382) is ultimately delusional. For Kristeva, anything that splits the subject into the recognition and questioning of “I” and “not I” is abjection, which ties to death. In “The Power of Horror,” she states that the corpse “is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject” (166). A concept similar to Kristeva’s notion of the abject is Marcus’s description of the self-identity crisis which occurs in clone narratives. As Marcus notes, “a baffled sense of self-identity in clone narratives” transpires when the original discovers the clone (375), a discovery that quite literally presents an abject split of “I” and “not I,” thus the questioning of self. Marcus further explains that this results in a “temporary or permanent identity crisis for the original and/or for his or her clone, who are represented as two autonomous subjects” (378). Their encounter is devoid of any of the fantastic elements Todorov identifies as uncanny. Marcus contends that the unsettling aspect of the clone narrative consists of the evil motives of “greed, the desire for revenge, and most importantly, the desire to possess another person and to treat that person as an object, a means to an end” (388). Yet an application of Kristeva’s concept of the abject to the intersubjective relationship of clone and original reveals an association with death—an unsettling, uncanny association that could develop Marcus’s assertion that the specter of death resides mostly with doubles but extends, to a lesser degree, to clones.

In addition to offering this alternate theoretical approach to clone narratives, I also complicate Marcus’s analysis of the intersubjective dynamic in double narratives. To do so, I consider the social commen-

tary possible with the gothic literary convention of the double. Marcus establishes seven over-arching observations on the intersubjective in double narratives, developing both them and his general discussion by focusing on eight double narratives from the nineteenth century, including two by British novelists. Unlike the texts selected for his analysis of clone narratives, these eight works were all written by men about male protagonists and their doubles. Thus, I wish to extend Marcus's seven observations by applying them to two nineteenth-century double narratives in the gothic tradition written by women in order to see if and how they uphold, challenge, or expand these concepts.

The two double narratives I select for this analysis are *Frankenstein* by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley and *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. Both novels are as well-known if not more famous than the two British novels Marcus discusses: Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which rivals *Frankenstein* in popular lore, and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. *Frankenstein* enables us to consider a woman author's portrayal of a male protagonist and double. *Jane Eyre* provides a woman author's depiction of a female protagonist and female double. Published thirty years apart, *Frankenstein* (1818) and *Jane Eyre* (1847) both fit Marcus's definition of a double narrative based on intrasubjective considerations. In other words, they are not the quasi-double narratives Marcus excludes from his study. Both focus on a protagonist, Victor Frankenstein and Jane Eyre, whose copy in the form of another character may be a part of the protagonist's self. Victor's creature has been read as a "second self" to Victor.<sup>1</sup> Although Jane and Bertha are discussed as two distinct physical entities, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's groundbreaking analysis in *The Madwoman in the Attic* interprets Bertha as a psychological extension of Jane.<sup>2</sup> When read in a psychoanalytic, intrasubjective fashion, both protagonists and their doubles offer a moral warning that the fragmented self brings death or ruin to the original and those whom the original loves.

While *Frankenstein* and *Jane Eyre* qualify as double narratives, they are also novels influenced by the gothic literary tradition with its plot

devices of sublime settings, isolated castles, and *doppelgängers*. In 1958, Robert Heilman juxtaposed a “new” Gothic tradition based on natural explanation for uncanny phenomena with a gothic tradition that relied on the supernatural. Later theorists, such as Alison Milbank in “Gothic Femininities,” align this “new Gothic” with Ann Radcliffe and the women writers who follow her, writers focused on the horror of the everyday. Works by Shelley and Brontë, writers following Radcliffe, can be analyzed as integrating commentary on the horrors of the everyday, thus providing a social rather than exclusively psychoanalytic means to explore Marcus’s observations. As Kate Ferguson Ellis notes, gothic novels “are concerned with violence done to familial bonds that is frequently directed against women” (3). Both *Frankenstein* and *Jane Eyre* invoke gothic conventions, including violence enacted on women characters such as Elizabeth Lavenza, Justine Moritz, Bertha Mason, and Jane Eyre. This is not to say that the male characters in the novels do not suffer violence, for they do, most notably Henry Clerval, William Frankenstein, and Rochester. Rather, Ellis’s statement encourages us to consider if and how the violence against women characters creates a commentary on women’s social conditions. In examining this potential for commentary with an eye toward gender issues, the gender not only of the author but also of the double and the original should be considered. Within this more gendered and social context of the gothic tradition, to what extent do Brontë’s and Shelley’s double narratives support Marcus’s definition of intersubjective doubles?

Marcus’s first observation is that “the double and his original display rivalry” (382), with the double following the original, resulting in a fierce competition between the two. Doubles in *Frankenstein* and *Jane Eyre* uphold this element of intersubjectivity. The creature finds Victor’s hometown, stalks him through the Alps until their encounter at Mont Blanc, follows him on his ill-fated trip to Scotland, and tells him “I shall be with you on your wedding-night” (163). He is, and he kills Elizabeth. Similarly, whether we regard Jane as Bertha’s double or Bertha as Jane’s, both inhabit Thornfield. Jane follows in Bertha’s

footsteps in taking up residence there; Bertha creeps into Jane's bedroom to destroy her bridal veil.

Protagonists and doubles in both novels also enforce Marcus's second criterion for an intersubjective double in that the "double tends to desire the 'objects' that are most precious for his original" (382). In *Frankenstein*, the creature's desire for a family—a void temporarily filled by the De Lacey family—inspires him to seek out his creator and creator's family. The potential for happiness other men possess motivates the creature to ask for a mate, for he burns with passion and desires a companion that "'must be of the same species, and have the same defects. This being you must create'" (139). The creature's subsequent rage at Victor's destruction of the female companion underscores his longing and desire.

In *Jane Eyre*, both Bertha and Jane desire what the other values—Rochester. Psychoanalytic interpretations of Bertha, such as Gilbert and Gubar's, reduce her to an expression of Jane's psyche and thus Jane's double. As Jane's double, Bertha wants Rochester's attentions for herself, and rightfully so, considering that she is his legal wife. Her antipathy toward Jane emphasizes that Rochester is *hers*, her legal husband. As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> however, Jane more appropriately functions as Bertha's double: Jane follows Bertha as Rochester's bride. Were Richard Mason not to stop the ceremony, Jane would become a bigamist's illegal second wife. Her desire, therefore, echoes Bertha's for she wants Rochester to love and to marry. So tempting is Rochester's proposal for them to be together in an adulterous fashion, yet so strong is her desire to remain virtuous that Jane flees Thornfield Hall, declaring "'Mr. Rochester, I will *not* be yours'" (278).

That Jane and Bertha can be viewed as either the original or the double reinforces Marcus's fourth observation about double narratives. He asserts that "the double often inverts the hierarchical relations with his original by subjugating the latter's will to his own" (382), challenging the view of who is the original and who is the double. In Brontë's work, Bertha may seem to be a plot device, making Jane the original. As Jane's inverted double, Bertha is the

original wife. Her existence, her very presence, works an effect on Jane, who, though she wants to be with Rochester, will not. Jane subjugates her own passionate desire because Bertha's existence requires her to avoid adultery by leaving. Jane notes that "Mr. Rochester was not to me what he had been; for he was not what I had thought him" (260), for, among other things, she had thought he was free to marry her. Bertha proves otherwise.

Similarly, the creature also dominates Victor's will, drawing increasing parallels between the two of them. Although he cannot convince Victor to complete the female companion, the creature can goad Victor into following him by killing Elizabeth, a vengeful act that leaves them both without a partner in life. After this murder, the creature commands his original's complete attention as the hunted Victor now hunts the creature, fueled by the same desire for revenge that motivated the creature to kill Elizabeth. In the end of the novel, the creature sums up this inverted hierarchy by addressing his dead creator as Walton listens, saying, "thou wouldst not desire against me a vengeance greater than that which I feel. Blasted as thou wert, my agony was still superior to thine" (215).

Despite upholding three of Marcus's observations on intersubjective doubles, *Frankenstein* and *Jane Eyre* challenge his remaining four observations to the varying degrees that each novel can be read as infusing the violence of gothic conventions with social and gendered commentary. For instance, Marcus's third point that the original feels both admiration and hostility toward the double holds for *Frankenstein* with its male protagonists. At first, Victor feels awe and admiration for the creature because he freely chooses to regenerate him, making *Frankenstein* one of the exceptions Marcus notes when saying "the original in most double narratives does not create his double of his own free will" (383). Victor does. He expresses awe as he plans to infuse life into the dead body parts, reveling that "no one can conceive the variety of feelings which bore me onwards, like a hurricane, in the first enthusiasm of success" (52). His excitement quickly dissipates into ambivalence and loathing at his grotesque creation: "I had

desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart" (56). Victor flees his creation and his responsibility to it.

The general rule regarding originals not creating their doubles is the one rule by which *Frankenstein* does not abide, perhaps because this act of giving life enables Shelley to offer a commentary on a horror in her society. U. C. Knoepfelmacher argues that *Frankenstein* is "a novel of omnipresent fathers and absent mothers" (90). Frankenstein's creation removes women from the reproductive process. Others note how the novel can be read as a condemnation of pseudo-scientific methods such as galvanism, alchemy, and natural philosophy, going past the bounds of acceptable knowledge.<sup>4</sup> The inseparable and deadly ends for Victor and his double in this context not only uphold the two final tenets of double and original intersubjectivity, but also underscore Shelley's critique of scientific methods of procreation substituting for women. Even though Victor flees, in keeping with Marcus's sixth observation, he cannot escape from the creature, even on his honeymoon. Marcus notes that the two "*become* inseparable because they treat each other as if the one's very being were dependent upon the other" (384). On the one hand, Victor's revenge depends upon the creature, and this quest gives his life new meaning. On the other hand, the creature encourages Victor to hunt him by leaving provisions to sustain Victor in the colder northern climes, thus making sure that he now has the full attention of his family that he so desired. Their symbiotic relationship culminates in the death of both creature and creator in the catastrophic ending which Marcus identifies as the seventh aspect of the intersubjective double/original relationship. Victor's death, brought on by his masochistic pursuit of the creature, will result in the creature's death as well, for one cannot live without the other. Upon Victor's death, the creature declares that "my work is nearly complete" (214); all that remains is his own suicide. He tells Walton, "he is dead who called me into being; and when I shall be no more, the very remembrance of us both will

speedily vanish" (214). *Frankenstein* fulfills these final two observations of inseparability and the double-death ending because Shelley violated the typical approach to a double in having Victor willingly make his own and then suffer the consequences of this hubris, which includes the violent death of Elizabeth. These violent consequences of Victor's choice add Shelley's social commentary on the bounds of scientific knowledge and its potential threat to women to the warning about self-fragmentation Marcus associates with double narratives.

Brontë's use of the gothic convention of the double offers social commentary on the potential dangers of matrimony, undercutting all four remaining observations on intersubjective relationships, perhaps because her work features female protagonists. Unlike Victor, neither Bertha nor Jane creates the other, in this sense upholding the fifth guideline that the original does not create the double which leads the original to experience the double as violence. However, *both* the double and the original in *Jane Eyre* are created by another: Rochester manipulates both women, reducing Bertha to a madwoman and Jane to her replacement, working violence against each within the common and familial bond of matrimony. Without any consideration for complicating aspects of Bertha's behavior,<sup>5</sup> including his own indifference to her, he locks her upstairs, dismissing her as the beast that she becomes. As Elaine Showalter explains, "much of Bertha's dehumanization, Rochester's account makes clear, is the result of her confinement, not its cause. After ten years of imprisonment, Bertha has become a caged beast" (121-22; see Brontë 272). Also in total disregard to Jane's feelings, as well as morals and laws, Rochester positions her as Bertha's successor—her double—by almost entering into a bigamous union with her. That neither woman willingly casts herself as a double of the other enables Brontë to criticize women's lack of agency, thus complicating the application of Marcus's fifth observation to these doubles.

Brontë's social critique of Rochester's marital power also undercuts the concept that the original alternately admires and despises the double, resulting in ambivalence. There is nothing ambivalent about

Bertha's destructive actions in Jane's bedroom. She certainly does not admire her rival; however, it remains ambiguous as to whether the rending of the veil targets violence at Jane or if, like Bertha's other violent acts, it focuses on Rochester. The hostile action in her replacement's bedroom can be read as Bertha's "veiled" warning to Jane to reject a marriage to one as capable of violently imprisoning a wife as Rochester. Likewise, Jane neither admires nor despises Bertha. When Jane first sees her rival, she offers no harsh judgment, wondering instead "what it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell" (257). Later, as Rochester attempts to explain his actions, Jane pities Bertha, telling him: "It is cruel—she cannot help being mad'" (265). Jane's subsequent departure rejects Rochester's devious plan for bigamy or adultery and affirms Bertha as his legal wife.

Jane's ability to flee Thornfield Hall shows how this double and her original can separate, perhaps because, unlike Victor and his creature, they did not create each other and are more physically distinct than other doubles Marcus discusses. As a result, their ability to lead separate lives also precludes both of them dying in a catastrophic murder/suicide. Instead, Rochester suffers redemptive injuries in the fire that precipitates Bertha's suicide, a final act of agency that allows Jane to marry Rochester as a legal second wife without moral compromise. Jane now marries a husband who must depend on her, more evenly balancing the power dynamic in the marriage and lessening the threat of violence against her within that familial bond.

So what implications arise for Marcus's observations from their application to two double narratives written by women? First, the potential impact of the gender of the author when assessing nineteenth-century literature should be acknowledged. Nancy Armstrong notes in *Desire and Domestic Fiction* that "the history of the novel cannot be understood apart from the history of sexuality" (9). Elizabeth Langland contends in *Nobody's Angels* that "women were active in *producing* representations and so became prominent players in the historical scene" (6) and that in terms of "cultural currency as opposed



to economic capital, women dominated Victorian society" (7). An analysis of nineteenth-century double narratives should include a discussion of both women authors and female doubles and their originals. Thus, an extension of Marcus's analysis to women authors in addition to Brontë and Shelley could provide a more complete picture of nineteenth-century double narratives. Moreover, taking into account the influence of the gothic tradition on an author's use of doubles, male or female, may reveal more for doubles and originals than a focus on the supernatural or self-fragmentation: it expands the analysis to social context and commentary. Whereas Shelley's and Brontë's works follow some, if not most, of the intersubjective principles Marcus provides, they also challenge some of them in a manner that leads to a social critique aligned with gothic horror, particularly violence against women. Marcus may want to further study women originals and their doubles, particularly in works written by women, to see if an expansion of these intersubjective markers is warranted. My brief foray into such an analysis suggests that it is a warranted and important extension of the solid foundation he offers for analyzing not only doubles and their originals but also clones and theirs.

The University of Findlay  
Findlay, OH

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See among others, Gerhard Joseph, "Frankenstein's Dream: The Child as Father of the Monster"; Rosemary Jackson, "Narcissism and Beyond: A Psychoanalytic Reading of *Frankenstein* and Fantasies of the Double"; Peter K. Garrett, *Gothic Reflections: Narrative Force in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*.

<sup>2</sup>In addition to Gilbert and Gubar, see among others, Morteza Jafari, "Freud's Uncanny: The Role of the Double in *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*"; and Elaine Showalter who, in *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists*, states that "Brontë's most profound innovation [...] is the division of the Victorian female psyche into its extreme components of mind and body, which she externalizes as two characters, Helen Burns and Bertha Mason [...]. Brontë gives us not one but three faces of Jane" (113).

<sup>3</sup>See Diederich, "Gothic Doppelgangers and Discourse."

<sup>4</sup>See, among others, Kate Ellis, "Monsters in the Garden"; Robert Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England*; David Ketterer, *Frankenstein's Creation: The Book, the Monster, and Human Reality*; Peter Dale Scott, "Vital Artifice"; Marc Rubenstein, "The Search for the Mother in Frankenstein"; William Veeder, *Mary Shelley and Frankenstein*.

<sup>5</sup>Bertha's context has been explained in terms of race, most famously by Gayatri Spivak in "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." For more on Bertha and racial context in *Jane Eyre* see, among others, Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*; Cora Kaplan, *Sea Changes: Essays on Culture and Feminism*; Patricia McKee, "Racial Strategies in *Jane Eyre*." Other social contexts into which critics have placed Bertha include considering her and the novel alongside nineteenth-century freak shows in Chih-Ping Chen's "'Am I a Monster?': *Jane Eyre* Among the Shadow of Freaks"; and, reading Bertha from a disability studies position in Elizabeth J. Donaldson, "The Corpus of the Madwoman: Toward a Feminist Disability Studies Theory of Embodiment and Mental Illness." English and Elaine Showalter relate Bertha's behavior to women's hormones in "Victorian Women and Menstruation."

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## Three “Homes” which Gerard Manley Hopkins Enjoyed: A Counterbalance to Adrian Grafe’s “Hopkins and Home”\*

JOSEPH J. FEENEY

[...] in all removes I can  
Kind love both give and get.  
("To seem the stranger," 1885?)

After leaving his family home to become a Jesuit in 1868, did the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins ever have a “home” again? In his study “Hopkins and Home,” Adrian Grafe examines Hopkins’s poem “In the Valley of the Elwy” and raises the interesting and deeply human question, “what was home for Hopkins?” (56). He then argues that “from the moment he joined the Jesuits, all homes, in the sense of houses in which he resided, were temporary for Hopkins” (55). Most striking, writes Grafe, were the last five years of his life—“In a sense, the home/non-home dialectic lies behind all the poems Hopkins wrote in Ireland”—but all through his life, “Hopkins drew poetic energy from the feelings and the idea of home, just as he did from being away from home,” and “the theme of home [...] remained with Hopkins throughout his writing life” (56, 57). Grafe then studies aspects of “home,” “hospitality,” and “exile” in Hopkins’s life and work, holding that “[p]ermanence is part of the notion of home” (59). Such is the basis for Grafe’s conclusion that, as a Jesuit, Hopkins never really had a “home” here on earth. As for having *any* “home” at all, Grafe affirms Hopkins’s “feeling-at-home-ness in the universe” as created by God (57), his finding “his home, his ‘place,’ in the Real

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\*Reference: Adrian Grafe, “Hopkins and Home,” *Connotations* 21.1 (2011/2012): 55-71.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debgrafe02101.htm>>.

Presence" of the Blessed Sacrament and a "filial intimacy" with the Virgin Mary (62), and his having an "inwardness [within himself that] is home, too" (64)—this last, a most perceptive insight. But did Hopkins have any normal "home" on earth?

To begin, I might (as a minor point) question the definition of "home as a fixed, permanent dwelling" (67), for I find overly restrictive the statement that "[p]ermanence is part of the notion of home" (59). None of the six dictionaries I checked<sup>1</sup> includes "permanence" as a dimension of "home," and the *OED* mentions "fixed" as only one of many options.<sup>2</sup> Even the Hopkins family had three different homes in Stratford, Hampstead, and Haslemere. Today, moreover, families might well have several homes over the years.<sup>3</sup> Do such families lack a "home"? I say this only to suggest that the words "permanent" and "fixed" make the definition overly stringent and less convincing.

But this is a minor point. More important is the portrait of Gerard Hopkins which the essay presents, and this is the point I engage. I agree with Grafe's assertion that "from the moment he joined the Jesuits, all homes, in the sense of houses in which he resided, were temporary for Hopkins" (55). But saying that Hopkins was at "home" in the universe, at "home" with Christ and Mary, and at "home" within himself, yet as a Jesuit had no permanent "home" anywhere, seems too other-worldly for the warm and friendly Hopkins. My own work as a Hopkins scholar shows him particularly "at home" with his family—a "permanent" home through *all* his Jesuit years—but also "at home" with his fellow Jesuits and with the MacCabe family in Ireland. Thus, in drawing this alternate portrait or "counterbalance," I affirm the presence of "home" throughout Hopkins's life by studying his poetry and biography, paying special attention to three homes he enjoyed: (1) in England, the Hopkins Family Home, (2) in Wales, St. Beuno's College as Home, and (3) in Ireland, the MacCabe Family Home.

## 1. In England, the Hopkins Family Home

Gerard Hopkins was born in the near London suburb of Stratford, Essex, but as the town industrialized, the Hopkins family<sup>4</sup> moved to the Oak Hill neighborhood of London's leafy Hampstead, living there from 1852 (when Gerard was eight) to the summer of 1886 when they moved to Haslemere, in Surrey. The family consisted of Manley and Kate Hopkins and their children (in order of age) Gerard, Cyril, Arthur, Milicent, Felix, Lionel, Kate, Grace, and Everard. Gerard, the eldest, first left home to go up to Oxford University (1863-67). His conversion to Catholicism in 1866 caused some pain to the family, especially his father, but this split was soon healed. On leaving Oxford, Gerard lived in Birmingham while teaching at the Oratory School (1867-68), then returned to Hampstead for almost five months before, on 7 September 1868, he finally left his family home to enter the Jesuit Order at their novitiate, Manresa House, Roehampton, London.

As a Jesuit, Gerard Hopkins still remained a loved and loving member of his family, showing his continuing sense of "home" by writing poems and letters to them, regularly visiting them (sometimes for weeks), even joining them for trips and holidays. And when his family left Hampstead and moved to Haslemere, Gerard (as will be seen) expressed a strong affection and sense of loss for his old home at Oak Hill, a final indication of how much he continued to feel at home there.

One sign of his feeling at home with his family is the triad of poems he wrote, two to his young sisters as children, and one later to his youngest brother, Everard. The first light poem (only fragments survive) was written at Oak Hill in his Oxford years for his sister Katie, and entitled "Katie, age 9. (Jan. 8, 1866.)":

As it fell upon a day  
 There was a lady very gay,  
 She was dressed in silk attire  
 For all to see and to admire.

. . . .

But the boatman on the green  
Told of the wonders he had seen. (*Poetical Works* 87)

The second light poem, for his younger sister Grace, was entitled “Grace (8). (Same day.)”:

In the staring darkness  
I can hear the harshness  
Of the cold wind blowing.  
I am warmly clad,  
And I’m very glad  
That I’ve got a home. (*Poetical Works* 87)

These poems, so warm and affectionate, show the young Hopkins’s easy familiarity with his family and his sense of being at “home” with them in Hampstead. His third family poem, the incomplete “Epithalamion,” was written in his Jesuit years in Dublin to honor the marriage of Hopkins’s brother Everard to Amy Caroline Sichel on 12 April 1888. After describing two secluded pools of water with boys swimming in one and himself swimming in the other, Hopkins begins to approach his theme of wedlock:

Enough now; since the sacred matter that I mean  
I should be wronging longer leaving it to float  
Upon this only gambolling and echoing-of-earth note

What is.....the delightful dean?  
Wedlock. What the water? Spousal love

. . . . .

to Everard, as I surmise,  
Sparkled first in Amy’s eyes

. . . . .

turns  
Father, mother, brothers, sisters, friends  
Into fairy trees, wildflowers, woodferns  
Rankèd round the bower.

. . . . .

(*Poetical Works* 195-97)



That is all he completed, but his attempt again shows his continuing family affection in his later years. I add that Hopkins sent copies of a number of poems to his mother, and discussed his poems in letters to both his mother and his father, again a sign of his being “at home” with them.<sup>5</sup>

There is no full record of Hopkins’s visits to his family home as a Jesuit, but his letters and journals offer vivid particulars which establish Oak Hill as the most permanent of his “homes,” and my argument rests on the *pattern* of these visits. On 11 September 1871, for example, the young Jesuit traveled from Stonyhurst in Lancashire to his family home in Hampstead, stayed at Oak Hill, visited his grandmother and aunt across the Thames in Croydon, and on the 13th joined his mother and family on holiday in Bursledon, Hampshire (see Mc Dermott 42). Though unable to visit at Christmas, he sent his family warm greetings from Stonyhurst, but the next Christmas—in 1872—he stayed at Hampstead for seven weeks, a visit that included Christmas dinner, surgery for hemorrhoids (done at home by family physicians), a two-week recovery in bed (he joked with his sister Grace about an old poem floating into his mind after surgery), a visit to an art exhibition at Burlington House, and a visit to a Jesuit at Roehampton, before he returned to Stonyhurst on 4 February.<sup>6</sup> At Christmas 1873 he was again home for a week, and with his brother Arthur, an artist and illustrator, he visited a water-color exhibition and made extensive notes on the paintings.<sup>7</sup>

In 1874, when Hopkins was on his way to St. Beuno’s College to study theology, a visit with his family (on holiday) was frustrated by bad timing: Hopkins told his mother how his Jesuit provincial “wrote a letter giving me leave to spend a week with you at Lyme on my way [...] here, but I had already started. You will be vexed at this; at the same time it shews how thoughtful he is” (*Further Letters* 127). Three years later, after Hopkins had finished his theology examination and awaited his priestly ordination on 23 September 1877, he wrote his Oxford friend Robert Bridges that in July “I hope to be in town for a fortnight or so from the 25th” and that “[p]arentage of course will ‘put

me up', up at Hampstead" (*Letters to Bridges* 42). During this visit he read, wrote letters, discussed music with his sister Grace, visited with Bridges, and went to visit an uncle, later writing warm letters to thank his father "for your kindness during my stay at Hampstead" (*Further Letters* 146) and Bridges "for your kind entertainments" (*Letters to Bridges* 44).

From July to November 1878, Hopkins served on the staff of the Jesuits' Farm Street Church in London, and visits to Oak Hill may well be presumed. Likewise, he was in Roehampton, London, for much of his Jesuit tertianship from October 1881 to August 1882, and again visits to Oak Hill may be presumed. In August 1883, Hopkins stayed with his family for a longer time, first travelling from Stonyhurst to Hampstead, then going to Holland, where he had planned to join his parents in bringing home his grieving sister Grace after she had visited the family and grave of her late fiancé, Henry Weber. Hopkins, however, was delayed by a church-staffing emergency in Manchester, and arrived late to Holland where, despite the journey's sad purpose, he once joined in the merriment of his sister Kate and a cousin in watching some bats and, in Kate's words, he enjoyed "throwing little bits of plaster into the air to cheat them into diving at it believing it food."<sup>8</sup>

Hopkins's transfer to Dublin in February 1884 made travel to London more difficult, though his family invited him to spend Christmas with them in Hampstead.<sup>9</sup> In May 1885, amid the depression which produced "The Terrible Sonnets," he saw the need for a complete change of surroundings, and in late July 1885, he travelled to Hampstead by boat and train, then went with his family to enjoy their holiday in Easebourne, Sussex.<sup>10</sup>

During the first part of his visit, he was told of the family's planned move from Hampstead to Haslemere, for in a letter to his mother on 13 November 1885 he wrote: "It seemed like death to leave Hampstead. But Haslemere is, it must be owned, a welcome thought" (*Further Letters* 174). Such a comment, such heartfelt regret—"like death"—clearly show his affection for his old home. At Christmas

1885, the family's last Christmas in Hampstead, Gerard was not able to join them because of examining duties in Dublin, but he wrote his brother Everard, "I take it for granted you will be tomorrow at Hampstead [...]. Give all my best Christmas wishes, thank Grace for her pretty card, and believe me your loving brother Gerard" ("Three Uncollected Letters" 13-14). Gerard did make one more visit to his beloved old home, for on 20 April 1886 he left Dublin to visit his family in Hampstead, staying with them, enjoying the Royal Academy annual exhibition, and visiting an artist's studio with his artist-brother Arthur.<sup>11</sup> A final farewell to his home was a rueful remark in a letter to his mother on 11 June 1886 that "[p]erhaps this is the last letter I shall write to Hampstead" (*Further Letters* 176).

In the summer of 1886, the Hopkins family moved to Haslemere, and a year later Gerard made his first visit there in August 1887.<sup>12</sup> Other family visits were recorded by Gerard's niece, Beatrice M. Handley-Derry, daughter of Gerard's brother Arthur, who wrote in 1944 that "Father Gerard [...] used to come often and see us in London and at Whitby in Yorkshire, where my father used to go, to paint," adding stories of Hopkins's wit and story-telling "at a family luncheon party" and on holiday in Whitby.<sup>13</sup> In sum, throughout his life Gerard Hopkins continued to think, act, and be present as a member of his family, and was at "home" with them in Hampstead, in Haslemere, and on holiday.

## 2. In Wales, St. Beuno's College as Home

Hopkins lived in happy Jesuit communities (or homes) at, for example, St. Mary's Hall, Stonyhurst, 1870-73 ("The brotherly charity of everyone here can be felt at once: indeed it is always what you take for granted"; *Further Letters* 113); at Mount St. Mary's College, Chesterfield, 1877-78 ("the community [is] moderately small and family-like"; *Further Letters* 148); and at University College, Dublin, 1884-89 (the rector is "as generous, cheering, and openhearted a man

as I ever lived with, and the rest of the community gives me almost as much happiness"; *Further Letters* 164). But Hopkins's happiest years as a Jesuit were spent at St. Beuno's College in North Wales where, from 1874-77, he studied theology and was ordained a priest. It was, again, a "home."

The Jesuits there had long enjoyed an estimable reputation, and a Jesuit historian wrote in 1968, "[t]he community at St. Beuno's appears in Jesuit papers as impossibly happy" and "affection for this remote college would be expressed in letters from missionaries in many parts of the world," as in 1880 when "Augustus Law, starving to death, thought of St. Beuno's in Umzila'a kraal" in Zululand, South Africa (Basset 396). In 1892, Hopkins's rector at St. Beuno's, Fr. James Jones, S. J., wrote, "I have loved St. Beuno's as I have never loved any other place, and I do not believe it will ever be supplanted in my affections" (Edwards 92).

More specific to Hopkins's time is the hand-written and hand-illustrated diary of John Gerard, S. J., "A Journal / kept at / St. Beuno's," which begins in 1870 and ends in 1874, only weeks before Hopkins arrived there. John Gerard himself was later a distinguished Jesuit of "warmhearted amiability" who served as headmaster and provincial, wrote several books, founded the first Jesuit residence at Oxford, and was editor of *The Month*.<sup>14</sup> At St. Beuno's, the Jesuits studied theology and such related subjects as Hebrew, scripture, Church history, and canon law, while living the Jesuit life of personal prayer and daily Community Mass. Yet John Gerard's "Journal" is surprisingly lighthearted, a vivid portrayal of Victorian Jesuit life that shows Gerard as a happy man in a happy house of some forty students about 30 years old, well educated men of humour and high spirits who swam, fished, hiked, sang, kept pets in their rooms, played pranks, had snowball fights, and laughed about their professors.

Illustrating his "Journal" with his own comic drawings, John Gerard called the year's first class-day "Black Monday," and wrote about fishing and sketching, about the foul Welsh weather, and about the

theologians—"the boys"—making "a large but somewhat shapeless snow man at coffee time." They enjoyed "songs and jollity" at Candlemas dinner on February 2, nicknamed one professor—the Italian Fr. Bottalla—"Bottles," and talked of the rector as "the Governor," "the Gov.," and "the old boy." John Gerard kept two young hawks—"Jack" and "Downy"—in his room as pets, recorded the theologians' pranks and snowball fights, and told how they swam in nearby streams, smoked tobacco, kept bees, and on special occasions enjoyed wine, punch, "grog," and home-brewed beer. Such stories explain why one rector spoke of the Jesuits' "family life" at St. Beuno's. As John Gerard prepared to leave St. Beuno's on July 11, 1874, he looked back with warm affection on "my pleasant Beuno's life" ("Journal," n. pag.).

Only seven weeks later, Gerard Hopkins arrived at St. Beuno's to a warm welcome: Francis Bacon, his closest Jesuit friend, had "put scarlet geraniums in my room, and everyone was very kind and hospitable" (*Journals* 257). Even the setting of St. Beuno's, overlooking the Vale of Clwyd in North Wales, evoked deep emotion in Hopkins, and in early March he wrote that "the valley looked more charming and touching than ever: in its way there can hardly be in the world anything to beat the Vale of Clwyd" (*Further Letters* 137). St. Beuno's even makes an appearance in "The Wreck of the Deutschland," when in Stanza 24 Hopkins contrasts his peaceful room at St. Beuno's (where he is writing the ode) to the "gales" swirling around the shipwrecked nuns in December 1875:

Away in the loveable west,  
 On a pastoral forehead of Wales,  
 I was under a roof here, I was at rest,  
 And they the prey of the gales;  
 [...].                    (*Poetical Works* 125)

"The lovable west" includes both St. Beuno's and the countryside around it, and the land and its skies appear vividly in his 1877 sonnets "God's Grandeur," "The Starlight Night," "Spring," "The Sea and the

Skylark," "In the Valley of the Elwy," "The Windhover," "Pied Beauty," "The Caged Skylark," and "Hurrahing in Harvest."

As in John Gerard's time, Hopkins and his fellow theologians at St. Beuno's enjoyed their own treats, celebrations, and other pleasures: daylong walks to Cwm, St. Asaph, Ffynnon Fair, and Denbigh; sports like lawn tennis, fishing, hill-climbing, and ice-skating; formal debates (some humorous) and Magic-Lantern displays; concerts, readings, glees, and songs; a billiard table; spelling-bees (a game recently introduced from America—Hopkins was once the winner; see *Further Letters* 136); an Essay Society with papers in English or French followed by questions and discussion; home-brewed beer and wine on feast days; festive meals with gifts of "grapes, turkeys, hares, pheasants, venison, and once even champagne"; a house dog named Vesta who won first place at a dog-show in the nearby town of Rhyl; occasional drives in a pony and trap; visits home with their families; extempore concerts after dinner in St. Beuno's garden; and summer holidays at Barmouth, on Cardigan Bay in northwest Wales near the peak Cader Idris, where the theologians could relax, hike, row a boat up the Mawddach estuary, and swim in the Bay. Hopkins, of course, joined in much of this merriment, and he celebrates his days at Barmouth in his poem "Penmaen Pool."<sup>15</sup>

Like John Gerard before him, Hopkins found St. Beuno's a happy home for himself and his fellow theologians. Even more, Hopkins himself played a major role in this happiness: in 1927 a Jesuit classmate remembered him as "perhaps the most popular man in the house. Superiors and equals, everybody liked him. We laughed at him a good deal, but he took it good-humouredly, and joined in the amusement" (Feeney, "A Jesuit Classmate" 170-71). On Hopkins's own part, a lively poetic example of his affection for St. Beuno's—and of his sense of being at home there—is his 48-line comic poem "'Consule Jones,'" which he wrote for the theologians' outdoor dinner in July 1875, a festive event to celebrate the end of classes. The poem, sung by a theologian to the rollicking Welsh tune "Cader Idris," jokes about the rector, Fr. James Jones, S. J., calling him a Roman consul—

““Consule Jones’”—and mentions by name twenty theologians and their leisure activities, e.g., Cardwell smokes tobacco (“a learned and amiable bonfire scarce human”); “Hayes pens his seven and twentieth diary, / Bodo’ does not, there’s no time to be had”; Lund keeps bees; the two Splaine brothers “swing by with such swaggers” that Sib resembles “a Huzzar” and Bill “a dragoon.” And with light whimsy, Hopkins writes that “Murphy makes sermons so fierce and hell-fiery / Mothers miscarry and spinsters go mad” (Hopkins, ““Consule Jones’” 8-9). Such warmth, and such specifics, again indicate Hopkins’s sense of being at home in his years at St. Beuno’s.

A later poem, “The Silver Jubilee” (1876), memorializes both St. Beuno’s itself and the “velvet vales” of Wales as Hopkins celebrates the jubilee of the local bishop, letting his “chime of a rhyme” substitute for the pealing bells of the land:

Then for her whose velvet vales  
Should have pealed with welcome, Wales,  
Let the chime of a rhyme  
Utter Silver Jubilee. (*Poetical Works* 128-29)

Such tributes to St. Beuno’s by Augustus Law, James Jones, John Gerard, and Gerard Hopkins help to explain why Hopkins—and many others—felt so much “at home” there. He enjoyed the community life at St. Beuno’s, and loved “Wild Wales [which] breathes poetry” (*Correspondence Dixon* 142) and was “the true Arcadia of wild beauty” (*Further Letters* 370). Most important, it was there that he developed his distinctive voice and genius as a poet, as demonstrated in “The Wreck of the Deutschland” and the eleven Welsh sonnets.

After his ordination as a priest in 1877, Hopkins wrote to Robert Bridges: “Much against my inclination I shall have to leave Wales” (*Letters to Bridges* 43). Two years later, in 1879, Hopkins returned to St. Beuno’s to spend his Christmas holidays with the community. At the time, looking west over the River Clwyd, he wrote his mother that “the Vale has been looking very beautiful” (*Further Letters* 154). He was home again.

### 3. In Ireland, the MacCabe Family Home

In Ireland, where Hopkins first thought his “lot” was “To seem the stranger” in his sonnet of that name, the sonnet’s sestet records how he can still “Kind love both give and get” in his new country:

I am in Ireland now; now I am at a third  
Remove. Not but in all removes I can  
Kind love both give and get. (*Poetical Works* 181)

Hopkins’s hope was fulfilled, for in Ireland he both gave and received “Kind love,” making warm friends and visiting regularly with four families. He spent summer days with Judge Thomas O’Hagan and his family in Howth (“the kindest people”; *Letters to Bridges* 274-75),<sup>16</sup> and he visited with the Curtis family at No. 19, North Great George’s Street, Dublin (“I often see them and shd. more if I had time to go there”; *Further Letters* 164).<sup>17</sup> He often spent Christmas and other holidays with the Cassidy family of Monasterevan, Co. Kildare (“kind people at a nice place,” Miss Cassidy being “an elderly lady” whose “kind hospitality [...] is become one of the props and struts of my existence”; *Letters to Bridges* 248, 253, 305). But Hopkins found his true “home” in Ireland with the MacCabe family at “Belleville,” their home in Dublin’s nearby suburb of Donnybrook: with the MacCabes he was best able to “Kind love both give and get.” The members of the family were Dr. (later Sir) Francis MacCabe, a physician, his wife Margaret, and their six children—“delightfully extrovert people,” wrote a family friend, who were dedicated to medicine and horses.<sup>18</sup> Hopkins called Dr. MacCabe “my great friend” (*Further Letters* 190), borrowed books from him, and spent hours with him in his study. His wife listened to Hopkins talk about his boyhood, mended his clothes, and—at his request—visited him on his deathbed. On Christmas Eve 1885, Hopkins wrote his brother Everard, “I have friends at Donnybrook, so hearty and kind that nothing can be more so and I think I shall go and see them tomorrow” (“Three Uncollected Letters” 13-14). Dr. and Mrs.



MacCabe also came to know Hopkins's parents, and visited them at their home in Haslemere.<sup>19</sup>

Most striking, and most indicative of Belleville as a "home" for Hopkins, are the memories of "Fr Hopkins" by three of the MacCabe children, recorded in writing between 1947 and 1959. Seeing Hopkins from the perspective of children, these memories are so winning in their charm and directness that, rather than summarize them, I quote them as originally written, for they show Hopkins completely at home with the whole MacCabe family.

Mary (MacCabe) Roantree was about fifteen when she met Hopkins in 1884, and in 1947 and 1948 she wrote:

From the beginning of our friendship we took to him, and he seemed to take also to us.

[...] He frequently came to our house, Belleville, at Donnybrook. There he was perfectly at home, and talked or kept silent as he felt inclined.

He had a very charming personality [...].

I once asked him if he sang, to which he replied "No, but I make a cheerful noise."

We were very attached to him, and loved his visits [...].

When he was dying he asked permission for my Mother to see him. She did so, but stayed only a few minutes with him. I think he was almost at the end then. His simplicity and humility were charming, and we all felt that we had lost a good friend.

One story which amused us was that my two brothers took Fr Hopkins out in a homemade so called *boat!* on a deep quarry, 90 feet of water, when they were well out Father Hopkins pulled off his Roman collar and quietly remarked "To hell with the Pope!"—another day one of my sisters who was sensitive about being on the fat side, appeared in very thick clothes and he said—"You look as if you had on a thousand vests."<sup>20</sup>

Her sister, Katie (MacCabe) Cullinan, about eleven years old when she met Hopkins, had her own, different memories, recorded between 1947 and 1959:

Father Hopkins was always bright in manner and very boyish—taking interest in all our games—His visits were very frequent mostly spent in my father's study—He would about once a week have lunch with us[—]My Father and Mother were fonder of him than of anyone I ever remember coming

to the house[.] He would always bring his clothes to my Mother to mend for him and it was a labour of love to her [...].

Did he ever sing!! Yes but it was awful to us—mournful in the extreme—He composed—and one song he called “a cheerful ditty” but it was like Dead Mass!

He fancied his musical ability—It was like “sprung” rhythm—and beyond us—[...].

He enjoyed himself very much in an old Punt that one of my brothers built and used on a flooded quarry near our home—it was dangerous but he loved to spend hours in it when he had the time and one day as he caught some fish said “Goodbye to Rome” and took off his collar and was really more of a child than any of us—

[...] Fr Hopkins [...] had a very merry laugh.<sup>21</sup>

The third MacCabe child to record his memories was John Francis MacCabe, known as “Jack,” a boy of eight when he met Hopkins. In 1947, he offers a boy’s perspective:

My memories of Father Hopkins are vivid and his personality produced a great impression on me as I remember him far more clearly than any of the other of the guests at my father’s house [...].

Of course I was far too young to even guess at the greatness of Father Hopkins and only saw him as a genial kindly friend who enjoyed our games and was particularly happy when fishing in a nearby pond. On such occasions he had no idea whatever of the passage of time.<sup>22</sup>

In the MacCabe household Hopkins was a warm “friend” and a delight to both the parents and the children. A frequent visitor, he had lunch with them “about once a week,” often stayed for long talks with Dr. MacCabe or to play with the children, and showed himself totally at home and relaxed with his favorite Irish family. The other Irish homes he visited often enough, but with the MacCabes he found a true “home” at Belleville.

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I end this essay, in the tradition of *Connotations*, by returning to Adrian Grafe’s fine study “Hopkins and Home.” In asking “What was

home for Hopkins," Grafe found Hopkins at home "in the universe," in "the Real Presence" of the Eucharist, in "filial intimacy" with the Virgin Mary, and in an "inwardness" within himself, but he saw Hopkins's life in this physical world as "home"-less. He was an exile, a wanderer in this earth-land, a man for whom "all homes [...] were temporary." As an alternative, I offer this "counterbalance," arguing that Hopkins had three "homes" in England, Wales, and Ireland (and by implication other places)—true homes where he could "kind love both give and get" throughout his Jesuit life. With such people and such "homes" in England, Wales, and Ireland, Gerard Hopkins was, throughout his life, a fortunate son and brother, a fortunate Jesuit, and a fortunate friend.

Saint Joseph's University  
Philadelphia

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>A *Dictionary of the English Language*, ed. Samuel Johnson (London: Strahan, 1755); *Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1938); *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 1987); *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000); *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2001); *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2002).

<sup>2</sup>Other options in the OED include a "dwelling-place, house, abode; the fixed residence of a family or household; the seat of domestic life and interests; one's own house; the dwelling in which one habitually lives, or which one regards as one's proper abode."

<sup>3</sup>Other families with non-permanent homes might involve a diplomat, a military officer, a divorce, or a spouse's death and remarriage.

<sup>4</sup>For biographies of the family, see McDermott 137-38, and White, *Literary Biography*, *passim*; for the family tree, see Thornton 32.

<sup>5</sup>See *Further Letters* 138, 139-40, 141, 143-45.

<sup>6</sup>See *Journals* 229-30, 410 and McDermott 45.

<sup>7</sup>See *Journals* 240; and White, *Literary Biography* 217.

<sup>8</sup>*Letters to Bridges* 182-84; White, *Literary Biography* 346-47.

<sup>9</sup>See White, *Hopkins in Ireland* xvii.

<sup>10</sup>See White, *Literary Biography* 395, 402.

<sup>11</sup>See White, *Literary Biography* 414-15.

<sup>12</sup>See McDermott 114.

<sup>13</sup>Unpublished letter, in Feeney, *Playfulness* 37-38.

<sup>14</sup>See the anonymous "Obituary: Father John Gerard."

<sup>15</sup>See Thomas 151-85.

<sup>16</sup>See also *Further Letters* 185; and White, *Literary Biography* 442.

<sup>17</sup>See also Feeney, "Hopkins's Closest Friend in Ireland," *passim*.

<sup>18</sup>See Letter of Ruth Dooley to author; in Feeney, "The MacCabe Family" 300.

<sup>19</sup>See Feeney, "The MacCabe Family" 300, 304.

<sup>20</sup>Letters to Anthony Bischoff, S. J.; Feeney, "The MacCabe Family" 301-02.

<sup>21</sup>Letters to Anthony Bischoff, S. J.; Feeney, "The MacCabe Family" 302-04.

<sup>22</sup>Letter to Anthony Bischoff, S. J.; Feeney, "The MacCabe Family" 305.

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## Symbolism, Imagism, and Hermeneutic Anxiety: A Response to Andrew Hay\*

NICHOLAS HALMI

### I.

In an article published last year in *Connotations*, Andrew Hay proposed an intriguing analogy between the image as postulated in Ezra Pound's program for Imagist poetry and the symbol as conceived by various Romantic-era writers and defined normatively in my book *The Genealogy of the Romantic Symbol* (2007). The analogy is between relationships constitutive of the respective semiotic phenomena: the relationship of ontological content to meaning in the Romantic symbol, and of presentation to reception in the Imagist poem. While the symbol is supposed to represent the fusion of contrary states (Halmi, *Genealogy* 1-2), Pound's Imagist distich "In the Station of a Metro"—"The apparition of these faces in the crowd; / Petals on a wet, black bough" (*Personæ* 111)—is asserted to represent the fusion of an objective image with the reader's subjective response to it: "Just as the Romantic symbol necessitates a union—whether it is the contingent and the absolute, or the temporal and the trans-temporal—Pound's poem works through a yoking together of different contingencies: the reader and the image" (Hay 314).

Proceeding from Pound's own statement that the poem embodies "the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective" ("Vorticism" 286),

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\*Reference: Andrew Hay, "On the Shore of Interpretation: The Theory and Reading of the Image in Imagism," *Connotations* 21.2-3 (2011/2012): 304-26. For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debhay02123.htm>>

Hay interprets the poem's indistinct temporality ("timeless instant"; Hay 312) as enacting not only the poet's transformation of perceptual act (seeing the faces) into poetic image (the petals) but also the reader's interpretation of that transformation: "the image serves authorial intentionality, but this intention sits alongside the faculties of the poem's reader" (314). By anticipating, if in the most generalized way, the process of its reception, the poem in effect conjoins "the internality of the reader and the onticity of the image" (314).

Pleased as I am to see him making a literary critical use of my discussion of the symbol, I find Hay's analogy unconvincing for two reasons. The first is the heterogeneity of the terms of comparison. Hay understands the Image (a word I shall capitalize when referring to its application to Imagist poetry) to incorporate proleptically the reader's response to it. If that is correct, then the Image acknowledges, however qualifiedly or problematically, that it must be recognized as an image in order to function as such. In contrast, by identifying the meaning of the symbol with its ontological content—"Meaning here is simultaneously being itself," F. W. J. Schelling taught in his lectures on art in 1802-03 (411)—Romantic theorists in effect denied the symbol an instituted character, in Gadamer's sense of the term (cf. 159-60).<sup>1</sup> In other words, because its meaning was supposed to inhere in it, the symbol could be conceived as meaningful even when it was not empirically recognized or recognizable. So while the Image anxiously anticipates its recipient, the symbol remains sublimely indifferent to whether it has one or not.

Secondly, to the extent that it offers a critique of the Imagists' own theorization of their practice, Hay's account of the Image is what Niklas Luhmann would call a "second-order observation" (94-95), concerned with the understanding of representation rather than with the description of phenomena. But the concept of the Image is at least a second-order observation of something real and specifiable, namely poetic images, whereas the Romantics' concept of the symbol lacks a corresponding first-order observation. Indeed a central contention of my book is that the semiotic phenomenon theorized under the rubric

of the symbol neither did nor could exist because the concept itself was incoherent, conflating the logically incommensurate relations of identity/difference and part/whole by founding a semiotics of identity (in which symbol is claimed to be the same as what it refers to) on a metaphysics of participation (in which the symbol is claimed to be a part of what it refers to). Hence the second sentence of the *Genealogy*: "This is not a study of poetic imagery" (1).

Admittedly, some critics have contested this insistence that the symbol was purely a theoretical construct; but since Hay accepts my description of the symbol, it is fair to criticize his use of that description in an analogy which presupposes exactly what I deny, that an image in a literary work could ever conform to the Romantic concept of the symbol. From my perspective, the symbol does not afford, as Pound's Imagist program does, the opportunity of being tested against poetic practice. Imagism is a theory of poetry, the Romantic symbol a theory of the meaningfulness supposedly inherent in the structure of the world itself. The latter is a contribution not to poetics but to aesthetics, for it is concerned with *aisthêsis* in its root sense, perception, and more particularly with that reformed mode of perception which Shelley, stealing a phrase from Coleridge, advocated as lifting the film of familiarity from the world of quotidian experience (see 533). If Imagism "represents a *naturalizing* of the poetic sign" (Levenson, *Genealogy* 150), then the Romantic theorization of the symbol constitutes a naturalizing of the symbol for the sake of making nature symbolic.

## II.

The foregoing objections notwithstanding, Hay's juxtaposition of the theories of the Romantic symbol and the Poundian Image prompts reflection on whether there might not in fact be some underlying affinities between them. Or rather I should say renewed reflection, for since the 1960s critics of Modernism have tended to reject Frank Ker-



mode's identification of the Poundian Image, under the awkwardly tailored philosophical clothing furnished by its stepfather T. E. Hulme, as a successor to the Romantic symbol in a line of descent through French *symbolisme*. In *Romantic Image* (1957) Kermode had argued that, notwithstanding Hulme's professed antipathy to Romanticism and Pound's explicit dissociation of Imagism from Symbolism, both shared the symbolist dream of liberation from discursiveness: "What it comes down to in the end is that Pound, like Hulme, like Mallarmé, and many others, wanted a theory of poetry based on the non-discursive *concreto*. In varying degrees they all obscurely wish that poetry could be written with something other than words, but since it can't, that words may be made to have the same sort of physical presence 'as a piece of string'" (136). In this account, the Imagist emphasis on the visuality of the Image, as in Hulme's description of poetry as "a visual concrete" language, a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily" ("Romanticism" 70), amounted to an attempt to mitigate or repress the semiotic character of language.

Opposing Kermode's interpretation of Imagism as a rather naïvely conceived mode of verbal pictorialism, unable or unwilling to acknowledge its nineteenth-century intellectual ancestry, Herbert Schneidau (see 14-15, 29-31) and Donald Davie, followed with qualifications by Marjorie Perloff, accept Pound's own contention that Imagism was not a continuation of Symbolism by other means, but in fact "a radical alternative to it" (Davie 43; cf. Perloff 159). What Pound understood Symbolism to consist in may be gauged from two brief paragraphs in his essay "Vorticism." Here he identifies Symbolism vaguely with "mushy technique" and more specifically with the semantically associative use of imagery: "a sort of allusion, almost of allegory [...] a form of metonymy" (281).<sup>2</sup>

For examples of what he was taking about, Pound needed to look no further than the early poetry of W. B. Yeats, with its "golden apples of the sun" and "silver apples of the moon." Surveying the contemporary poetic scene in January 1913, Pound criticized Yeats, whom he

identified with the French Symbolists, for his belief in “the glamour and associations which hang near words”—in contrast to the nascent group of Imagists, who, following Ford Madox Hueffer (later Ford), favored “an exact rendering of things” (“Status Rerum” 125-26). Always an eager pedagogue, Pound undertook personally to wean Yeats off his rhetorical imprecision and sentimentalism during their winter together in Stone Cottage, in Sussex, in 1913, his efforts being rewarded by Yeats’s volume *Responsibilities* of the following year. Reviewing that book, Pound affirmed that the poetical “fogs and mists since the nineties” were finally being dispelled by the “hard light” evident, for example, in the first five lines of “The Magi”—“a passage of *imagisme*” (“Later Yeats” 380; see also Levenson, *Modernism* 133).<sup>3</sup> Yet Pound’s reference in “Vorticism” to metonymy recalls a principle enunciated by Mallarmé in his “Réponses à des enquêtes sur l’évolution littéraire” (1891) and paraphrased by Arthur Symons in *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), the book that introduced the generation of Pound and Eliot to the French Symbolists. Trying to account for the abstruseness and unintelligibility, as he concedes it to be, of Mallarmé’s late style, Symons exhorts the reader: “Remember his principle: that to name is to destroy, to suggest is to create” (71).<sup>4</sup> Symons imagines Mallarmé’s compositional process as the sequential substitution of images increasingly remote from the sensation in which the poem originated, perfection from the poet’s perspective achieved when the path back to that originary sensation has been completely effaced and the reader, who sees only the final choice of images, is thoroughly bewildered.

### III.

If Pound’s assessment of Symbolism was polemically reductive, its purpose, Perloff proposes, was to throw into relief the distinctiveness of the Image in being neither polysemous nor mimetic, the latter term understood here to mean “pictorial.” Symbols were acceptable to

Pound to the extent that they resisted, or at least did not demand, translation into ideas. Thus in the “Credo” section of his “Retrospect,” a statement cobbled together from various essays and notes and published in 1918, Pound declared that “the proper and perfect symbol is the natural object, that if a man use ‘symbols’ he must so use them that their symbolic function does not obtrude; so that *a* sense [...] is not lost to those who do not understand the symbol as such, to whom, for instance, a hawk is a hawk” (259). Four years earlier, in the essay “Vorticism,” which Perloff characterizes as an “anti-Symbolist manifesto” (161), Pound had even more emphatically denied the Image, under its new rubric of Vorticism, semantic translatability: “The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster [...] a VORTEX, from which and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing” (289). Even if the Image itself cannot be paraphrased, however, the theory of it can be, and it amounts to two principles that were also central to Romantic symbolist theory: first, the self-identity of the image, a condition for which Coleridge coined the term *tautegory*—that is, “meaning the same thing as itself,” in contradistinction to *allegory*, in which the image means something different from itself (see Halmi, “Coleridge” 353-55)—and second, the irreducibility of the image to any particular meaning.

To be sure, in the poetical work generally considered in the 1920s and 1930s to be Pound’s masterpiece, the sequence *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920), the poet manifestly violated his own dictum that “[t]o use a symbol *with an ascribed or intended* meaning is, usually, to produce very bad art” (“Vorticism” 284). Conceding this contradiction, Perloff observes that the beginning of the poem’s third section, which rings the changes on the contrast between an idealized past and the debased present, offers up eight symbols in eight lines, each of which could be replaced by another without substantially changing the passage’s poetic effect:

The tea-rose tea-gown etc.  
 Supplants the mousseline of Cos,  
 The pianola “replaces”  
 Sappho’s barbitos.

Christ follows Dionysus,  
 Phallic and ambrosial  
 Made way for macerations;  
 Caliban casts out Ariel. (*Personæ* 186)

That *Mauberley* appears unambiguously to be a social commentary, deploring the degradation of consumer capitalism and the monstrosity of the recently concluded World War, accounts for much of its attraction to students of Modernism: “the age demanded,” among other things, a poem about the age. But the poem is uncharacteristic, Perloff argues, precisely because the substitutability of its images suggests that Pound proceeded from ideas rather than from images; and she accordingly displaces *Mauberley* from the center to the margins of the poet’s achievement, as an anomalously transparent satire with a greater affinity to Eliot’s roughly contemporaneous *Waste Land* (whose symbolism Pound’s editing made more prominent) than to Pound’s own subsequent *Cantos*, which are distinguished by linguistic indeterminacy (167-70, 181-83). Interpreting *Mauberley* in relation to Pound’s evolving conception of his poetic project, Perloff is entirely convincing. One may still question, however, how qualitatively differentiated innovative linguistic indeterminacy and old-fashioned semantic obscurity are in readers’ experience.

Like Perloff, Hugh Kenner and, more recently, David Tiffany (see 21) define the essence of Imagism and Vorticism as the rejection of verbal pictorialism. For his part Kenner identifies such pictorialism with post-Symbolist lyric poets of the 1890s rather than with the Symbolists themselves (186), but he insists no less emphatically than the other two critics on the fundamentally non-visual, non-mimetic character of the Poundian Image. Referring to “The Return,” published in the 1912 volume *Ripostes*, Kenner observes that none of the poem’s imagery is visual or sculptural: “It is wholly linguistic” (191). Here are the first three stanzas:

See, they return; ah, see the tentative  
 Movements, and the slow feet,  
 The trouble in the pace and the uncertain  
 Wavering!



ticipation on which the Romantic concept of the symbol had been founded. As Pound's biographer A. D. Moody observes, the hawk that is "always a hawk and not any other thing" in an Imagist poem is already "a subjective mental object" (225), no longer a bird in the sky but a bird in the mind. Thus when the poet presents the faces seen in the metro station as "petals on a wet, black bough," both the faces and the petals are in the mind, and "under the pressure of attention they become identified the one with the other in a further apprehension charged with unexpected significance" (Moody 225). The ontological relation of the face in the mind to the face in the underground or of the petal in the mind to the petal on the bough is irrelevant.

In contrast, such connections between images and objects are the very subject of Baudelaire's "Correspondances" (1857), which I adduce because it is less a Symbolist poem itself than a versified statement of a Romantic natural philosophy that attributes to discrete phenomena resonances of a unifying order by which all are related to one another.<sup>5</sup>

In this sonnet the imagined interactions of things—smells, colors, and sounds—are compared to echoes heard from afar and merging in an obscure and profound unity: "Comme de long échos qui de loin se confondent / Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité" (*Œuvres* 1: 11). While assuming one kind of correspondence, between word and object, the poem enunciates another, between physical phenomenon and metaphysical order. The two kinds are inversely related, the semiotic functionality of the language becoming invisible in proportion as the symbolic functionality of the natural objects evoked becomes credible. When, in the first quatrain, Baudelaire tells us that nature is a temple in which living pillars sometimes release mysterious words, and that we pass there through forests of symbols that watch us with knowing looks, his words are supposed to direct our attention beyond themselves to the phenomena they interpret:

La Nature est un temple où vivant piliers  
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;  
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles  
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers. (1: 11)

Still, a nagging question remains: how would we know that we were walking through forests of symbols if Baudelaire didn't warn us? How would we know otherwise that amber, musk, benjamin, and incense, having the expansion of infinite things (*Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies*), chant the ecstasies of the mind and senses (*chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens*)? The poem's deictic purpose undermines its very claim for the symbolic action of nature.

To summarize the argument thus far: the Romantic symbol and the Poundian image differ profoundly from each other inasmuch as the one is conceived as the objective manifestation of a harmoniously organized totality encompassing the individual subject, and the other as the subjective appropriation of a mentally represented external object. "Images in verse," T. E. Hulme averred, "are [...] the very essence of an intuitive language" (70). And Pound concurred: "An *image* [...] is real because we know it directly" ("Vorticism" 283). Intuitive, non-discursive apprehension of that kind is a fantasy, however, and moreover the very fantasy—as Kermode recognized—that links Pound, in spite of himself, to the Romantic theorists of the symbol. Behind that fantasy, I suggest, is the hermeneutic anxiety signalled in my title: a preoccupation with the tendency to error and imprecision inherent in any self-governing semiotic system. Hence the appeal to an authority, whether the order of nature or the individual mind, in which the communicative act could be claimed, although paradoxically, to be wholly contained, and the need, indeed the possibility, of interpretation thereby eliminated. The epistemological reliability of semiosis was to be assured no longer by the grounding of the process in an extrasemiotic reality—as, for Dante, the triune God is, enfolding all signs into himself like the leaves of a book being closed (cf. *Paradiso* 33.85-87)—but rather by its self-referentiality, even if that self-referentiality was defined in metaphysical terms that are themselves open to question. No interpretive slippage would occur in the semiotic vacuum of self-referentiality, or more precisely, of self-identical referentiality.

The philosopher Hans Blumenberg once observed that a weakness of subjective idealism is that, although it can conceive the world as the self-objectification of the subject, it cannot guarantee that the world thus objectified will conform to the subject's wishes (see 298). A comparable problem attended both the Romantic symbolists and Pound in that the intuitive, non-discursive communicative acts they posited needed to be communicated discursively to others if they were to be known at all—if, in the case of the Image, a radiant node of rushing ideas was to be distinguished from a mere opacity of meaning. Just as the forest of symbols could not speak for itself, neither could the petals on the wet, black bough. The Imagist poem therefore required its own theoretical, discursive correlative, the Imagist manifesto, although that cannot have been what Pound had in mind when, sounding strangely like Wordsworth in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), he spoke of the need to “bring poetry up to the level of prose” (“Vorticism” 280).

University of Oxford

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Translations throughout are mine.

<sup>2</sup>Pound first published “Vorticism” in the *Fortnightly Review* in September 1914, then reprinted it as chapter 11 of *Gaudier-Brezeska: A Memoir* (1916). Whitworth offers a brief contextualization of the critical positions of Kermode and Perloff with long extracts from both critics.

<sup>3</sup>This is Yeats's stanza as quoted by Pound:

Now as at all times I can see in the mind's eye,  
In their stiff, painted clothes, the pale unsatisfied ones  
Appear and disappear in the blue depth of the sky  
With all their ancient faces like rain-beaten stones,  
And all their helms of silver hovering side by side. (“The Later Yeats” 380)

Pound omits the final three lines: “And all their eyes still fixed, hoping to find once more, / Being by Calvary's turbulence unsatisfied, / The uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor” (*Variorum Edition* 318). On Pound's misleading use of the term *objective* in his contrast between Yeats and Hueffer (“Status Rerum” 125-26), see Levenson, *Genealogy* 150.



<sup>4</sup>Mallarmé himself had written: “To *name* an object is to suppress three-quarters of the pleasure of a poem [...] to *suggest* it, that’s the dream. This is the perfect use of the mystery that constitutes the symbol: to evoke little by little an object in order to display a state of the soul” (869).

<sup>5</sup>With regard to Baudelaire’s English reception as a *symboliste* poet, it is worth noting that Symons first included a chapter on him, and a very brief one at that, only in the third edition of *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1919). (Baudelaire had died nineteen years before Jean Moréas published the manifesto of the Symbolist *mouvement* in *Le Figaro*.) To be sure, Hugo Friedrich argues that Baudelaire’s relation to Romantic *Naturphilosophie* is itself problematic in that his metaphysics is an “empty ideality”: because we never learn from Baudelaire exactly what the “henceforth understood language of flowers and things” is (Friedrich refers to the poems “Elévation” and “Correspondances”), we can “fill his words with no other content than that of absolute mysteriousness [*Geheimnishaftigkeit*] itself” (48-49). With the substitution of the word *meaningfulness* for *mysteriousness*, however, Friedrich’s conclusion about Baudelaire would apply perfectly to Romantic descriptions of the symbol.

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## The Curious History of Imagism: Of Hulme, Bergson, Worringer, and Imagism's Readers. A Response to Andrew Hay\*

MARY ANN GILLIES

Imagism has long occupied a curious position in the history of Modernism. Many modernist scholars have regarded imagism as central, even essential, to the development of twentieth century poetics, yet, at the same time, its short lifespan calls its very centrality into question.<sup>1</sup> The American literary critic and dramatist Glenn Hughes made an early case for the significance of Imagism in his study *Imagism and the Imagist* (1931). However, it was T. S. Eliot's claim, made in a 1953 lecture, that granted primacy of place to a movement which had all but faded from view by the time of his remarks: "The *point de repère*, usually and conveniently taken, as the starting-point of modern poetry, is the group denominated 'imagists' in London about 1910" (Eliot 58). Indeed, as Andrew Hay notes in his recent, perceptive reengagement with Imagism: "When contextualised in the history of Modernism, Imagism might seem to be little more than an ancillary concept" (304). How can Imagism be both essential and ancillary? An answer, as Hay's article suggests, can be found in the tension between the poetics of Imagism and the product of those poetics as well as in the (re)construction of those tensions by critics over the last one hundred years or so.

Hay's article begins with a return to the debates surrounding Imagism. It provides a useful exposition of the poetics of the movement and reminds us of its historical context. Not surprisingly, he revisits

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\*Reference: Andrew Hay, "On the Shore of Interpretation: The Theory and Reading of the Image in Imagism," *Connotations* 21.2-3 (2012/2013): 304-26. For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debhay02123.htm>>.

the pivotal roles that T. E. Hulme and Ezra Pound played in establishing this new poetics, and he also examines the theories of some of the writers and thinkers they drew on in the process of developing their approaches. Familiar names make appearances—the German aesthetician Wilhelm Worringer, the French philosopher Henri Bergson, and the French poet Remy de Gourmont, to name three prominent contemporaries of the Imagists. Hay goes on to update the familiar Imagist “talking points” by relating them to the works of mid- and late twentieth century critics/scholars such as Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and Geoffrey Batchen. In doing so, he not only emphasizes the continuing relevance of Imagist poetics, but also implicitly points to the coded ways in which they have been integrated into subsequent aesthetic debates.

Hay’s article is an engaging and engaged reappraisal of Imagism, and though I might quibble with a few of his characterizations or readings, I think it is a commendable piece of scholarship. What drew my attention, and what I would like to respond to, are two comments he makes which I think deserve to be teased out more fully.

While I fully appreciate that the length and scope of Hay’s article necessitates a somewhat abbreviated assessment of Imagism, at least as a starting point, I find overly schematic his assertion that “[w]here Pound’s rhetoric prescribes the image in poetic practice as distinctly non-representational, Hulme’s insistence upon clear visuality as the stylistic apotheosis of the best new poetry means that the poetic is fundamentally and inescapably intertwined with the mimetic” (308). I don’t think their positions (or implicitly, their roles) are as clear-cut as Hay claims. Greater nuance is called for with respect to both Pound and Hulme’s role in the genesis of Imagism and their understandings and use of the image. This is particularly true given the different trajectories the two men’s careers had after the initial, formative period of Imagism. However, my comments are constrained by space, just as Hay’s were, so my own response precludes a full engagement with this line of his argument. Nonetheless, I would like to suggest that a more nuanced account of Hulme’s engagement with Bergson

and Worringer, in particular, would reveal a somewhat different assessment of Hulme. I am especially interested in the way that Hulme blends Worringer's ideas with Bergson's to arrive at his own views on the image.

The second comment that drew my attention is Hay's conclusion—"the proliferation of labels in Imagist theory gives way to a more diverse form of poetic practice, with multiple conceptual/interpretative possibilities" (323)—which strikes me as opening a fruitful avenue for further discussion, particularly in light of Hay's incorporation of post-structuralist thought into the discussion.

### 1. Bergson and Worringer

Turning to the first point, we know that the usual narration surrounding Hulme's aesthetics shows him picking up Bergson's theories only to discard them later in favour of Worringer's. This standard approach also claims a parallel in his movement from Imagism towards Vorticism, from intuition to the clarity of geometric art. The situation, however, is far more complex than this, as critics as diverse as Samuel Hynes, Alun Jones, Michael Levenson, Patricia Rae, Mary Ann Gillies, Karen Csengeri, Andrew Thacker, Helen Carr and Rebecca Beasley, amongst others, have noted over the years.<sup>2</sup> But let's start with the familiar narrative.

As the story goes, Hulme was drawn to Bergson's theories upon the return from his sojourn in Canada. What Hulme found most attractive in Bergson's thought, at least initially, was the Frenchman's concept of intuition. Hulme would have been familiar with Bergson's concept from attending the philosopher's lectures and reading his early work, including *Time and Free Will*. The degree of his familiarity with Bergsonian intuition is perhaps most clearly evident, however, in Hulme's translation of *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, where he notes in the "Preface" that in it "M. Bergson explains, at greater length and in greater detail than in the other books, exactly what he means to

convey by the word *intuition*" (iii-iv). The crucial facet of Bergsonian intuition for Hulme was the way it cut through the restrictions of conceptual thinking and the structures such thought erects, permitting direct contact with the flux of reality. 1907 found Hulme attending Bergson's lectures in Paris; from 1909-1912 he was writing articles about Bergson for the *New Age*; and in 1912-1913, he was translating Bergson's *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. But by 1912, Hulme was reconsidering Bergson's theories, in part because of their growing popularity, particularly amongst women, and in part because he detected in them a strand of romanticism that was antithetical to his own thought. He began to move away from Bergson, seeking an aesthetic more in keeping with his evolving ideological views.

Although the exact date that Hulme was first drawn to Worringer's work is unknown, we do know that Hulme was in Berlin in October 1913 where he attended Worringer's lectures.<sup>3</sup> What drew him to Worringer is better known; Hulme was attracted by the German's contention that there were two basic kinds of art, abstract and empathetic. Abstract art—what Hulme was to call geometric art—was non-representational and associated by Worringer with a more "primitive" world-view.<sup>4</sup> Empathetic art—what Hulme called vital art<sup>5</sup>—was realist art in the mimetic tradition that had held sway in Western Europe since the Renaissance. Worringer's insistence that abstract art was not of lesser stature or value than empathetic art was controversial, but it struck a sympathetic chord in Hulme. What likely appealed even more to Hulme was Worringer's contention that they represented fundamentally different world-views. Hulme's series of articles on "Modern Art" published in *The New Age* in 1914 make clear his debt to Worringer. He opens the first of these by remarking "I am attempting in this series of articles to define the characteristics of a new constructive geometric art which seems to me to be emerging at the present moment" (263). Hulme's emphasis on the (re)emergence of geometric art and his tying it to contemporary sensibility echo Worringer's theories. As Helen Carr suggests, "Worringer gave Hulme a new direction" (104), for in Worringer's theories, Hulme

found a means of addressing a fundamental conflict that permeates his thought. Carr underscores this point when she writes: “Empathetic or mimetic art is practised by those who feel at home in the world, confident of their place in it,” while “[a]bstract art is practiced by those who find the world a baffling, inexplicable, fearful place; they turn to abstract, geometric, and patterned forms to create order and stability in a universe in which they find none” (103). By using sharp, geometric shapes to arrest the flow of perceptions, order could be imposed on chaos without sacrificing an essential emotional connection with the flux of reality.

Tellingly, though, Carr also maintains, even while advocating Worringer’s aesthetics, “[Hulme] still does not explicitly abandon his belief in Bergson” (104). Indeed, his late art criticism is subtly marked by his long immersion in Bergson’s philosophy. Take, for example, “Modern Art IV: Mr. David Bomberg’s Show” which appeared in the *New Age* in July 1914. Ostensibly a review of Bomberg’s one-man show, it provides Hulme with the opportunity to articulate his theory of form and its relation to feeling or emotion. He concludes his assessment of Bomberg by remarking:

I should add that as yet his use of form satisfies a too purely sensuous or intellectual interest. It is not often used to intensify a more general emotion. I do not feel, then, the same absolute certainty about his work as I do about Epstein’s. In Mr. Epstein’s work, the abstractions have been got at gradually, and always intensify, as abstractions, the general feeling of the whole work. (309)

Both the passage’s language and its concern with the adequacy of form (or language) to represent a direct experience (or feeling) would not have been out of place in Hulme’s earlier work on Bergson. For example, in notes for a lecture on Bergson’s theory of art—edited by Herbert Read and published posthumously in *The New Age* in 1922—Hulme writes that, while Bergson “has not created any new theory of art,” what he “does seem to me to have done is that by the acute analysis of certain mental processes he has enabled us to state more definitely and with less distortion the qualities which we feel in art”

(287). Feeling and form are foregrounded here as much as they are in later discussions.

I don't want to wade too far into a discussion of the vagaries of Hulme's aesthetics, however; suffice to say I agree with Carr's observations. The philosophy or aesthetics of both Bergson and Worringer were necessary ingredients in Hulme's articulation of his own aesthetic, and their very contradictions speak to the opposing forces at work within Hulme's construction of the image and within Imagism itself. This is a point that I think might have been teased out more fully by Hay, particularly in light of the conclusions he draws at the article's end.

## 2. Central but Marginal—Imagism's Place in Modernism

I turn now to my second point, arising from two comments with which Hay concludes his article. I quoted the first passage above—"the proliferation of labels in Imagist theory gives way to a more diverse form of poetic practice, with multiple conceptual/interpretative possibilities" (323). The second occurs immediately before it: "By recognising the relative ephemerality of Imagism as a 'school,' and resisting the urge to inscribe a false correlation between voluminous Imagist theory and the more diverse Imagist practices, the critic can avoid the perils of the Imagist 'crypt'" (322-23). Together they open the possibilities to not only a richer reading of Imagism—theory and praxis—but they also allow us to address its ambiguous place as simultaneously central and ancillary in the "contextualised [...] history of Modernism."

The initial observation I would like to make about both quotations is Hay's assertion of a disjunction between the theory promulgated principally by Hulme, aided by Pound and others, and the poetry produced most notably by H. D., though also by Pound, F. S. Flint, Richard Aldington, and others.<sup>6</sup> This kind of disjunction is not unusual in modernist writing, where the praxis often deviates from



the theory. The different approaches of the “founding fathers” of Imagism as well as the subsequent effect this has on Imagism’s place in literary history is one of the aspects that makes Imagism such a fascinating study. For Hulme, the nascent philosopher, what was important was to arrive at an understanding of how reality—however it might be understood—functioned and then derive an art form which captured that as precisely as possible. For Pound, Modernism’s foremost propagandist, what was important was the art; certainly, he also took on the task of promoting that art via articles and manifestoes, but I would argue that those functions were secondary concerns to Pound. Hulme and Pound were united in their drive to find new ways of using language to express the experience of modern life, but their disparate approaches result in what Hay refers to as “the proliferation of labels in Imagist theory,” and it is this very proliferation that calls into question what lasting contribution Imagism makes to twentieth century poetics. For how can one movement have such contradictory methods? How can it offer multiple possibilities to its practitioners? Can something as “fissile” (308) as Imagism was, to quote Hay again, actually be called a movement?

My second observation helps to answer these questions. Scholars starting as early as the 1930s, aided and abetted by modernist theorists and promoters such as Pound and Eliot, have imposed order on Imagism retrospectively: they have insisted that its theories have a logical coherence and that the poetry matches the poetics. They have maintained this position despite sometimes torquing both to ensure that they fit this portrait, and they have done this in service of imposing an orderly history on the evolution of poetics in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> But these efforts at shaping the narrative notwithstanding, that isn’t what happened. It is well known that for not only Hulme and Pound, but also for most of the writers associated with it, Imagism was one stage in their poetic or aesthetic development. By the time Harriet Monroe published Pound and Flint’s essays proclaiming Imagist theory in *Poetry* in 1913, the founders of the movement had already begun to move on—Hulme was becoming

ever more preoccupied by art and aesthetics, and Pound was already involved with Wyndham Lewis and the beginnings of Vorticism. By early 1915, the initial group had fractured, and the arrival of Amy Lowell and her assumption of a central place in the movement is sometimes seen as signalling the end of Imagism's innovative phase. Ironically, it is at this moment that the impulse to affix a label and offer an "official" narrative gains momentum, and the subsequent place that Imagism assumes in the "contextualised history of Modernism" thus takes shape. However, as Hay's article usefully reminds us, if we can sidestep the interminable debates about the theory of Imagism, we can see, instead, the importance of its "diverse form[s] of poetic practice, with multiple conceptual/interpretative possibilities" (323).

I agree with Hay that Imagism "becomes a practice that fails to fit or coalesce with its own theoretical precepts" (315) and would add that this is not a bad thing. Hay's point of view is well-supported by the post-structuralist theories he brings to bear in his engagement with Imagism, and this is where a very fruitful avenue of thought is opened. While many might argue the point, I believe Imagism's legacy resides not in its theory, in the "dos and don'ts" of an *Imagiste* that we continue to pass along to our students as the essential qualities of the movement, but rather in the possibilities Imagist poetry affords writers (and readers) searching for new modes of expression. The theory—appropriated and refashioned as it was by New Critics and subsequent generations of scholars—seeks to provide a container for experience, to "fix" the approach to the poetry, to insist that it must be read in a certain way in order to grasp what the poet was doing. The crystalline image took on the qualities of an art object, which, no matter how beautiful and arresting it was, had still to be decoded—preferably by the initiated or by expert critics—in order for its meaning to be grasped. The poetry, however, defies this formalist approach, reaching out towards its readers beyond the boundaries imposed on it by the theory. Hay suggests just this tension between the two when he comments that "both Pound and H. D. exhibit a far

more intersubjective aesthetic within the reading mechanics of their poetry than Imagist theorisations of reading might permit. This is not to disallow aesthetic theorising within the context of Imagism's self-situation, nor to delimit pertinent theorising of an Imagist aesthetic, but rather to urge a productive and generative tension between theory and practice, collectivisation and singularity" (317).

In his article's concluding sentence, Hay makes an interesting gesture towards the possibilities Imagism opens up: "the images of Imagist poetry are as active as the interpretative energies of that poem's reader" (323). This observation is telling because it speaks to the seismic shift in the reader's role vis-à-vis the poem and it also implicitly critiques the Formalist and New Critical constructions of literature that carved out such a strong foothold in literary criticism in the first half of the twentieth-century. I believe that Hulme and Pound would have resisted the extremes of New Criticism, maintaining that poetry, even stripped to its essentials as per Imagist tenets, was still an act of communication between poet and reader, one where an essential truth was transmitted.

When Hulme wrote in 1908, "the first time I ever felt the necessity or inevitableness of verse, was in the desire to reproduce the peculiar quality of feeling which is induced by the flat spaces and wide horizons of the virgin prairie of western Canada" ("A Lecture" 53), he encapsulated this very situation: the difficulties and the opportunities which co-existed in Imagism. As he explained in the same lecture, new verse "has to mould images, a kind of spiritual clay, into definite shapes" (56), and these shapes convey that "peculiar feeling [...] induced" not solely by the Canadian prairies, but by the poet's experience of modern life. He announced the arrival of a new era in poetry when he concluded the essay with the assertion that the new verse "builds up a plastic image which it hands over to the reader" (56). On the face of it, what is crucial here is the Image. But the phrase "hands over to the reader" cues us to the shift in sensibility that I'm suggesting is the lasting Imagist legacy: the shared responsibility

between poet and reader in the (re)construction of the experience that the Image attempts to convey.

To remain a viable art form poetry must communicate. Since, as Hulme reminds us, “[w]e can’t escape from the spirit of our times” (“A Lecture” 53), new ways of communicating are required for new eras. For Hulme and Pound, as theorists, and for Pound and H. D. as practitioners, modern verse “has become definitely and finally introspective and deals with expression and communication of momentary phases in the poet’s mind” (“A Lecture” 53). The Imagist poet takes the base clay of these “momentary phases in the poet’s mind,” moulds them into shapes/images that fix or arrest, momentarily at least, the essence of the experience, and then presents the images to the world. What happens to it afterwards is out of the poet’s control, much to the dismay of those who wanted art to provide some order in the midst of the chaos of modern life. However, the more effort the reader puts into the act of engaging with the poem, the more likely it is that he or she will get at least a glimpse of “the peculiar quality of feeling which is induced by the flat spaces and wide horizons of the virgin prairie of western Canada.” Hay’s conclusions remind us of this, providing a valuable capstone to an insightful and provocative essay. At the same time, he challenges us to re-examine our institutional portrait of Imagism, with an eye to how we might (re)conceive it if we were to resist “the urge to inscribe a false correlation between voluminous Imagist theory and the more diverse Imagist practices” and embrace, instead, our roles as readers, bringing our interpretative energies to bear in each act of engagement with Imagist poetry.

Simon Fraser University  
Burnaby, British Columbia

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>One way of assessing the impact of the narrative that sees Imagism as a centrally important poetic movement is to note how it has been presented in influential reference texts on modernism. Works such as Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane's seminal *Modernism 1880-1930* (1976) situated Imagism at the heart of modernist experimentation. The ninth edition (the most recent) of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. F: *The Twentieth Century and After* (2012) continues to position Imagism as central to the development of twentieth century poetics. There is also a large body of scholarly work that traverses this territory indicating the continuing importance of this short-lived movement in the development and history of modernism. References to some of the work may be found in this article's works cited.

<sup>2</sup>Hulme's complicated relationship with Bergson is a subject that scholars have returned to repeatedly over the years. Hynes's influential work on Hulme in the 1950s discussed Bergson's role in Hulme's thought, as did Jones in his biography of Hulme. Levenson's *A Genealogy of Modernism* catalogued three phases of Hulme's career, demonstrating the threads that were woven throughout them, including Bergson's place. Rae's work on Hulme sought to provide a more balanced view of his "borrowings" from philosophy, and from Bergson in particular. Gillies's *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* looked briefly at Hulme's use of both Bergson and Worringer. More recent work re-examines the Hulme-Bergson relationship, for the most part attending more closely to the complex place the French philosopher holds in Hulme's thought. See, for example, Ferguson's biography, Beasley's *Theorists of Modernist Poetry*, and Thacker, Carr and others in their contributions in *T. E. Hulme and the Question of Modernism*. I'm not suggesting that these critics share a common view, just that they have all examined the Bergson-Hulme connection.

<sup>3</sup>Hulme's involvement in art criticism is a complex subject. Rebecca Beasley makes an interesting and convincing case that, in addition to Worringer, by 1912 Hulme was also engaged with the contemporary art world in London and that the work of Roger Fry and Clive Bell, amongst others, struck a similar note and resonated with Hulme. See Beasley "'A Definite Meaning': The Art Criticism of T. E. Hulme."

<sup>4</sup>Worringer published his doctoral dissertation *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* (*Abstraction and Empathy*) in 1907; it outlines his concepts of abstract and empathetic art which Hulme subsequently incorporated into his own art theories.

<sup>5</sup>Hulme used this phrase notably in his article "Modern Art II—A Preface Note and Neo-Realism" which appeared in *The New Age* in February 1914.

<sup>6</sup>Hay is right to comment on what he calls "the fissile nature of the Imagist movement" (308) given the many different configurations the movement took over its short lifespan. Most accounts of Imagism, however, cite Hulme, H. D., Pound, Flint and Aldington at the core of its cadre of poets. This view was early on promoted by Pound himself, who in his important 1918 article "A Retrospect" acknowledges Aldington's role but curiously omits mention of F. S. Flint. Flint

contributed “Imagisme” to the same 1913 issue of *Poetry* in which Pound’s “A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste” appeared—in fact Pound’s essay followed Flint’s. The piece by Flint not only contains the same three “rules” of Imagism cited by Pound in “A Retrospect,” but also introduces an American audience to the group’s existence and aesthetic. Pound’s successful shaping of the narrative is seen in the degree to which subsequent accounts—including those in widely disseminated works such as Bradbury and MacFarlane’s *Modernism: 1880-1930* and *The Norton Anthology* that I’ve cited above—echo his. One might add Amy Lowell to either of the categories—or even both, and one might also take issue with the list of core poets. I take the position that Lowell’s late arrival on the scene places her in a secondary role in the sense that the important theoretical issues had been sorted out and her poetry does not approach the quality of the four poets I’ve named.

<sup>7</sup>As suggested in previous notes, the history of Imagism has been shaped to some extent by the needs of its various founders and by the use to which Imagist theory was put by subsequent critics or poets. Pound and Amy Lowell, for example, both used Imagism to establish/consolidate their own positions in the literary field. Glenn Hughes’s *Imagism and the Imagists* was the first book-length study of the movement and as such it sets out what becomes the standard history of the group; this narrative was repeated by other influential scholars. Hugh Kenner in *The Pound Era* recounts the history of Imagism in the terms set out first by Pound and then by Hughes, for instance. More recently, Andrew Thacker’s *The Imagist Poets* (2011) challenges the customary history of Imagism, reinserting Flint, John Gould Fletcher, and Amy Lowell as significant figures. Thacker’s intervention is as much indicative of current scholarly concerns as Hughes or Kenner’s reflect those of their eras, which supports my contention that Imagism is still a very much contested movement in part because of the way it speaks to central twentieth-century aesthetic and poetic issues.

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## Beyond Authenticity of Voice: A Response to Barbara Korte\*

MIRIAM NANDI

In her article “Can the Indigent Speak” Barbara Korte makes a convincing appeal to literary critics to confront postcolonial narratives of poverty such as Aravind Adiga’s seminal *The White Tiger* and Vikas Swarup’s *Q & A*. As the West gradually starts to lose its status of “an island of affluence” (Brabandt/Roß/Zwingel 9) and intellectuals are becoming increasingly aware of the need to theorize and to criticize the ever widening gap between rich and poor all over the globe, Barbara Korte’s claims could not be more pertinent. Drawing on the work of Gayatri Spivak, Stuart Hall, and Walter Benn Michaels, Korte is aware of the fact that there is an important divide between the people who write about poverty and the actual poor who are written about in socio-critical fictions. However, she also questions the position that only those who have experienced poverty are entitled to write about it. According to Korte, writers such as Aravind Adiga and Vikas Swarup flaunt “our preconceptions” about the poor in the Third World and thus endow the “indigent” with “agency and powers of enunciation” (297).

While I couldn’t agree more with her as far as the relevance and the timeliness (and indeed the artistry) of Adiga’s and Swarup’s novels are concerned, I have some reservations concerning the notions of agency and voice that she develops. Throughout her text, Korte con-

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\*Reference: Barbara Korte, “Can the Indigent Speak? Poverty Studies, the Post-colonial and Global Appeal of *Q & A* and *The White Tiger*,” *Connotations* 20.2-3 (2010/2011): 293-317.

For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debkorte02023.htm>>.



spicuously avoids the usage of the term “subaltern” and employs “indigent” instead, a term which she never defines, even though the title of her article puns on Spivak’s classic “Can the Subaltern Speak?” A reason for this might be that the term subaltern, at least in the Spivakian sense, is associated with silence, whereas Korte is interested in recuperating voice and agency. Seen from this angle, hers is an ingenious move. The flipside is, however, that, in avoiding the term subaltern, she also avoids addressing the deconstructionist framework of Spivak’s article. This framework, however, has been defining in the field of postcolonial studies. Spivak, as most postcolonial theorists, goes beyond debates of “authenticity of voice,” i.e. she does not say, as Korte implies, that only the poor can write about the poor. As Spivak states in an early interview, she does not think that “only the subaltern can speak for the subaltern or only the native can know the scene” (Arteaga 15). Her point is deconstructionist, as she focusses on the contingency of all representation. According to Spivak, every critique, however “benevolent” or radical it may be, will always have to “inhabit” the “structures of violence” that it criticizes (*Post-Colonial* 72). Therefore, serious critique always already comes “from within” (*Critique* 49). This entails that postcolonial critique will have to borrow the language of colonialism to a certain extent. For deconstructionist postcolonialists such as Spivak, there is no way of returning to a pre-colonial “origin.” Similarly, subaltern studies will always have to rely on the language of elite discourse (such as historiography or indeed literary fiction) to a certain extent—there is no “pure” subaltern consciousness. Taking her cue from Jacques Derrida, Spivak suggests that there is no vantage point for the postcolonial intellectual from which s/he can write about exploitation.

Following up on Spivak’s deconstructionist framework, I will locate *The White Tiger* within an elite discourse on postcolonial Indian identity. The “indigent/subaltern” are instrumental for this discourse, but they are not lent “powers of enunciation” (Korte 297) in any uncomplicated manner. Since my analysis requires extensive close reading, I can focus on one novel only. I have chosen *The White Tiger* as it is

particularly innovative in terms of narrative situation and tone. His narrator is not likeable, nor are we invited to identify with him. So from the first lines onwards, he does indeed challenge sentimentalized conceptions of the poor, as Korte argues quite justifiably. But even if Adiga undermines middle class clichés about the disenfranchised, he does not “assign [them with the] authority to raise their voice and speak (as well as act) for themselves” (295) in any simple way. I will demonstrate this point in three steps. First, I will examine the narrative techniques in the novel as well as the voice of Balram Halwai, its narrator-protagonist, demonstrating that there is a considerable gap between the narrating I, who is no longer indigent but a rich entrepreneur, and the experiencing I. As a second step, I will analyse the usage of animal metaphors in *The White Tiger* arguing that poor, rural India is connoted with bestiality. The last section will deal with the way subaltern India is associated with “the abject,” with disgusting things, people, and deeds. Thereby, I will show that Adiga expresses criticism, but ultimately, he also (maybe unwittingly) reifies images of the poor that seem “not only trite but offensive” (Kumar).

### 1. The Voice of the Tiger

On a formal level, Adiga’s novel is unlike much other Indian socio-critical fiction.<sup>1</sup> It defies the sentimental-melodramatic mode that is espoused by Mulk Raj Anand in his novels *Untouchable*, *Coolie* and *The Village* and by Kamala Markandaya in *A Handful of Rice* and *Nectar in a Sieve*, novels that clearly were written with an urge to improve the social situation in their historical context but are now viewed as fraught and problematic (see Khair). Also, Adiga does away with the lush exoticism often associated with more recent socio-critical works such as Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (see also Huggan), and the 19th century realist mode that Rohinton Mistry’s socio-critical novels have become famous for.<sup>2</sup> Instead, Adiga has created a narrator-protagonist with a voice that is unique in the history of Indian-

English literature: Balram Halwai is grim, in-your-face, angry and cheeky. The passive subservience of Anand's Bakha and the silent rebellion of Roy's Velutha are not for him. He does not even have a political agenda such as the Naxalite Draupadi, the heroine of Mahasweta Devi's Bengali short story of the same name. He kills his exploiter purely for his personal economic gain.

Adiga thus indeed re-writes "our" middle class preconceptions about the poor, but does so within an already existing intellectual discourse about the disenfranchised. In other words, he writes against middle class stereotypes about the poor, but he is still (and he has to be) invested in this discourse. The latter becomes evident in Balram as the narrative voice, as Balram tells his tale in retrospect, *after* he has made it from rags to riches. On his way to the top, he changes his name twice. Born as Munna (which simply means "boy") he is baptized by his teacher who calls him Balram.<sup>3</sup> Having killed his boss Ashok Sharma, Balram takes up the name of his victim as well as his upper class *habitus*. It is Ashok Sharma, killer and entrepreneur, who tells us his story. Thus, all the time we are not listening to the voice of an "indigent" as Korte suggests, but to the voice of an entrepreneur. This is particularly evident in a passage also cited by Korte:

The dreams of the rich, and the dreams of the poor—they never overlap, do they? See, the poor dream all their lives of getting enough to eat and looking like the rich. And what do the rich dream of?

Losing weight and looking like the poor. (225)

Barbara Korte correctly points out that Adiga's narrator is the master of a "pithy phrase" (299). I would like to add, however, that it is not the disenfranchised village boy Balram who utters his biting satire here, but Ashok, start-up and entrepreneur. Ashok knows about the dreams of the rich—he is one of them now. What is more, Ashok's name is reminiscent of the legendary emperor Ashoka of the Maurya dynasty, who ruled vast parts of the subcontinent in the 3rd century BC. His very name thus shows how he is now part of the elite rather than the indigent class of India.<sup>4</sup>

Along narratological lines, Ashok is the “narrating self,” and Balram Halwai/Munna are written about and could be termed the “experiencing self,” i.e. the younger self whose story is related by the older (narrating) self (see Stanzel 201). And yet, we learn comparatively little about the attitudes and feelings of Balram/Munna, as everything is already filtered through the grim perspective of the entrepreneur Ashok, who is, obviously, no longer subaltern or indigent. If he had remained subaltern, he could not have told his story in the first place. He would have neither the means nor the time to do so, as he would be slaving away in a chai-stall. Ashok, the narrating self is confident, verging on the megalomaniac, cheeky and courageous, while Balram is subservient, humble, and constantly afraid. There is thus a considerable gap between the older narrating self Ashok and the younger experiencing self Munna/Balram.

Through the merciless gaze of Ashok Sharma, entrepreneur and start-up, the *ex-Financial Times* journalist Aravind Adiga masterfully satirizes the neo-liberal rhetoric of the “new India” that is marketed all over the globe and celebrated daily in the media in India. In the following passage, Balram/Ashok refers to a radio show in which the business culture of the “new India” is contrasted with the alleged lack of entrepreneurship in China. His tone is utterly scathing:

Apparently, sir, you Chinese are far ahead of us in every respect, except that you don't have entrepreneurs. And our nation, though it has no drinking water, electricity, sewage system, public transportation, sense of hygiene, discipline, courtesy, or punctuality, does have entrepreneurs. (2)

It may well be that Ashok/Balram's satire here is an echo of the interviews with the servants, taxi drivers and riksha pullers that Adiga conducted when working on *The White Tiger*, as Korte suggests. But it is even more likely that Ashok's scathing tone echoes the sarcasm of the *ex-Financial Times* journalist who was once compelled to write articles celebrating Indian entrepreneurship. The above passage expresses middle-class disgust with the hypocrisy of the “new India” and its overblown rhetoric. It is a disgust that I share, but it is, alas, an

emotion that can only be felt by a class that is familiar with this rhetoric. Subaltern India, however, is largely cut off from the rhetoric of entrepreneurship—most chai-wallahs do not read the *Financial Times*. Again, I would conclude that Adiga's novel is much less about subaltern agency and voice and more about middle class worries about "the condition of India" (Detmers 535).

The greatest innovation in Adiga's representation of India is that he teases out how in the 21st century, the premodern and the postmodern interact in most gruesome ways. In Adiga's grim narrative, the economy in the villages still works along feudal lines, but the feudal lords are equipped with the latest SUVs, smartphones and laptops. The whole country is divided into two spaces: rural India, the slums, even Old Delhi, which are all associated with backwardness, feudalism, poverty, violence, and dirt and only called "The Darkness" on the one hand; and the "Light," i.e. the urban, globalized, rich, clean, and glitzy world of Bangalore, New Delhi and Mumbai, which is ruled by entrepreneurs, start-ups, and their respective employees on the other. As Ashok observes:

Please understand, Your Excellency, that India is two countries in one: an India of Light, and an India of Darkness. The ocean brings light to my country. Every place on the map of India near the ocean is well off. (11)

Remember, Mr. Premier, that Delhi is the capital of not one but two countries—two Indias. The Light and the Darkness both flow into Delhi. Gurgaon, where Mr. Ashok lived, is the bright, modern end of the city, and this place, Old Delhi, is the other end. Full of things the modern world forgot about—rickshaws, old stone buildings, the Muslims. (215)

Adiga's analysis of the contemporary condition of India is ingenious and original. Furthermore, the gap between rich and poor he observes here is quite simply a harsh economic fact. Therefore, I would agree with Barbara Korte that Adiga draws attention to problems of the Indian poor. But this is not concomitant with endowing them with "voice." Rather, Adiga echoes older intertexts in which the shortcomings of Indian society are similarly depicted in a merciless, scathingly

critical, grim tone. Adiga even uses the same imagery as V. S. Naipaul in his seminal *An Area of Darkness* (1962). Like Naipaul 40 years earlier, Adiga is very sceptical about nationalist, romanticized images of India. What is more, Adiga, like Naipaul, writes from a diasporic position. Born in India, but educated in Australia and the USA, Adiga would share what Vijay Mishra has called the “Diasporic Imaginary” (1996). According to Mishra, being diasporic is always, to a certain extent, traumatic. He links the trauma of having been ripped from the “mother country” to the trauma of being prematurely ripped from our mother’s body in our early psycho-social development (423). Mishra thus suggests that the diasporic subject will keep a strong affective tie to the “motherland” and may even come to idealize it in the process. The moment when the diasporic subject returns to the idealized motherland often renews the trauma, as the subject then realizes with a shock that neither culture nor society of the alleged homeland are ideal. On the contrary, the idealized motherland is suddenly seen as corrupt, backward, cruel and verging on the bestial. I will elaborate on these negative images of India in the next sections.

## 2. A Postcolonial Bestiary

Seen through the eyes of Adiga’s narrator, India is not just an “area of darkness,” but ultimately also an area of bestiality. Animal metaphors abound in Adiga’s text (see also Suneetha). India is compared to a “clean, well-kept, orderly zoo” (53), driving is associated with “taming a wild stallion” (47), and Balram is constantly called “country mouse” by his fellow-servants. The four feudal lords of Balram’s native village Laxmangarh are all given the name of the animal which is supposed to represent “the peculiarities of appetite that had been detected in him.” The characters named the Buffalo, the Stork, the Wild Boar, the Raven are hardly ever called by their actual names:

[...] was called the Wild Boar. This fellow owned all the good agricultural land around Laxmangarh. If you wanted to work on those lands, you had to

bow down to his feet, and touch the dust under his slippers, and agree to swallow his wages. When he passed by women, his car would stop; the window would roll down to reveal his grin; two of his teeth, on either side of his nose, were long and curved, like little tusks.

The Raven owned the worst land, which was the dry, rocky hillside around the fort, and took a cut from the goatherds who went up there to graze their flocks. If they didn't have their money, he liked to dip his beak into their backsides, so they called him the Raven. (21)

Ashok/Balram's tone here vacillates between cold rage and a grim humour. We do get a sense that he feels with the village folk who are oppressed, humiliated and exploited by the bestial landowners, but more importantly we can sense his utter disgust. The landowners are represented as morally and physically abject, their outward appearance mirroring their inner depravity. They are not content with just squeezing all the money out of the village people, they also enjoy humiliating them sexually. The laconic description of homosexual rape ("he liked to dip his beak into their backsides") is particularly resonant and shocking in this respect.

*The White Tiger* is indeed a postmodern animal fable that plays with older intertexts such as Aesop's fables, Ben Jonson's *Volpone* and even the medieval Bestiary, all of which are classic Western texts in which animals come to represent human flaws (or virtues). In an almost classic postcolonial move, he "appropriates" a colonial tradition, puts it into a different context and thus "abrogates" its hegemonic status (Ashcroft/Griffith/Tiffin 38-41). In other words, he employs and renews a genre (the fable) that a Western, cosmopolitan elite would be familiar with and find aesthetically pleasing. For Indian readers, or readers more familiar with the Indian context, *The White Tiger* might also resonate with the *Panchatantra*, a collection of animal fables originally composed in Sanskrit. As Sanskrit is associated with the establishment of the caste system, and the lower castes were traditionally forbidden to even hear Sanskrit, it is a very fraught language for Dalits, as subaltern castes call themselves in India. So again, he makes use of a tradition (and he does so masterfully) that is very problematic with regard to India's history.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, the poor are depicted along equally dehumanized lines. Again and again Balram describes them as “chicken” that are trapped in a “coop” waiting to be butchered. He does seem to deplore their state, but he also expresses a sense of being disgusted by them:

The greatest thing to come out of this country in the ten thousand years of its history is the Rooster Coop.

Go to Old Delhi, behind the Jama Masjid, and look at the way they keep the chickens there in the market. Hundreds of pale hens and brightly coloured roosters, stuffed tightly into wire-mesh cages, packed as tightly as worms in a belly, pecking each other and shitting on each other, jostling just for breathing space; the whole cage giving off a horrible stench—the stench of terrified, feathered flesh. On the wooden desk above this coop sits a grinning young butcher, showing off the flesh and organs of recently chopped-up chicken, still oleanigous with a coating of dark blood. The roosters in the coop smell the blood from above. They see the organs of their brothers lying around them. They know they’re next. Yet they do not rebel. They do not try to get out of the coop. (147)

The “Rooster Coop” is a cruel, in-your-face allegory of modern India. Balram’s voice is scathingly, bitterly sarcastic. He criticizes the way the “chickens” are kept, and thus comments on how the upper classes treat their subaltern other. But he is also disgusted by the poor. The chickens are packed as “tightly as worms in a belly,” an image that quite literally makes our stomach turn. They peck and defecate on each other and give off a “horrible stench.” What is interesting here is that he not just abhors their physicality but their state of mind. He is appalled by “the stench of terrified, feathered flesh.” As it seems to me, he resents the subaltern for their passivity. “Why don’t they ever resist?” is the question that looms at the backdrop of Adiga’s urban bestiary.

The Rooster Coop can also be read as sardonic allegory of the caste system. What Adiga echoes here is that “caste” is based on a system of ritual purity and impurity. The lower castes are considered to be constantly impure and are hence drastically stigmatized and ostracized. This stigmatization is considered to be illegitimate among the urban middle classes, but practised in quite a few rural areas of the



Subcontinent. In an uncanny way, however, Balram's disgust for the "chicken that [...] shit on each other" echoes an upper caste fear of being "polluted" by the lower castes and a disgust about their constant "impurity." Another issue associated with the caste system is acceptance and passivity. For him (and probably for most of his middle class urban readers) the humility of the disenfranchised that, like the roosters caught in the coop, would not in any way rebel against their "butchers" is quite simply maddening. For these reasons, I find Korte's statement that the narrator-protagonists of *The White Tiger* and *Q & A* "are drawn as exceptional human beings in contemporary India who manage to overcome the general lethargy of the 'rooster coop' and develop idiosyncratic voices" (304) a bit problematic. We learn very little about the inchoate fear, pain, and rage of the people who are actually trapped in the "coop" of the caste system. Thus, I would suggest that what we are hearing here is the voice of a diasporic middle class subject who may care for the disenfranchised but is still invested in the very discourse which stigmatizes them.

In this context, it is worth noting that Adiga's narrator subscribes to a blatant individualism. In Adiga's postmodern beast fable, only the "White Tiger," the narrator-protagonist himself, breaks out of his cage. Like the animal with which he identifies, he is an exception, an anomaly. The colour symbolism is just as striking as the animal imagery in this context. The whiteness of the tiger stresses his exceptionality and rarity on the one hand, but it also points to a fraught sense of colonial or upper-caste superiority on the other.

The tiger has an important place in India's cultural imaginary. He is the vehicle of Durga, the goddess of destruction. He occurs in numerous other socio-critical Indian-English novels. The nearly extinct Sundurban tiger serves as an image of danger as well as vulnerability in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*, symbolizing subaltern rebellion and middle class fear thereof. Furthermore, the tiger is constantly alluded to in Bhabani Bhattacharya's *He Who Rides a Tiger*. Bhattacharya's narrative, which is set during the Bengal famine in 1947 and also tells a story of a lower class and lower-caste persona who breaks

with tradition, presents an interesting contrast to Adiga's novel. In Bhattacharya's novel, the protagonist *rides* the tiger (like the goddess) and thus puts himself into considerable danger. Not surprisingly, he fails in the end. Balram, however, *is* the tiger, a sublime individualist in a society of collectivists. He therefore moves beyond the conventions of the social-critical novel with its focus on collective action (see also Garajawala). As Kathleen Waller has pointed out, *The White Tiger* is a narrative about individualism, a witty, daring postcolonial Bildungsroman. However, I would argue that *The White Tiger* does not sign up for individualism as a model for Indian society in any straightforward way. After all, Balram is utterly "alone" when he "drives off with his master's car" (Gajarawala 23). What is more, he kills his boss for egotistical reasons, not because he has a political agenda of any kind. *The White Tiger* does have its share of social critique, but the revolt represented in the novel is motivated by the very discourse it attacks: individualism of the neoliberal kind. His critique of neoliberalism and social injustice thus is a critique from within. It borrows from the "structures of violence" that it seeks to undermine, as Spivak would put it (see *Post-Colonial*). This also means that his critique "falls prey" to his own work (Derrida 24).<sup>6</sup> Adiga's critique is bound to repeat or re-establish the structures he criticizes. The next section will further illustrate this point.

### 3. An Abject Aesthetics

*The White Tiger* is unsettling not just because of its lack of "realism" (see Garajawala) but also because of the pervasive presence of disgust in its depictions of rural India. In this respect, Adiga is much closer to Jonathan Swift than to Ellison or Dostoyevsky, from whom he has probably also "learnt a trick or two" (Rushdie xviii). It is disgust, rather than moral outrage, that colours and permeates the narrative. Balram is disgusted by the "horrible stench" of the chicken in the markets of Old Delhi, by the "human spiders that go crawling in

between and under the tables with rags in their hands" (43), disgusted by their sluggish looks and, more importantly, by their lack of dignity. He abhors the lack of hygiene in the servants' quarters, and particularly his chore of massaging his master's knotty feet. The most compelling image of the abject is the river Ganges which is full of filth and faeces:

Please understand, Your Excellency, [...] the river brings darkness to India—the black river. Which black river am I talking of—which river of Death, whose banks are full of rich, dark, sticky mud whose grip traps everything that is planted in it, suffocating and choking and stunting it?

Why I am talking of Mother Ganga, daughter of the Vedas, river of illumination, protector of us all, breaker of the chain of birth and rebirth. Everywhere this river flows, that area is the Darkness. [...] Mr. Jiabao, I urge you not to dip in the Ganga, unless you want your mouth full of feces, straw, soggy parts of human bodies, buffalo carrion, and seven different kinds of industrial acids. (12)

Adiga here masterfully satirizes Indian nationalist rhetoric, in which the river Ganges is depicted along mythical, idealized lines. In Adiga's narrative, the Ganges is quite simply disgusting. It is polluted with "seven different kinds of industrial acids" and associated with death and decay. Furthermore, Balram first sees the Ganga on the occasion of his mother's death and the ensuing funeral rites. She is burnt, in accordance with Hindu practice, on the *Ganga ghat*. Balram's tone when he describes his mother's funeral pyre is not so much marked by mourning and sadness, or even by blind childish grief. Instead, what Balram conveys here is a sense of horrible disgust:

As the fire ate away the silk, a pale foot jerked out, like a living thing; the toes, which were melting in the heat, began to curl up, offering resistance to what was being done to them. Kusum shoved the foot into the fire, but it would not burn. [...]

Underneath the platform with the piled-up fire logs, there was a giant oozing mound of black mud where the river washed into the shore. The mound was littered with ribbons of jasmine, rose petals, bits of satin, charred bones; a pale-skinned dog was crawling and sniffing through the petals and satin and charred bones.

I looked at the ooze, and I looked at my mother's flexed foot, and I understood.

This mud was holding her back: this big, swelling mound of black ooze. She was trying to fight the black mud; her toes were flexed and resisting; but the mud was sucking her in, sucking her in. It was so thick, and more of it was being created every moment as the river washed into the *ghat*. Soon she would become part of the black mound and the pale-skinned dog would start licking her. (14-15)

Seen from a narratological angle, this passage is one of the few instances in the text where the distance between the cheeky voice of the narrating self and the humble and subservient personality of the experiencing self grows smaller. It is one of the very few instances where the narratorial perspective shifts towards the young boy Balram and is not exclusively filtered through the perspective of the entrepreneur Ashok. In the depiction of the childhood trauma of witnessing his mother's abject death, the voice of the experiencing self, the boy Balram, and the narrating self, adult Ashok, seem to merge. The boy Balram cannot narrate his emotions of pain, sadness, and fear, as they are too traumatic, but the adult Ashok can still recall the horrible image of the burning silk, his mother's weltering foot and the terrible pale-skinned dog. To use another metaphor: we can see Balram's world, even if it is darkened by Ashok's Ray Ban sunglasses.

The young boy cannot cope with the traumatic character of the situation and the pain of losing his mother. Therefore, he fixates on the image of his mother's foot rather than reflecting upon his emotions. But what he sees traumatizes him even more. Appalled yet spellbound by the image of the burning corpse he imagines that its foot fights against being burnt. His mother's losing battle against the fire mirrors his own losing battle against the system of oppression he is caught in. Like his mother, he will be drawn into "the mud," which stands for traditional Indian mores. According to these conventions, he is doomed to remain in abject slavery. Upon realizing that "[n]othing would get liberated here" (15), Balram faints for the first time in the narrative.

Only a few lines later, Ashok's grim humour gains control over the narrative again, as he describes the broken water taps and defunct electricity poles to an absent Wen Jiabao. The trauma of witnessing

the abject funeral pyre is not just a rewriting of the myth of the suffering Indian mother, but ultimately also yet another instance where the question of subaltern voice and agency becomes extremely fraught. As I have pointed out elsewhere (*M/Other India/s*; "Longing"), subaltern India is frequently associated with the abject even in the most radical postcolonial Indian fictional texts. Anand's sweeper Rakha whose "tattered flannel shirt, grimy with the blowings of his ever-running nose, obstruct[s] his walk" (84) is only the most obvious example.<sup>7</sup>

The Darkness, as Adiga calls it, is the epitome of the abject. It is a place inhabited by "human spiders," a place where all the water taps are broken, and hygiene is but a grotesque joke, where rivers abound with faeces and pieces of dead bodies and seven different industrial acids. It is interesting to note here that this dark abject space is also associated with Balram's dead mother, who is no longer a loving, nurturing person, but a grotesque and frightening dead body. Also, there is a second, similarly monstrous mother-figure, a grotesque parody of the ever-suffering "mother India" (Bharat Mata) who haunts nationalist discourse.<sup>8</sup> Throughout the narrative, Balram's grandmother Kusum serves as the epitome of provincial backwardness. She pesters him with her demands of money, suggestions for future brides, and she keeps trying to draw him back into that abject "area of Darkness." Kusum is pictured as morally depraved, self-centred, greedy and cruel, as manipulative and cunning. She resents her son's decision to send Balram to school and nags him to: "Put him [Balram] to work in the tea shop and let him make some money" (23). Also, she takes the dowry of his cousin Kishan's wedding (42). Ashok/Balram keeps referring back to her as a "wicked old witch."

Therefore, Ashok/Balram does not simply criticize Indian village mores. He also, unwittingly, articulates a strong sense of disgust and even hatred for subaltern India, which is a far cry from endowing the subaltern with agency. These affects cannot be attributed to an alleged subaltern voice, but it is much more likely that it is part of a "diasporic imaginary," to use Mishra's phrase. The pain and anger of the exile, who, on returning to his mother country, realizes how this very coun-

try is quite literally going to the dogs (to stick with Adiga's animal imagery) permeates the narrator's cheeky voice, as does a deeply-felt disgust about the lack of hygiene, the practices of cremation, and the stifling character of arranged marriage. This is not to equate Ashok's voice with that of Adiga. The point I am making here is not about individual authorship but about the larger cultural framework within which *The White Tiger* is located. As we have seen, *The White Tiger* is a social-critical novel, but its criticism is still invested in the very discourse it seeks to undermine.

#### 4. Conclusions

*The White Tiger* masterfully plays with all sorts of intertexts from a variety of cultural and historical backgrounds thus appealing to a globalized, educated readership. With his cheeky narrator-protagonist, Adiga indeed undermines sentimentalist or exoticist images of the poor, but, ultimately, his narrator articulates a number of attitudes and affects that can be attributed more to a middle-class intellectual than "the indigent." Balram's brilliant parody of neoliberal rhetoric is informed by the expertise of the ex-*Financial Times* journalist Adiga. His general sense of being appalled by "The Darkness" echoes leftist middle-class sentiments about the apparently omnipresent corruption and lack of hygiene in India's villages. Again, it is a feeling that his globalized, educated middle class readers (and I probably have to count Korte and myself among them) will find at least vaguely familiar.

This is not to belittle the political urgency of Adiga's masterful book, nor, of course, its artistry. His analyses are timely and "raise awareness" for the plight of the subaltern. But they do so within a framework that ventriloquizes the voice of the subaltern to make more general points about the condition of India. What is more, awareness-raising is in itself an extremely problematic issue as the case of the film adaptation of *Q & A*, Danny Boyle's blockbuster *Slumdog Million-*

*aire*, demonstrates. The setting of the film, Mumbai's gigantic slum Dharavi, has now become a major tourist attraction just like Taj Mahal. Film lovers all over the globe have indeed become more aware of the problems in the slums, and more sensitive tours guided by actual social workers have also emerged as part of an awareness-raising process,<sup>9</sup> but along with that, unashamed voyeurism seems to have become acceptable, too.

Maybe, what we are left with is what Dipesh Chakrabarty has termed "a politics of despair" (46), which do not entail a return to Romantic notions of authenticity, nor a wholesale rejection of Western modernity and individualism. The politics of despair requires a reading strategy that shows why the predicament which we have to criticize is necessarily inescapable. If even the most radical, the most sensitive and intelligent narratives about the disenfranchized (and *The White Tiger* is certainly among them) reify the discourse they write against to a certain degree, there may indeed be very little room for agency and voice. Seen from this angle, it seems to be all the more important to lay bare the structures of the discourse in which radical fiction is located. It may be a first step toward taking off Ashok Sharma's Ray Ban sunglasses and to try to see the world through Balram's eyes, however difficult and painful this may be.

Albert-Ludwigs-Universität  
Freiburg

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>On the "newness" of *The White Tiger* see also Detmers.

<sup>2</sup>For an excellent discussion of realism in *The White Tiger* see Gajarawala.

<sup>3</sup>On naming in *The White Tiger* see also Suneetha.

<sup>4</sup>In my usage of the term "elite," I take my cue from the eminent historians Ranajit Guha and Partha Chatterjee, according to whom we have to address the divide between the underprivileged, rural, often lower caste subaltern on the

one hand, and the historian who belongs to the urban, educated, typically upper-caste elite on the other. There are, of course, more classes than the two, and neither Guha nor Chatterjee would deny this.

<sup>5</sup>There is of course no such thing as a unified caste system. The very term “caste” which derives from the Portuguese “casta” (“creed”) is already fraught. There are two Sanskrit words for the phenomenon translated as caste, each of which refers to a different system: “varna,” which could also be translated as “colour,” and “jati,” which could be termed “clan.” The varna system is laid down in classical texts such as *Manusmriti* (“The Law of Manu”), but is often considered to be abstract and not important in everyday practice. There are four varnas—the Brahmins or priests at the top, the Kshatriyas or warriors come second, the Vaishyas or traders third, the Sudras or servants at the bottom. Jati, by contrast, is a system of endogamy, professional occupation and social hierarchy that is often mistranslated as “subcaste.” There are thousands of jatis that are typically associated with a profession—a “Gandhi,” for instance, is a vegetable vendour. Balram, when he talks about caste, refers to his jati, which is “sweet-maker” (on caste see, for instance, Fuchs).

<sup>6</sup>“Operating from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources from the old structure [...] the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work” (Derrida 24).

<sup>7</sup>Arundhati Roy’s Orangedrink Lemondrink Man, a monstrous pedophile who is, like Adiga’s chai-wallas, associated with the spider, would be another case in point. Images of the abject are also present in Vikram Seth’s *A Suitable Boy* in a scene where the upper-caste protagonists visit a shoe factory. As tanning and working with leather are considered to be impure and inauspicious, these tasks are traditionally performed by Dalits, people of the lowest stratum of caste hierarchy. Like Adiga, Seth plays with upper-caste disgust for the Dalit.

<sup>8</sup>The image of the bravely suffering Indian mother, often associated with the rural lower classes such as the Halwai family, is of crucial importance in the cultural imaginary of the subcontinent, and the scene is of similar importance in the narrative. See for instance Sunder-Rajan and Ray for excellent discussions of images of women and maternity in India.

<sup>9</sup>I would like to thank Christine Vogt-William for this piece of information.

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