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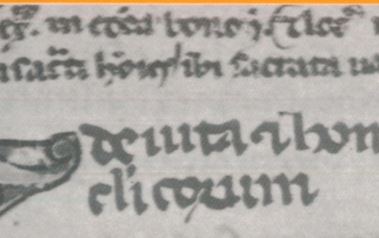

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THE END OF HISTORY. OR, IS IT? CIRCULARITY VERSUS PROGRESS IN CARYL PHILLIPS' *THE NATURE OF BLOOD*

ÁNGELES DE LA CONCHA
U.N.E.D.

The fact that Linda Hutcheon in her influential work *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988) declared "historiographic metafiction" as the defining postmodernist genre, testifies to the status historical fiction enjoys in contemporary writing. Indeed not all critics have agreed on her rather grand pronouncement, but even those who have dissented (Nünning 1997), have done so the better to encompass the rich diversity of the genre, the significant enlargement of its boundaries and above all the challenging epistemological issues it has contributed to raising.

The vigorous upsurge of interest in History is related to the crisis of the discipline itself, in the wake of the revisionist rethinking of the Enlightenment and its self-legitimating emancipatory narratives. History is no longer accepted as the movement of a linear time towards an open and indefinitely perfectible future, in a process whose direction and purpose justifies the events it undertakes to narrate. The exposure of this metanarrative as a legitimation myth for a type of civilisation that it has helped to constitute, that of Western modernity, has destroyed the status of totality it had fashioned, leaving open a structure of "partial totalities, totalities that turn out to be limited by fact", as Foucault (1997: 373) argued in *The Order of Things*. Inevitably, the more history "accepts its relativity, and the more deeply its sinks into the movement it shares with what it is recounting, then the more it tends to the slenderness of the narrative, and all

the positive content it obtained for itself through the human sciences is dissipated" (1997: 371).

That history is a narrative, and that this narrative is all we have of the past or, to put it another way, that we no longer have access to facts but only to interpretations, any interpretation being itself the interpretation of an older one, a story of a previous story, is already an accepted assumption amongst postmodernist historians. That these narratives are subject to what Hayden White significantly described as a "poetic process" in an article, no less significantly, entitled "The Fictions of Factual Representation" (1976), highlights the literary nature of history writing, which involves the literary procedures of selection, troping and emplotment. It is hardly surprising then that since historiography is on the same plane as fiction, the same core questions on the nature of reality and its representation are addressed by both genres, albeit from different perspectives, providing mutually enriching views but indeed blurring their hitherto well defined borders. It is no less surprising that fiction has eagerly seized the chance to contest history's previous privileged authority as regards purported truths, and has both gleefully taken it to task and engaged in providing contending versions. Indeed, the epistemological differences that had staunchly separated them have become narrower in their postmodern counterparts, in that both genres radically oppose foundational discourses that transcend the local, contingent, time-bound stories they undertake to tell, and also, in that both articulate a profound loss of faith in our ability to represent reality. Just as postmodernist historiography alerts the reader to the illusion of the historian as omniscient narrator, and of the "poetic" nature of narrativisation, these novels alert us to history's practices, as well as to their own, in spinning stories. The change of course is crucial. It certainly signals the end of the "great story" of Western civilisation in its two grand versions, the humanist of moral progress and the Marxist of justice and freedom, reducing it to a series of competing, often contradictory, accounts of the same events that undermine the belief that historical processes can ever be objectively known (Niethammer 1992: 8).

The end of history, posthistory, or directly the *death* of history, is not an isolated concept. A mood of impending end theories gradually gathered momentum through the last decades of the twentieth century, probably under the influence of a millennial consciousness. The end of metaphysics, the end of metanarratives, the end of universals, the end of large-scale truths, are all familiar tenets in postmodern criticism. No less than the theories that proclaimed the death of the author, dissolving authorship into socially based discursive practices, the end of the subject, reducing the ego-based autonomous individual to a product of cultural codes, or even the end of man himself (Foucault 1997: 385). It is therefore no wonder that History should have been drawn into the swirl, with the fiercest assaults levelled not by literary contenders, but by philosophers of History. Yet, when reading them, it becomes clear that they complicate rather than affirm or certify the end of History. Furthermore, the discipline itself, not to mention the novels that fictionalise its discourse, appears more alive and kicking than ever, feeding precisely, in a rather necrophilic mood, upon the alleged death of its subject matter. On the other hand, some of these assaults have been aimed not at History itself but at certain specific historical practices derived from its claim to a scientific status and to an inherent capacity to articulate the inner drives of large world processes. For example, the devastating onslaught on History that Michel Foucault carried out in his influential essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1976), was actually a rejection of what he described as "the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies". In its stead he proposed a different historical practice which he called "genealogy", and embarked on historical enterprises, radically different in kind, in that they relentlessly disrupted history's pretended continuity and teleology, such as *Histoire de la Folie*, translated into English as *Madness and Civilisation. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* or *The History of Sexuality*. However, the difficulty of radically doing away with history as a metaphysically driven narrative is shown in the stinging criticism levelled at his method by Derrida, who, upon the publication of *Madness and Civilisation,* argued that Foucault's attempt "to write the history of madness *itself*" (original emphasis), and not "a history of madness described from within the language of reason, the language of psychiatry *on* madness", fell prey to the same metaphysical trap he was determined to uncover (Derrida 1978: 34). The revolution against reason, claimed Derrida, can be made only from within (1978: 36). On the other hand, if the origin of the history of madness is located at that point in which "reason constituted itself by excluding and objectifying the free subjectivity of madness", then that decision, that differentiating act, "runs the risk of construing the division as an event or a structure subsequent to the unity of an original presence, thereby confirming metaphysics in its fundamental operation" (1978: 40).

A key issue in the narrativist historians' thesis is the consideration of emplotment as the syntax which articulates the meaning of otherwise discrete, even random, events. Plot, in turn, is structured in sequential units lineally arranged in a beginning, a middle and an end. As Peter Brooks (1984: 10) perceptively stated in *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in*

Narrative, "plot is the design and intention of narrative, what shapes a story and gives it a certain direction or intent of meaning. We might think of plot as the logic or perhaps the syntax of a certain kind of discourse, one that develops the propositions through a temporal sequence and progression". The articulation of time and emplotment are hence crucial in the story's encoded significance. Depending upon the points chosen to situate the beginning of the narrative and its closure, we shall have a story of either progression or of decline. Both teleology and its ensuing political or moral messages are thus unobtrusively embedded in the narrative process that, in turn, gives shape and meaning to the events narrated.

In both History and story, the issue of a narrative voice or voices has far ranging implications as regards the question of objectivity. The theory of History's neutral detached voice, of its pretension to narrate events as they were, no longer holds. Its illusionist effects have long since been uncovered by the distinction introduced by Benveniste between discourse and history. In historical utterance, he claimed (1977: 208), the speaker is not implied: "no one speaks here; the events *seem* to narrate themselves". Discourse, on the other hand, designates "every utterance assuming a speaker and a hearer, and in the speaker, the intention of influencing the other in some way" (1977: 209). Of course the fact that this intention is not acknowledged in historical narrative does not mean that it does not exist. In fact each historian has his own view of the events he undertakes to narrate. As Barbara Foley (1986: 67) shows in *Telling the Truth. The Theory and Practice of Documentary Fiction*, in both History and the novel "a truth is being told with facts to back it up". It is hardly surprising then that since the self-assumed neutrality of the narrator's voice has been unmasked and exposed, a plethora of new voices have risen to claim the right to speak up, and have challenged the hitherto unified omniscient view of prevalent historical discourse. Who can speak for whom has subsequently become a thorny question. The archives of History have been opened up to a plurality of story tellers who articulate their contents in new stories, from new perspectives, according to the different vantage points they explicitly assume. The categories of gender, race and ethnicity, largely ignored by the master Western discourse, have hence provided a rich lore of competing stories that lay mute and dormant, waiting, as it were, for release. The monological, lineal, teleological discourse of History has been thus swiftly overtaken by a polyphonic one, which is overtly challenging the former unified prevalent versions, characteristically white and, indeed, male.

In the realm of the novel there has been a parallel process. The new relish in a dialectics of versions and reversions has led to a reopening and

rewriting of canonical works, and has yielded a vast output of new stories that enrich old plots with fresh insights, by providing in-depth explorations of former secondary characters or hitherto unquestioned issues. Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1967) was the first well-known successful experiment, with Rhys fleshing out a rich full past for Bertha Mason, Rochester's mad wife in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre.* Emma Tennant's sequels to some of Jane Austen's novels, for example, *Elinor and Marianne* (1996), where she takes up *Sense and Sensibility* after the marriage of the two sisters; or *Pemberly* (1993) and *An Unequal Marriage* (1994), in which she deals with the fortunes of Darcy and Elizabeth and the ongoing effects of "pride and prejudice", offer an ironic and playfully humorous counterpoint to classic (un)realistic closures. Marina Warner in her novel *Indigo* (1992) has recast the female characters of *The Tempest*, Caliban's mother Sycorax, a voiceless shape whose portrait was painted in the harshest terms of abuse by Prospero, and sweet-tempered, credulous and compliant Miranda. Warner fleshes them out anew, giving them full voices of their own, which expose the ideological undercurrents in colonial and feminine representations in Shakespeare's age and play. Both Jean Rhys and Marina Warner had connections with the West Indies. The former was born and raised in Dominica and went to England when she was sixteen. Marina Warner, for her part, though born in England, is related to the small English-Caribbean island of St. Kitts through her father's ancestry, which includes black and white branches. It is hence hardly surprising that their work should explore this hidden vein of untold stories.

Caryl Phillips, who is black and was also born in St. Kitts and was brought up in England, is another writer that epitomises this kind of literary experimentation in historical revision and reversions. His first novels dealt with Jamaican issues: the stagnant life and enclosed horizons of a small colony, the hazy dreams of its inhabitants, the lure of the metropolis and the inability to adjust in either place. In *Cambridge* (1991) he went on to explore the conflicts of the daughter of an English plantation owner, who goes over to the West Indies on an inspection tour of the neglected family property. The narrative is the untold tale of largely suppressed plantation conflicts, silently looming in the background of canonical eighteenth and nineteenth-century British literature. One has only to remember *Mansfield Park*, for example, where the Bertrams' wealth and position are due to their plantation in the West Indies, or Jane Eyre, who near the end of the novel inherits a small fortune from an uncle also in the West Indies.

Crossing the River (1993) is an extremely interesting story covering the family destinies of a former black slave bound for Liberia, the land chosen for black slaves in America to go to when they were freed after the American

Civil War. The novel signals Caryl Phillips' first experiments with fictionalising the breakdown of traditional historical narrative. He does so by defying its most salient feature, linearity, in its widest possible spectrum of plot, social background and time. Instead of a lineal plot, we have a stark juxtaposition of fragments of the stories of a black slave's children, located in distant spaces and times. Starting in Liberia, after the American Civil War the narrative moves on to Denver, U.S., in the early 19th century, and from there on to a small provincial town in England during the second world war, to end in the same place some years later. The breaches in chronology, space and social environment do away with explicit causality. Instead, they give the effect of a broken mirror, its fragments sadly reflecting the African diaspora and ensuing destruction of memory, land and kin ties. They are tales of oblivion, death and dispersal, connected only by a tenuous family link that provides the palimpsest against which the novel acquires its haunting extra-temporal quality. The palimpsest, in turn, articulates the overall meaning of the narrative, by highlighting behind the temporal and spatial dissemination of the stories a pattern of recurrent exclusion and dispersion.

In *The Nature of Blood* (1997) Phillips further expanded the interaction between chronology and plot. The juxtaposition of aspects of the past and the present is here more ambitious and daring, as the narrative interweaves very different sources: historical, literary and fictional, with disparate places and times. It is the palimpsest which provides, in the end, the thread that holds the random fragments in shape. The plot intertwines various threads from distant historical times, social backgrounds and countries. The novel opens in a camp in Cyprus under British rule after the war, where thousands of Jewish refugees are waiting to be allowed entry in Palestine. It moves on to an extermination camp in Germany upon the entry of the British troops and their provision of humanitarian relief to survivors. We are then taken back in time to the 15th century, to Portobuffole, a small city near Venice in the Easter of 1480, when Jews and Christians are celebrating their respective historical religious commemorations. From there on to Venice at some time in the 16th century, when the Republic is on the verge of war with the Turks over Cyprus. There is an incessant shuttle between past and present, in which all the threads gradually interweave in a pattern which we will not be able to discern until the end of the narrative. Even at this point, it is intimated that the narrative could be indefinitely stretched to accommodate a new range of stories strung together by a haunting circularity. Its closure is thus arbitrary, fully dependent on the will of the narrator to stop there and then, and only then do we realise that the temporal and spatial gaps are just as much constitutive elements of the pattern as the recorded events. Furthermore, it is

their empty spaces that ascribe, albeit in an oblique way, full meaning to the story. Their recurrence constitute, as it were, visible figures within a geometry in which the voids are simultaneously background and/or figures, with respect the figures and/or background. In this way, Phillips builds up a narrative strategy that collapses the limits between form and content in a masterly way, as gradually the background becomes a figure and the figures recede into background.

As the novel is not sequential, there is no need for chapters. Events are arranged in no fixed clear-cut structure, but rather in a loose flow of episodes and voices criss-crossing across centuries, with only a few blank spaces between the shifts in time and place —Cyprus, Germany, Italy, England and Israel, in no apparent order. Textually, the beginning and the end are connected through a secondary character, Stephan Stern, a Jewish doctor who once chose to leave Germany, the country of his birth, in pursuit of the dream of a promised land. The novel is circular in structure, or perhaps elliptical, as it spirals forward to the present, while incessantly gyrating towards and around events in the past as it tours through distant countries and cultures. There are Christians, there are Jews and there are blacks. Blacks that are either Christian as Othello, or Jewish like Malka, the African girl flown into Israel from a village in Ethiopia that briefly figures in the last episode. And there are those who do not fit in a particular definition, who are just caught in the in-betweens. These are arbitrarily defined by others, or they eventually define themselves according to the image projected onto them by others, either by the others' rejection of them, or by their own will to please and adjust and become integrated in the others' world. In some cases there are visible differences in skin colour, dress and/ or way of life, the latter either chosen or imposed. But the fundamental difference goes beyond all appearances. *The Nature of Blood* is in this sense a profoundly metaphorical title. On the one hand, blood is related to the semantic field of emotion and kinship, and is as such associated with the deepest, the tenderest, the most violent and murderous human feelings. On the other, its physical substance does not show any outward difference, thus it is only the ideology informing the social and cultural practices that carries the excess in meaning.

Narrators shift in this kaleidoscopic novel. There are first, second and third narrative voices. Intradiegetic and heterodiegetic narrators. Direct report and also free indirect style. Wanderings of memory, flux of consciousness, a split voice of a fractured self. Instead of the neutral or absent (in either case monological) voice of the historical narrative, we get a polyphony, where each voice is posited in relation to every other while remaining perfectly distinct: a plurality of centres of consciousness, irreducible to a common

denominator or a unifying view. Even in the instance of an omniscient narrator telling a historical event which occurred in Portobuffole in 1480, that of the trial of three Jews accused of child murder as their religious rites, the narrative voice splits into double meanings. Irony reveals in this case the unlimited capacity of language to choose, among its many layers of meaning, those that construe reality to suit power. Oral sources of history are by this means, unobtrusively exposed through the testimonies adduced to prove the facts that are accepted as evidence. For example, the witness borne by a woman who had spoken to the allegedly murdered child beggar, when he had asked her for the name of the town. Or the report of another woman that had seen him, though not actually spoken to him. Or yet again, the testimony borne by a blacksmith, who is described as "a busy albeit unpredictable temperamental man", who, yes, recalled he had been asked the address of one of the Jews by a child and had directed him to his place. This last witness we are told in passing, was the crucial one, as "in those times nobody could accept the word of a woman, unless it had been substantiated by a man" (49). Of course this quiet side remark links together in the same order two sets of well grounded historic phenomena: the deprivation of basic civic rights, in the case of women on the sole ground of gender, and the artful interpretation of law, in the service of the authority currently in power, in matters affecting ethnic and racial minorities, both of which show in retrospect the workings of prejudice and its fateful import in the course of history.

The Nature of Blood captures well the deadly power of false rumours, their calculated effect in blood heating and the vicious violence of blood prejudice once set loose. Expressions such as "it was widely known" (52), "one had to understand" (59), "the Jews were widely known to" (52), "there was no doubt that" (59), "nearly everyone remembered" (59), attest to the unspecific, yet powerful force of anonymous authority. Conversely, the novel also captures the cold-blooded form in which justice can remain both unscrupulously at fault and yet scrupulously faultless in its procedures. Irony is eloquent in this respect. "Jews were obliged to take an oath that they would freely volunteer the truth", we read. A judge, on the other hand, could order "the individual to be tormented if he suspected either perjury or reticence". The neutral-seeming third person narrative ironically signals the foreseeable outcome: "having by means of torture, loosened the Jews' tongues to a full confession of their wickedness, the appalling details of their crime continued to cause great indignation among the people of Portobuffole... Andrea Dolfin [the doge's representative] concluded his urgent

report with a written summary of the crime, according to the Jews' own confession" (100).

In the light of the exposed unreliability of historical records, the broken and fragmentary first person narrative of Eva Stern, a young woman aged 21, on the verge of release from an extermination camp in Germany by British troops, though openly subjective, rings more true. Yet, her story, for all its prototypical quality, is not likely to appear in History books. She is not an agent of History, but only a bearer of it. And History, of course, deals with agency and change. Agents are the ones to be recorded, their acts acknowledged no matter the outcome. Bearers, on the other hand, are lumped together and recorded as ciphers. Eva's narrative tells the ordeal of an inexperienced young girl caught in a turmoil of forces she cannot understand and for which she bears little responsibility. Significantly, she is the child of a mixed marriage, a Jewish father and a German mother, and has no particular religious or ethnic allegiances. Her father had estranged himself from his own kin, being only too eager to "heal the wound of his 'low' upbringing" (16). And her mother was, in turn, estranged from her own parents upon her marriage to the young doctor, bright enough to be her father's junior partner, but not deemed socially fit to marry her.

The last thread to complete the novel's complex interwoven narrative is that of an African, the appointed General of the Venetian navy, soon to defend the island of Cyprus from the Turks. It is once again a first person narrative and also a leap back into the past, to Venice in the 16th century, and again one more tale of exclusion on ethnic grounds. In the case of the three Portobuffole Jews accused of child murdering, the protagonists were (self)enclosed in a ghetto and allowed no possibility of social mixing. At the time, intimacy between Jewish men and Christian women was punished and neither community had any wish to intrude upon the other's ground. In Eva's narrative the exclusion was initially rooted exclusively on socio-economic grounds. In her grandparents' case, on the first generation money of their daughter's suitor compared with their own solidly established wealth through a lineage of bankers. There is no other identifying sign or visible difference. Later on, in her own case as in that of many others, the difference is even more insubstantial as it has to do with the invisibility of blood, which, as such, is far beyond physical perception. It needs, therefore, to be made apparent. First, it has to be clothed in a recognisable fashion and forced to wear a visible outward sign, then it has to be openly and indelibly inscribed on the body itself. It is always an "other" who has the prerogative to inscribe and signify, and hence to set the new meaning, regulated by a new syntax, no matter how arbitrary. "Destiny is a movement of a uniformed man's hand"

(163), we are told, and it is up to this hand to decide, to the point of life or death. The depersonalisation implied by the close-up of the hand and the uniform which grow into a centre of decision, stands metonymically for a process of objectification in which human beings are reduced to bodies. In the camp it is the body only that counts. Body activities, body decay, damaged bodies. They are despoiled, scrutinised, used, manufactured, discarded and shot or gassed and burned. Bodies made docile objects, eventually reduced to food for rats. "Dead or alive. The distinction is irrelevant" (172). The narrative acquires at this point a staccato feverish rhythm; sentences cut short, grammar reduced to the barest essential as the randomness of the mind follows the calculated, purposeful depersonalising scheme.

And yet, the tenor of the story subtly, but significantly, aims at a different target. Once again, it does so by means of the narrative form, without comment or explicit causal connections. It is not the brutality of the extermination camps that the narrative foregrounds, despite the scenes depicted, but the equally deadly effects produced by freedom, when this freedom is set in a vacuum and its promises turn out to be a mirage. To Eva's eyes, untuned to the ways of the world, as the camp had encompassed all her experience other than childhood memories, the kind, cool impersonality of the D. P camp is as damaging as the calculated brutality and random cruelty of the extermination one. The difference lies only in the lack of physical violence: "[N]o killing. No last words. No cruelty. Just death" (187). Objectifying slips into subjectifying, that Foucaultian concept by which the individual is given the illusion of becoming a subject in his or her own right, whilst actually being subjected and "normalised" in a no longer visible but just as effective way. Eva feels looked at, weighed, labelled and placed, according to an image of her she cannot control and which escapes her. She is at a double remove from the world and from her inner self, as she faces an unrecognisable body under the depersonalising acrostics for the displaced. Memory and dreams start to blend in nightmares mixing with reality and soon overtake it, as freedom looks empty and the future is void of its promises. It is significant that release and officially granted freedom break the resistance the camp had not succeeded in breaking. Ironically there is no need to kill anymore. Eva herself willingly takes her life, sweetly reassuring the other half of her divided self with the soothing words she had always been offered, and which persistently prove to be lies: "You'll be fine", "everything will be fine", "don't worry, everything will be fine".

Of course the intention is fully political. It targets the aftermath of post-colonisation and enfranchisement processes, when people are granted a citizenship void of the actual means to enjoy it. It is Eva's infatuation with

the British trooper who individualises her in the German camp and gives her the illusion of once again being a human being, a woman with the prospect of the bare commonness of a woman's life —love and children— and her later disillusion, that causes her fall into madness and death. It is telling that this happens in Britain, where she follows him in the wake of his feeble offer of marriage and help. Indeed the narrative makes clear that he cannot keep his promise, not out of ill will but through lack of purpose and sheer ineffectuality. Pointedly, a strong purpose, albeit quite different in kind, is ironically shown in the case of the British troops responsible for ensuring the passage of the Jewish survivors from the German camps into Palestine, who are detained yet again in a barbed wire camp in Cyprus: "A dishevelled collections of tin huts and tents were illuminated by bright floodlights. However this shower of electricity, far from conferring any glamour, served only to confirm the pitiful nature of the whole shabby enterprise. The British had taken it upon themselves to imprison the defenceless" (6), we read. The fact that this episode is located at the beginning of the novel, with the liberators turned into guards of a new restrictive order, proleptically points to the fatal cycle of oppression and revolt that, according to Michel Foucault, opposes the consolatory fable of progress of traditional history.

In his influential essay on the discourse of History as scientific discipline, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", Foucault launched a fierce attack on the tendency to describe the history of morality in terms of a lineal development. Developments, for him are wishful illusion. They "may appear as a culmination", he wrote (1977: 83), but they are merely the current episodes in a series of subjugations", in which the rulers exploited at will their power to regulate and to punish through the emptiness of law and its system of rules, which could be bent to any purpose. Contrary to modern History's attempts at unifying synthesis and meaningful teleology, he encouraged a method of research that would record events in their singularity, outside an imposed chain of significations. Furthermore, he (1977: 76) urged his readers "to seek in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without History —in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts" This is precisely what postmodern historical novels are currently doing. Indeed what Caryl Phillips does in *The Nature of Blood* in which discrete, disparate events are explored through the deepest human predicaments to reveal the profoundly antihuman thrust of Western History, self-fashioned as a record of moral progress.

I mentioned earlier the import of emplotment and how it provided the syntax of a discourse by arranging the episodes in units structured in a sequential order, in which beginnings, middle and ends articulate the

meaning. The temporal and spatial randomness of the stories that are gathered together in this multiple plot novel is of course only apparent. The lack of sequence and the fragmentary nature of the structure are in themselves fully meaningful. Although there is no particular order and the stories are not told one at a time, but intermingle all the time, the links and the meaning are there in their very absence, highlighting the lie of a metahistory of lineal development and showing instead the pattern of repetition. Irony is one of the threads that link the disparate stories, conferring on them an overall negative historical meaning. Eva's catch-phrase in Germany "everything will be fine", is replicated in Malka's story in Israel, in which it is the Jews' turn to seize power and we are unobtrusively shown its incipient effects: "Everywhere, we were told the same thing. First we will teach you the language, then when you leave the absorption centre you will be able to study at the university. Don't worry, your parents will find work" (208). Eventually she ends up in a dancing club entertaining elderly men, about to be sacked, and being black, she is never asked to dance.

I also mentioned the elliptical structure of the novel within which the different stories spiralled forward in a related circular movement. In keeping with it, they all share a pattern of initial enticing progress that augurs personal success or liberation, inevitably to turn back into further confinement in society and the self. The protagonists move both geographically and socially from the margins into the centre, only to be drawn away and ruthlessly expelled far beyond the limits of the social order. Eva's father moves up the ladder socially and professionally but success almost coincides with defeat, bringing about in his fall that of his German wife and their two daughters. Geographically, he moves from the outskirts of the city into a four-storeyed house in the professional quarter that stands at its centre as a symbol of his acquired status, only to end up, all four, in small hidden rooms of back streets, and later on, in the deadly confinement of the extermination camps.

"I had moved from the edge of the world into the centre. From the dark margins to a place where even the weakest rays of the evening sun were caught and thrown back in a blaze of glory. I, a man born of royal blood, a mighty warrior, yet a man who, at one time, could view himself only as a poor slave, had been summoned to serve this state; to lead the Venetian army; to stand at the very centre of the empire" (107). This is Othello musing over his fortune while contemplating his newly wed wife, peacefully asleep. Indeed we do not need to be told the outcome of this story. It is known well enough. As T. S. Eliot (1963: 194) hauntingly expressed in "Burnt Norton", appropriating Mary Stuart's enigmatic motto, "in my end is

my beginning". Caryl Phillips situates the end of Othello's narrative almost at the point where Shakespeare began his, with premonitory advice urging the African renegade: "Black Uncle Tom... fighting the white man's war for him" (181), "while you still have time, jump from her bed and fly away home... no good can come from your foreign adventure" (183). In *The Nature of Blood*, Othello's story is a tale of foreboding. A story of strenuous self-advancement and of adjustment to others, for which he will pay a high price.

The inclusion of a literary piece of work, such as *Othello,* in the midst of other narratives dealing with historical events, though Phillips makes a point of citing its historical sources, is in keeping with two of the main tenets of new historicism, initially highly indebted to Michel Foucault. First, in that it "eliminates the old divisions between literature and its 'background', between text and context" (Veeser 1989: xi). And, second, in the non sequential and temporally distant arrangement of the narratives, showing the way in which "literary and non-literary texts can interpenetrate over a great historical divide" (Veeser 1994: 16).

Othello is one of the tragedies that has undergone the most thorough critical revision by new historicists, not to mention feminist and multi-cultural critics. In bringing together their critical practices and insights, namely the juxtaposition and relating of events belonging to different realms of experience, and offering different perspectives on their ideological ground, Phillips highlights a recurring historical pattern ignored or suppressed by History's grand narrative of progress. In this respect, the postmodern historical novel shows itself to be particularly well fitted for the analysis of those ideological pressures that have shaped events, both private and public. By rejecting the portrait of the past as the self-contained and complete world depicted by modern history and by focusing instead on the distortions and reworkings that subjective interpretation and reconstruction entail, it has the ability to yield ever new, often competing, meanings. Furthermore, it throws new light on the way narrative itself shapes meaning as it brings to the fore, on the one hand, the ways in which representation is pervaded by ideology, in the Althusserian terms of the imaginary relationship the individual entertains with his real life conditions. On the other, it shows how the personal is political, as feminist theory had insistently claimed. This means, that those practices which for ages have been largely dismissed as legally and socially irrelevant because of their ascription to the realm of the private and the domestic, are in fact at the basis of the social organisation and have immense consequences at the public level. No wonder Foucault encouraged historians to look into "sentiments, love, conscience, instincts".

Another related feature of the postmodern historical novel is the rewriting of events from the point of view of those generally ignored by traditional history. Women, for instance, have been and still are conspicuously absent from historical records. By choosing a female voice and the ordinary experience of an ordinary girl for the account of an event central to the novel, and one as historically significant as the Holocaust, Phillips brings to the fore the largely disregarded history of women. *The Nature of Blood* exposes their exclusion from the centres of decision and power that articulate social pressures into practices, whilst showing them to be the first victims of the ensuing social organisation. In Eva's narrative, her mother is the first one to see the impending turn of events. She insists once and again on the need to leave Germany whilst it is still possible and migrate to America where they could all make a new start. But her pleading and insistence are of no account to her husband, estranged from her out of his social self-consciousness, until it is too late. The fate of Eva's eldest sister, Margot, is related to the sexual abuse she suffers at the hands of the man in whose house she is in hiding. The suicide of the German woman who gives shelter to Eva and her parents is related to her relationship with her Jewish lover. Eva's own death is ultimately related to her abandonment by the British soldier that befriended her in the camp. None of these women have any power of decision regarding their own lives, conditioned as they are by powerful, cultural and emotional or psychological ties. Eva herself indirectly makes her mother responsible for her father's stubborn refusal to listen to his wife's pleas, guessing that if she had been more compliant towards him, less herself in a word, she would have been able to win him into leaving for America.

Desdemona is another such victim. From the very beginning of Othello's narrative she is unconsciously associated in his mind with the prevailing reductively binary classification of woman as either virgin or whore, the borderline between the two always being unclear. In his first long monologue while contemplating his wife in her sleep, he wonders at the fate that had "deposited her into such a predicament". In his musing she is cast as object of the public male gaze, in which he shares in full connivance with the accompanying sexual speculations: "No longer to be gazed upon as desirable, yet unattainable". Imagined by others as "easy prey for their lascivious thoughts". "Truly, what am I to make of her?", he wonders. "In her chastity, loyalty and honour, she is the most un-Venetian of women, yet is there some sport to this lady's actions? I am familiar with the renowned deceit of the Venetian courtesan, yet I have taken a Venetian for a wife. Has some plot been hatched about me?" (106).

Shakespearean critics are quite unanimous in tracing Othello's jealousy back to a profound sexual anxiety that makes him prone to believe Iago's slanderous accusations of Desdemona. As Gayle Greene (1995: 48) puts it, "though he has powerful instigation in Iago, Iago has power only because his insinuations ring deeply true to him". As she goes on to show, his anxiety is grounded in men's internalisation of women's ambivalent identity, an ambivalence which makes the ties between them precarious, whilst always leaving the prerrogative to cut them in male hands. Desdemona's father does so when discovering that she has eloped with the Moor. He thereupon disowns her as his child and warns Othello that having deceived her father, he may well be the next one to be deceived. The plausible generalisation of an act is soon to be coupled to the generalisation of lustful sexuality that Iago attributes to women. It is indeed the shared male assumptions on the nature of women that makes Othello believe Iago sooner than Desdemona. And yet it is also quite clear from the play, that this identity which has been bestowed on women by men has no grounds whatsoever as far as the three feminine characters are concerned (Hidalgo 1996, Neely 1980). As Greene (1995: 54) highlights, "men's misconception of women are in Desdemona's words 'horrible fancies', projections of their own worst fears and failings" (iv, ii, 26).

In the novel, Caryl Phillips emphasises from the beginning of the narrative the nature of Othello's anxiety, and leaves it clear that Iago will succeed because the seeds of the tragedy are already there in the African's heart. In *The Nature of Blood* Othello has a wife and a son of his own, both of whom he has left behind in his native country and is about to betray. As he wandered through the city of Venice, he gazed at it in awe and was lured by its golden vision, a vision he saw as profoundly "desirable but attainable". For months he has been sailing its intricate labyrinth of channels sliding into its inmost water lanes. Desdemona's enclosed garden is at the centre of the empire, being the daughter of one of the powerful senators in whose hands is his destiny. The seclusion of the place, the watery surroundings and the tales of self-aggrandisement make the realms of power and sexual desire interlock metaphorically. Phillips makes clear that the sexual anxiety generated in Othello, though indeed projected onto Desdemona, has more to do with his own self and past than with their mutual relation. In this he differs from Greenblatt (1994: 70), for whom Desdemona's frank sexual desire is unconsciously perceived as adulterous by her husband, on account of the prevailing Christian conception of marriage and the suspect nature of pleasure and sexual love. In Phillips' version, Othello's adultery moves beyond the

sexual realm into the political, as it involves turning his back on his own kin and people to fully embrace his white masters' values and ambitions.

Gayle Greene perceptively remarks that Othello "indicates considerably more interest in what made Desdemona love him than what made him love her, and a reliance on [...] certain "props of assurance": a dependence on the esteem of others for his sense of himself" (1995: 50). In the same vein, in *The Nature of Blood* Desdemona is the means by which he accomplishes the successful fashioning of an identity that becomes not only acceptable to the Western "others", but is loved by the daughter of one of the most important protagonists. She is the token of his centredness and hence, the possibility of her betrayal, albeit sexual, transcends sexuality. It threatens the core of the identity he has so laboriously fashioned.

In his seminal article "The Improvisation of Power", Stephen Greenblatt identifies narrativity and performance as the essential constituents of Othello's character. It is indeed quite evident from the play that Desdemona's initial attraction to him is grounded in his narrative abilities, in the tales he tells her of wondrous deeds and of the fearful dangers he had run into and overcome. Greenblatt (1994: 59) argues that "Desdemona's falling in love with the self fashioned by his narrative seals Othello's ceasing to be himself". Phillips, for his part, reveals quite clearly in his own narrative the self-delusive nature of the black man's fantasies. His self-absorption, his keen observation of others in order to learn from them and grow in their esteem. He even uses Desdemona as a source of valuable self-interested information, using the occasion of their meetings "to learn from her about Venetian society" (1997: 134). It is his narcissism and his courting of Western values that do not allow him to be a good judge of character as he relies too heavily on the perception of himself solely in relation to a culture within which he is a foreigner. Caryl Phillips' novel focuses on the close association of ethnic and gender prejudices resulting in such a tragic output of historical violence. Othello has internalised both. His image of himself is constructed by his search for his reflexion in the eyes of others. He is profoundly self-conscious of his appearance and of the impression he makes and for all his pride and boasts of personal worth, he is only too eager to trust, to please and adjust. Indeed when the plot is hatched, he will make an easy prey.

By juxtaposing stories within a wide spectrum of factual truth with texts whose status is unmistakably literary, the novel clearly endorses the new historicist claim to the collapsing of text and context. The reopening and rewriting of historical texts, regardless of whether they belong to the literary or the "historical" realm, perform the same ideological function. They display

the cultural, political and ideological pressures that have shaped representations of identity and social groups, and expose the outcome of their clashing interests. At the same time, they show the hidden links and the common nature of discreet events, encouraging the reader to reflect on the untold history that binds them together.

Narrative closure has an ideological clinching effect, as well as being the ultimate means to articulate the meaning of the story. In consonance with the remarks made above on the non-sequential yet elliptical structure of the novel and on the apparent arbitrariness of its beginning and ending, I wish to point now to the undecidable quality of its closure. The circularity of the narrative, after a wide span of centuries, brings us again to the beginning. Shortly after, in fact, because we are allowed the very brief, though necessary, glimpse of the outcome of the hopes deposited in the Promised Land. This time we are told the story of a black Jewish Ethopian young woman and her predicament in Israel amongst white Jews. History blends once again into another random story, yet again showing no development and no progress, only a sinister pattern of recurrence. A narrative doomed to an indefinite replay of the past with slight variations. We are left with the lonely image of Stephen Stern, who has briefly met this black Jewish woman and seen through her story, sadly rewinding scenes of his own lost life and the wasted lives of his nieces, Eva and Margot, back in Germany. His arms vainly outstretched to reach them signal the unbridgeable gaps between sequences of subjugations, within which Malka's near future prefigures yet another episode. The mood is indeed melancholic.

It is here that the pattern of affairs between the events is brought to the fore to reveal that single drama that Foucault's (1977: 85) genealogy shows History as staging: "the endlessly repeated play of dominations". Genealogy was for Foucault "a way of analysing multiple open-ended, heterogeneous trajectories of discourses, practices and events, and of establishing their patterned relationships without recourse to regimes of truths that claim pseudo-naturalistic laws or global necessities" (Mitchell Dean 1994: 35). But Foucault's alternative, and Caryl Phillips' in his wake, though indeed drastically "curative" of false illusions, as it was intended to be, replaces the discarded "consolatory" metanarrative of moral progress with an indefinite recurrence of oppression. "In this perspective, the future no longer exists", Baudrillard (1994: 11) wrote accurately in "The reversal of history", and "if there is no longer a future, there is no longer an end either. So *this is not even the end of history*" (original emphasis), but simply another point on its endless circularity. ❧

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POST-BAROQUE SUBLIME? THE CASE OF PETER ACKROYD[1]

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The purpose of this essay will be to examine a postmodern British novel, i.e. Peter Ackroyd's *English Music* (1992), in the light of contemporary discoveries concerning baroque aesthetics. This dimension is inscribed in various ways in Ackroyd's works, through the resort to specific textual ploys, but also thanks to the presence of characteristic *topoi*, which include the fascination with and spectacle of death, existential anguish, metamorphosis, disguise and dressing up, illusions, etc. These thematic characteristics and strategies contribute to the building up of an atmosphere or colouring which is comparable to that pervading the novels of other contemporary British authors, such as Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson and even Salman Rushdie, whose works will be used sporadically to illustrate our point. This tends to suggest that the baroque is still very much present as the distinct tessitura of the novels of some of the most prominent contemporary British writers, and thus appears as a distinct component of postmodern fiction.

As may be surmised from these preliminary considerations, our approach will be based on a transhistorical conception of the baroque as a thematic, formal and aesthetic constant (Eugenio d'Ors), as a function or an "inflexion" (Deleuze), or even as a way of seeing (Buci-Glucksmann), and is not directly concerned with the periodization theory of the baroque. However, the notion of periodization will have to be tackled in so far as one may find it difficult to deal with a postmodern artefact without taking into account the text's inscription within a period, a culture, an ideology. This will be done through Buci-Glucksmann's (1996) notion of the "ultramodern", a period characterised by a shift away from stability and finitude towards an "infinite dispersal of the real and the virtual" which is tantamount to a form of entropy (Buci-

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Glucksmann 1996: 18). More specifically, this essay will try to address the question of the status of the baroque as an infinite fold or "pli infini" (Deleuze 1988), or more particularly, that of the connection between the baroque and the notion of infinity.

In fact, we shall try to concentrate on Buci-Glucksmann's conundrum, i.e. does postmodern/ ultramodern/ post-baroque culture retain any link —despite its obsession with the baroque categories of artificiality, superficiality, ephemerality— with a culture of the sublime (in Jean-François Lyotard's (1988, 1991) acceptation of the term) or does it lead to a form of "de-sublimisation"? This should allow us to concentrate on the relationships between what is traditionally considered a representative of religious art from the time of its emergence and development in the countries of the "baroque crescent" and its post- or ultra-modern, potentially "de-sublimised" avatar.

This will be done in three stages: first by noting the presence of baroque elements in Ackroyd's novel converging in the building up of some sort of a baroque diction/eloquence (which might sound paradoxical within the framework of fiction in print). Secondly by focusing our attention on the representation of artifice and on the artifice of representation in the novel (bearing in mind the represented/ representing dichotomy). The last movement will be concerned with the problem of expressiveness and presentation (as opposed to representation), which will lead us to ponder on the necessary readjustment of *mimesis* (its modalities and finalities) in a postmodern, post-baroque context.

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The purpose of this article is certainly not to broach yet another poetics of the baroque. However, we would like to take a look at some elements which eem to be characteristic of this aesthetic movement or manifestation. *English Music* is a novel concerned with reminiscing, tradition, continuity —in other words permanence— under various guises. It thus analyses various aspects of inheritance: the biological, the cultural, the creative, etc.[2] What is remarkable is that this is done (as is often the case with Ackroyd, *Hawksmoor* being a case in point) through a great deal of repetition and redundancy (at the thematic, symbolical and narrative levels among others) leading to the establishment of a specific tonality and a superficial ornateness traditionally associated with things baroque. In other words, the text evinces many of the figures of amplification analysed by Gérard Genette (1969: 195-222) in an essay entitled "D'un récit baroque". Not only are the style and the descriptions inordinately ornate (a quick look at page one will convince the

a quick look at the *incipit* will make this clear. In order to introduce the notion of permanence (metaphorised through the geographical or rather geological/ archeological notion of superposition, an option already amply resorted to in *Hawksmoor*), the narrator gives two juxtaposed instances of replacement and continuity, where one would have been sufficient. This cumulative rhetoric is a constant in the novel and will be omnipresent to the last paragraph. Interestingly enough, those repetitions are linked to the evocation of the permanence process evoked through the image of a fusion, a melting down from one age/ generation to the next. This is conveyed through the candle metaphor in the second paragraph: "On the other side of the hall there had been a dairy, and the family who owned it kept a cow in the backyard; they also sold soap and candles which, it was rumoured, were melted down from its predecessor" (Ackroyd 1992: 1). The opening description, by concentrating on the geographical evocation of the *locus* of the protagonist's childhood, thus provides a series of spatial metaphors of the process of permanence, transformation and inheritance. The whole scene tends to appear as some pictorial composition, a vignette or tableau, and this opening *hypotyposis*, by soliciting the reader's eye, introduces what is generally considered a characteristic of the baroque, i.e. its reliance on vision or, in Christine Buci-Glucksmann's (1986: 29, 51) term, "voyure".

Besides, the spatial metaphor of inheritance or permanence is resorted to time and again, in cumulative fashion, as is made clear in the following lines: "'Houses are always built on, Timothy. One gives place to another. Foundations laid upon foundations. The end of one is the beginning of another. And this one, now, is coming to its end. […] The inhabitants of this place have all gone their own ways, their adventures finished, and whatever stories have been told beneath the roof of this old house have come to their conclusion'" (Ackroyd 1992: 92). In such passages, the architectonic metaphor of permanence goes hand in hand with the literary metaphor of the palimpsest to echo and prolong a paradigm already present in Ackroyd's equally baroque earlier novel, *Hawksmoor* (1985).

Now, as announced on the first page, this notion of continuity is going to be relayed throughout the novel, both as regards its micro- and macro-structure. In fact, the narrative is organised around the alternation of odd-numbered chapters devoted to the evocation of the protagonist's life from childhood to old age and of even-numbered chapters concerned with aesthetic experiences, the protagonist and narrator being a highly gifted person, of a very sensitive, medium-like disposition, which allows him, in true modernist

'orld migration (McHale 1987, 1992) under the
stance, he may be seen to break through the
ı painting/ book so as to be granted access to
Now, those alternative chapters are concatenated
called a thematic, tonal and even structural
structural image of the notion of continuity
: and is highly illustrative of the sensation of
sthetics of the baroque. For instance, Chapter
f the protagonist's favourite books as a child
which his father spent reading out to him, at
d here are the *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Alice in*
on the following words, while the grown up
scing: "I hear the sound of his voice again, I
nees and his glasses slipping from the bridge
urn and I am once more curled up within my
r of the ceiling and, sometimes, as he reads,
er begins with the following polyptoton, in
lancy option at work in the text: "And as he
a dream", giving the reader access to the
mland/ wonderland with Alice and Christian,
onsiderations, partly written as a pastiche of
mplete with allegories and archaisms): "So he
am. His father was beside him; he had fallen
on, and the book from which he was reading
from the outset, Chapter Three mixes literary
alimpsest,' my father said, at breakfast on the
992: 24, 27, 48).[3] All transitions function in
ıake the meaning obvious, inescapable,
the novel, by resorting to infinite
nd redundancies, promotes an impression of
t which is to be found in such genres (or

al hammering and the overkill technique
ences, other figures of excess are present in
pear in the diegesis. This is the case because
ch is generally depicted in some detail, yet
f shadows and of the imprecision linked to
) the foreignness of past time and territory)
pernatural events and characters. In fact,
nities with the mode of romance (its happy

ending, for instance), *English Music* is concerned with an exotic world in which magical occurrences are bound to take place. They are accommodated within the framework of a generally realistic narrative, but at the same time they do strain realism (in the same way as the cumulative excesses and the rhetoric of redundancy alluded to above) to create what might be termed some sort of a baroque realism or simply atmosphere. From the beginning, the reader is presented with a protagonist whose working life as a child in Edwardian London consists in being the assistant of his father's performances in faith-healing sessions —one might be tempted to call them numbers— in the hall called the Chemical Theatre. Throughout the text, the reader is thus presented with extraordinary circumstances, even though they are treated in a realistic way: people are healed in dramatic circumstances, some sort of a dialogue with the afterworld —or with that of the past— is also made possible. Likewise, through the chiaroscuro of its reminiscing shades, the text allows for the apparition of figures of a special kind, creatures of the night and of the circus, which in other circumstances might be called freaks. The character of Margaret is a case in point: she is a diminutive person, a member of the Harcombe Club (i.e. the group of eccentrics or marginal figures gathering around Clement Harcombe, the protagonist's father), and she is depicted as a creature of the air, some sort of an elf, sharing affinities with fairies or other legendary folk, or with literary precedents like Alice herself: "'There isn't much weight to take off,' she replied. 'I'm a very light creature, you see. We light people just float around'. In fact she began to skip along the path: I opened the door for her, she slipped past me into my father's room, and immediately flung herself into an old brown armchair" (Ackroyd 1992: 52). This elfish creature, of a very hybrid nature, half human and half spirit, half realistic and half paper-thin in its intertextual determination, is evocative of other such characters that people the composite worlds of postmodern novels. This is for instance most notably the case with Angela Carter's creatures, and more especially with Fevvers, the winged protagonist of *Nights at the Circus* (1984), with its host of freaks and improbable allegories, but also with the heroine in Jeanette Winterson's *The Passion* (1987), Villanelle, with webbed feet and amphibious powers, or again with Winterson's Rabelaisian Dog Woman, in *Sexing the Cherry* (1989). Such textual constructs also people the worlds of Salman Rushdie's novels, as is the case with Saleem Sinai and all the Midnight's Children who telepathetically haunt the world of the novel bearing the same title (*Midnight's Children*, 1981). In those cases (which represent but a sample of contemporary British fiction) those amphibious creatures of ambiguity underline the limits of the phenomenal world of realism, introduce a distinct

note of fantasy or magic into the text and contribute to the euphoric proliferation of extraordinary elements and occurrences that decorate a world richly ornamented with grotesque textual carvings highly reminiscent of a baroque atmosphere. Their purpose is to promote some hesitation as to their ontological status. Being half human, half angelical, those creatures are granted a special freedom, being apt to cross the boundaries between this world and that of spirits. One of the consequences is to make their status as purely literary constructs obvious, as will be explained later.

Besides, the structure of *English Music* is also characterised by the amplification devices singled out by Gérard Genette (1969: 195-205) in his analysis of baroque narrative, i.e. development, insertion and intervention. The first two categories are easily identifiable. In fact, *English Music* may be considered as a dual book, itself a hybrid, in that it is made up of what might be called a fairly traditional *Bildungsroman* structure whose ingredients alternate with more poetical, intertextual and parodic passages. The structure of the novel can be seen as a double helix, with two intertwined strands: the realistic, *Bildungsroman*, odd-numbered chapters juxtaposed and interconnected with the intertextual, more modernist, even-numbered chapters, which Catherine Lanone (1997: 17-30) might call a meeting of incompossible perspectives, taking up Deleuzian and Leibnizian terms. In terms of structural progression, the even-numbered chapters do not help fuel the plot at all. They may be considered as parasitic growths of a highly metaphorical nature, meant to give more (historical and intertextual) depth to the surface structure of the *Bildungsroman*. To resort to a hackneyed analogy, one might argue that the odd-numbered chapters are concerned with the horizontal development of the plot and assume a syntagmatic function, whereas the province of the even-numbered chapters is that of paradigmatic resonance and embellishment. This distinction is quite useful in that it duplicates two *topoi* of baroque art and may be applied to its architectonic expressions (the syntagmatic structure of the building as distinct from the paradigmatic profusion of ornaments) and its musical manifestations (the *basso continuo* running horizontally as opposed to the vertical fanning out of harmonics)[4] (Deleuze 1988: 184). In *English Music*, the use of the double structure is not merely motivated by an illustrative function —though it obviously is to a great extent. The even-numbered chapters gratify the reader with parodies and pastiches of the main elements of what the narrator calls English music —i.e. the matrix of cultural Englishness. The reader is thus presented with revisitings of *The Pilgrim's Progress* or *Alice in Wonderland*, as specified above, but also of *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Pamela*, *Great Expectations*, *Wuthering Heights*, etc. Besides, Ackroyd's presentation of the English cultural tradition also extends to other arts like music (with incursions into the worlds of Purcell and Byrd) or painting and engraving (Hogarth, Gainsborough, Turner, and other architectural painters or engravers). Those illustrations also allow for the multiplication of allusions and correspondences, and thus are part and parcel of the saturation technique at work in the novel, of the metaphorical overkill which helps grant the text such a convoluted aspect and at the same time the impression that it is "saturated in *Heimligkeit*" (Bernard 1994). The even-numbered chapters thus assume the function of textual insertions or incrustations (more on the use of narrative embeddings later) which is the second criterion for amplification selected by Genette, and at the same time they provide a development of the novel's main theme, by prolonging its associations and correspondences, thus contributing to the profusion of references and echoes which characterise the overall tonality. Now, one may remember that development is Genette's first criterion.

The notion of intervention may be said to be one of the constitutive traits of *English Music*. As suggested above, this novel is characterised by a high degree of eloquence, the main modality of which is the recurrence of hyperboles, cumulative devices, tropic overkill, etc. It may be said that *English Music* as a narrative —and this essentially thanks to its paradigmatic/ metaphorical components— unmistakably belongs to the category of "telling" (as opposed to "showing"). The metafictional aspect of the work will be developed in the second part of this article, but it must be said that the saturated resort to conventions, the metaphorical hammering and intertextual layering are conducive to the emergence of structural rhymes and rhythms, and lead to the building up of a series of echoes which run through the novel. In fact, *English Music*, as is made clear from the title and from the echoing presence of a pictogram representing a horn metaphorically sounding the chords of tradition at the beginning of some even-numbered chapters, is an extremely vocal and sonorous text, in which sentences, references and fragments keep echoing each other to evoke the rustling atmosphere, precisely, of an echo chamber. Yet, as a text characterised by a strong hermeneutic dimension, the novel does not provoke a paranoid reading but rather a rhythmical one.

However, against this musical background which solicits the reader's ear and sense of rhythm, the novel generates an eloquence of another type. The narrator, whether directly or indirectly, is extremely present throughout. The odd-numbered chapters are narrated by the protagonist, Timothy Harcombe, as an old man reflecting on his childhood, adolescence and early manhood. The even-numbered chapters are voiced by an impersonal heterodiegetic narrator

who evokes Timothy's adventures in the imaginary *loci* and periods of English music. Now, both narrators and characters harp on the theme of permanence, and the title is taken up time and again throughout the novel, so much so that the general meaning, about the role of tradition as a modality of permanence and inheritance —cultural, spiritual, biological— is redundantly made clear throughout. Never do the narrators allow the reader to lose sight of the general import of the novel, and they provide innumerable embedded commentaries. In other words, the eloquence of the text is not only poetical, but also structural, narrative and even narratological. The text profligately provides the keys and tools which command access to its general meaning, thus jettisoning all hermeneutic pretensions the better to promote an aesthetic of the obviously told and and of the well sign-posted characteristic —in its profusion— of the baroque.

One may find an allegorical illustration of this principle in the last pages, when Timothy Harcombe evokes his job in a circus (a place in which his father and grandfather plied their trade before him). Interestingly enough, his number is that of a ventriloquist, as is made clear in the following lines: "I would sit quietly in the middle of the ring, and my voice would come from the region of the high wire, or from a certain row in the audience, or even from a particular person. Sometimes there were many voices, and the ring would come alive with sounds and echoes" (Ackroyd 1992: 396). One might see in this (almost) concluding vision a means to recapitulate and encapsulate the way in which the text works, since it is essentially based on the polyvocal device of the palimpsest. In this passage, the protagonist is presented as an allegory of the text and, more specifically, of the intertextual method at work throughout, being itself a means to metaphorise the notions of inheritance and permanence. This is a way of providing indirectly, through an illustration taken from the represented universe of the novel, a comment on how representation works in this text. The baroque eloquence of *English Music* thus owes much to its resorting to a running commentary on the way in which it is to be read, be it directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, and this corresponds to what Genette (1969: 213) selects as a characteristic of baroque narrative, i.e. the prevalence of discourse over pure narrative.

Hyperboles are numerous in the text and revolve around what might be called a baroque paraphernalia: analogies and metaphors, the representation of (inter-)textual allegories and the conception of the novel as a whole as an allegory of permanence, an obvious predilection for the use of almost (infinite) correspondences, together with a fascination with surfaces, reflections, mirrors in particular and illusion in general may be said to characterise the novel which plays on the notion of thematic, symbolical,

intertextual and also discursive saturation. All those elements give rise to a form of eloquence, and it could almost be said that *English Music* is a loud text in which everything converges to promote —through the use of saturation, ornateness and excess— a sense of dramatisation characterising things baroque.

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As may be surmised from the preceding developments, one of the defining traits of the novel is its obsession with the idea of representation, art in general, literature in particular and, in a nutshell, itself (true to what has generally been deemed the postmodern "canon"). The impression that the reader may be left with, in this respect, is that of a high degree of textual narcissism. Independently of the fact that the Narcissus figure is a baroque *topos*, this obsession is a means of introducing instances of textual representation within the novel (even-numbered chapters being devoted to the protagonist's excursuses into the world of art, the reader is allowed to wander abroad to meet many of the representative figures of the English cultural tradition). In other words, the text repeatedly uses commentary and, more specifically (and more interestingly, in the context of a baroque text) *ekphrasis* to provide systematic narrative embeddings and to initiate the reader's pondering on the notion of illusion. One may find this reminiscent of the baroque *topos* of the world as a stage.

What characterises *English Music* more specifically, though, is its tendency to spatialise narrative embeddings and insertions, and to make them visual in their profusion. If *English Music* is an eloquent text, it is made to appear so by resorting to various spatial metaphors and representations, paradoxical as this may seem. Buci-Glucksmann (1986) reminds us of what she considers the main axiom of baroque aesthetics: "To Be is to See".[5] And in fact, through the use of *hypotyposis*, the visual organ is regularly solicited, throughout the novel. Similarly, *English Music*, in spite of this paratextual indication suggesting the prevalence of sound images, is interspersed with visual devices. As indicated above, some even-numbered chapters start with a pictogram representing some sort of a horn metonymically sounding the chords of the English music to be heard in the following intertextual passage/chapter, an instrument reproduced on the cover of the Penguin edition. Likewise, each even-numbered chapter is preceded by the reproduction of a painting, or an engraving or etching, or a frontispiece, or a map of London streets. The functions of these insertions or visual embeddings are various. Of course they refer the reader to the imaginary and legendary territory of Englishness. They also provide tonal commentaries or introductions to the atmosphere of the chapters for which they act as

preludes. More than that, they may assume the role of visual analyses of the written text itself.

This is most notably the case of the reproduction appearing on page 200, at the beginning of Chapter Ten (the William Byrd chapter). The composition belongs to the genre of still lifes and more specifically of vanities as a skull appears in the shades of its top left-hand corner. Along the lines of its diagonal layout there also appears an open book the frontispiece of which indicates that it contains a collection of emblems, and further down, in the bottom right-hand corner, musical instruments of various kinds, mostly string, partially visible, partially out of frame. Those fragments give a metonymic illustration of the novel's general theme. The represented written text, the fragmented instruments and the skull provide a visual compendium of the novel's components together with a comment on the notion of permanence and inheritance. In this composition, the passing of time metonymically evoked by the skull is but a correlate of its ability to recapture the past through art, which is evoked by the reference to the written text and the musical instruments. As may be inferred from this evocation, the painting represents an allegory of permanence and, interestingly, an embedded allegory of the novel itself. In such passages, the spatial is used as a modality of the musical, which points to the baroque predilection for things visual. This, again, is quite illustrative of its tendencies towards spatialisation, as explained by Buci-Glucksmann (1986) who demonstrates that the baroque tends to introduce a spatial dimension in the temporal continuum of writing, thus creating a "theatre of sound",[6] an analysis which echoes that of Benjamin (1985: 218) who speaks of a "sonorous language".

Not content with that, the relation between the written and the iconographical is also chiasmatically interrelated, since the novel provides many *ekphrastic* passages. Those appear under various guises: through the means of amplification, as is the case with the map of London streets to be found at the beginning of Chapter Four, a rewriting *of Great Expectations*. This map obviously refers to the territory of Dickens's novels which provided a great deal of inspiration for Ackroyd (see his biography of Dickens and also his layered, metaphorical, intertextual, transhistorical treatment of London space, architecture and archaeology in *Hawksmoor*),[7] and it is given a textual illustration and extension, ten pages later, in a pastiche of Victorian Gothic when Timothy and Pip meet in the foggy London Streets, by the Thames (Ackroyd 1992: 72, 82).

Other such passages may be found regularly, every time the protagonist is confronted with a painting. This happens for instance in the passages when Timothy enters a Hogarth engraving thus being allowed to take a hallucinated walk through eighteenth-century Bedlam or when he moves from a classical Constable scene to a Turner seascape. In this passage, the description is dominated by the recurrence of a multitude of colours and movements —more than real shapes— and, though indirectly, the spatial once again becomes an in-built modality of the sonorous/ musical/ written (Ackroyd 1992: 317). Those *ekphrastic* moments are obviously of a specific type since they go beyond the level of mere description or commentary to introduce participation or immersion within the artefact. This particularly sensuous and synaesthaetic way of representing the world of the novel, is a way to produce, through a contamination of the textual by the visual, some sort of a *moiré* or *chiaroscuro* effect. It is also a means to introduce the notion of ontological transgression or transworld migration which is generally associated with narrative or plot embeddings, as will be underlined later. Within the context of a baroque system, however, this technique assumes a more specific meaning in that it allows for the introduction of a baroque *cliché* linked with the notions of proliferation and saturation: that of the painting overflowing the frame, because of its excessive and dynamic properties.

The convoluted overflowing of the frame generally ranked among the characteristics of baroque painting is also present in *English Music*. In fact, the even-numbered chapters may be said to provide textual metaphors of musical scores, or traditional texts, or even iconographic documents, as suggested above. At the end of Chapter Thirteen, Timothy is seen to interrupt his tour of a picture gallery so as to enter the frame of a work by Gainsborough: "Somehow I found myself getting up and walking towards the painting; or, perhaps, it was coming towards me. And then, without any surprise or hesitation on my part, I entered the frame" (Ackroyd 1992: 301). As becomes natural with the recurrence of similar episodes, chapter after chapter, the end of Chapter Fourteen allows the reader to witness the reverse movement, as Timothy steps out of the painting and frame, after a long oneiric passage of transworld migration: "Impressions. Points of light. The vortex. Squares of colour. Abstract shapes. Shadows. This is how it all began, he thought. Then he woke up, and found himself still seated in front of the Gainsborough landscape" (Ackroyd 1992: 322). The metonymic, kaleidoscopic, fragmentary vein at work in this passage, independently of the fact that it conveys a metamorphic image of a fluctuating world linked with the baroque theme of illusion, underlines the profusion of visual impressions. The feeling that the reader is left with is that of an extreme dynamism or flow of sensations ("The Vortex") which, under the strain and impetus of multitudinous ornaments (which might be termed a depravity of design) burst the constraining limits of the frame, make this aesthetic and

ontological boundary porous, so as to spatialise and dramatise once again a baroque tendency according to which there can never be more than directly meets the eye. For this baroque strategy is one which postulates that everything has to be told or, more specifically here, shown. Nothing brooks discretion or veiling in *English Music*: things, bodies, sensations must be harped on and evoked or called up (more than actually described) ostentatiously and exhaustively. This is what Benjamin (1985: 222) explains when he comments on the baroque's tendency to create the impression that space is to be filled at all costs. Buci-Glucksmann (1986: 96-97, 181) confirms this analysis when she underlines the omnipresence of the body in the baroque (hence Christian) tradition of representation or when she alludes to what she terms "baroque sensualism". Deleuze (1988: 166) also concentrates on this phenomenon when he asserts that in baroque representation, matter tends to spread, to overflow the frame, as in *trompe l'œil* motifs.[8] This is precisely what happens in *English Music* where the frames themselves disappear. One could even contend that they are especially used (and that the double structure of the novel is especially used) the better to be undermined, so that their frailty and porosity should emerge clearly. The structural constraints of the novel are but a means to promote the absence of constraint, the tendency to overflow, the irrepressible impetus towards freedom.

In the overall economy of *English Music*, the multiple self-reflexive references have a similar function. For instance while the novel is replete with intertextual references, the protagonist's father teaches him the word "palimpsest", one morning at breakfast, as has been mentioned above. Besides, some passages literally teem with quotations, in true echo-chamber fashion, as may be surmised from this short extract: "'For my part I will be content to recede into some larger spirit, some divine original, which is the ground of all our being. No man is an island'" (Ackroyd 1992: 172). Here, the reference to Wordsworth's Immortality Ode ("the ground of all our being") with its emphasis on the similar theme of permanence and on the possibility offered to the poet of recapturing the past vision of glory is associated with another famous extract from John Donne's "Devotions 17" (1986: 166-167). Here again, the stress is laid on the refusal of isolation, in what might be considered a vindication of connection, inheritance and permanence. Intertextual and metafictional references are concentrated not to point to the presence of extraneous fragments (thus boundaries and limits) within the text but rather to blend them into the novel as a whole. Once

and freedom characteristic of baroque aesthetics. This is in perfect conformity with what has been unearthed by various specialists of the baroque, among whom is Buci-Glucksmann (1984: 174) who underlines its permanent movement, its desire that nothing should be fixed.

The self-reflexive/ meta-textual dimension of the novel (relying essentially on its intertextual dimension and on the presence of numerous instances of self-reflexive commentaries) is also largely evocative of a central *topos* of the baroque, generally associated with baroque drama but which is at the origin of many contemporary avatars, *i.e.* the notion that all the world is a stage. From Calderón and Shakespeare to Pirandello and Borges, this metatextual ploy based on the (narrative) device known as metalepsis runs through baroque and baroque-inherited artefacts. The metaleptic strain of *English Music* is especially remarkable, in that it helps promote a reflection on determinism, both intertextual and narrative. This is particularly perceptible in the pastiche passages (even-numbered chapters), when Timothy crosses an ontological boundary and finds himself interacting with well-known fictional characters within embedded narratives. One such occurrence may be found in Chapter Six, when Timothy meets a detective figure meant to be a Sherlock Holmes double:

> 'All my adventures are narrated,' Austin Smallwood explained before Timothy had a chance to reach the end. 'All the time I am being invented, or created, or what you will. And do you know the worst aspect in this affair? I cannot see the conclusion. How is this particular plot going to end, for example? How are we going to solve the mystery of your father's disappearance [...]. But there is also a larger question. How will I come to the end of my adventures? I go on from day to day as if I were immortal, and yet there is someone else. Someone who is writing everything down' (Ackroyd 1992: 130).

In this extremely Pirandellian passage, everything seems to be done in order to create a reality effect. In other terms, such passages could be interpreted as designed to underline contrastively the fictionality of the parodies or pastiches. This would in turn make the story of Timothy's life (i.e. the *Bildungsroman* element present in the odd-numbered chapters) sound more real, since a frame looks generally more real than its contents —by definition a piece of representation not belonging to the same ontological plane as that of reality. Still, the search for verisimilitude (as regards the embedding) does

Borges-Brecht effect according to which when a reader reads a story in which another reader is her-/himself reading a text, some sort of analogy or contamination provokes metaphysical/ontological wondering in the first reader's mind: if those people who think they are real are in fact being watched/read about by me, this may mean that I too could be a character in a plot/narrative at a higher level, being read and written about. This is the device which is used in Muriel Spark's famous metafictional first novel *The Comforters* (1957).[9] One might argue that this is a way to emphasise the autotelic status of the artefact by underlining its narcissistic dimension, its inability to refer to the world outside the text, the failure of its representative capabilities or, from another perspective, its having reached the stage, in John Barth's famous words, when it has become a "literature of exhaustion". However, in baroque drama, this device is often used as a modality of "replenishment" to suggest a perspective, that of the divine eye (Buci-Glucksmann 1984: 72). It is thus a means to deny the autotelic, narcissistic vision of art so as to promote a link with extratextual powers that do not belong generally to representations of the phenomenal world that we apprehend through our senses.

Even if such passages are designed to generate an impression of textual determinism (the characters being obviously trapped in some script or narrative of a higher ontological level), they also point to the notion of circulation between various ontological spheres. Once again, we are presented with this characteristic functioning in which boundaries (whether they be structural, aesthetic or ontological) are erected the better to be overflowed through the irresistible baroque proliferation of matter and information. It may be said that, seen in this light, the novel as a whole is an allegory of flux, dynamism, communication and inheritance between generations, families, texts, aesthetic movements, *etc. English Music* thus appears as a baroque allegory of permanence which in itself is quite telling for, since Benjamin's groundbreaking study of baroque drama, allegory has been considered the most specifically baroque way of meaning and representing.[10] Most contemporary commentators select this criterion as one of the most obviously relevant in a definition of baroque texts in particular and aesthetics in general, as is the case with Buci-Glucksmann in all three books quoted in these pages, and with Deleuze. The latter reminds us that, with baroque allegory (as opposed to romantic symbol), the object/ vehicle itself swells to incredible proportions so as to overflow its frame, while the concept/ tenor is reduced to minimal proportions.[11] This is precisely what happens in the convoluted world of *English Music* which proliferates into a richly ornamented and repetitive baroque postmodern object to convey the concept of permanence —and also those of openness, freedom and infinity.

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In fact, with *English Music*, everything seems to be used so as to illustrate the traditional principle of the painting/represented object exceeding/ overflowing the frame. In other words, the point of the novel seems to be less the representation of a child's growing up into adulthood, less the story of an individual's evolution into old age, less the story of the initiation into the tradition of English culture than a way to explore the boundaries of the ordinary, phenomenal world so as to reach into a form of abstraction mediated through art and its manifestations.

This is suggested by the notion of openness closely associated with metaleptic devices. As suggested above, the text seems to work according to the general logic of the "both…and" type (as opposed to the traditional "either…or" model), in that it uses the metafictional vein to make its narcissistic/ autotelic and open potentialities coexist: the metaleptic narrative is characterised by an overflowing movement out of its frame, out of itself, a movement which is not aimed at the outside phenomenal world of everyday existence, but at some other undefined and undefinable sphere. In painting, this corresponds to what Deleuze (1988) has called the infinite line or fold, which could be paraphrased as "the fold reaching into infinity" (*le pli infini*), as the hallmark of the baroque. The infinite fold is designed to create the illusion that it can overflow the frame, that it can leave the surface of the painting freed of all material constraints.[12] In the context of *English Music*, one does not find typically baroque pictorial representations of any such infinite fold. However, the text's infinite fold appears metaphorically by means of the various structural and aesthetic boundaries present throughout the text (see the preceding analysis of the double helix), and above all thanks to the metaleptic occurrences that foreground the presence and functions of ontological boundaries throughout the text. For instance, in the above-quoted passage in which a character feels that he is trapped into someone's narrative, being written by a narrator and read by a narratee, the ontological boundary/ fold called forth by the contaminating impulse of the Borges-Brecht effect obviously bursts the seams of the text and creates the impression of a (vertical) movement towards infinity, thereby promoting a feeling akin to vertigo and triggering off metaphysical pondering.

Besides, the infinite fold that runs from the novel may be said to be of a vertical nature, as is made clear in the metaleptical example given above, in which both character and reader are led to wonder about the existence of a higher world or of an all-encompassing, different ontological plane. This is

in perfect conformity with the diegetic level, since the protagonist is endowed with supernatural powers and since his father's job, at the beginning of the story, is to heal people by making them connect with the world of spirits, by calling forth the souls of the departed. Accordingly, the novel is characterised by an obsession with things metaphysical, and with various manifestations (always of a highly hypothetical nature, of course) of transcendence. This is all the more interesting as, still according to the "both...and" logic, the novel presents the reader with both a profusion of textual matter or corporeality —an overflowing of all frames, as demonstrated above— and a hypothetical probing into its opposite, the absence of corporeality, the essence of immateriality. Once again, we are confronted with the paradox of a conjunctive opposition or coincidence between two poles: the excess of representation (what Deleuze (1988: 166) calls the law of extremum of matter, corresponding to a maximum amount of matter for a minimal textual space) and the evocation or calling forth of a mere potentiality, of an extreme abstraction. In other words, what *English Music* presents us with is an interaction, almost an equation between maximum presence and extreme absence.

This harmonious separation between *and* conflation of matter/ presence on the one hand, and immateriality/ absence on the other hand may be accounted for in the light of Deleuze's discoveries and analyses. In fact, the French philosopher conceptualises this tension through the architectural metaphor of the house with two floors. This is explained in the first chapter of his study, but also in Chapter Three, entitled "Qu'est-ce qui est baroque ?' He defines the two floors of baroque architecture as an open, lit ground floor representing the body and materiality leading to a closed, dark first floor associated with the soul. For Deleuze (1988), the infinite fold moves across both floors to concentrate in the high inner chamber of the soul and fan out towards the lower external hall of corporeality and matter, thus giving the baroque a distinctly vertical orientation.[13] Within one and the same textual space or universe, the baroque thus introduces a flux and a tension between the low and the high, the corporeal and the material, matter and the realm of pure forces, organised along the vertical line of the infinite fold. Deleuze gives another explanation for this tension or interaction, when he emphasises the simultaneous workings of the baroque double vector. It is an aesthetics characterised by a simultaneous pressure towards the bottom and a push towards the top, within one and the same world or house, to take up the architectural metaphor introduced above (Deleuze 1988: 41). *English Music* could be said to evince the same dual baroque pattern as the paintings by Il Tintoretto or El Greco analysed by Deleuze. The structural double helix could

figure a horizontal line separating the worldly, phenomenal, material world of the realistic *Bildungsroman* situated on the lower half of the allegorical representation into which the novel may be said to develop, while the top half could be the province of the supernatural, magical, non-realistic level of the intertextual method, that of correspondences devoted to the evocation of the world of art and of spiritual/ cultural continuity. One might see an infinite fold moving between the two and eschewing all attempts at separation the better to illustrate the process of permanence, which could add yet another functional layer to the allegory of inheritance.

In this way, the baroque aesthetics of *English Music* are used to create a tension between two worlds, which is itself in many ways designed to imply that the world is made up of more than what directly meets the eye, or that it is characterised by a certain ontological plurality. In fact, even in the context of a postmodern, secularised culture, the baroque seems to retain or recapture some of its fundamental affinities with the religious or, at least, spiritual, in that by resorting to the infinite fold and its verticalising function, it tends to point to the possibility that there might be another world (which is far different from the religious certainties postulated by the baroque age, and more especially the Counter Reformation). It may be said that in the context of a secularised culture the function of the baroque impulse is to recapture some of that Benjaminian "aura" supposedly lost with the advent of the modern age. In fact, independently of the transcendent dimension of the text, at the level of representation, there are many instances of represented movements towards the spiritual or the transcendent, and one could even say that the text is saturated in such evocations. This is the case in the first chapter concerned with the description of Timothy's childhood and job as his father's assistant in the Chemical Theatre: the medium's customers fall into what look like trances, they are surrounded by a mysterious halo (Ackroyd 1992: 5). In other passages, the music referred to in the title is explicitly compared, in a tongue-in-cheek though telling way, to the music of the spheres (Ackroyd 1992: 18). Elsewhere, the existence of an "alternative world" is contemplated (Ackroyd 1992: 63). Of course, this is not specific to *English Music*. Such occurrences crop up with obsessive frequency in Muriel Spark's *The Comforters* or Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry*, the latter being based on the scheme of alternative choices, ideas and worlds. However, they are obviously associated with the openness of the baroque, with the latter's refusal to believe that there is only one world. This is expressed in terms of incompleteness (Genette 1969: 222) and in terms of openness or freedom (Deleuze 1988: 48, 166).

In other words, what the reader is invited to discover in the baroque universe of *English Music* is an aesthetic construct whose saturated and convoluted surfaces are but means to call up or even probe abyssal or celestial depths. This is what Buci-Glucksmann (1986: 50) suggests when she remarks on the baroque's ability to call forth a vacuum or a nothing through an excess of images. She recurrently voices a similar conclusion when she (1986: 17) comments on the baroque's compatibility with the evocation of a "complementary world", and with transcendence in general, which is quite in keeping with the religious origins of this aesthetic manifestation. In a secularised, postmodern context, what remains of this baroque (whose function, actually, is less to probe the depths of some other universe than blindly to probe *at* the boundaries of the phenomenal world, without any certainty as to its uniqueness, and nothing more) is to postulate/ call forth/ envisage the possibility of a presence without using the conventional tools of representation.

Now, this seems to be the very foundation of the baroque mechanism. In fact, the ornamental proliferation, the multiplication of figures of amplification, the various kinds of saturation, in short all the components of baroque eloquence or diction contribute to a revisiting of traditional *mimesis*, to the latter's adaptation to the purposes of our times and to an accommodation and updating of its workings. In the secularised, potentially de-sublimised postmodern world, baroque aesthetics used in *English Music* or in novels like *The Comforters*, *Midnight's Children*, *Nights at the Circus* or *Sexing the Cherry* provide a way to express what cannot be represented, what has been called "a *mimesis* of nothing" ("*une mimétique du rien*" (Buci-Glucksmann 1986: 49)). This is somewhat reminiscent of Barthes's (1982) analyses of what he called the "*sens obtus*", i.e. a meaning that comes in excess of representation, or a signifier without a signified, a profusion without a tangible/ explicit referent. The convoluted representation process of *English Music* acts as a complement to its represented world of supernatural occurrences, but its baroque profusion introduces some of that *sens obtus* defined by Barthes.[14] It provides the means for an emotional presentation of something that cannot be represented. It relays and prolongs traditional *mimesis* when the latter has reached its limits. It lets its baroque profusion become the instrument of a suggestion (excess becoming the means of discretion, ostentation allowing for the emergence of veiling and indirection). This is associated with the prevalence of a vertical, lift-like movement, as explained before, in which both upward and downward impulses are compatible and even simultaneous. The resort to baroque aesthetics is thus a means to replace problematical, limited representation by the more daringly emotional workings of presentation. Its probing at the boundaries of the phenomenal world is highly compatible with the prevalence of its main figure: allegory which, as we are reminded by its etymology (*allos* for other), is perfectly suited for the evocation of things foreign.

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What seems to characterise the baroque dimension of *English Music* is the tension which it foregrounds between a strong emphasis on the sensitive (the convoluted proliferating aspect of the narrative) associated with the primacy of perceptions of a visual and haptic kind on the one hand, and an equally strong stress on the transcendent or, rather, on the possibilities of transcendence on the other hand. This opposition or interaction is articulated along the axis of the infinite fold analysed by Deleuze and allows for a probing at the limits of the phenomenal world and an extension of *mimesis*. This baroque artefact is governed by the conjunctive, pleonastic workings of the "both...and" type, what might be called redundancy, addition or extra-ness. Owing to this hyperbolical dimension, Peter Ackroyd's baroque narrative lays the stress on effect and affect alike, so as to produce what has been described as a "rhetoric of affects" and, we may add, of effects (Buci-Glucksmann 1984: 188). All in all, the baroque orientation of the novel contributes to the establishment of a distinct form of expressionism, which we termed "eloquence" above, and which may be seen as an avatar of the artists' fear, in the baroque period, of the levelling power of the printing process, baroque texts being meant to be said and performed, and not merely read. This expressionism which, according to Benjamin (1985: 52-53) is a distinctive trait of baroque drama in particular and of aesthetics in general, is associated with a rhetoric of unmediated emotion which leaves no room, at least in *English Music*, for that verbal *trompe l'œil*, irony. The novel is in earnest from beginning to end, and the parodies/ pastiches of past texts and artefacts, though at times tinged with a certain humorous distance produced by hyperbole, are no more earnest and straightforward ways of expressing the central notion of permanence.

Furthermore, what the enlarged *mimesis* of the baroque permits is the replacement of the representation of reality by an expression or presentation of the supernatural, or by what Buci-Glucksmann (1984: 213, 229) defines as imagination. In this respect, owing to the convergent stress on effect and affect and on the powers of imagination, one might say that what the baroque ingredients of *English Music* allow for is the promotion of a romantic undercurrent. This is perceptible not only through the insistence on the pre-romantic and romantic intertext used in the novel (through references to Blake, Emily Brontë, Turner), but also through many passages in which the

protagonist experiences what may be defined as moments of purely romantic ecstasy in a novel which, in many respects, may be said to be a revisiting of or variation on Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode," with its emphasis on the child's higher vision and the possibility of recapturing it (Ackroyd 1992: 278, 282). The stress on effect and affect, on the powers of the imagination, on the primacy of emotion —whether or not recollected in tranquillity— thus seem to point to some sort of a romantic inheritance in a text very much concerned with things past, reminiscing and nostalgia.

In this respect, even if it is the product of what has been called a post- or ultra-modern, entropic, de-sublimised period, *English Music*, by instrumentalising a baroque aesthetics and programme, may be said to provide an attempt at recapturing some element of sublimity. Through its stress on affect and emotion, through its compatibility with transcendence, and through its postulation of the existence of some other world or "world beside" (to perpetrate a direct translation of Lyotard's (1988: 108) phrase "un monde à côté"), *English Music* uses baroque potentialities in a way not incompatible with manifestations of post-modern sublime, again in Lyotard's meaning of the term.

In the last analysis, what appears after this "baroque" reading of an instance of postmodern fiction in print, is some sort of a line or fold (that might be infinite) allowing us to envisage postmodern fiction (or at least some of its most acclaimed representatives) as yet another stage or hypostasis in a transhistorical current of excess, effect and affect running through modernism, to romanticism, and the baroque. Now, the characteristic of the above-mentioned cultural, artistic and aesthetic movements is to provide (in some degree at least) an opposition or reaction to —or at least a contrast with— what is known as classicism. In the light of this conclusion, one might be tempted to propose a synthetic, hypothetical contribution to the debate as to the nature of post-modernism by suggesting that it can be apprehended negatively, by means of a contradistinction, in that it seems to be what classicism is not.

NOTES

[1]. This text was originally meant for publication in *Lettres en ligne*, an e-publication of the Universities of Lille 3 and Louvain.

[2]. In this respect one might read the pages that Catherine Bernard (1995: 27-44) devotes to *English Music* and to the nostalgic ventriloquism at work in the novel which she interprets as a deploration of the loss of the English tradition, as an elegiac evocation of things past, while we tend to stress the euphoric dimension of the representation of permanence, in this study.

[3]. Interestingly, the same type of structural anadiplosis playing an atmospheral function as part of a deliberate aesthetics of redundancy is to be found in *Hawksmoor*, in which the chapters alternate between life in twentieth-century and eighteenth-century London, providing the reader with a series of correspondences which are emphasised through a resort to obvious transitions, what might be called a taste for metaphorical overkill, the resort to *hypotyposis*, but also proliferations of all kinds, etc.

[4]. One may remember that this distinction is taken from Roman Jakobson's (1956) groundbreaking article on aphasia, and that David Lodge elaborated a theory of the literary history of modern literature based on this distinction. In *The Modes of Modern Writing* (1977), Lodge argues that the history of modern literature is a constant movement between a metonymic/ syntagmatic/ realistic pole of writing and a metaphorical/ paradigmatic/ modernist or experimentalist pole. The two tendencies are present here, but they are not commingled, they are merely juxtaposed, being linked only through the means of transitions, as developed above. The two components thus eschew integration, and it might be argued that this hesitation or undecidability constitutes the hallmark of the postmodern aesthetics of this text. Of course, it is a brand of postmodernism which does not reject the cultural past and acknowledges its link with the modernist canon, among others (Bernard 1995). In that repect the baroque postmodernism of Peter Ackroyd fits within the framework of continuity (as opposed to break) theories of the postmodern.

[5]. About Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, she (1986: 29) makes the following comment: "Si bien que l'opéra énonce d'emblée le grand axiome du baroque: Etre, c'est Voir", before moving on to a commentary on pictorial representation and making an analysis of the functions and values of the eye in the baroque economy: she considers it as a divine organ, the central organ of the baroque system as is attested by the allegories of vision that people sixteenth- and seventeenth-century paintings.

[6]. "Aussi, s'il est vrai que le baroque tend toujours à introduire une dimension spatiale et figurale dans le continuum temporel et dans l'écriture, la musique serait la " pointe " paradoxale de la folie du voir: mettre le son en espace, créer un devenir spatial —un théâtre du son—, fût-il, comme chez Bach, le plus intérieur, le plus formalisé, le plus architectonique possible" (Buci-Glucksmann 1986: 62).

l'extérieur, s'articulant ainsi comme le haut et le bas" (Deleuze 1988: 49). For more information on the vertical doubleness/ double-storied dimensions of Ackroyd's novels, see Jean-Pierre Audigier (1994: 143).

[14] "Si l'on ne peut décrire le sens obtus, c'est que, contrairement au sens obvie, il ne copie rien: comment décrire ce qui ne représente rien? [...]. Cela veut dire que le sens obtus est en dehors du langage (articulé), mais cependant à l'intérieur de l'interlocution". Roland Barthes (1982:55).

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CARIBBEAN WOMEN POETS – DISARMING TRADITION

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Hortense Spillers' statement regarding the capacity of black women's writings for redefining and disarming tradition "by suggesting that the term [tradition] itself is a critical fable intended to encode and circumscribe an inner and licit circle of empowered texts" (cf. Davies and Fido 1990: 18), provides a launching point for an exploration of the work of Caribbean women poets, in particular by Grace Nichols, and Lorna Goodison. It is possibly somewhat premature to talk of any Caribbean poetry in terms of tradition —if by the term we wish to avoid the inevitable notions conjured up of Eurocentric norms of poetry and patriarchal domination that prevailed in the early part of this century, when writers were "generally colonial in outlook" (Birbalsingh 1996: xi)— and embrace instead the research taking place now which largely focuses on more recent developments in writing that come under the umbrella of post-colonial, bringing in a whole variety of other concerns. But as Ramabai Espinet points out, the literary "canon" of the Caribbean consists "overwhelmingly of male writers" (1992: 162) with role models coming from the "major" recognised writers such as Walcott, Brathwaite, Naipaul, Lamming and Harris (Wilson). What is also questionable is how to determine what constitutes the denomination "Caribbean" writer, when so many now live away from that archipelago. Poets such as Audre Lorde and Paule Marshall were born and reared in the United States, yet they have embraced the Caribbean cultural environment handed down to them by their parents as their own. The multi-ethnic communities that reside within the Caribbean comprise a wide range of backgrounds from both the African and Indian continents, and however disperse they may be now it is generally recognised and accepted that any claim to a Caribbean past counts as valid. As Antonio Benítez-Rojo discusses in *The Repeating Island* there are mixed opinions about Caribbean culture being representative of unity and diversity, as well as

Miscelánea: A Journal of English and American Studies 22 (2000): 45 - 60

about the very possibility of the existence of a single culture, given the extremely heterogeneous condition of the area (1996: 35-39).

It is perhaps the most striking facet of the poetry designated as Caribbean that the authors are predominately no longer living in the geographic space of the Caribbean, but elsewhere. However, Samuel Selvon's elucidatory remarks, which, he concedes, echo those of George Lamming, go a long way to help an understanding of how this has contributed to the growth of Caribbean concerns in their poetry when he says how West Indians "only started to identify themselves as such when they moved outside the Caribbean" (1996: 63). Distancing thus provides a perspective which permits, forces even, the writer to consolidate an identity that, as is well known, for West Indians is highly complex and multifaceted. Olive Senior lives in Canada, and Grace Nichols in Britain, for example, and while Lorna Goodison remains a resident of Jamaica, she frequently travels abroad. All would probably consider themselves, like Selvon, to be "a citizen of the world" (66), and all would probably agree with Carole B. Davies' assertion about women: that creoleness, as an essentially Caribbean identity, is "the necessity of accepting all facets of experience, history and personhood in the definition of the self" (1994: 122).

Political, colonial, national or historical agendas, whose basic ideological assumptions stem from black power and négritude and Marxist-Leninist premises, have been to the fore in guiding Caribbean thought and have prevailed in much writing that has come out of the Caribbean. By contrast, women poets writing from within a Caribbean culture have collectively been considered as addressing a feminist agenda, or at least as politicising the position of women in their poetry. Thus women poets have generally been set apart from their male counterparts, not least because it has taken far longer for them to achieve recognition or even to get started in their writing —the female roles of carer, wife or mother have most often taken precedence over other individual career pursuits. It must also be acknowledged that Caribbean women's literature only began to unfold on a large scale in the 1980s when enabled by an increased international feminist awareness and the growth of feminist criticism, where representations of women were examined in a new light. Male poets such as Derek Walcott or Edward Kamau Brathwaite who have achieved acclaim for their innovative work —innovative because they too have contributed to that redefinition of tradition and launched the Caribbean psyche onto the international market— have no doubt paved the way for others. However, their work remains different nonetheless from work being produced by women. Walcott's view of women contrasts with that of other poets, with a frame of reference firmly

grounded in European thought, mythology and religion. He has even been accused of treating women in his writing in ways that are "full of clichés, stereotypes and negativity" (Fido 1990a: 289), and his prejudices about women are conveyed through "conventional" imagery. "The Schooner, *Flight*", often regarded as Walcott's most important poem, presents the woman figure María Concepción purely in terms of sexuality. It is a prime example of work that Seamus Heaney describes as having "evolved out of one man's inherited divisions and obsessions" (1991: 65), concisely conveying the theme that is Walcott's principal preoccupation —that of weaving a language out of dialect and literature, of shaping an idiom that fuses the old with the new. The structure of Brathwaite's poetry can also be seen to have had a pioneering influence on work by other poets; its multitude of forms and their interplay persistently provide pictures of the Creole continuum with the employment of Nation Language, and by extension of the Caribbean experience, to the extent that his compositions led to the feeling that "a revolution of some kind was taking place" (Markham 1989: 28). When similar constructions are used by women poets, they indubitably tend to be employed in terms of gender issues, but even so there is no single voice or perspective among them. This is hardly surprising given that, as Jan Carew points out, the West Indian experience has always been "a very eclectic experience" (1996: 50). If it can be narrowed down at all, the women poets' concerns largely incline towards a commitment to gender, race, nationality and class issues, through recurrent themes of the struggle of survival —described by Paula Burnett as "gritty celebrations" (1986: xxiii). Hardly a narrowing down, they remain in themselves a broad range of concerns, but they are inextricably inter-linked and unavoidably bound together in any black female's experience. Although the predominant focus may be one of "lamenting the lost and searching for identity" (Burnett 1986: xxiii), this is always expressed through an exulting celebration of tongue and tradition, a tradition which comes from innovative and altered perspectives. As Grace Nichols puts it,

> I have crossed an ocean
> I have lost my tongue
> from the root of the old
> one
> a new one has sprung. (1990: 87)

Grace Nichols' "Epilogue" to her first collection of poems *I is a long-memoried woman* (first published in 1983 and awarded the Commonwealth Poetry Prize) encapsulates Selvon's notion of finding an identity and a voice

("Taint", 18) whose "life has slipped out/ of my possession" ("Sunshine", 21), "The Beginning" angrily and forcefully decries the treatment of the African woman uprooted as she was from her native origins. The opening poem, "One Continent to Another" (5-7) amply illustrates the quality of her work. A poem divided into fifteen sections, sometimes of only one word, and with a typographical layout that recalls Brathwaite's compositions in *The Arrivants* trilogy, its reeling, lamenting dactylic rhythm works together with the imagery to effect an almost tangible anguish and pain:

> **Chil**d of the **middl**e passage **womb**
> **push**
> **dau**ghter of a **venge**ful Chi
> she **came**.

The onomatopoeic "push" conjures up the winds that blew this daughter "into the new world" "from one continent/ to another", while also conveying the pain and effort of the figurative birth, and is followed by an audible, isolated "moaning" which culminates in the powerful imagery contained in the following line, also isolated:

> her **be**lly cry **sou**nding the **wind**.

We are reminded of the oral nature of the language in hearing how "she hasn't forgotten/ hasn't forgotten" how she was taken slave and grieved even for the men who were made to lose their "deep man pride", for which she "wasn't prepared" to have to witness. The final three lines are forcefully spat out in a rhythm that resounds with execration for her future:

> Now she **stoops**
> in green **cane**fields
> piecing the **life** she would **lead**. (my emphasis, 1990: 5-7)

"These Islands" (31) marks a turning point where the woman begins to identify in a rhythmic chant the contrasting beauty and horror of the Caribbean islands. The juxtaposition of lines that convey first idyllic and then metaphorically brutal images: "These islands green/ with green blades" whose gently swaying rhythm abruptly become in the second stanza a dactylic beat, quickening the pace, lashing out and building up to the final lines in the third stanza:

islands
fertile
with brutality (1990: 31)

inverting the meaning of fertile from rich and abundant and invoking instead its terrifying power for the growth of pain and suffering of her experience.

The issues of slavery and the sugar plantations which provide the backdrop to the collection are heavily conflated with issues of feminism in poems such as "Loveact", "Skin-teeth" and "Sugar Cane". In "Loveact" (48-49), her power manifestly lies in her gender; the present retrospective tense is firmly based in the past history of slavery, and power over the master's House is gained in spite of the slave's being in a situation of submission.[1] Nichols employs a language full of evocation: words like "ebony haunches" convey the strength of a hard wood with the implication of black as beautiful and seductive, while all the time it is her "sorcery" —magic and the supernatural being a very strong part of African life— which empowers her to find her revenge. The rich, concise and refreshing way in which Nichols uses language gives the poems a lively feeling. "Skin-teeth" (50) —a Caribbean term which denotes a smile of hatred, much like a grimace— is laden with references to slave origins, but connotations for contemporary white male attitudes to women can be read into it. Although the poem is full of hate and revenge it contains the kind of humour that is always present in Nichols' work. Laughter serves as a means to protect oneself against tribulations and hardships and is therefore often employed as "a defence mechanism" (Selvon 1996: 61). Nichols makes it clear in "Skin-teeth" that the slaves would mock the masters, and her use of the snake image in the final section —"to rise and strike"— ends the poem on an assertive note by isolating the final word "again", to encourage the reader to re-think history and realise that there always was resistance, however small. But it is in "Sugar Cane" (32-35) that the history of life on the plantation is employed most forcefully as a metaphor for man. The shape of the poem itself is emblematic, visually reflecting the form of the sugar cane plant, it is male-gendered and throughout contains a double-edged meaning:

He isn't what
he seem –

indifferent hard
and sheathed in blades

his waving arms

is a sign for help (1990: 32)

and, once again, ends on a note of power and control of woman: "I crouch/ below them/ quietly" —implying that although subjugated she knows how to bide her time and wait for the moment to retaliate.

It is now common, after Gayatri Spivak's seminal works[2] to find feminism and post-colonialism grouped together with postmodernism. Ann Brooks asserts that they are movements which all share a process of "dismantling or subverting dominant hegemonic discourses" on account of their common aim of challenging the established theories of knowledge in an attempt to "re-establish marginal discourses" (Brooks 1997: 105). It may be somewhat reductionistic, however, to marry the concept of a post-colonial identity to a feminist label automatically when discussing Caribbean women's poetry. It is easy also to fall prey too hastily to the assumption that for West Indians identity is necessarily a universal concern, when it is really only a tiny facet of particular women's concerns in the myriad individual experiences that their poetry deals with. Nichols, for example, who cannot "compartmentalize" herself, acknowledges that she is influenced not only by her "sex, race, cultural background" but also by "a heap of other factors" (Nichols 1992: 151). Human beings are not "uni-dimensional" after all (Rassool 1997: 188), and so each individual writer brings to bear on her work, both "consciously and unconsciously", different individual experiences of a common socio-historical background.

The search for "rootedness" and a sense of historical "belonging" for the Caribbean émigré can create a degree of conflict when trying to determine a cultural identity. The long historical experience of being uprooted, displaced and socially alienated as a result of the slave experience and colonisation may give rise to an inclination towards a "monolithic construction" of identity (Davies 1994: 10). That is to say that the West Indian may favour an identity as an African as being something more concrete and tangible, and as one which immediately comprises a "resistance to European domination" (Davies 1994: 10). Olive Senior frequently draws on a sense of African culture, using references to the rituals of the African past and its relation to the contemporary experience —somewhat sceptically at times, as in "Epitaph":

Last year the child died
we didn't mourn long
and cedar's plentiful
but that was the one
we buried
beneath the tree of life

lord, old superstitions
are such lies. (1989: 219-220)

and dwelling on ancestors who make their presence felt. Much of her poetry also focuses heavily on the unification and disruption of family, and conveys a strong feeling of pain, "isolation and displacement" (Davies and Fido 1990: 35) along with helpless desperation, as in the fourth stanza of "Cockpit Country Dreams" (1989: 219):

Now my disorder of ancestry
proves as stable as the many rivers
flowing round me. Undocumented
I drown in the other's history.

For those who feel a sense of displacement, clinging to the "myth of unitary origin" (Davies 1994: 113) may therefore be the inevitable consequence of their need to find a "home" or a "nation" to identify with. Throughout Britain's empire, long into the twentieth century until India's Independence of 1947 and the Caribbean's of the 1960s, the imposed British culture had successfully suppressed other cultural expression. During the struggles for independence the nation "as a source of identity, destiny and liberation" (Persram 1997: 209) frequently prevailed as a dominant discourse. That growing nationalist feeling had to contend with the white British hegemony which endured throughout the transition period from Empire to Commonwealth. Even today, male white hegemony still prevails, a problem Nichols addresses in her poem "Spell Against Too Much Male White Power" (1989: 18-19), which she explains derives from trying to watch television one night only to find that on every channel the programmes were dominated by "elderly white men" discussing different issues (Nichols 1991). The poem ranges wide, in the most concise and compact way, from "Pretoria" to the "Kremlin", and like a spell uses a chanting, rhythmic beat and rhyming groups of alliterative and assonantal sounds. But the irregular stanzas which cut across a traditional spell formula all the while seek to find ways to overcome that "Male White Power" and "persuade it/ ...dissuade it/ ... dissipate it". The final imagery of the need to stop the tentacles of power from reaching too far, and the posing of the question of how a female black can invert that power into a desire for peace and tranquillity bring the poem to a close that inspires hope rather than frustration, the last line being the only one in the poem to contain punctuation:

How can I rebound
the missiles and rockets
How can I confound
multinational octopuses
Or at least

How can I remove the 'Big Chiefs'
from the helm
How can I put them to sit on beaches
quiet, sea-gazing, retired old men.

Nichols has stated that she hates "the one-dimensional stereotype of the black woman as just being a sufferer or a person who's a victim or who's had a very oppressive history" (1988: 19). In 1950s Britain, Black women "experienced [...] the entrenched prejudice, racism, sexism and foreign bias" (Davies 1994: 99) that subsequent generations of Black professional women are still having to face today, and it would appear that sexism is still "rife in the Caribbean" also (Davies and Fido 1990: 41). The "fight for survival and dignity" of the 1970s (Gilroy 1976: 10) still forms a part of their struggle for equal recognition decades on. This is why Nichols' *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984) are so important for those women to "Stan up pon we dignity", —to quote from the poetry of Louise Bennett, arguably the mother of all Caribbean women poets (1989: 51)— in their celebration of all that, ostensibly, does not meet with the "mythical norm" (Davies 1994: 153). Nichols strategically empowers women to take a pride in their appearance —if she can be accused of adhering to a stereotype then she is also defending a feature that has a right to its place in society. She invites the women to slap those norms in the face and disarm the traditional white, slim, Nordic stereotype rather than be moulded by a society which "located beauty always in European features and physical characteristics" (Davies 1994: 101). Hence her fat black woman in "Looking at Miss World" can proudly be seen to be "toasting herself as a likely win" (1984: 20) over and above all the "slim aspirants" she sees before her on her television screen.[3] But Nichols categorically states that she is not only speaking to black people, she is "addressing the whole world" (Nichols 1991).

There could be a danger of over-romanticising in Nichols' work in the face of the hardship that black women in Britain have had to endure. Ever present is that sense of displacement, where "back home" simultaneously means back in the Caribbean and back in Britain. This becomes a more important concept than that of seeking a nationalist identity, although the two are never far apart. Nichols' third collection of poems, *Lazy Thoughts of*

a Lazy Woman (1989), which subtly mocks the modern mores of her country's ex-colonisers, poignantly and wittily treats the experience of the migration of a black woman living in London and her resurgent memories of the Caribbean. In "Wherever I Hang" (1989: 10) she finds moving to England's "misty greyness" like living in a dream, and although little by little she "get accustom to de English life" she "still miss back-home side", and is perplexed as to "know really where I belaang". The Creole emphasis is clearly defined in her outward expression of her inner identity. The woman is of the "new-world-self" too, however, and in acknowledging that:

> Yes, divided to de ocean
> Divided to de bone
>
> Wherever I hang me knickers – that's my home,

she is giving others the motivation to be themselves at all times and in all places. The idiom of pop culture, also parodied in "Invitation" in *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984: 12-13), ("Come up and see me sometime") juxtaposed with the rawness of Creole speech suggestively underlines woman's capacity to have control over her personal domain and circumstance, whatever or wherever it may be.

The concept of nation in post-colonial terms, and especially for those of West Indian heritage, is frequently the site for retrieving histories that were either lost or suppressed, and lies at the heart of reclaiming histories that have "yet to be written" (Persram 1997: 209). For the majority of writers who grew up in the pre-independence era, their educational experience under British colonising forces was one that had "excluded any reference to slavery or to the African ancestry of the slaves" (Ashcroft *et al.* 1989: 147). The revival of their true history and its subsequent development is still a preoccupation; as George Lamming explains in his introduction to *In the Castle of My Skin*, the Caribbean writer needs to restore the fragmented memories of his people and find the truth between "White instruction and Black imagination" (1991: xxxvii).[4] The attempts to legitimise the narratives of the oral societies by dismantling given versions of history and redefining them with a newly-found voice is one which adopts Lyotard's definition of post-modern (and by extension, that of post-colonial) as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (1992: 999). And when we consider feminist issues in the light of post-colonial issues such as these then "traditional" feminism also comes into question. Early theories from Luce Irigaray, for example, are based on locating woman as a universal category whose prime challenge is to speak out from the silence imposed by the patriarchal discourses. Yet as

Hazel Carby explains, this patriarchal oppression is expressed in relation to middle class *white* women and does not embrace the oppression of black women and their gender within the same terms. In variance to the framework of white femininity it is also in consequence "subject to racism" (1997: 46). Black and white women's "herstories" (45) are therefore not the same stories.

Lorna Goodison goes some way towards redressing the balance and writing more recent black heroines "into the text" (Cixous 1990: 316) in her poems "For Rosa Parks" and "Bedspread" (1989: 244-245). "For Rosa Parks" is a tribute to a simple black woman's refusal to vacate her seat to a white person on a bus during the post-emancipation era, when there was dire black segregation in the Southern States of the US and blacks, who were only allowed to travel at the rear of the buses, were obliged to offer their seats to a white person when none were available elsewhere. We are told in the poem how Rosa Parks' soft word "No" was "like the closing of some aweful book/ a too long story/ with no pauses for reason". With this Goodison wills the history books away —the archaic spelling used in *aweful* connoting the power to inspire fear or reverence and at once encapsulating how history had been conveyed as being the whole truth to be revered without calling it into question. She does not forget how the real history for her people harked back to when, as slaves, they "had walked before/ in yoked formations down to Calabar" and walked "again/ alongside cane stalks tall as men". But Rosa Parks' action marked a signal "to begin the walking", to enter a new period of history when the black people began boycotting the buses in response to segregation, and the "heroine", who "never lowered her eyes" proudly led the people "towards sunrise", towards a brighter, more hopeful future. Although it took a long time in coming; many protest marches, much brutality, Martin Luther King and the 1960s' Civil Rights movements were the ripple effects of Rosa Parks' action.[5]

"Bedspread" tells how Winnie Mandela and the women of the land of Africa "fought for the right to/ speak in their own tongues" and wove a bedspread with "notes of hope" and "ancient blessings". It heralds the relentless struggle to fight off the "hot and hopeless" memories, work to free Nelson Mandela and bring "glory in a Free/ Azania", clinging always to the "dreams" which Goodison acknowledges as providing "the only country some people have to live in" (1996: 163). The poem's resounding overall significance is that the dreams have the power even to solve a political problem, and the women's conviction of this has the power therefore to propel history into a forward trajectory of significant and momentous change.

Goodison's poetry comes over as more heartfelt and earnest than Nichols's, her references to the past and the present are implied rather than

stated. In "Heartease I", from her third collection (1989: 246), "We with the straight eyes" who are looking for truth as seekers on a "spiritual journey" (Goodison 1996: 158) are still manipulated by the "spider's direction"; the allusion to the trickery of Anansi as the deceit which tries to mislead them on their quest is used in conjunction with a more contemporary history of being "born/ a Jubilee/ and grow with your granny/ and eat crackers for your tea". The message that cuts through the allusions is direct enough though —"Believe" and have the conviction to pursue the quest. Elaine Savory Fido says of Goodison: "she is powerfully a writer of spells, incantations and blessings, which work on a metaphysical level, almost, to bring us closer together in an atmosphere of harmony and peace" (1990b: 40-41). Her interest in mysticism develops from her reading of Sufi influenced writings and those of the 18th Century Trappist monks, which, as she explains in an interview with Anne Walmsley, she has embraced because of her concern "more with reunification than anything else ... as the paramount task of humanity" (1989: 233). That she is a religious person "in a very big sense", but in a non-denominational sense, is expressed in her poem "A Rosary of Your Names (II)" (1989: 247), where "God is/ Infinity" and the "Architect of Planets"; as the title to the collection "Heartease" suggests, she believes the human situation to be one which needs to pursue a personal "spiritual journey" to find relief from the pain that the heart suffers.

The period of history in which we live is indeed an extraordinary one. The end of the twentieth century is witnessing such escalating changes that it is proving difficult to keep up with them. Race, class and gender are terms which are slowly merging as politically and ecologically forced migrations suddenly place people in a different position. Societies are increasingly multicultural, but their members are slow, and sometimes unwilling even, to assimilate the implications of this. The need for a cultural identity is of paramount importance but increasingly hard to retain; a totally universal and hybrid society is impossible, but humanitarian goals can remain to the fore, as Nichols and Goodison both appear to agree, where acts of writing poetry can become "spiritual journeys" and acts of "spiritual revival" (Nichols 1992: 147) in efforts to reclaim a heritage and forge a path forward. As Homi Bhabha explains in his illuminating text *The Location of Culture*:

> The 'right' to signify from the periphery of authorized power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are 'in the minority'. The recognition that tradition bestows is a partial form of identification. In restaging the past it introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition. (1994: 2)

Bhabha refers to these acts of restaging the past as "borderline engagements of cultural difference", where "past-present" (1994: 7) articulations are precisely the result of the complex era in which society is currently living, where time and space are no longer clearly demarcated and the prefix "post" is already losing its force as a defining term. Which is why Goodison's poetry clings more to the one "essence" that is constant amidst such changing definitions —man's and woman's inner desire for peace and concern for finding at least one aspect that can make a disrupted, dispirited, dissipated being begin to feel whole again. It is also why Nichols's "spiritual revival" takes on a new meaning when considered thus; the term tradition itself is disarmed by a past-presentness which provides a glimpse of glory and a ray of hope for the future, as her poem "Of Course When They Ask for Poems About the "Realities" of Black Women" unequivocally illustrates:

> I say I can write
> no poem big enough
> to hold the essence
>   of a black woman
>   or a white woman
>   or a green woman
> [...]
> Maybe this poem is to say,
> that I like to see
> we black women
> full-of-we-selves walking
>
>   Crushing out
>   with each dancing step
>   the twisted self-negating
>   history
>   we've inherited
>   Crushing out
>   with each dancing step. (Nichols 1989:52-54)

NOTES

[1] See Rhonda Cobham's "Women in Jamaican Literature 1900-1950", in Davies and Fido (1990: 195-222). Slave women and women of the post-emancipation period, many of whom worked in domestic roles, were regarded as "sexually promiscuous", which was seen as something "dangerous and evil". Cobham cites examples of literature where domestic servants "fought back against their employers and the system in general" rather than acquiesce in being portrayed as "victims of exploitation".

[2] In particular "Can the Subaltern Speak?", in Williams and Chrisman (1993: 66-111).

[3] In 1977, Janelle Commissiong, Miss Trinidad and Tobago, won the Miss Universe title in spite of the continuing "tendency towards European criteria of the beautiful" (In C. B. Davies's "Woman is A Nation", in Davies and Fido 1990: 189).

[4] See Chapter 3 of Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* (1991) for an autobiographical insight into the distorted nature of instruction of Nationalism imparted at school during the colonial era.

[5] Contextual information about Rosa Parks provided by Amryl Johnson, poet, speaking on cassette A421 produced by the Open University, 1992.

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MAY SINCLAIR'S *THE THREE SISTERS* AS AN EARLY EXAMPLE OF MODERNIST FICTION

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1. INTRODUCTION

Between 1910 and 1920 May Sinclair (1863-1946) was considered by many as the most important English woman writer alive and her novels were compared to those of the best practitioners of the art in the past. After this period of splendour, her reputation was eclipsed by other writers and, since then, her pioneering contribution to English modernist fiction has been generally ignored.

May Sinclair played an active role in the new literary movements of her time. Among her friends were well-known writers such as Henry James, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and Ford Madox Ford. From 1911 until 1920, she enjoyed the company of the young Imagist poets and was an active member of other groups that were promoting new ideas in literature such as the Tagorephiles and the Vorticists. Thus, Kaplan (1975: 47) has defined Sinclair as "a popularizer of themes and techniques which belonged to the avant-garde". (1975: 47).

In 1913, Sinclair was a founding member of the Medico-Psychological Clinic of London, the first one to use concepts and techniques of psychoanalysis in treating mental diseases.[1] She wrote an article on psychoanalysis entitled "Clinical Lecture on Symbolism and Sublimation", published in 1916 in *The Medical Press* (in Boll 1970: 463). Her familiarity

with psychoanalysis as well as with theories of philosophy was soon to be noticed in her novels. Another contribution to the evolution of her novels from Victorianism to a more modern stance came from Imagism. Several articles written by May Sinclair on Imagist poets like Richard Aldington, F.S. Flint, Ezra Pound and, especially, H.D. reveal Sinclair's awareness of and sympathy for the Imagist movement. In these articles, Sinclair defended the Imagist poets against criticism and showed a sympathetic attitude towards their principles, which she considered to be guided by Romantic doctrines. Thus, for her, "Wordsworth's aim and the Imagists' is to restore the innocence of memory as Gauguin restored the "innocence of the eye". She (1921a: 7) highlighted Flint's decisive and final break with tradition and the effectiveness of his *vers libre*. She (1921b: 398) also compared Aldington to a Romantic poet: "Richard Aldington is possessed by the sense of beauty, the desire of beauty, the absolute emotion, as no single poet since Shelley has been possessed, with the solitary exception of H.D.". Finally, in another of these articles dedicated to Imagist poets, Sinclair (1920b: 663) praised Ezra Pound for his "discovery" of the old literatures of China and Japan and the "clearness", "vividness", "precision" and "concentration" that resulted from their influence .

Sinclair was also a literary critic of notable perception and generosity. Her most famous article, "The Novels of Dorothy Richardson", expresses her critical appreciation of the aims and methods of what she epochally calls stream-of-consciousness novel. Despite the evident influence Richardson had on Sinclair, critics have usually agreed that Sinclair has a value of her own. Thus, in his early review of 1920, Dawson Scott (1919: 8) argues that Sinclair does not owe her merit as an innovative writer to Richardson's influence:

> [...] to say that Miss Sinclair derives from this writer [Dorothy Richardson] would be doing her less than justice. For one thing, Miss Sinclair was experimenting with this method before Miss Richardson began to write, and for another, their work has nothing else in common. Miss Richardson's is monumental. [...] Miss Sinclair, on the contrary, is selective.

Kaplan (1975) also considers that it would do May Sinclair an injustice to give the impression that feminine consciousness was something that appeared only after she became acquainted with *Pilgrimage*. She (1975: 48-49) argues that Sinclair's stream of consciousness was the outgrowth of her own ideas and development as a novelist. Thus, when she read *Pointed Roofs*, she would have recognized something in Dorothy Richardson that was also within herself.

As Zegger (1976: 143) points out, by reading Sinclair's novels, one gains a better perspective on the genesis of the modern novel. The influence of Henry James, Thomas Hardy, and the Brontës on the modern novel, frequently mentioned but actually difficult to trace in the works of other writers, is apparent in her novels.

In the words of Miller (1994: 164), Sinclair's Edwardian novels are the "struggle of putting new wine into old bottles", and her change to modernism is the acknowledgement of "the inevitable necessity of creating new bottles". Sinclair was one of the few Edwardian novelists who tried formal experimentation in her novels and sought new narrative structures and styles. For Miller (1994: 163-202), Sinclair sought new fictional forms with which to tell the stories of women's lives and in doing so, "she moved from a content-driven modernism to the modernism of form".

The aim of this study is twofold: first of all, the paper offers an analysis and evaluation of Sinclair's first novel as an early example of the transition from the classic realist to the modernist text narratives. Furthermore, *The Three Sisters* (1914) —Sinclair's first psychological novel— is considered in the light of some of the formal and thematic principles as well as the prototypes of female heroine that she would later use in other modernist novels such as *Mary Olivier: A Life* (1919) and *Life and Death of Harriett Frean* (1920). These three psychological novels form the core of Sinclair's fiction and should be considered an invaluable link between Edwardian and modernist fiction.

Sinclair's restless experimentalism made her change from one technique to another, never keeping long in one direction. Sinclair was, thus, continually fitting the experiences she wrote about into progressively changing formulas and abstract frames such as the theories of philosophical idealism, naturalism and psychoanalysis. However, eventually she would only maintain her idealistic point of view in her later fiction because of her criticism of the psychoanalysts' lack of concern for absolute truth and for a metaphysically comprehensive view of the world.

2. *THE THREE SISTERS* AS A LYRICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL

Sinclair's crucial position as a link between literary movements has to be understood in the diachronic context of established genres that are deeply rooted in the history of literature. Thus, the poetic element in her narrative

prose can be identified as a characteristic of what is called the lyrical novel. Some of the characters in Sinclair's psychological novels undergo complex and subtle mental processes that are adequately expressed through a poetic medium. This poetic release is typical of *Bildungsroman* novels such as Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. In this way, Sinclair's novels resemble poetry in both their contents and language. Language in Sinclair's psychological novels calls attention to itself and turns into a medium of poetic expression.

The Three Sisters (1914) has been seen as a powerful novel, structured around scenes of intensely realized moments that are presented by means of epiphanical moments. Images and symbols are used in it to suggest themes, so that the materials of fiction are transformed into patterns of imagery that give the novel a lyric quality. Thus, metaphorical suggestiveness is increased and the mind is rendered more effectively. Miller considers that this novel's characteristic features —"the concentrated poetic style, the narrative comprised of moments, the emphasis on consciousness, the symbolism, the psychology"— are typical of modernist fiction. (198-199)

Unlike *Mary Olivier* and *Harriett Frean*—which start *in medias res*— the first chapter of *The Three Sisters* gives the reader a traditional introduction to the setting where the action is going to take place. The second chapter descends from the general introduction provided in the first chapter to the more particular setting of the house and the presentation of the characters. There are three paragraphs devoted to an individual account of each sister that begin with a set formula:[2] "Mary, the eldest, sat in a low chair [...]" (3); "Alice, the youngest girl [...] lay stretched out in the sofa" and "Gwendolen, the second sister, sat leaning over the table [...]" (4).

Boll (1973: 228) situates in this novel the appearance of pointillism in Sinclair's fiction. Its influence is apparent in broadly spaced sections within the chapters, in paragraphs of a single sentence, and in the separation of the last paragraph in a chapter from the rest. These spaces help to keep the musical beat going. To balance the pointillism, there are repetitions and similar or contrasting images that create an impression of continuous movement. (1973: 228) Special arrangements of paragraphs and chapters give the novel a poetic rhythm that differentiates it from Sinclair's previous novels. Sometimes, a cluster of chapters is used to develop a single scene and present it through several points of view. A remarkable case is the group formed by chapters 6-10. Chapter six starts with Alice sliding into the drawing room before prayers to play the piano and concludes with her still continuing her boisterous performance of the Chopin Grande Polonaise:

> And she played. She played the Chopin Grande Polonaise, or as much of it as her fingers, tempestuous and inexpert, could clutch and reach. She played neither with her hands nor with her brain, but with her temperament, febrile and frustrate, seeking its outlet in exultant and violent sound. [...]
>
> And as she played the excitement gathered; it swung in more and more vehement vibrations; it went warm and flooding through her brain like wine. All the life of her bloodless body swam there, poised and thinned, but urgent, aspiring to some great climax of the soul. (13-14)

This passage characterizes Alice's piano performance as a means of sublimating her sexuality. Some words like "frustrate" and "outlet" in the first paragraph are clearly derived from Sinclair's knowledge of psychoanalytical concepts. The second paragraph seems to present Alice's playing as a substitute for sexual fulfilment, which culminates with an allusion to a sublimated orgasm: "aspiring to some great climax of the soul". However, the reference to the soul in this last phrase also neutralizes and spiritualizes the too physical connotations of the preceding sentences. The reference to physical sensations in the description of Alice's rapturous performances will progressively become more open in its revelation of Alice's sexuality. Her enjoyment of the physical aspect of music has a clear effect on her body, mentioned twice as a receptacle of pleasurable sensations: "She enjoyed the massive, voluptuous vibrations that made her body a vehicle for the organ's surging and tremendous soul, Ally's body had become a more and more tremulous, a more sensitive and perfect medium for vibrations" (95). Alice's attempts to pass her ecstasy off as something spiritual are finally unmasked when she plays the organ with Jim Greatorex:

> On both faces there was a look of ecstasy. It was essentially the same ecstasy; only, on Alice's face it was more luminous, more conscious, and at the same time more abandoned, as if all subterfuge had ceased in her and she gave herself up, willing and exulting, to the unspiritual sense that flooded her (227).

Chapter seven describes the effects of Alice's music on the house, her sisters, the vicar and Essy. This is a preparation for the climax of the vicar's expected violent reaction: "It raged like a demon. Tortured out of all knowledge, the

d writhed in its agony. [...] To let it loose thus
se and her revenge" (15).
eight is directly linked to the end of the
sentence of chapter seven is "Through the
sy listened for the opening of the study door"
ter eight is "The study door did not open at
nues with the vicar's reaction of repeating to
d patience, wisdom and patience" (17) and the
ings to the narrative. The vicar is presented
leceived person. The narrator highlights the
reactions —"He was unaware that he was
l at the same time his temper and his
emphasizes his sense of self-importance: "To
aret appeared as the image of righteousness
place" (19). However, the narrator sees the
prisoned in a cell" (18). His unacknowledged
s of psycho-narration:[3] "And all the time he
it, that, [...] evidences might be a little
visdom and patience, of austerity and dignity,
other comic statements about the vicar make
onality. Thus, the narrator characterizes his
s an act of "superhuman clemency" (52).
asizes the vicar's meanness: "Now, by the
ers were allowed to use his bedroom twice in
nd in the autumn, for the purpose of trying

on of rage by conjuring up the refrain that
atience. Wisdom and patience. [...] It was a
with Alice starting to play again, and this is
to the following. Thus, the end of chapter
thoven, the Pathetic Sonata" (22) and the
: "Mr Cartaret sat in his study, manfully
23). The vicar finally commands Alice to
hat chapter eight ends with the beginning of
ch continues throughout chapters nine and
apter ten marks the end of this cluster of
sed. [. . .] And, in the sudden ceasing of the
heard the sound of wheels and the clank of

This group of chapters (6-10), linked by means of Alice's piano performances, centre the characters' attention around a single motif. The reader is aware of their unity because they divide a single scene into separate parts that form a thematic whole. This phenomenon can also be found within paragraphs and sentences. Clusters of paragraphs, formed usually by groups of three, also comprise a thematic unity. The common element that bonds them is usually a character and they are responsible for the peculiar layout of the page that suggests poetry rather than prose. A paragraph separated off from the others —formed by one or more sentence— at the end of a chapter is another example of the unusual layout to be found. Thus, for instance, chapter ten ends with an isolated sentence: "The three sisters waited without a word for the striking of the church clock" (29).

The Three Sisters also marks a break from Sinclair's pre-war novels and opens her group of psychological novels. With this novel, she moved from the world of external environment to the inner world of feelings and the subconscious, from the world of Wells to the world of D. H. Lawrence. Zegger (1976: 74) considers *The Three Sisters* a transitional novel in the history of English literature, because its source is Charlotte Brontë and its influence leads to D. H. Lawrence. It offers a rich social history of late Victorian and Edwardian society and, at the same time, it provides a vivid account of the inner life of its protagonists. The parallelisms between Sinclair's and Lawrence's novels studied by Zegger (1976: 73-74) would include similarities in the plot and in the relationships between the characters, the representation of the moon as a symbol of the antagonism between men and women, and the contrast between an asexual, conventional sterile life and a fruitful sexual life (1976: 73-74). Miller (1994) also highlights the striking stylistic and thematic similarities between *The Three Sisters* and D. H. Lawrence's early fiction. She (1994: 199) points out that, like Sinclair, Lawrence was strongly influenced by the combination of feminism and realism in the new fiction of the 1890s, and that he also strove to shift the focus of his fiction to the unconscious. Likewise, Lawrence also showed interest in the sexual forces that motivate apparently sophisticated people .

For Phillips (1993: 22), *The Three Sisters* is an example of Sinclair's transition from traditional to experimental fiction. She (1993) explores the representation of consciousness in Sinclair's novels, employing a close formal analysis of voice and viewpoint, and demonstrating that even in her single consciousness novels, the consciousness of her characters is dialogic. Phillips (1993: 21-22) explains Sinclair's transitional role in English fiction

ious techniques in the portrayal of mind

g of a character's thought is, of course, a ısed by nineteenth-century novelists, ... and, for Sinclair, Henry James. The difference in s novels is simply one of emphasis. One way in ghts the thoughts of her characters is by as parallel to, and often in contrast with, their wever] this representation of thought depends of authorial presence within the novel, in the narrator, whose presence may nevertheless be ng divisions between spoken and unspoken

lance between thought and conversation in a ner and outer conversation— in *The Three* 'enda and Rowcliffe meet for the first time. s an example of the unsystematic use of tor that expresses the characters' thoughts: hy am I always meeting you? What do you l. I've done it ever since we came here'. (It re *you* came')" (67).
itiates Sinclair's group of psychological elaborate and sophisticated mental processes ns of a poetic language.

IMAGISM

uence of H. D's Imagistic poems and the ion of images like the flowering thorn-tree, ne novel. Its physical presence conveys its of an emotion that speaks to her directly, ous reflection. Its function is, thus, similar inclair's (1922: 203) account of Imagist lid to describe her own aims in *The Three*

> s poems] passion, emotion, reflection, and ivid image that does the work of description the burning unity of beauty. [...] H. D.

> invariably presents her subtlest, most metaphysical idea under some living sensuous image solid enough to carry the emotion.

This fusion of qualities typical of the observer —"passion, emotion, reflection"— and of the image that is perceived recalls Bergson's idea of *durée* as a unification of the multiplicities perceived by the subject. The individual's "reflection" is simultaneous with that flux of the image he is perceiving and it includes it.[4] The theory Sinclair expresses in this review of H.D.'s poems appears in Gwenda's moments of communion with nature, when she is contemplating a group of thorn-trees. In *A Defence of Idealism* (1917) Sinclair (in Boll 1973: 259) describes these moments of heightened psychic intensity, in which one perceives reality as

> moments when things that we have seen all our lives without truly seeing them, the flowers in the garden, the trees in the field, the hawthorn on the hillside, change to us in an instant of time, and show the secret and imperishable life they harbour ...

In *Epiphany in the Modern Novel*, Morris Beja (1971: 17) writes:

> As men have found themselves putting less and less trust in the truths and absolutes of the past, they have more and more come to stress the *trivia* of existence. They have sought meaning in what they could see, all around them, in the apparently inconsequential objects and events of everyday life. Epiphanies have tended to be attached to certain recurrent attitudes toward the meaning of experience, the nature of reality, and the means of salvation —or at least of enlightenment.

These sudden spiritual manifestations in Sinclair's novels point towards the use of epiphany in a significant —modernist— way that links her to modern novelists like Joyce and Woolf and separates her from the more traditional techniques of her contemporaries —H.G. Wells, Arnold Bennett—. The use of epiphany also makes *The Three Sisters* approach the characteristics and standards of poetry. It functions as a structural device that marks climaxes in the novel and gives unity to it.

The selection of objects that convey a transcendental meaning implied by an epiphany seems to be anticipated in Sinclair's (1915: 88) previous description of Imagism as "the naked representation of a thing [...] in no case is the Image a symbol of reality [...] it is reality [...] itself. You cannot distinguish between the thing and its image". (1915: 88) Thus, it seems

likely that *The Three Sisters* (1914) was the germ of some of Sinclair's subsequent theories on Imagism —presented in her article on H.D. and Imagism (1915) and her review of H.D.'s *Hymen* (1922)— and on philosophical idealism —*A Defence of Idealism* (1917).

Passion is the link that Sinclair discovers between Imagist poetry and the Brontës. Mary, Gwenda and Alice, the three protagonists of this novel, are modelled partly on the early Victorian Brontës and also illuminated by Freud's psychoanalysis. Phillips (1993: 167) has identified a variety of psychoanalytic concepts that are alluded to in *The Three Sisters*: repression, sublimation, association, symbolisation and displacement. Jean Radford (1981) finds the parallel with the Brontës' situation and setting striking and deliberate. She (1981: v) points out that Sinclair had written a series of introductions to some Brontë novels re-issued between 1907-1914, and that in 1912 she had published a study on them entitled *The Three Brontës*. Radford also points out that D. H. Lawrence's story "Daughters of the Vicar", published in 1914, also deals with the situation of Victorian and Edwardian middle-class women.

Sinclair's reflections in her book *The Three Brontës* give the reader an insight on the influence the Brontës had into her: "In *Jane Eyre* Charlotte Brontë comes for the first time into the kingdom of the inner life. She grasps the secret, unseen springs; in her narrow range she is master of the psychology of passion and of suffering [...]" (*The Three Brontës*, 124) "Passion" and "suffering" are, indeed, central in *The Three Sisters*, which also presents "the kingdom of the inner life" and its "secret, unseen springs". The innovation that Sinclair introduces is the psychoanalytical explanation of these hitherto unexplained forces.

4. THE NEW HEROINES

Sinclair's first modernist and psychological novel introduced prototypes of heroines that she would develop more fully in her later fiction, placing them in different situations and analysing their behaviour. Therefore, *Mary Olivier* (1919) and *Harriett Frean* (1920) can be understood as variations on *The Three Sisters*. Gwenda is the model on which Mary Olivier will be moulded, lthough some of Alice's features —like the sublimation of her passion in ier piano playing— will also help to fashion her. *Mary Olivier* represents, hus, Sinclair's decision to select one type of woman from those she had ntroduced in *The Three Sisters*. By dedicating a whole novel to Mary's

the possibilities of development that could be open to a woman similar to Gwenda. Harriett Frean, on the other hand, encapsulates all the negative characteristics of the Cartaret sisters.

Gwenda, Mary and Alice Cartaret live under the tyranny of their father, the vicar of Garth. All of them can be considered stereotypes of women: Gwenda is the independent one, Mary the feminine type and Alice the personification of passion. Gwenda's rebellious nature is able to attenuate her father's domination. She wins over the two characteristics that define the vicar's personality throughout the novel, namely "wisdom and patience": "Patience failed before her will and wisdom before the deadly thrust of her intelligence" (168). Alice is not able to oppose her father in such an effective way, and her rebellion consists in playing the piano without his consent and taking a morbid pleasure in her illness. Harriett Frean will also have the same attitude towards illness, the same as Prissie, who makes herself ill to attract her husband's attention. Alice's masochistic enjoyment of her illness is described as "a half-voluptuous pleasure" (32). She uses it as a device to become the focus of her family's attention and also as an excuse to meet Rowcliffe. Prissie's delight at her self-provoked illness —also intended to attract her husband's attention— is characterized in a remarkably similar manner as "voluptuous content".[5]

Alice's performance of Chopin's Grande Polonaise epitomizes her struggle to achieve self-fulfilment and the sublimation of her sexuality. As for Mary Olivier and Dorothy Richardson's Miriam, music is for Alice a way of releasing her oppressed inner life. By playing the piano, they all give vent to their unacknowledged feelings and have a semi-epiphanical revelation of transcendence.[6] However, Gwenda finds no release in music, but in intellectual activity: "Her passion found no outlet in creating violent and voluptuous sounds. It was passive, rather, and attentive" (340). Despite Gwenda's independent nature, she will eventually end up taking care of her father, just as Mary Olivier has to renounce her own freedom to nurse her mother. Under the pressure of her isolated state, Gwenda sees herself dangling between her former desire of freedom, of wanting to earn her own living, and her present imprisonment: "There were moments when she saw herself as two women. One had still the passion and the memory of freedom. The other was a cowed and captive creature who had forgotten" (337).

Gwenda's conception of her inner life is similar to Mary Olivier's. Both of them think that their inner lives are impregnable against the worries of the world and they assert the superiority of their solitary selves over the outside

nothing moved" (339-340). The sentence "Outside nothing happened" has a striking similarity with Sinclair's (1918: 58) statement about the first three instalments of *Pilgrimage* in her article "The Novels of Dorothy Richardson": "Nothing happens. It is just life going on and on". This could suggest that when May Sinclair was reviewing Dorothy Richardson's novels, she was recognizing, perhaps unawares, something that she had already experienced in *The Three Sisters*. Her admission that "nothing happens" in Richardson's novels seems to refer to the lack of emphasis on the external world and the extreme importance of the internal world of the mind, the "plunge in" she (1918: 57) refers to in her article. Zegger (1976: 67) points out that Gwenda's love of the moors, together with her independence and courage, make her resemble Emily Brontë as depicted in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* and in Mrs Gaskell's biography.

Another feature shared by the inner lives of Mary Olivier and Gwenda is that they cannot verbalize their epiphanical moments. Thus, we are told that Gwenda's experience of fusion with the landscape she contemplates cannot be expressed with language: "There were no words for this experience. [...] It seemed to her that she *was* what she contemplated, as if all her senses were fused together in the sense of seeing and what her eyes saw they heard and touched and felt" (340). This account of Gwenda's perception shows the influence of Henri Bergson's theory of *durée* as the individual's power to unify several multiplicities. Gwenda's thought is simultaneous with the fluxes of the natural landscape she is contemplating and it comprises them all. This simultaneity of fluxes refers to her inner duration, that is, real duration.[7] Gwenda's moments of communion with nature are sometimes related to her contemplation of some thorn-trees and they could be seen as a precedent of Mary Olivier's more elaborate epiphanical moments. Gwenda's moments of mystical communion with nature could also be considered as a precedent of Mary Olivier's pantheism. In *The Three Brontës*, Sinclair's comments of Emily Brontë that "her passionate pantheism was not derived; it was established in her own soul. She was a mystic, not by religious vocation, but by temperament and by ultimate vision" (*The Three Brontës*, 171). Moonlit thorn-trees in flower have an unearthly quality for Gwenda and they are interpreted as the fruit of her suffering. The final reference to the thorn-trees closes the novel with a poetic note: "On Greffington Edge, under the risen moon, the white thorn-trees flowered in their glory". (*The Three Sisters*, 388)

Dedication to intellectual concerns is another way of escaping reality for Gwenda. After her renunciation of R

way of reading books is a symptom of her attempts to dominate her passion: "She had become a furious reader. She liked hard stuff that her brain could bite on. It fell on a book and gutted it, throwing away the trash. [...] She must have strong, heavy stuff that drugged her brain. And when she found that she could trust her intellect she set it deliberately to fight her passion" (351-352). In her attempts to dominate passion by means of intellectual concerns, she is similar to Mary Olivier, who writes poems to forget "desire": "The poem would be made of many poems. It would last a long time, through the winter and on into the spring. As long as it lasted she would be happy. She would be free from the restlessness and the endless idiotic reverie of desire". (*Mary Olivier*, 234) Mental activity is paradoxically characterized in this passage with images of physical violence —implied by the words "furious", "gutted" and "fight"— and the resistance opposed by the books she reads —described by the adjectives "hard", "strong" and "heavy". This portrayal of intellectual activity as a physical struggle suggests Gwenda's efforts to sublimate her sexuality. Radford (1981: vi) mentions Sinclair's use of "psychoanalytic theory to dramatise the tension between conscious and unconscious motives in her characters, between the social rationalizations and the irrational forces of their sexual drives". However, she (1981: vi) also points out that Sinclair had also treated women's sexuality in a previous novel, *The Helpmate*, published in 1907.

The reader of *The Helpmate* may notice several levels of awareness in the characters. From the beginning of the novel, irony provides the reader with a point of view that differs from the idea the characters have of themselves. Phillips's (1993) analysis of the problematic area of the unconscious in *The Three Sisters* demonstrates the variety of methods employed by Sinclair, and her success in leaving open to the reader the interpretation of her characters' unconscious minds. She (1993: 157) distinguishes three levels of thought: "conscious articulated thought, [...] pre-verbal thought which is not articulated, [...] and finally, the deepest of the three levels, the one that is incapable of articulation because it is below [...] [the] level of awareness". Radford (1981: ix) is also aware of difficulties in the representation of unconscious life in *The Three Sisters*, such as the parenthetical authorial interventions to tell the reader about the discrepancies between conscious and unconscious mind. An instance of the discrepancy between the conscious and the unconscious mind can be found in Gwenda's renunciation of Rowcliffe, so that her sister Alice can marry him. Gwenda's renunciation is parallel to Harriett's refusal to acknowledge her love for Robin, her friend's fiancé.

dependent personality and the unsublimated repression of her desires make her unable to accept her frustrated love and ruin her life completely. Like her sister Mary, Gwenda feels self-satisfied with the idea of her own goodness: "She [Gwenda] faced it [the fact that she would have to go away] with a strange courage and a sort of spiritual exaltation, as she would have faced [the discovery] that she was going to die" (184). Irony can be perceived in this passage, as Gwenda equates her sacrifice with a dramatic personal immolation of herself in the name of her sister. The narrator intervenes later with a comment that is intended to explain Gwenda's unconsciousness: "But it never occurred to her that this dying of hers was willed by her. It seemed foredoomed, inevitable" (185).

Chapter sixty-two is dedicated to unveil these unconscious feelings of Gwenda by means of what the narrator calls a "duologue". Her personality seems to be split into two sides each of which engages in an argument about her renunciation of Rowcliffe. This passage proves that, despite the differences between them, Gwenda is like Harriett Frean in her renunciation of her lover. They do it out of a sense of self-righteousness. Thus, whereas Harriett takes pride in having behaved "beautifully", Gwenda's "unconsoling voice" tells her she has done it for her soul: "And a dreadful duologue went on in her [...]. "You should have taken. You had your chance". "I'd have died, rather". "Do you call this living?" [...] The unconsoling voice had the last word. For it was not in answer to it that a certain phrase came into her brooding mind" (370-371).

Whereas Gwenda and Harriett sacrifice their lovers' happiness for their own self-satisfied complacency, Mary Cartaret and Prissie are aware of their husbands' depression at not having married the women they loved, but they seem to take advantage of this knowledge to hurt their self-sacrificing sister and friend. Mary is pleased by her husband's depression because it gives her more control over him. In the following passage, the narrator gives an account of Mary's unacknowledged feelings for her husband: "Mary was unaware of the cause of his [Rowcliffe's] malady. If it had been suggested to her that he had got into this state because of Gwenda she would have dismissed the idea with contempt. [...] Rowcliffe's state was a consolation and a satisfaction to her [...] to Mary her sorrow and her tenderness were a voluptuous joy". (374)

Gwenda's unconscious feelings when she learns that Mary is going to have a baby recall Harriett Frean's similar reaction when her friend Prissie, also married to the man Harriett loves, tells her about her dead baby and her hope of having another:[8] "And when she had

be glad". She said to herself, "I *will* be glad. I want Mary to be happy. Why shouldn't I be glad? It's not as if it could make any difference" (343-344). Gwenda has to force herself to be "glad". The repetition of this adjective in this passage emphasizes her obsessive repression of her sexual jealousy. This unawareness of unconscious reasons is also shared by Mary Cartaret, who gives an image of "goodness and sweetness" typical of the "womanly woman" type she incarnates, and uses her pretended goodness as a shield to hide her manipulations. Mary's excellent idea of herself is also presented in an ironic key as her "exquisite sense of her own goodness" (334). While trying to meet Rowcliffe because she feels attracted to him, she keeps convincing herself that she is doing it for her sister Alice. This justification is sometimes enclosed in brackets without the intervention of a narrator and it highlights her self-deception and the intrigues hidden beneath Mary's "goodness and sweetness": "(She said to herself it would look better on Ally's account.)" (213).

Mary inadvertently unveils her unconscious thoughts in a conversation she has with Gwenda when she reproachfully reminds her that she has always been nice to her. Her obsession with "behaving beautifully" is shared by Harriett Frean:[9] "[...] Mary believed in keeping up appearances, and the appearance she most desired to keep up was that of behaving beautifully to her sister. [...]" (378-379). Mary's thoughtless comment in her conversation with Gwenda allows her sister to see her true nature behind the veil of "sweetness and goodness" and the remorse she feels. Authorial comments also unmask other characters' real natures such as Rowcliffe's and the Vicar's.[10] Rowcliffe, characterized by the expression "romantic youth" throughout the novel, is presented by the narrator as selfish and conceited. The phrase "romantic youth" represents Rowcliffe's high idea of himself and his self-deception. It is an identity he assumes before himself and the world: "He knew he would not really have liked it. But his romantic youth persuaded him in that moment that he would" (67). Rowcliffe's duplicity is seen in the inner and outer dialogue that he maintains when he is talking to Gwenda: "He said to himself: 'She doesn't take it [the hysterical nature of Alice's illness] in *yet*. [...]' To her he said: 'Well, I'll send the medicine along to-night'" (*The Three Sisters*, 77). In his thoughts, he rather cruelly refers to Alice as "a poor parson's hysterical daughter" (80).

Alice is convinced that Rowcliffe is in love with her. The narrator presents her self-deception in a more sympathetic way, giving a comic account of Rowcliffe's visits from Alice's point of view. The vocabulary

destructive to the blessed state, which was pure passivity, untroubled contemplation in its early stages, before the oncoming of rapture" (91). The narrator's description of Alice's ecstatic contemplation of Rowcliffe with words such as "ecstasy", "blessed state" and "rapture" recalls the presentation of the mystical process of achieving direct intuitive experience of the divine. The technical precision of the vocabulary in this account of Alice's experience has a comic effect on the reader, who is made to realize how deep her infatuation is.

Rowcliffe's self-deception contributes to his being allured by Mary's "sweetness and goodness". He is aware of what lies behind these two qualities of good Victorian wives, but, later, he will deliberately forget them: "He was aware that Mary Cartaret was sweet and good. But he had found that sweet and good women were not invariably intelligent. As for honesty, if they were always honest they would not always be sweet and good" (74). Progressively, his idea of Mary becomes more acceptable because of the soothing tranquillity that he associates with her: "And it struck Rowcliffe, as it had frequently struck him before, how good her face was" (216). This effect has the result of modifying even his perception of her physical appearance: "His impression was that Mary had made herself beautiful. [...] Up till now it hadn't occurred to him that Mary could be beautiful" (237). From this moment, he will convince himself that she is perfect for him. The reason is that Mary is always doing domestic work and seems to enjoy it. Thus, when he sees her knitting he approvingly thinks: "How sweet she is. And how innocent. And good" (241). Mary finally achieves her goal of presenting herself as the only possible alternative for Rowcliffe. She has managed to do this by portraying her sisters in a poor light and by presenting herself as the saviour of the vicarage's household management.

Gwenda is also seen through Rowcliffe's eyes and judged in an erroneous way. First he assigns negative characteristics to her —egoism and conceit— which later prove to apply to himself too: "He said to himself that Gwenda was impossible. She was obstinate and conceited and wrong-headed. She was utterly selfish, a cold mass of egoism" (201). His dislike of Gwenda seems to be caused by her independent nature, which makes him think he cannot wholly control her. Zegger's(1976: 74) awareness of the true nature of the relationship between Gwenda and Rowcliffe is also apparent in her comment that "Gwenda has a core of individuality that she cannot submerge in her relationship with Steven, and her self-contained and aloof quality exasperates Steven" (1976: 74). Gwenda herself explains to Rowcliffe that she is neither feminine[10] nor gentle, and these are precisely the qualities he will find in Mary: "... I am not so dependent on people. I am not gentle as Ally. I am

not as loving and I'm not as womanly. In fact, I'm not womanly at all" (198). Rowcliffe resents her having a life of her own, where he plays no part, and his progressive disenchantment with her is what makes him start to pay attention to Mary's "sweetness and goodness". Gwenda is given the privilege of unmasking Rowcliffe, and, significantly, she does it by disclosing the falseness of his "romantic youth". Now that the mask has fallen from his face, his selfishness —the sin he had charged her with— becomes apparent.

This section has analysed the complex interactions between the characters from *The Three Sisters* and those from *Mary Olivier* and *Harriett Frean*, showing that Gwenda not only has some positive traits that are similar to Mary Olivier's, but also shares some of the negative characteristics of Mary Cartaret and Harriett Frean.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Sinclair's *The Three Sisters* —together with the rest of her psychological fiction— is in need of being divulged and analysed as a major contribution to the transitional English fiction of the early twentieth century. This paper has attempted to contribute to this aim by analysing her first novel as the forerunner of much of her later modernist fiction, in which she fully developed her own views on contemporary theories such as Imagism and on philosophical idealism. *The Three Sisters* shows the influence of Imagism in its profusion of poetic images related to spiritual manifestations. The subject feels identified with the image in a process that can be likened to Bergson's idea of *durée*. These ecstatic moments of heightened intensity are recognisibly related to the later modernist epiphany exemplified in the work of Joyce and Woolf, and bring the novel close to the lyrical standards of poetry, functioning both as a structural device that gives coherence and unity to the novel and marks its climaxes. *The Three Sisters* marks Sinclair's change to the typically modernist narrative, where there is an emphasis on the inner world of thought and the subconscious, unsystematically represented by means of parenthesis. Moreover, the poetic quality of Sinclair's narrative prose entitles it to be included in the category of the lyrical novel. The complex and elaborate mental processes expressed in Sinclair's psychological novels find a suitable medium of expression in poetic language. In *The Three Sisters*, epiphanical moments, images and symbols contribute to create a lyrical atmosphere that complements the poetic medium of expression, also highlighted by Sinclair's distinctive marking of paragraphs, chapters and sentences. Thus, a group of chapters can be focused on a single motif that makes them function as a thematic unity.

This paper has also studied how the play of mirrors generated by the different prototypes of heroines in *The Three Sisters* explains the ways in which Sinclair's later psychological novels reflect and distort those patterns of female characters. *Mary Olivier* and *Harriett Frean* can be understood as variations on *The Three Sisters.* Whereas Mary Olivier is presented as a positive character who is partly moulded on Gwenda and Alice, Harriett Frean encapsulates all the negative features of the Cartaret sisters. Alice, Harriett Frean and Prissie have the same morbid and masochistic enjoyment of illness, used as a device for making oneself the focus of attention. Alice and Mary Olivier enjoy playing the piano as a release for their repressed minds. Gwenda and Mary Olivier have a similar conception of their inner lives as being solitary and superior to the external world and they cannot verbalize their epiphanical experiences. Both Gwenda and Mary Olivier enjoy similar moments of communion with nature and they struggle to achieve independence by means of a progressive intellectualization. This dedication to intellectual issues puts their femininity at risk, as it does for Jane Holland, one of the protagonists of one of Sinclair's early novels, *The Creators* (1909). However, Gwenda also has some similarities with negative characters like Mary Cartaret. They are both self-satisfied with the idea of their goodness and because of their sense of self-righteousness they do not marry the men they love. On the other hand, Mary Cartaret and Prissie are similar in their awareness and enjoyment of their husbands' depression at having married the wrong women. The self-deception of some characters like Alice, Rowcliffe and the Vicar is presented in a sympathetic or ironic key. Thus, Rowcliffe's negative judgement of Gwenda as egoist and conceited adequately describes him. The unconscious feelings of the characters in *The Three Sisters* are represented by means of duologues and bracketed sentences that inform the reader of the characters' unacknowledged thoughts and motivations and show Sinclair's knowledge of psychoanalysis. The superiority of internal reality over external events is, thus, an essential modernist characteristic of *The Three Sisters*, something that Sinclair would also highlight in her review of Dorothy Richardson's novels with the sentence: "Nothing happens. It is just life going on and on". □

NOTES

[1] In "May Sinclair and the Medico-Psychological Clinic of London", Theophilus Boll (1962) gives a thoroughly documented history of the founding and dissolution for the clinic and of Sinclair's activities as a founder-member, her support of the clinic, and her authorship of the report of the clinic for 1918-1919. In passing, Boll (1962: 310-326) says of Sinclair as an author, "her disapperance from critical history is a silent witness against the narrowed perceptiveness of the contemporary critical world, and not a judgement against her works".

[2]. Hereafter page numbers from *The Three Sisters* will be given in brackets.

[2] I am using Dorrit Cohn's terminology (1978).

[3] See Deleuze (1987: 83-85).

[4] Prissie has a masochistic pleasure similar to Harriett's and Ally's when she tells Harriett that the doctors find no reason for her illness. The narrator reveals Prissie's secret reasons by means of the ellipses, meant to represent repressed thoughts that cannot be voiced by the character.

> In the morning Priscilla told her about her illness. [...] It seemed to give her pleasure to go over it, from her first turning round and round in the street (with helpless shaking laughter at the queerness of it), to the moment when Robin bought her the wheel-chair. ... Robin. ... Robin ... "I minded most because of Robin. [...] Robin's a perfect saint. He does everything for me". Prissie's voice and her face softened and thickened with voluptuous content. (*Harriett Frean*, 73-74) (Ellipses enclosed in square brackets are mine, the others belong to the text.)

[5] Mary Olivier's inner happiness is closely related to her enjoyment of piano playing: "When Mary thought of the piano her heart beat faster, her fingers twitched, the full, sensitive fingers tingled and ached to play" (*Mary Olivier*, 183). This streak in Mary's personality could be seen, thus, as the result of the direct influence of Alice Cartaret, and also, possibly, of the first three instalments of *Pilgrimage* that Sinclair had reviewed in 1918. This would confirm the idea that Sinclair's *Mary Olivier* is not merely the result of Dorothy Richardson's influence.

[7] "Harriett was aware of a sudden tightening of her heart, of a creeping depression that weighed on her brain and worried it. She thought this was her pity for Priscilla" (*Harriett Frean*, 75). The last sentence shows an ironic judgement of Harriett's behaviour on the part of the narrator, who shows a knowing complicity with the reader. Both are aware of Harriett's jealousy.

[8] Harriett's self-deception is also expressed in the repeated references to her "beautiful behaviour". Her parents had always expected her "to behave beautifully" (*Harriett Frean*, 23). However, there are some paradoxical references to this adjective. Beauty is associated with goodness —"Being naughty was [...] doing ugly things. Being good was being beautiful like Mamma" (*Harriett Frean*, 15)— but red campion flowers, the symbol of sexuality, are also said to be beautiful: "Look Hatty, how *beautiful* they are" (*Harriett Frean*, 20).

[9] Phillips conducts a detailed study of ironical ways of alluding to some of the characters in *The Three Sisters*. Thus, the vicar is referred to with the phrase "wisdom and patience", which develops into a much subtler and extensive exploration of his lack of charity and his repressed sexuality. Rowcliffe is called a "romantic youth", as he can be read alternatively as a glamourous hero figure or as an arrogant and deluded person. Mary's self-image is characterized also by the repeated phrase "goodness and sweetness", which suggests the legend of "the angel in the house" (194-293).

[10] Gwenda's rejection of her femininity could be seen in relation to her independence —she even wants to earn her own living working as a secretary— and with her intellectualization. Jane Holland, one of the protagonists of The Creators (1909), is also said to have a masculine side because of her dedication to intellectual issues, in this case, literary creation.

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RAVING ABOUT THINGS THAT WON'T SOLVE: MARYLEE HADLEY IN *WRITTEN ON THE WIND*.

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In her introduction to *Home is Where the Heart is*, Christine Gledhill (1987: 37) claims that

> the figure of woman, which has served so long as a powerful and ambivalent patriarchal symbol, is also a generator of female discourses drawn from the social realities of women's lives—discourses which negotiate a space within and sometimes resist patriarchal domination. In order to command the recognition of its female audiences, melodrama must draw on such discourses. [T]he dual role of woman as symbol for the whole culture and as representative of a historical, gendered point of view produces a struggle between male and female voices: the symbol cannot be owned, but it is contested.

On the other hand, David Rodowick (1987: 272) has commented on the dangers that wish-fulfilment and desire, and especially female sexuality, pose to successful psychological socialisation and argues that

> successful socialization requires the division of sexuality from sociality. This problem is especially crucial in the representation of women who, split between the passive, suffering heroine and the turbulent sexual rebels are identified in the relations of patriarchal authority only by their systematic exclusion. The ... of this exclusion refer of course to the assumed right of

> patriarchal authority to confer social and sexual identity. As opposed to the male characters, whose conflicts devolve from the difficulty of attaining an active sexual identity in which patriarchal power can be confirmed and reproduced, the conflict of the women stems from the difficulty of subjugating and channeling feminine sexuality according to the passive functions which patriarchy has defined for it, that is, heterosexual monogamy and maternity.

It is the aim of this paper to identify these juxtaposed and often clashing discourses on femininity and female sexuality within the framework provided by Douglas Sirk's representation of the US-American middle class in his popular film *Written on the Wind* (1956). I will try to demonstrate how the workings of ideology, which usually culminate in the ideologically correct traditional "happy ending", are subverted through the imposition of an arbitrary and quite implausible resolution. From here, I shall attempt to read the ending of the film against the grain of received "ideological correctness". But first, let us quickly consider the development of the melodramatic form.

In his discussion of Hollywood melodrama, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (1987: 70) claims that the melodramatic genre emerged from the confluence of three different factors:

1) the development of realism and tragedy, which provided the melodramatic form with a structural skeleton.

2) A set of social determinants, which are related to the rise of the bourgeoisie.

3) A set of psychic determinants, which often take the shape of an Oedipal conflict within the realm of the family, a symbolic microcosm of society.

Mise-en-scène is also considered an integral part of the melodramatic artefact, usually providing the spectator with additional information which is often denied to the characters within the diegesis. As Elsaesser (1987: 62) puts it

> [m]elodrama is iconographically fixed by the claustrophobic atmosphere of the bourgeois home and/or the small town setting, its emotional pattern [...] reinforced stylistically by a complex handling of space in interiors [...] to the point where the world seems totally predetermined and pervaded by meaning and interpretable signs.

The melodramatic form is thus generally identified with the bourgeois milieu and ideology. As a genre, it was initially juxtaposed to tragedy, which was traditionally associated with the representation of the much-loathed and corrupt aristocracy. In its early days, the melodramatic conflict was clearly a class conflict, the villains always being members of the aristocracy and the victimised hero/ heroine, a member of the bourgeoisie, the emerging class. When the latter social group finally established itself and acquired a significant socio-economic status, the class conflict lost its relevance and the melodramatic form sought then to establish bourgeois values as "standard" values set against the background of the family, the social institution that often upholds bourgeois ideology and its interest in maintaining the *status quo*. The family was meant to become a kind of "Heaven on Earth", where, it was assumed, all problems generated outside its scope could be solved. In this way, the family institution became psychologically overburdened since the emotional expectations generated around it could seldom be fulfilled, which resulted in frustration and disappointment. As Chuck Kleinhans (1991: 200) puts it,

> [u]nder capitalism people's personal needs are restricted to the sphere of the family, of personal life, and yet the family cannot meet the demands of being all that the rest of society is not. This basic contradiction is the raw material of melodrama.

On the other hand, in the US this line of development cannot be so easily traced because there was no aristocracy as such. However, there exist variations on this theme, as the sophisticated "aristocratic" family melodramas of the 1950s evince. Families of *nouveaux riches* substitute for the aristocracy, but the former can hardly epitomise virtue due to the bad taste and extravagance that often characterise them, defects that the self-controlled bourgeoisie abominates.

Along with the subgenre of the aristocratic family there exist others such as the (extramarital) love story, the maternal melodrama and the adult film, a subgenre to which, according to Barbara Klinger (1994: 37), *Written on the Wind* belongs[1]. This specific subgenre is best characterised by its brazen depiction of male and above all, female sexuality.

Partly for economic reasons and partly to counteract the success of television, the studios financed a great deal of similar "adult film" projects and this saucy trend became the norm rather than the exception[2]. That is to

open to the representation of socially inadmissible demands (usually on the part of the female characters), rather than in its adult content, that is, in its explicit depiction of sexuality and frustrated desire. The "adult film" was more part of a business strategy on the part of the studios geared to attract adult audiences to the cinemas, than a conscious attempt to promote sexual liberation. Sexuality was overtly represented but the chances were that those characters who exceeded the norm, however appealing to the spectator, were to be punished or suppressed in one way or another.

However, in the hands of Douglas Sirk, censorship constraints would become self-consciously exploited and exposed through what has come to be known as the "Sirkian system", mostly characterised by self-conscious creative irony[3]. In other words, Sirk's films presented situations that were familiar to the American audience but they strove to uncover the objectionable vices affecting the American middle class.

In *Sirk on Sirk* (1973), Halliday summarises the director's professional trajectory. Douglas Sirk started work as a director in the Germany of Weimar and, following the Nazi take-over, he abandoned the country. He first moved to Scandinavia and then to the US. When he started work in Hollywood, he found himself subjected to a fixed artistic practice conditioned not only by moralistic constraint and institutionalised censorship, but also by the cliché-ridden expectations of a mostly naive audience. The stuffy cinematic practice often relied on threadbare conventions and a repetitive story pattern centring on the American Dream of affluence and upward mobility was employed over and over again. It is not difficult to imagine that a Brecht-influenced Sirk, having survived the horror of Nazism, found it hard to digest the pervasive infantile belief in the American Dream and the seeming ability of the family to provide individuals with their heart's desire. Thus, Halliday explains, he distanced himself from the ideology founded upon the long-standing myth of happiness which permeated the American family institution. Klinger (1994: 14) takes up this line of argument again and explains that

> Sirk's relevance came about as a result of his Brechtian credentials, evidenced, for example, in his use of mirrors and barrier framings as distancing devices. Within his excessive, unrealistic style, Sirk was essentially a modernist in Hollywood, subverting the system and its ideology from within.

Since the publication of Halliday's interview with Sirk, *Sirk on Sirk*, in which the director revealed his Brechtian affinities (mainly characterised by critical social commitment and ironic detachment from the plot), most critics have striven to find traces of an ironic subtext in his works. This creates a

problem as these assumptions inevitably condition anyone's personal reading of Sirk's work, which may indeed result in a farfetched misreading. It seems that an ironic undertone should be taken for granted: we may feel forced to consider his production as inevitably subversive in that it ironizes about the bourgeoisie. Consequently, the Sirkian ironic subtext has been discussed from many different points of view. Critical reading is always historically specific and it reflects the prevailing trends of its social/ historical context. "This mobility of meaning suggests that academic readings come to terms with the formal properties of a text through a series of interpretative grids provided by the developments in the discipline, rather than through a rapport with the single 'truth' of the text" (Klinger 1994: 25). Thus, it is understandable that critics may reject and disagree with each other's readings of the same text. Feminist critics, for instance, are bound not only to find traces of patriarchal strictures in Sirk's works, but also to accommodate the characteristics of the ironic Sirkian system to their attacks on patriarchy. Commenting upon sexist readings of the character of Lana Turner as the "bad mother" in *Imitation of Life* (1959), Christine Gledhill (1987: 12), for example, rejects this labelling for it is just "a judgmental temptation few Sirkian commentators have been able to resist, despite [the possibility], within the logic of the 'Sirkian system', for ironically exposing ideologies of motherhood. Ironic value in this context has an implicitly misogynistic edge". Her reading of irony works in a different direction from that suggested by other critics. Particular critical readings may not only clash with previous ones, but they may also overpower authorial intention. As reader-response criticism defends, an artistic artefact becomes meaningful (if it ever does) through individual reading, and understanding cannot be fixed. If we take, for instance, the ending of *Written on the Wind*, we may see that what for some (de Cordova 1987: 266) is an (apparently) ideologically correct "happy ending" reinforcing the bourgeois social order as represented by the main(?) characters in the film, might easily be subverted and contradicted if we concentrate on the position and signification of the fringe characters. This is what the next part of my analysis will be devoted to.

Written on the Wind tells the story of the wealthy but decadent Hadley family, whose members are either physically or mentally ill. Affluence, ironically once again, has not provided this family with happiness, as the capitalist myth of the fulfilled affluent family is self-consciously exposed. The two Hadley children are stark embodiments of maladjustment and decadence, which actually seems to be expanding to the small town itself, aptly named after the family, and thus turning the Hadleys into an extended public family. The audience is not meant to identify with them for, as de

Cordova (1987: 260) asserts, the point of view offered to the audience in the sophisticated family melodramas of the 1950s is that of the privatised bourgeois family "over and against a more public one". The stylisation of the mise-en-scène through colour and deliberate bad taste reinforces the tendency to resist identification. Paranoid Kyle Hadley (Robert Stack) and nymphomaniac Marylee Hadley (Dorothy Malone), the inadequate children, are constantly contrasted with the sober characters, Mitch Wayne (Rock Hudson) and Lucy Moore/Hadley (Lauren Bacall). This juxtaposition is carried out through acting (excessive vs. subdued), mise-en-scène (flashy colours and cars are associated with Kyle and Marylee, whereas darker or mellower colours are associated with Lucy and Mitch) and dialogue[4]. The audience is meant to identify with self-control and not, in the words of Lucy, "hokey playing". As Rodowick (1987: 279) explains, the general ideology in the aftermath of World War II "promised, through an acceptance of its authority, a world of economic mobility, self-determination and social stability, but delivered in its stead a hierarchic and authoritarian society plagued by fears of the internal subversion of its ideologies". Sociopath Kyle, and especially Marylee, embody the much dreaded "internal subversion"[5] in the film and for this reason they will be subjugated through some form of ideological containment.

However, it is on the figures of Marylee and Mitch that I would like to concentrate and from here defend, following Klinger, my own reading of the final moments of *Written on the Wind*, which is bound to be different from what audiences might have experienced upon the release of the film, in the 1950s. As Elsaesser (1987: 47) explains, "melodrama appear[s] to function either subversively or as escapism —categories which are always relative to the given historical and social context". From the point of view of spectators in the 1990s, the characters of Mitch and Lucy, whom de Cordova (1987: 266) refers to as the "ideologically correct couple", may not always be the object of identification, as might have been the case in the 1950s. These days, with the workings of the dominant ideology being constantly exposed, contested and deconstructed, it is easy to trace and identify the workings of patriarchal ideology and its effects in a way that may entice us to identify more readily with the subversive "victims" of a repressive patriarchal system (i.e. Marylee Hadley), than with the characters that seem to be endorsing it.

Elsaesser (1987: 45) argues that "[h]istorically, one of the interesting facts about [the melodramatic] tradition is that its height of popularity seems to coincide [...] with periods of ideological crisis", such as the 1950s. This was indeed a time of deep ideological crisis, as the prewar social organisation had to be forcefully restored. These were the years of the Cold War and it

should not be forgotten that, during the War, women were given the chance to enjoy some measure of social, professional and economic independence. When the War ended, the men came back and took over the jobs that women had been doing meanwhile. As a consequence, the women had to return to their homes and adopt the traditional roles of mother and housewife granted to them under patriarchy. This provoked a sense of general anxiety among the population at large, as both men and women found it hard to adjust to the roles available to them within the social network. According to Mintz and Kellogg (1988: 195-196)

> Several factors contributed to a widespread sense of discontent among American women. The closing off of employment opportunities and freedoms enjoyed during World War II frustrated women who had tasted the economic and personal independence of "men's work". A tension underlay woman's need for personal fulfillment and the sometimes conflicting demands of her family role. On the one hand, young women received the same education as men and were encouraged to develop their skills and intellectual abilities. On the other, women were pressured to maintain their "femininity" and to seek fulfillment as wives and homemakers, and they were cautioned against pursuing a career. The result was a deep sense of ambivalence and internal turmoil toward both homemaking and career. [...] Men's roles, too, were subjected to extreme stress in the postwar United States. With chagrin, psychologists traced the decline of the traditional father and his replacement by a bumbling "dad" who seemed out of place in the family home. [...] Popular culture was saturated with acute cravings for calm, decisive, strong, consistent, strict paternal authority, but real fathers seemed incapable of meeting these needs.

Moreover, Klinger (1994: 112) explains that the refusal to accept such roles could actually be considered pathological:

> [w]hat was defined as sick often centered on deviations from normative ideals of proper male and female roles. In a culture still uncertain about the success of postwar civilian readjustments and enmeshed in a Cold War that left its powers somewhat in question, the definition of gender roles attained paramount importance, particularly because of their implicit affiliation with social stability. Concomitantly, "failures" at assuming proper gender responsibilities, such as wife and mother or father and breadwinner, caused [...] sociologists [and] psychologists [...] to

> pathologize deviations and ponder their destructive force on national security.

Marylee Hadley is portrayed as the excessive and overtly sexual woman posing a threat to the social/ patriarchal order. Her excess is signified in several ways: she has money (her access to it is never questioned in the film), she drives a flashy car, she is hardly ever seen without a glass of liquor in her hand, she smokes and, most importantly, her sexual needs never seem to be fully satisfied. On the other hand, in the opening sequence of the film, she is visually juxtaposed with Lucy, the other important female character in the film. Marylee is bare-shouldered and shot surrounded by shadows, with a characteristically suggestive and malignant expression on her face. For her part, frail Lucy is seen in bed wearing a prudish white nightdress. At the end of the sequence, Marylee, always active and determined, goes down the stairs[6] and enters the room where her brother Kyle and her beloved Mitch are. Lucy, however, remains in her room and finally faints upon hearing some shooting[7].

Marylee's character is far too excessive to be accommodated into the narrative and successfully turned into a fit figure for sympathetic rapport, and her juxtaposition with Lucy serves this purpose. Bacall plays the perfectly bourgeois heroine meant for identification. Her status, however, is initially problematic and unclear. In the opening sequence mentioned earlier, we can see her in bed with Mitch at the window. This image may lead the spectator to infer that they form a couple and thus her interest in, and final marriage to, Kyle in the first section of the film becomes unsettling. On the other hand, it is Mitch and Lucy that we see at the New York office after the opening credit section. They both seem to click, so much so that Mitch at some point is led to conclude, "we're two of a kind". The spectator is therefore bound to assume a close link between these two characters, especially because upon meeting Kyle, Lucy does not seem to show great interest in him. They meet at the 21 Club and she appears to dislike Kyle's ostentation, a feeling that Mitch shares. She explains that she envisages her future involving "a husband, a house in the suburbs and kids". Kyle believes that she deserves better than a boring "bourgeois" suburban fate and invites Lucy to join his club for "the prevention of boredom". Thus, they end up flying to Miami aboard Kyle's plane and staying at a very expensive "little boarding house". Once there, Kyle makes it plain to Lucy that with him she could have all the material wealth she could ever aspire to. It all proves much too materialistic for Lucy to digest and she leaves the hotel. She

off the plane. After promising her that he will behave like "Tom, Dick and Harry, [he will] take her to lunches and the movies", he proposes to her. She, oddly enough, agrees to marry him there and then without having a chance to witness his transformation from a spoilt rich young man into a normalised bourgeois adult. What Lucy values above all is the marriage certificate itself, and she duly achieves it. It is this that leads Mitch —and perhaps the audience— to become disappointed in her, for he thought Lucy (with whom he had already fallen in love) was a "different kind of girl". After their honeymoon, they move to the Hadley home and Lucy meets Marylee. Once again, the two characters are visually juxtaposed in the scene in Lucy's room through the device of the looking glass. As Bacall brushes her hair, we can see Marylee's reflection on her mirror, and they actually seem to be making the same movements, which hints at the possibility of each being the "mirror image" of the other. They would represent the two faces of the category "woman", of the representation of femininity. They would thus become the two sides of the same coin, one a representative of the law, of adherence to the establishment, and the other, a representative of subversion, non-conformity, or in Rodowick's (1987: 273) terms, authority and madness[8]. Such a rigid juxtaposition and typecasting for women within patriarchy —that is, the healthy girl-next-door or the subdued sexless wife or the whore or sexual vamp—calls for further consideration of the only roles available to women in a bourgeois milieu. As Rodowick (1987: 273) explains

> the inability to resolve these two extremes —that is, to find a way to compromise the inertia of the law (the social system defined by patriarchal authority) and the restlessness of desire within individual characters— constituted a real crisis of representation for the domestic melodrama.

This crisis characterises the ending of *Written on the Wind,* for, as I will try to show, the epilogue to the film, which starts after the trial sequence, seemingly works to uphold the bourgeois order as represented by Lucy and Mitch, who are seen happily leaving the rotten aristocratic world of the Hadleys. But does this "happy ending" really work? Marylee is also foregrounded through a crosscutting of images of her and the newly formed couple and her representation remains too powerful for the ideologically correct bourgeois ending designed to make us forget her. She was supposed to

be necessary to analyse her relationship to Mitch. Though the character of Lucy is meant to be a substitute for the Law[9], it is Hudson's character that is most ideologically laden. Barbara Klinger (1994: 109-12) has explored the ideological implications of the roles played by Hudson through his acting career. He epitomised "normalcy" and was often contrasted with the paranoid split characters that actors such as Marlon Brando or Robert Stack played. "Normalcy" (or what would nowadays be considered a lack of appeal) was attractive in postwar American society:

> Hudson's normalcy did not simply operate to counterpoint psychoanalytic inflections of masculinity. [...] In the post-World War II era, social critics often equated troubled masculinity with weakness, [which] in an ascending spiral of possibilities, could lead to perversion and homosexuality.[10] On a deeper level, Hudson's image represented a "healthy" [...] solidly heterosexual masculinity within Cold War perceptions about the deterioration of virility and its implications for national power and familial stability.

The link between a healthy masculinity and national stability and between a deviant (and therefore "un-American") sexuality and the communist threat was thus hinted at. Marylee's behaviour is openly deviant within the social context in which it is situated. Her sexual needs are so urgent that they take her to bars frequented by members of the working class. In the film, she metaphorically becomes a symbol of the Red Scare. As Babington and Evans (1992: 55) have noticed, she has an almost obsessive fixation with the colour red (her car, her clothes, the flowers in her room), but most importantly, she mingles with the lower classes, unashamedly breaking class barriers —and thus laying bare the American myth of democratic classlessness— and crucially breaking the law of bourgeois legitimate inheritance since

> [Marylee's] very existence as a sexual being poses a threat to the patriarchal order, i.e., the offspring of a misalliance between propertied female and non-propertied male cannot be disavowed as easily as when the sexes are reversed. The containment of female sexuality [...] is necessary for the legitimate transfer of property in capitalist societies. (Orr 1991: 382).

Marylee is about to spend an "interesting afternoon" at the bar when Kyle and Mitch, after receiving a call from the bartender, arrive and try to stop/ repress her in the name of the patriarchal Father. Her defiance of the Law does not,

however, stop here and on a second instance, she is caught by the Police at a motel with a petrol station attendant, whom she had actually picked up. She is taken home and the development of this section, underscored by the "Temptation" dance that Marylee performs (a powerfully sensual musical element), actually leads to the death of her father, Jasper Hadley, of a heart attack. Frustrated desire (Marylee frantically dances in front of the picture of the man she loves) defeats a decrepit symbol of patriarchal domination. Following Jasper's death, we are first allowed to see Mitch Wayne in the study, thus creating a symbolic identification between him and Jasper. He becomes the symbolic "heir" to the aristocratic family throne since it has become clear in the course of the film that neither weak and death-driven Kyle nor nymphomaniac Marylee can be turned into ideologically legitimate heirs to Jasper's position. In Kyle's words, only Mitch "can fill his father's shoes". Once again, decorum and "normalcy" are set against maladjustment and deviance.

In her analysis of Rock Hudson's persona, Klinger (1994: 113-114) complains that

> the shrillest analysis of the family man linked his failure to the looming presence of the "modern woman" [...] [who] enjoyed increased authority in society due to [...] changing conceptions of home life that found her sharing housework and decision-making with her husband in a new spirit of democracy, her increased participation in the work force, and her growing prominence as a sexual being with equal right to satisfaction in the bedroom.

She goes on to quote an article in *Look* magazine and adds that

> [o]f particular concern was woman's "new sexual aggressiveness", resulting in the sexual domination of men [...]. Men suffered symptoms that ranged from fatigue, passivity and *anxiety (about satisfying women)* to impotence and the Freudian "flight from masculinity" that resulted in homosexuality [...]. For the postwar era Hudson represented the quintessence of the manly man, The Great Straight Hope in an environment increasingly defined by changing and contested conceptions of manliness (p. 114-115, emphasis added).

This sheds light on the reasons why Mitch constantly (and perhaps more consciously than is generally acknowledged) rejects Marylee's advances. He, as a representative for the dominant ideology of the time, rejects the castrating/sexually deviant modern woman. Orr (1991: 382) convincingly

explores Mitch's fear and comments on two sequences in the film where substitute objects are meant to symbolise the phallus and fear of castration. The first example is the moment when Jasper suggests to Mitch that he should marry Marylee. He responds that he could not do it since "she is too much like a sister to [him]". However, the composition of the frame, the acting and the prominence given to the (phallic) pencil that Mitch is nervously handling, suggest that Mitch is overtly anxious and lying. He rejects Marylee because he is afraid of her castrating power and the only way he finds to defend himself is by humiliating her: "You're sick Marylee. Your sickness won't be cured by marrying me". He indeed tries to parry her sensual attacks by asking Marylee near the end, "Would I ever be enough for you?". He is aware that he could not possibly satisfy her for her desire has its roots in her "sickness", that is, social maladjustment through unchecked sexuality. Elsaesser (1987: 57-58) remarks:

> [the] unrelenting internal combustion engine of physical and psychic energy [or desire], generically exemplified by the [...] crackling aggressiveness of the screwball comedy, [...] shows signs of a definite slowing-down in the 50s [...], where raucous vitality and instinctual "lust for life" is deepened psychologically to intimate neuroses and adolescent or not so adolescent maladjustments of a wider social significance [...]. In the films of Sirk an uncompromising [...] innocent energy is gradually turned away from simple, direct fulfilment by the emergence of a conscience, a sense [...] of responsibility or the awareness of moral complexity.[12]

Further evidence of Mitch's anxiety can be traced in the party sequence, when Marylee and Mitch talk alone in his old room. Orr (1991: 382) gives psychoanalytic significance to the phallic oukelele that Mitch is playing and which he puts down immediately after Marylee sits close to him. I would add another instance: when Marylee takes Mitch home after the incident at the bar, she is seen driving her powerful sports car against a background of oil derricks. While she is telling him how much she loves him, how desperate she is, Mitch, once again rejecting her, repeatedly fails to light his (phallic) cigarette. Marylee closes the conversation with the following remark: "I'll wait, and I'll have you, marriage or no marriage". Mitch rejects her because, on the one hand, that would entail "castration", he would somehow relinquish his bourgeois masculine authority, and on the other "he [would

Marylee cannot have Mitch, who, for his part, cannot have Lucy, the woman he loves. Mitch, however, remains "faithful" to her, and in a duly decorous way, respects her marriage. For their union to become possible, its main obstacles must be eliminated. Kyle's accidental death facilitates their way out of the Hadley family. He dies and the full course of action seems to have been closed, this scene being also the opening sequence of the film. We are nevertheless presented with a long final sequence, the trial against Mitch Wayne. Orr (1991: 385) remarks that this section is only necessary for the "correct" couple —and by extension the sympathetic audience— to be exonerated of all (psychological) guilt, which is finally (psychologically) imposed on Marylee. He considers that this final section would otherwise become unnecessary. However, the trial sequence becomes a ploy to "tame" Marylee and allow bourgeois morality to triumph over the decadence of the affluent, despite Marylee being in a clear position of power at the inquest. At the Hadley home she tries to blackmail Mitch —with as little success as ever— into marrying her by reminding him that she "could talk [him] right into the State Penitentiary", and although at the trial she initially testifies against him, she suddenly collapses, stops lying and tells the whole truth, supposedly, out of truly felt romantic love for Mitch. This moment is somewhat contradictory. It may just be the case that, as Doane (1987: 118) argues, "[i]n a patriarchal society, the myth of romantic love is always there to act as an outlet for any excess energy the woman may possess, to, somewhat paradoxically, *domesticate* her" (emphasis added). The Euripidean *deus ex machina* device is employed to make Marylee suddenly change her mind and provide Lucy and Mitch with an easy exonerating escape. But why would she let Mitch go? Orr (1991: 385) questions the plausibility of these final moments,

> Why after being driven to destroy her father [through her excessive sexuality] and brother [through her slanderous machinations] out of sexual frustration, should she spare the principal cause of that frustration? The salvation of the hero is clearly arbitrary—a resolution imposed from above. Had Marylee been allowed to act consistently, the film would in fact have revealed to the implied audience the "real conditions" of its existence.

That is to say, the actual existence of socio-economic power structures based on class. But Marylee is not allowed to finally exercise the power she has

have the "ideologically correct" ending involving Mitch and Lucy that the film would, supposedly, endorse. This is the traditional "happy ending" in which the family melodrama often culminates, though it is indeed a little eerie that two recent deaths should so unproblematically give way to a joyful resolution. On the other hand, we have the recently redeemed(?) character of Marylee. She, however, is excluded from the happy ending, since her presence would undermine the joy of this final moment. She is denied access to this blissful scene, and hence it might be concluded that she has not been clearly contained within the ideological project of the film. Her position lingers on the boundaries between inclusion —i.e., at the end of the trial sequence —and exclusion— she remains enclosed at her prison-home. Her disruptive presence throughout the film has proven far too powerful for it to be disavowed through an apparent "taming" process in the trial scene. Her own "unhappy ending" remains to be examined. As I mentioned earlier, it calls for further consideration of the roles allotted to women in patriarchal societies. She has now rid herself of the shackles of her repressive father, but as was suggested at the beginning of this paper, hers is an aristocratic family which has merged with the community itself. This implies that although Marylee does not have to confront her father now, she will have to confront the community at large, the bourgeois social order. However, though she has lost what she most loved (Mitch), as her suggestive stroking of the (phallic) oil derrick suggests, she has now the power that money and class confer, as her ambiguous smile evinces.

Marylee, thus, has not really lost the power she had previously enjoyed, and so, whose position (whose ending) is now more prominent? The fact that despite everything Marylee now has the power that had previously repressed her (she is visually connected to her father in a mise-en-abîme composition) threatens to unsettle the apparently happy ending. Rodowick (1987: 276) explains that

> [w]hat isolates the domestic melodrama of the 1950s [...] is its inability to fully internalise [...] two contradictory demands [...]. On the one hand, the affirmative tendency [...] restricted to the conventional "happy end", [...] [and o]n the other hand, [a] structure of conflict common to the domestic melodrama [which] was produced *internally* by contradictory forces which challenged the bourgeois family and patriarchal authority from within.

In *Written on the Wind,* the ending attempts to reproduce and foreground this conflict by having two different female characters associated to each of these

contradictory demands. Lucy is assigned the "happy end" and Marylee the "forces of contradiction". However, the ending works precisely to expose the two alternative and irreconcilable outlets available to women in a patriarchal society that represses (female) citizens through its arbitrary imposition of the bourgeois family institution as *the* norm to be assimilated and perpetuated. By laying these options open, Sirk succeeds at self-consciously and critically exposing the plight of women in a system that leaves personal determination available only to men and reserves to itself, to take up again Rodowick's earlier argument, "the right to confer social and sexual identity". Although Marylee now has the power of money, it is not clear whether she is satisfied with her lot or not. If she is not, then her punishment has become effective, but if she is, then the apparently bourgeois ideology of the film has finally failed and so it would become obvious that the film is just openly, to quote Marylee describing her brother Kyle, "raving about things that won't solve".

NOTES

[1]. The subgenres included within the category of "Family Melodrama" often merge. Consequently, we may find a film such as *Written on the Wind* typified as, for instance, a "family aristocratic melodrama" (see Schatz 1991: 161) or an "adult film" (see Klinger 1994: 37). However, I will mainly base my analysis on the latter definition.

[2]. Klinger (1994: 56) cites other films that were included within this trend: *The Cobweb* (1955), *Tea and Sympathy* (1956), *Bigger than Life* (1956), *Some Came Running* (1959), etc.

[3]. See, for example, Babington, Bruce and Peter Evans. 1992. "All that Heaven Allowed: Another Look at Sirkian Irony". *Movie* 34-35: 48-58.

[4]. A typical instance: Mitch comments on Kyle's whim to have a steak sandwich at the 21 Club in New York, which he characterises as evidence of Kyle's "simple-mindedness".

[5]. Or, as one of the readers of this paper kindly suggested, "un-Americanness".

[6]. In *Melodrama and Meaning* Barbara Klinger (1994: 60) comments upon the connotations inherent in the staircase itself and reproduces some publicity describing it: "'it takes a circular staircase to bring out a girl's sex appeal. [...] That stairs and sex appeal go together [...] has been proven many times over'. [...] Dorothy Malone is singled out as a 'staircase actress' *par excellence*".

[7]. Although this is clearly a sign of her own excessively hysterical behaviour, it works in an altogether different direction from Marylee's.

[8]. Christopher Orr (1991: 384) claims that "[w]ithin the body of the text, Marylee functions as a symbol for the return of the repressed and the revenge that repressed desire turned perverse, exacts on the agents of repression. [...] [S]he need[s] to destroy Lucy because of Lucy's complicity with the Law; Lucy married Kyle rather than Mitch because she was attracted to Kyle as an object to be reformed/ castrated".

[9]. As Babington and Evans (1992: 54) note, "Lauren Bacall [is] here showing none of the spirited independence of her Hawksian roles". Yet, in some of her other 50s films, she plays a similarly mellow role: *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953), *The Cobweb* (1955), *Designing Woman* (1957).

[10]. The unforeseen ironic implications of turning Hudson into the epitome of untroubled masculinity are analysed by Klinger in the last section of her book.

[11]. Elsaesser (1987: 56) argues that "[t]he melodramas of [...] Sirk [...] deal with [...] what one may call an intensified symbolisation of everyday actions, the heightening of the ordinary gesture and a use of setting and décor so as to reflect the characters' fetishist fixations".

[12]. As Mitch laments in front of Marylee: "How far we've come from the river".

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MEETING THE CIVILISED BARBARIAN: BRAM STOKER'S *DRACULA* AND JOSEPH CONRAD'S *HEART OF DARKNES*

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Joseph Conrad had neither met Bram Stoker nor read *Dracula* (1897) before writing *Heart of Darkness*, originally serialised in *Blackwood's Magazine* a year and a half after the publication of Stoker's novel.[1] Nor did early or late reviewers notice any analogy between these two texts.[2] Other texts of the 'imperial Gothic' subgenre, to use the term Patrick Brantlinger first used,[3] might seem to have closer links with *Heart of Darkness*, especially H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1887) and H.G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, published, like Conrad's novella, in 1898. Kurtz, like Ayesha and Dr. Moreau, reigns supreme over natives subordinated to their own barbaric exploitation of power. Brantlinger notes in reference to the autobiographical basis of *Heart of Darkness* that "in simplifying his memories and sources, Conrad arrived at the Manichean pattern of the imperialist adventure romance, a pattern radically at odds with any realistic exposé intention" (1988: 263).[4] Still, he artificially separates Conrad from the authors in his list of imperial Gothic writers, which also includes Stoker, feeling a certain unease about classing Conrad with the fantasy writers. Yet the themes that Brantlinger identifies as the centre of this subgenre are also present in *Heart of Darkness*: individual regression (or, going native), the fear of the invasion of civilisation by the forces of barbarism or demonism, the diminution of opportunities for adventure and heroism in the modern world and the Darwinian ideology of imperialism. Conrad seemingly differs from his peers only in his ignoring their interest in the occult and the supernatural.

The arbitrary separation between the canons of realism and fantasy has made Conrad appear as a rather isolated proto-Modernist paving the way for the flood of literary fiction on the British Empire that followed his own work and E.M. Forster's. Conrad did not move exactly in the same circles as Haggard, Stoker or Wells but he participated in debates on the underside of Victorianism, debates that involved them. He actually wrote for the same, still remarkably unfragmented, readership fond of adventure fiction,[5] the popular reflection of Victorian imperialism. Both *Dracula* and *Heart of Darkness* can be said to invert the expectations of adventure fiction readers by offering a distressing collision with terror instead of the exhilaration of the encounter with the exotic in overtly imperialistic texts. Stoker's and Conrad's stories deal with the meaning of evil; in them, the horrific is closely associated with fears of masculine degradation brought about by contact with a foreign culture and is associated with a situation of invasion and of 'natural' or supernatural colonial conquest on different sides of the barrier. The effects of degradation are epitomised by a mythical man —Kurtz, Count Dracula— who cannot tell his civilised self from his barbaric persona. His problematic and foreign patriarchal masculinity is presented as a model threatening the stability of a younger Englishman, a representative of modern business, sent to meet him in his domain: the primal central African jungle or Transylvania, the land beyond the forest in the centro-European heart of darkness.

Despite their different uses of the supernatural, *Dracula* and *Heart of Darkness* clearly spring from a similar late Victorian cultural atmosphere. Both use a Gothic framework for their work which allows them to delve into the domain of evil while eluding the more controversial political implications of their mythical parables. Their common concerns —the problematic control of foreignness and Otherness, the status of Englishness, the tensions accruing about the central position of masculinity in modernity— are cast in narratives with remarkable points of coincidence. But this Gothic foundation is precisely what problematises a reading of these texts based on a narrow notion of their historical context or their literary status. These texts are new myths about modernity which spring from both ancestral and historical fears. Gothic, as David Punter notes, is not only a mode of revealing the unconscious and exploring the boundaries of the primitive, the barbaric and taboo, but also a "mode of history, a way of perceiving an obscure past and interpreting it" (1980: 58).[6] Abandoning the medievalising atmosphere of 18th century Gothic, late 19th century imperial Gothic interprets the present rather than the past

surrounding them; their interpretation, though, rejects the rational notions of historiography and the realistic Victorian novel,[7] preferring instead the intuition of other discourses that would articulate individual and collective life in the 20th century. For, if *Dracula* "seems frozen at the threshold between Victorian evolutionism and psychoanalysis" (Pick 1988: 72), which Freud would develop in the decade following the publication of Stoker's masterpiece, "the symbolic structure of *Heart of Darkness* illuminates Jung's theories years before he had articulated them" (Young 1982/83: 588).[8] Kurtz and Dracula are, as Nina Auerbach says of the Count, less specters of the undead Victorian past than harbingers "of the world to come, a world that is our own" (1995: 63). They belong simultaneously to history and to the mythic subtexts that Gothic sustains alongside history.

Leaving aside Freud and Jung, for they would be part of another project, I want to focus here on the shift in masculinity at the turn of the century that Conrad and Stoker dramatise in their Gothic narratives, especially as regards the status of Englishness and the rejection of man's shadow or dark double. Their narratives reorganise this moment of chaos for a sympathetic audience. Conrad sees a way out of the horror in the attention of the male peers to whom he addresses his tale, the women being left aside. Stoker's relies, rather, on his heroine Mina to articulate the fragmented narrative of his characters' encounter with evil. Forcing her out of the women's too beautiful world (Marlow's words), Stoker makes Mina face the same dangers as the men around her; together, they can finally look forward to a brave new future symbolised by her baby son, a future conspicuously missing in *Heart of Darkness.*

I

Stoker and Conrad narrate similar descents into hell in which a young Englishman —Jonathan Harker, Marlow— is dispatched by a paternalistic employer to meet a foreign patriarch figure who rules a wild, remote country outside Western European civilisation.[9] The journey marks for Marlow and Harker a rite of passage into the male domain of business, but also an awakening to a more mature, bitter reality that changes them for ever, especially as regards their view of themselves as men. The journey works as a test of manhood for them in which they must prove that faced with the

out his memories of the time spent in Dracula's castle. Marlow reluctantly forces himself to lie to Kurtz's Intended so as not to disclose the dubious rituals that took place in Kurtz's jungle feud and his own equivocal opinion of them.

Gothic narratives like Conrad's and Stoker's dramatise the beginnings of a slow change in patriarchal masculinity that has not run its full course. This is tied to the deconstruction of Empire and the resistance against its hypocritical ideology of domination. Conrad's Marlow is frank enough about this. At the beginning of *Heart of Darkness* he interrupts the narrator's imperialist reverie, in which the river Thames is said to have helped "the dreams of men, the seeds of commonwealth, the germs of Empire" (47),[10] with his melancholy "and this has also been one of the dark places of Earth" (47). As the text moves forward, Marlow is heard mocking the "noble cause" (54) that inspires the Belgian colonisation of Congo; he has only words of condescension towards Kurtz, who, despite the admiration he elicits from others, is for Marlow "hollow at the core" (131). Conrad's intention, however, is not so much to dismiss the idea of Empire as a whole, as to condemn the colonisers who surrender to the temptation of abusing the power in their hands and, also, the hypocrisy about the actual materialistic ends of colonial exploitation. His narrative hints that Englishmen alone among the European colonisers are free from what he calls the fascination of the abomination. "What saves us", he tells his English colleagues, "is efficiency —the devotion of efficiency" (50). The efficiency of the English in the face of darkness and evil is also what Stoker endorses in *Dracula*. The Count is ultimately defeated because his "self-educated, gentle, ultimately 'amateurish' mastery of British ways cannot compete with the modern systematic data processing of the English" (Gagnier 1990: 151). The surrender to Dracula's empire is avoided just like Marlow avoids his own surrender to Kurtz's jungle, thanks to a self-reliance based on a staunch belief in the superiority of the civilised English man over the foreign civilised barbarian.

This superiority, though, is not as straightforward as it might seem. *Dracula* and *Heart of Darkness* bespeak clear signs of the loneliness and lisorientation of modern man in the face of the dark side of the imperial, patriarchal models. The anxieties about masculinity present in Conrad's and Stoker's texts are anticipated by other late Victorian Gothic texts such as *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), which eflect a view of masculinity split between the respectable man on the one and and his dark twin, or shadow, the barbarian who must be rejected on the ther. Jekyll and Gray show the limits of masculin

but, specifically, in the respectable Victorian man. Through Moreau and Kurtz, Wells and Conrad use the same idea to question the moral and spiritual soundness of the male coloniser. Dracula, on his side, forces the men of England out of their complacency by seducing their women and threatening to destroy them. The only solution left to the men in Stoker's novel is to show themselves as they are, with all their weaknesses, before the women they are to protect.

The confrontation between man's dark and light sides is possibly as old as mankind, but its fictional representation enters a new cycle with the beginnings of Gothic fiction and the rise of the Gothic villain. Gothic indicates that the source of evil lies in human psychology, not in an external moral or religious agency. The issue of the human nature of evil becomes almost an obsession in late Victorian times due, among other factors, to the overwhelming impact of Darwinism on religious beliefs. Social Darwinism eased the anxieties of many by convincing them that western man —British man— was the summit of creation and that all the 'others' were inferior: objects of the curious gaze attuned to the charms of exoticism, of xenophobic hatred, of colonisation. Upholders of the British Empire subscribed to this view while hypocritically presenting it as the white man's civilising mission to save the Other from degradation. Crucial to an understanding of this obsession is the notion of degeneration, the fear that contact with 'inferior races' would reverse the evolutionary path of the white man, but also the fear that individual men losing their vitality to the attractions of unbridled sexuality would revert to a previous evolutionary stage, as seems to happen to Dr. Jekyll or Dorian Gray.[11] Victorian intellectuals such as Herbert Spencer spoke at the turn of the century of the "process of rebarbarisation" of British society,[12] which surely sprang from the self-consciousness of Britain's dominant position in the world and the fear of losing that privileged place in the sun.

David Punter notes that the problem of degeneration dramatised in late Victorian Gothic texts is formulated as a "question appropriate to an age of imperial decline: how much, they ask, can one lose —individually, socially, nationally— and still remain a 'man'? One could put the question much more brutally: to what extent can one be 'infected' and still remain British?" (1996: 1). The end of the 19th century is perceived as a moment of decline possibly not so much due to an actual loss of power as because it is felt that privileges cannot be enjoyed indefinitely. The question should be rephrased, then, as 'how much can one risk to maintain one's place as a privileged

also by women through sex, seems to have been a major obsession for turn-of-the-century men afraid of becoming less than men. Conrad and Stoker clearly perceived their contemporaries' anxiety about the limits between the civilised and the barbaric and their fears that the blurring of boundaries between man and animal, the rational and the irrational, the primitive and the modern, the centre and the margins, man and the New Woman would lead to a state of terminal degeneration for the 'race' and, specifically, for the men running the Empire.

Degeneration, however, is only part of the problem in these texts: after all, Kurtz and Dracula are true survivors who adapt very well to their new environments and who may appear thus to be fitter in the Darwinian sense than average men to carry out their 'mission'. As Marlow notes, communication with Kurtz was impossible because Marlow could appeal to nothing that made sense to him; instead, he had to "invoke him —himself— his own exalted and incredible degradation" (144). Late Victorian Gothic fiction reflects, thus, not only a fear of racial degeneration but also a secret fear that evolution may bring about a successful mixture of the civilised and the barbarian, that progress may prove to be in alliance with Kurtz's amoral, barbarian 'degradation' rather than halted by it. When a journalist tells Marlow that Kurtz could have been "a splendid leader of an extreme party", (145) any party, he seems to be drawing the portrait of someone who could be a forefather of 20th century Nietzchean fascism rather than the herald of impending racial involution. Dracula's conquest, which involves turning the English into an immortal, superior race of vampires, also seems to point to the fear that evolution, in this case away from death, may entail the paradoxical degradation of civilisation.

These fears have to do, specifically, with what "*Englishness* (that is, "Britishness") means. For English/British men see themselves in this period as the peak of civilisation and also as its most vulnerable manifestation —they seem to feel that the only way forward once the summit has been reached through the building of the British Empire is towards evil and chaos. Both *Dracula* and *Heart of Darkness* anticipate thus one of the central topics of 20th century Western culture: the discovery that the modernity of the Western world cannot hold at bay the archetypal darkness lying in ambush not beyond the margins of civilisation but at its very centre. Kurtz and Dracula epitomise the definitive failure of the Enlightenment project of the 18th century, which the original Gothic fiction set out to deconstruct. What Conrad and Stoker propose is that, as countless Gothic villains had hinted, the civilised man is the worst barbarian. And if Englishmen are the most civilised of all, they must also be in the greatest danger of becoming the

extremest barbarians. To exorcise this fear, the civilised barbarian is represented, as happens in these two texts, as the European Other, a European Other the more threatening because of his remarkable knowledge of English culture.

The means the European Other uses to communicate with the English man —Marlow or Harker— is the English language. Both Dracula and Kurtz are described as men gifted with an impressive, deep voice. Marlow remarks in his journey upriver that Kurtz's voice is his real destination, though we finally hear very little of Kurtz's wondrous speeches. The voice that Marlow so much yearns for, honours him nonetheless with its confidence because "it could speak English to me" (117). Kurtz, Marlow continues, "had been educated partly in England, and —as he was good enough to say himself— *his sympathies were in the right place*. His mother was half-English, his father was half-French. All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz" (117, my italics). To be precise, all of Western Europe. All of Eastern Europe, on the other hand, contributed to the making of Count Dracula, originally one of the warriors entrusted with the defence of Europe from the 'darkness' of Islam. The historical figure who inspired Stoker, the Wallachian fifteenth-century Prince Vlad Tepes, was a hero whose reputation had suffered because of his 'unsound methods', a frontier warrior defending the cause of the white man against the dark Islamic man. When Harker meets him Eastern Europe has been freed and has no place for him. The Count is then planning the conquest of England, not because England is an enemy but because he has fallen under the spell of English culture.

Harker expresses little admiration for Dracula's speeches but he is subjected to endless hours of conversation, lasting from dusk till dawn. In these the Count displays his impressive knowledge of Britain and uses Harker both to practise English and get rid of the foreign accent that troubles him so much, and to gather more information about the land he calls "my dear new country of England" (25).[13] The Count reverses the method of Stoker's and Harker's research on Transylvania —both use the information on this land available from the British Museum Library[14]— constructing a mental picture of his idealised new home through books. The Count may well be the first 'Oriental' to deconstruct Western man's Orientalisation of Eastern Europe by using the white man's own tools, namely, texts. Just as Transylvania was a text and not an experience for Stoker, so England (Britain) is for Dracula, primarily, a text: "'These friends' —and he laid his hands on some of the books— 'have been good friends to me, and for some years past, ever since I had the idea of going to London, have given me many, many hours of

pleasure. Through them I have come to know your England; and to know her is to love her...'" (20).

Conrad himself must have surely entertained similar thoughts. It would certainly be preposterous to suggest that Conrad and Dracula share exactly the same position as foreigners within English culture. Yet, when reading passages like this in which the Count eulogises the England of his books, no foreign student of English culture can help feeling in sympathy with him. The same happens when one learns of Conrad's titanic efforts to master the English language. Yet, little indeed has been made of Conrad's miraculous conversion to Englishness. Neither does Harker appreciate Dracula's sensitivity towards English culture —in fact, he fears it. This is because, as *Dracula* suggests, one of the consequences of the elaborate bureaucratic machinery of the British Empire was to get to know the Other, in which information was the first step towards manipulation and colonisation. The fear Stoker's novel dramatises is that this highly efficient system might be used against England itself; a fear that is hard to dispel despite the impressive example that Conrad himself provides of positive assimilation into English culture.

Kurtz moves to the heart of Africa from the core of civilised Europe, soon regressing to a state of barbaric bliss not unlike that enjoyed by Dracula in his own backward domain:

> ... the wilderness had found [Kurtz] out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion. I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with his great solitude —and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. (131)

An abstract wilderness is made responsible for his fusion with the barbaric land —or rather with Kurtz's version of Africa as a barbaric land— in which he, nonetheless, wants to be still a master and not a slave. Dracula, himself a warrior representative of feudalism, a barbaric system of power that is dying if not undead, moves from the heart of darkness of central Europe —the *terra incognita* of Harker's incomplete British maps— to London, the centre of the very same civilised Europe that has created Kurtz. This exchange somehow restores the balance to a system of primitive savagery that has been disturbed by the modernity bred by European colonisation: Europe sends Kurtz on a dark civilising mission. Dracula is on his own

Dracula vampirises Harker's persona and leaves him behind trapped in his castle, assuming his respectable male identity so as to travel in disguise to Britain and pretend that he is a respectable Englishman. Dracula wants to fuse with the people of England though he is apparently in two minds as to the status he seeks there:

> But a stranger in a strange land, he is no one; men know him not —and to know not is to care not for. I am content if I am like the rest, so that no man stops if he sees me, or pause in his speaking if he hear my words, to say, 'Ha, ha! a stranger!' I have been so long master that I would be master still —or at least that none other should be master of me... (20)

Looking down on the natives from a position of superiority (unlike Dracula, who looks up to the English) Kurtz succeeds where the Count fails because he mixes his professional mastery of colonialist ways with his indulgence in barbaric ways —though these result in his self-destruction. Kurtz may easily become 'African', which Marlow both abhors and understands. But what terrifies Stoker's Englishmen is that the barbaric Count may become 'English' at all. *Dracula* appeared in 1897, the sixtieth anniversary of Queen Victoria's coronation, her Jubilee Diamond Year. Leaving aside Stoker's unclear politics —as an Irishman who had worked for the British government in Dublin, he must have had a direct experience of the imperial machine—it seems safe to say that *Dracula* celebrates the integrity of Britain in the face of the foreign threat of invasion. This corresponds only partly to what Stephen D. Arata (1990) calls the anxiety of reverse colonisation. As Clive Leatherdale observes, Dracula's "objective, then, is to establish a contemporary empire in Britain, the fulfilment of which would be unwittingly assisted by British laws and customs" (1985: 109). Dracula does not want to impose a foreign culture on England, but rather to use English culture to dominate Britain and turn the English into his slaves. *Dracula* supports thus the xenophobic view that those who surrender to the charms of British/English culture may want to appropriate it for themselves, corrupting it, and then claim power as the new masters of England/Britain. Yet, Stoker's story about how the invulnerability of Victorian England is only saved by the perspicacity of a foreigner, the Dutch Van Helsing, may have well been written tongue in cheek. Stoker himself was, as has been noted, not English but Irish and had entered English culture from the margins.

to counteract the pull of his vampiric foreignness and so he must be destroyed. Victorian English civilisation appears to be an exclusive club rather than a model of integration or a model to be exported. Pericles Lewis reads *Heart of Darkness* from this point of view, arguing that in it Conrad, "who would like to believe that he, a stateless Pole, has successfully become an Englishman, [...] expresses a profound scepticism about whether Africans —or even Belgians or Frenchmen— can do the same" (1998: 244). Or Transylvanians and Irishmen, for that matter. Stoker and Conrad were both migrant writers who chose England as their new home and who through their texts tried to out-English the English. Count Dracula may even be seen as Conrad's dark double. Conrad's native Poland had itself risen to its historic role defending Europe from the infidels coming from the East, just as Vlad Tepes' Wallachia had done. Like Dracula, Conrad came from eastern Europe and was fascinated by England's allure; he struggled to become not only a British subject (just what Dracula wishes) but also an English writer, even though English was the second foreign language he learnt.

Conrad was, so to speak, an exceptionally gifted, vampiric writer, drawing literary nourishment from a language that was not even his own, a point which is often stressed by unkind literary critics. Even staunch defenders of Conrad like Ian Watt have insisted that "Conrad's speech immediately identified him as a foreigner. Nor did Conrad's written English ever wholly free itself from Polish and French influences in vocabulary, syntax, and rhetorical style" (Watt 1980: 21). A carnivalesque image of Conrad in Dracula's garb may spring from this characterisation: this Conrad who never lost his thick Polish accent recalls Count Dracula, who never quite loses his Romanian accent. Watt observes that Conrad would rather keep quiet than explain to the uninitiated the historical and national roots of his identity as a human being, for he felt he was always misunderstood. Even admirers such as H.G. Wells and Edward Garnett "would tend to call his politeness Oriental, and his soul Slav, and thus in either case mortify Conrad by outraging the Western allegiance which is at the heart of the Polish sense of national identity" (Watt: 9). Both Conrad and Dracula understand that they cannot expect the English to respect them for what they are and so they try to master Englishness as the key to becoming 'one of us'. Through Marlow, his English alter ego, Conrad rejects Kurtz's unsound 'European' methods in the name of English 'efficiency'. Stoker, the Irishman, sides with the English in the defeat of the European Other, helping re-inforce the idea that the English and the civilisation of the British Empire will not succumb to the degeneracy that threatens to invade them.

Heart of Darkness is, clearly, much more problematic than *Dracula* as to its political positioning. As a Pole, Conrad knew much about the horrors of imperialism, having witnessed the subjection of his native land to Russia. However, the politics of *Heart of Darkness* are unclear. Marlow says at the beginning of his tale that "the conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much" (50) but he does not really look into it too much, immersed as he is in narrating Kurtz's personal fall. In Conrad's case this hesitation between the artistic, moral discourse and the political denunciation can be explained by his own ambivalence as a British citizen of Polish origins, which resulted in his inability to openly criticise the imperialism of the land that received him (Spittles 1992: 88). Stoker could speak about the fears of reverse colonisation to Queen Victoria's triumphant England without questioning at all England's (Britain's) position as a world power. It seems right for the Crew of Light not only to expel Dracula from England but also to chase him back to Transylvania and kill him in his own land, as if British justice could and should be meted out anywhere in the world. Conrad, however, could not voice the ugly truths of English colonialism except in a circuitous way. This is why the Gothic framework is so useful for him. He could still present the conflict between good and evil and question the ways in which Kurtz was a villain or a hero, the embodiment of civilisation or barbarism, but he needn't define his politics —it was enough to suggest, as most Gothic fiction did at the time, that the difference between good and evil was becoming more and more blurred and had more to do with the moral mistakes of particular men than with politics. Stoker simply appealed to a more basic jingoistic stance.

When contrasting their texts, the irony that emerges is that while imperialist, Western, Victorian Britain proclaims her triumph over the Oriental, monstrous Dracula, Europe manages to neutralise Kurtz, a much more dangerous monster than the Count, only through the accident of his illness and death. Dracula's power to threaten Britain is a sign of the contradiction inherent in late Victorian modernity between the rationalism of modernity and the irrationality of its uses: the function of his destruction is to reinforce the self-esteem of the civilised men who vanquish him and who represent the forces of civilisation. They succeed but at a high cost that entails the peace of mind of some, the lives of others —significantly, a woman, Lucy, and the American Quincy Morris, a good representative of the rough American masculinity that Stoker seemingly feared as a threat to the superiority of English masculinity. The threat posed by Kurtz is much more insidious: he is not an outsider but one of the European men carrying

civilisation to the heart of barbaric Africa. His failure and his lapse into barbarism are a mirror held up to Europe's colonialism rather than to Africa's alleged barbarism.[15] His seeing the horror, which Marlow regards as a moral triumph but also as a warning Englishmen must heed, undoes the victory achieved by the civilised men who kill Dracula and who naively believe that by killing the Count the horror and the monstrous men they themselves may become are under control.

II

The crippling encounter with darkness in the forest of Transylvania and the jungles of Congo leaves Harker and Marlow unable to fully articulate their tale for a long time, out of fear of what it might say about them as civilised Englishmen. Marlow finally tells his tale to his audience of business colleagues in the safety of civilised London,[16] where he lives after his Congo adventure. This is, however, the same London Dracula is planning to invade practically while Marlow speaks. The invasion is the horror Harker faces in his own English home, as the Count stalks and preys on Harker's wife Mina. It is to her that Harker entrusts his testimony of what he saw in Dracula's castle, convinced that only this respectable English woman can help him regain his mental balance. Marlow, apparently a single man, prefers the attentive audience of his male peers —who, he says, are linked by the bond of the sea— to cure the wounds the jungle left in his soul. No woman can help him, for, in Marlow's view, only a few chosen men can make sense of his experience.

Johanna Smith maintains that twin colonising ideologies of Empire and gender operate in Conrad's text (1996: 169). Smith argues that Marlow's tale seeks to silence —colonise and pacify— both woman and the darkness of Kurtz's Africa. In *Dracula*, there is also a link between the ideologies of gender and Empire. In this narrative of subtle invasion, the women (Lucy, Mina) symbolise a feminised Britain vulnerable to unconventional penetration by the invading Count. The men who protect them —literally winning their right to penetrate their women in a conventional way— must fight the Count's ability to turn the women into monstrous doubles of the respectable women they control. However, there is not a single unified misogynist front here, but a fragmented structure [illegible]

the prevalence of masculine values, but it is not the main focus of *Dracula*. Likewise, *Heart of Darkness* addresses only secondarily the issue of the position of women, focusing primarily on a deep conflict in man's view of himself.

Marlow has no particular reason to reorder his experiences for his listeners at that moment in his life, except perhaps his need to understand how they have contributed to making him the man he is. Harker, rendered metaphorically if not literally impotent by his experience of the horror, pours his feelings into his journal which he eventually hands over to his wife Mina. Kurtz's death reconciles Marlow with his own barbaric self, though his newly-found masculine self-confidence —built in opposition to the wishes of the Company's men to control the legacy Kurtz has left him— falters before the Intended's feminine notions of what a triumphant man is. In contrast, the nightmare so vividly recorded in Harker's diary —except, significantly, for the month he spends alone with the three vampire brides— opens a gap in Harker's sense of his own masculinity that only his wife, Mina, as his proper audience, can heal. Two main points separate Harker from Marlow here: first, Harker is forced to have sexual contact with the savage women of Dracula's castle whereas Marlow never interacts with the natives nor participates in Kurtz's dark rites —or so he claims; second, Harker is loyal to his fiancée and later wife Mina, while Marlow remains ambiguously loyal to Kurtz's memory. Dracula is pure evil and so cannot expect to elicit any kind of loyalty, except from madmen like Renfield. The moral victory that Kurtz wins in Marlow's eyes when he sees the horror in his own soul, earns him Marlow's respect, if not downright admiration.

Both Stoker and Conrad narrate an ambiguous quadrangular confrontation involving the young traveller, the wild man, and two kinds of woman: one a barbarian clearly associated with a wild type of sexuality, the other a respectable woman associated with conventional sexuality and marriage. In *Heart of Darkness*, the wild scream uttered by Kurtz's black mistress before Marlow's astonished eyes signals the transfer of her claims from Kurtz's body and soul to Marlow's. He has to account, though, for Kurtz's soul (his last words) and body (how he died) to the Intended, the respectable woman Kurtz never married. The struggle to possess Kurtz, the man, is won by none of these three people, but it seems obvious that the Kurtz loved by the anonymous African woman is closer to the real man —to the man Kurtz knows he has become when he cries out 'the horror'— than to the idealised man loved by the also nameless European woman waiting for his return to

gets Mina to retrieve him from the Transylvanian heart of darkness to marry him immediately. Mina's discreet femininity is expected to erase from Harker's mind the memory of the female "devils of the Pit" (53) that held him in thrall.

Harker saves English civilisation and his sanity by trusting his patient bride Mina with the narrative of his ordeal as he recorded it in his self-censored diary. The ultimate threshold he cannot cross if he is still to regard himself as a proper, civilised man is to narrate his ordeal to her by word of mouth. In his view of marriage, trust is essential, but when he hands his journal over to Mina he selfishly places a heavy burden on her shoulders:

> The secret is here, and I do not want to know it. I want to take up my life here, with our marriage... Are you willing, Wilhelmina, to share my ignorance? Here is the book. Take it and keep it, read it if you will, but never let me know; unless, indeed, some solemn duty should come upon me to go back to the bitter hours, asleep or awake, sane or mad, recorded here. (104)

Mina is given the diary when Harker recognises the Count in the streets of London and feels unable to go on keeping his secrets to himself. When Van Helsing attests to the truth of what Harker wrote and Mina reads, they are ready to face the Count's threat together. Harker's hysteria is balanced thus by Mina's determination to stand by him: "*my* belief in *him*", she writes, "helps him to have a belief in himself" (157, italics in the text). In this scheme of things, though, there is no opportunity for Mina to unburden her own misery and fear onto her husband. She stands surrounded and aided by the men while Dracula's attacks persist, but she is fundamentally alone. Her voice is heard through her journals but, almost magically, she never wavers, she never hesitates, she never cringes before the reality of evil, she never ceases to comfort the men.

Homosocial bonding as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes it (1985), is present in *Dracula*, but in this novel the men's bonding through woman's body is split into two phases. The men bond first through their pouring of blood into Lucy's veins and, later, through their joint dismembering of Lucy's undead body, a scene tinged with all the possible sexist horrors. But they realise that they can only truly bond positively through Mina if they are to defeat evil. When a hysterical Arthur collapses after participating in the grisly ceremony performed on his bride's body, Mina comforts him. "I suppose", she writes in her journal "there is something in woman's nature that makes a man free to break down before her and express his feelings on the tender or emotional side without feeling it derogatory for his manhood"

(229). She identifies this 'something' with mothering instincts: it is easy for her to see adult men as children. Initially, Mina is involved in the struggle against Dracula because of her friendship with Lucy and the engagement to Harker and her efficiency as a secretary. But, in fact, the men need above all her ability to bring out the feelings of men. Yet, their false sense of chivalry endangers her. Wanting to protect her, they deny her participation in their meetings to decide how to stop Dracula; it is in this isolation that the Count finds and attacks her. This has often been read as a literal attack against women's freedom but it would be more accurate to say that woman is trapped in the confrontation between different types of masculinity struggling to stay in control.

Mina is forced to participate in the confrontation between the split sides of man, the barbaric and the civilised, leaving aside her own interests as a woman, but she is, at least, very far from the false idealism of Kurtz's Intended. When she reads her husband's diary all she can think of is how she can help Jonathan overcome his "nervousness" and "ask him questions and find out things, and see how I may comfort him" (179) —for that will also revert in her own safety and happiness. Unlike Kurtz's Intended, who —we sense— would be totally incapable of understanding Marlow's discourse were he to tell the truth, Mina is in a privileged position, for men are less afraid to show her their fears and their darkest side, relying on her sensibility to discriminate between the wrong and the right sides of masculinity. She can understand and help Harker because she knows the truth in all its details, even down to what Harker cannot bring himself to say, whereas Marlow finds neither consolation nor sympathy in the Intended. Stoker is more modern than Conrad in this, as he involves woman in man's struggle, though he cannot imagine, either, how women can cope with the intrusion of the horror caused by men into that 'beautiful world' they are supposed to inhabit.

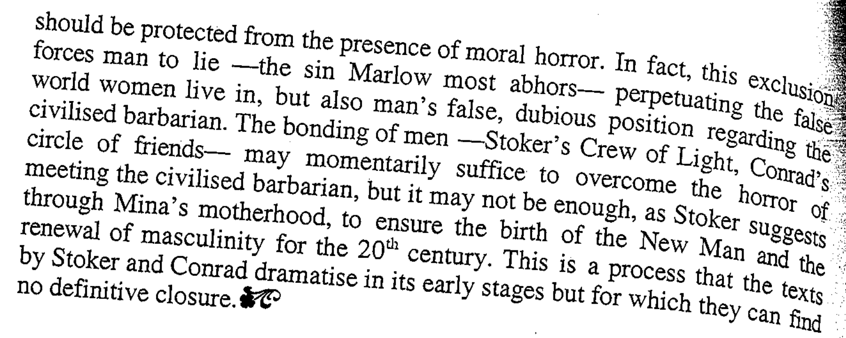
Marlow will not trust Kurtz's bride with the secret of her fiancé's terrible behaviour in Africa, telling his listeners that "to this day I don't know why I was so jealous of sharing with any one the peculiar blackness of that experience" (144). Marlow's sense of decorum turns out to be much more overwhelming than Harker's sense of shame but it is also bounded by this strange possessiveness about Kurtz. After having had time to meditate on and edit out his experience of the Congo, Marlow still lies to Kurtz's Intended, allowing the perpetuation of a monstrous fiction, namely, that Kurtz never strayed from the path of civilisation. This lie springs not so much from his failure to invoke any faith in the name of which to challenge the Intended's false ideals (Watt: 249) but rather from his doubts about himself. Marlow claims at the beginning of his narrative that there is nothing he hates more

than a lie. He lies apparently to preserve the Intended's ideal world, but he also lies to preserve his own memories of Kurtz and, above all, of himself.

Despite his dislike of the Intended's false view of Kurtz, he genuinely seems to believe that women should provide a haven for men: "They —the women I mean— are out of it —should be out of it. We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own, *lest ours gets worse*" (115, my italics). This position is not without its contradictions, for the need to protect women for selfish reasons also makes men hate them, precisely because women needn't face the horrors men face. When lying to the Intended, Marlow acts out of both motivations, protectiveness and hatred. He 'must' protect her from the truth, but hates her for it. This leads him to rob her of the authority to narrate the tale of Kurtz's death, which he passes on to his male peers, circumventing her —the woman who, he feels, cannot even imagine what he understands about Kurtz. But the exclusion of woman also hints at something in Marlow himself that cannot be disclosed: telling the truth about Kurtz is also telling the truth about himself, and he needs the Intended's false world more for his own sake than for Kurtz's. Explaining to his male audience why he had to go through the ordeal of looking into Kurtz's mad soul Marlow concludes that it must have been "for my sins, I suppose" (144); sins left untold at the end of the tale. It is not so hard to see, though, that Marlow's never being really horrified by Kurtz as Harker is by Dracula must be taken as a sign not so much of the strength of his civilised values as of his being in touch with the darkness in his own soul. Harker can tell Mina the truth because he reacts to evil in the 'appropriate' way. Marlow's ambiguity concerning Kurtz's strange death would certainly tell the Intended too much about himself. When he speaks about the savage noises made by the wild men in the jungle he acknowledges that "if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of response to the terrible frankness of that noise" (115). And this is what, ultimately, *Heart of Darkness* is about: Marlow's responding to the wild noise in Kurtz's soul. And this is what, finally, woman is not told.

As Van Helsing's closing remarks note, the real recipient of *Dracula's* fragmented narrative is Mina and Harker's son. This boy, born on the anniversary of the Count's defeat, bears the names of all the men in the league against Dracula but is known by them as Quincey in memory of the American man killed in the final fight. "This boy", Van Helsing says "will some day know what a brave and gallant woman his mother is. Already he knows her sweetness and loving care; later on, he will understand how some men so loved her, that they did dare much for her sake" (378). Perhaps not so much for her sake as for their sake, and at the cost of killing off her wilder sister Lucy. Yet, there is at least the promise of a New Man in this boy who is to be brought up by a man and a woman sharing the same memories of darkness and, above all, a fundamental trust in each other. Conrad's novella, unclear in its intention even for Marlow himself, offers no solution as to how the radical separation between men and women may be bridged, despite the fact that it clearly presents the role played by the lies between men and women in the monstrous perpetuation of the model of heroic masculinity the Intended worships in Kurtz. Marlow may convince other men to abandon their beliefs in the lies of men's dangerous dreams, but no New Man is likely to be born out of their bonding.

The comparison of texts as apparently diverse as *Dracula* and *Heart of Darkness* reveals the extent to which the sub-genre of the imperial Gothic cuts across the canons of the literary and the popular. It also reveals that these masterpieces articulate common concerns springing from a similar cultural background, crystallising around the date of Victoria's Jubilee in 1897. Conrad's and Stoker's texts respond, essentially, to anxieties about the privileged position of British masculinity beset then by fears of personal (i.e., sexual), racial and imperial degeneration. They reflect man's attempt to ease his anxieties by symbolically rejecting his shadow, the unwanted Other. The civilised barbarian at the centre of Conrad's and Stoker's narratives —Kurtz, Dracula— is an ambiguous patriarchal monster used as scapegoat in narratives that regenerate the discourse on the masculinity proper to the Englishman. This regeneration, however, is not without its tensions. The superiority of the Englishman over the foreign civilised barbarian is endorsed by writers who are not themselves English: Stoker's Irishness and Conrad's cultural and political allegiances as an immigrant Pole, naturalised British, problematise their defence of English masculinity. Seemingly seeking to reinforce their own position within English culture, Conrad has Marlow dismiss Kurtz's corrupt colonising project, while Stoker sides with the English in the defeat of count Dracula in his own Transylvanian domain. Both Conrad and Stoker write from a position that, without being necessarily misogynist, clearly ignores women's concerns. Where they most diverge, though, is in the different solutions they give to the problem of women's positioning in the face of the rejection of man's dark double. Stoker chooses to include women in the confrontation with the evil Dracula, focusing on Mina as the proper model of sympathetic woman who can selflessly aid man in his search for a new stability. Her own needs are left aside, but she fully participates in the defeat of the monster and in the construction of a future for herself, her husband and their son —the New Man to be born. For his part, Conrad excludes the women from Marlow's audience, arguing that woman



should be protected from the presence of moral horror. In fact, this exclusion forces man to lie —the sin Marlow most abhors— perpetuating the false world women live in, but also man's false, dubious position regarding the civilised barbarian. The bonding of men —Stoker's Crew of Light, Conrad's circle of friends— may momentarily suffice to overcome the horror of meeting the civilised barbarian, but it may not be enough, as Stoker suggests through Mina's motherhood, to ensure the birth of the New Man and the renewal of masculinity for the 20th century. This is a process that the texts by Stoker and Conrad dramatise in its early stages but for which they can find no definitive closure.

NOTES

[1] There is no mention of either *Dracula* or Stoker in Conrad's own meticulous reading notes (see Knowles 1989).

[2] See Sherry (1973) for a complete collection of these reviews.

[3] He first used the phrase for Chapter 8, "Imperial Gothic: Atavism and the Occult in the British Adventure Novel 1880-1914" of his book *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830-1914* (1988).

[4] Between June and December 1890 Conrad was employed by the Societé Anonyme Belge pour le commerce du Haut Congo. His traumatic experiences in Africa formed the autobiographical basis of *Heart of Darkness*.

[5] See White (1995). Despite the fact that we now regard Stoker as a popular writer and Conrad as a literary writer, in fact, "Conrad's main concern —obsession would hardly be an exaggeration— was to attract a large enough share of the reading public to enable him to become financially secure" (Watt 1980: 42), something he achieved with *Chance* (1913). *Dracula* gave Stoker no money and no reputation and he was fortunate that his job as manager of Henry Irving's Lyceum in London could support him.

[6] There is no need for Gothic to use supernatural elements, even though most Gothic fiction is also fantasy of one type or another. Gothic is, more generically, any type of fiction that explores the dark side of humankind with a special emphasis on the appeal of evil from a perspective for which realism is not essential.

[7] Shades of Darwin have been found in both texts, though. See Knowles (1994) for a discussion of the parallels between Conrad and Schopenhauer and Shaffer (1993) for those between Conrad and Herbert Spencer.

[8] Young argues that "Carl Jung's African journey [in 1925 to Mombassa] led him to formulate his theories of the collective unconscious" (1982/83: 586); Pick, however, argues that the transition from the late Victorian intuition of the depths of human psychology as expressed in the literary use of pseudo-myth to the science of psychology was over by 1905, when Freud published *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*.

[9] Dracula might be regarded rather as a pre-patriarchal primordial sadistic father. But it is important to notice that in the novel he has a place within the feudal, patriarchal system of his country. Despite being immortal he belongs at the same time to history.

[10] I am quoting from the 1984 edition of *Heart of Darkness* in *Youth, Heart of Darkness, The End of the Tether* by Oxford University Press.

[11] Medical theories supported the idea that man lost vital fluids he had in limited supply every time he engaged in sexual intercourse. Since semen was supposed to be the same type of matter that made up the brain, it is easy to see this must have caused anxiety to countless men, who responded by demonising sexuality and woman with it. The female vampire and the later screen vamp emerge from this context. See Dijkstra (1996).

[12] In *Facts and Comments* (1902), quoted in Shaffer (1993: 50).

[13] I am quoting from the 1983 edition of *Dracula* by Oxford University Press.

[14] Stoker never visited Transylvania, which he reconstructed from travelogue descriptions (Gelder 1994: 3).

[15] See Achebe (1978), and Zhuwarata (1994) for an African evaluation of Conrad's alleged racist colonialism.

[16] The anonymous Director of Companies, Lawyer, and Accountant, together with the frame narrator listen to Marlow's tale. In *Dracula* Harker is accompanied in his adventure by Dr. Van Helsing, Dr. Seward, Lord Godalming and Quincey Morris —forming another group of five men. They finally see, though, that Mina cannot be left aside.

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EFFECTS OF GARDEN-PATHING IN MARTIN AMIS'S NOVELS *TIME'S ARROW* AND *NIGHT TRAIN*

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She calls me up and says, "Get over there. There's nobody home." So I get over there, and guess what. There's nobody home. Martin Amis, *Time's Arrow*

1. INTRODUCTION

It might seem an odd paradox to praise a novel by epitomizing it as "deceptive", "confusing", or "misleading". But when it comes to Martin Amis's novels *Time's Arrow* (1991) and *Night Train* (1997), one is tempted to think in such terms. Evidently, Amis is slyly enjoying a kind of postmodern game with the reader, and yet (or perhaps, for this reason) both novels are also highly rewarding reads. As I will argue here, *Time's Arrow* and *Night Train* both employ narrative and structural techniques that produce what in psycholinguistic parlance is known as a "garden-path effect" triggered by a "garden-path sentence". As Mitchell Marcus puts it, garden-path sentences have "perfectly acceptable syntactic structures, yet [...] many readers initially attempt to analyze [them] as some other sort of construction, i.e., sentences which lead the reader "down the garden path"" (1980: 202).[1] In other words, garden-path sentences make readers follow up a certain hypothesis which may lead to processing failure, mistaken interpretation, or even lasting miscomprehension.

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Soon after linguistic researchers became interested in garden-path sentences the effect was also found to be present in larger units of text-types: Hockett (1973) and Yamaguchi (1988) came across it in jokes and riddles, while Mey (1991) and Jahn (1999) tracked it down in short stories. As I intend to show here, Amis, too, using a range of manipulative narrative structures, deliberately leads his readers astray, ultimately forcing them into a process of re-analysis. Before turning to the garden-path phenomenon itself, however, it will be helpful to introduce the basics of what Manfred Jahn recently termed "cognitive narratology" (1997; 1999). This theory seeks to explore the cognitive mechanisms of the reading process by importing concepts and ideas from Artifical Intelligence (AI) (Minsky 1979; Abelson 1976 *et al.*) and cognitive linguistics. Here, I will particularly draw on the notion of the reader's "construction of frames" (Minsky 1979; Perry 1979; Jahn 1997, 1999), which is in turn neatly connected with the major garden paths in *Time's Arrow* and *Night Train*.

Throughout the essay I will assume that Amis's garden paths are highly functional: rather than just annoy readers, they actually lead "somewhere", and produce a notable aesthetic effect. Exploring the ways in which Amis's texts garden-path me, I am fully aware that my reading is tied to specific personal, cultural and sociological conditions and assumptions. Therefore, what I term "the reader" or "readers" is, strictly speaking, a metonymic label for my subjective reaction to these texts. I am reasonably confident, however, that the texts' structures and narrative strategies were designed to trigger these or quite similar reactions.

2. CONCEPT-DRIVEN READING: THE NOTION OF FRAMES

What happens when we take a novel and start reading the first few pages? Obviously, we are confronted with an unknown and as yet dimly-lit fictional world. So at first, we will try to orient ourselves in this world and get a rough picture of what is going on. But how do we actually go about this? As the "whole of anything is never told" (Sternberg 1978: 1), as all information can never be given at once, what kind of general strategy do we employ in reading?

According to AI theorists, all our knowledge is stored and structured in our minds within so-called "super-structures", such as "schemes" (a term first used by the socio-psychologist Frederic Bartlett (1932))

mind and its central role in concept-driven information processing. Consider the following example by Bransford and McCarrell which illustrates the extent to which understanding must be considered a constructive process:

> The haystack was important because the cloth ripped. (1975: 209)

Without any further context, this sentence fails to be meaningful. But what if the "cloth" in question is the cloth of a parachute? This piece of information will make readers draw from their knowledge of [parachute jumping], and now the haystack not only makes sense in terms of importance but also as a life-saving circumstance.

Similarly, when we read a sentence like "He ordered a cherry pie for dinner", we naturally presume, apart from the fact that a male person is sitting in a restaurant, that there is a waiter who will serve him, and that the person will have to pay for his meal. Additionally, we may infer that the person is slightly extravagant and/ or stingy because what he orders for dinner is just a dessert rather than a proper meal. All of these conclusions are made on the basis of structures or schemata that are stored in our minds. Menakhem Perry alludes to this when he speaks of the "reader's construction of frames":

> Any reading of a text is a process of constructing a system of frames or hypotheses which can create maximal relevancy among the various data of the text —which can motivate their "co-presence" in the text according to models derived from "reality," from literary or cultural conventions, and the like. Each of these hypotheses is a sort of "label" constituting an answer to questions such as: What is happening? What is the state of affairs? What is the situation? [...] What is the purpose? What is the speaker's position? (Perry 1979: 37)

Perry's frames correspond closely to Bartlett's schemata and serve as guiding norms in the encounter with the text. In the act of reading the reader constructs "a set of frames which can motivate the convergence of as many of the various details in the text as possible" (Perry 1979: 36). Moreover, Perry adds, this set of frames functions as a "negative defining principle, so that deviation from it becomes perceptible and requires motivation by another frame or principle" (1979: 37).

theorists of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the mid-seventies. In his popular essay "A Framework for Representing Knowledge" (1979) Marvin Minsky writes:

> Here is the essence of the frame theory: When one encounters a new situation [...] one selects from memory a structure called a frame. This is a remembered framework to be adapted to fit reality by changing details as necessary. A frame is a data-structure for representing a stereotyped situation like being in a certain kind of living-room or going to a child's birthday party. Attached to each frame are several kinds of information. Some of this information is about how to use the frame. Some is about what one can expect to happen next. [...]. We can think of a frame as a network of nodes and relations. The "top-levels" are fixed, and represent things that are always true about the supposed situation. The lower levels have many *terminals* —"slots" that must be filled with specific instances or data [...]. Much of the phenomenological power of the theory hinges on the inclusion of expectations and other kinds of presumptions. A frame's terminals are normally already filled with "default assignments". (1979: 1-2)

According to Minsky, frames represent knowledge on a higher level of abstraction than knowledge which is activated by a concrete event. If we return to the example of the restaurant, the "top levels of a frame" of which Minsky speaks are representations of those things that are "always true" for all visits to restaurants: "to get a table", "to order a meal", "to ask for the check", etc. The "slots", however, are usually filled with "default values", and are concretized situationally with specific items, as for example that the waiter is "female" and called "Rosie".

As one can see, frames and data (i.e., a situation, a text) are mutually dependent entities: the frames offer us the conceptual structures for accumulating textual material in a way that makes sense, and the data tell us whether the frame used is appropriate. "Functionally", as Jahn puts it, "frames [...] disambiguate structural, lexical, referential, and illocutionary ambiguities, supply the defaults to fill the gaps in the discourse, and provide the presuppositions that enable one to understand what the discourse is about" (1999: 176).

Shortly after Minsky had introduced his concept of frames, many other terms were coined by cognitive researchers, all of which were based on roughly the same idea: a human mind which is capable of employing numerous "super-structures" in which certain situations and stereotypes ("making a phone-call", "seeing a film", etc.) are stored and structured. These structures or remembered experiences not only help us orientate ourselves in everyday situations, but are equally relevant in the act of reading. Although there are a number of alternatives to the term "frame", such as "scripts" (Schank and Abelson 1977) or "category" (Mandler 1979),[2] I will stick to Minsky's notion of frames in the following discussion of Amis's two stories.

As long as a text does not present any processing obstacles, readers will activate and follow the appropriate type of frame, which helps them make decisions on the specific meaning of a word, a sentence or the whole text. As Umberto Eco once put it: "A "reading" is the choice of a path and therefore a *direction*" (1976: 97). In the following I will try to locate central passages in Amis's novels that trip readers up causing them to use "false" frames which have to be revised later. While specific signals in the texts persuade the reader to draw on familiar types of frames, it becomes harder and harder in the course of the reading process to link up incoming textual material with the frames constructed thus far. At a certain point then —just as in the smaller units of garden path sentences— the reader realizes that he was led up a garden path and has to revise his or her hypotheses.

3. CONSTRUCTING A STRANGE WORLD: *TIME'S ARROW*

Time's Arrow tells the life of a Nazi doctor presented by means of a technique of chronological inversion. As the critic Richard Menke quite rightly put it, *Time's Arrow* is "[a] postmodern *unbildungsroman*" [my italics] (1998: 959): almost everything in *Time's Arrow* runs backwards, as if it were possible to press the rewind-button of a movie-tape called "life", creating odd and occasionally comical scenes: Garbage men for example arrive in the morning to dispense the trash; pimps hand over plenty of cash to their call girls; old people become younger and healthier. This mode of telling is not totally new,[3] but Amis is perhaps the only writer whose account is so elaborated and perfected that "[d]isorientation is one's initial response" (Diedrick 1995: 163). Catherine Bernard even claims that the whole structure

of the novel "hurls the reader in a narrative black hole where he loses his bearings" (1993: 133). Although some critical comments on the back of the Penguin 1992 paperback-edition gave the game away by telling the reader that the protagonist's life is told backwards, it is still likely that readers will be garden-pathed by the beginning of the story. Here it is:

> I moved forward, out of the blackest sleep, to find myself surrounded by doctors... American doctors: I sensed their vigour, scarcely held in check, like the profusion of their body hair; and the forbidding touch of their forbidding hands —doctor's hands, so strong, so clean, so aromatic. Although my paralysis was pretty well complete, I did find that I could move my eyes. At any rate, my eyes moved. [...] They were, I sensed, discussing my case, but also other matters having to do with their copious free time: hobbies, and so on. And the thought came to me, surprising in its fluency and confidence, fully formed, fully settled: How I hate doctors. Any doctors, all doctors. (*TA* 11)[4]

This opening descriptive passage provides essential expositional information. Somebody (an as yet unspecified "I") wakes up and does not feel comfortable about the doctors surrounding him. Although the word "hospital" is not mentioned at first, the scenario instantly reminds us of what we have stored as a "hospital-", or more specifically, as an "operation-frame": it is quite logical for the reader to presume that the narrating "I" awakes from some sort of an anaesthetic or that an operation preceded the hospital stay. Naturally, one is curious to learn about the facts that made a hospital stay necessary. Perhaps the first-person narrator was involved in an accident, or had a serious disease. Whatever a reader might imagine at this early stage of the reading process (and this includes numerous possibilities) is exactly what Minsky calls the "filling of the slots with specific data": our frame for a "hospital stay" is activated, and we instantly attempt to enrich it with imaginative concrete data.

But in expecting a clearer account of the hospital situation, the reader is already walking down the story's first garden path. In the course of the next three pages, the narrator somewhat incongruously claims that he is getting better progressively, but at the same time, that there seems to be something totally wrong about the world he is living in: "Wait a minute. Why am I walking backwards into the house? Wait. Is it dusk coming, or is it dawn? [...] Why are the birds singing so strangely? Where am I heading?" (*TA* 14). Only readers who are already aware of the story's trick —the reverse

chronology— can understand that they are in fact learning something about the narrator's past. Yet the hints that foreshadow this unique mode of narration are only to be found here and there. A reader may also speculate that the narrator is mentally ill —a hypothesis which also provides an explanation as to why he finds himself in a hospital.

After the story's first peculiar incidents, the reader is likely to find the story's first dialogue confusing at first, though it will in all probability supply a clue as to how the story works:

> "Dug. Dug," says the lady in the pharmacy.
>
> "Dug," I join in. "Ooh y'rrah?"
>
> "Aid ut oo y'rrah?"
>
> "Mh-mm," she'll say, as she unwraps my hair lotion. (*TA* 14)

This looks rather better translated, read backwards and from bottom to top:

> "Hm-mm."
> "How are you today?"
> "Good," I join in. "How are you?"
> "Good. Good," says the lady in the pharmacy."

At this point our ordinary-life frame falls apart: there is no event that precedes the "blackest sleep", from which the narrator awakes at the beginning, no accident, disease, no mental instability that required a hospital stay. The narrator "awakes" from his death-bed and time is running backwards. The reader now realizes that it is necessary to invert the temporal flow of the world, as we know it, in order to make sense of the story.

The first garden path is triggered because the reader mistook an unrealistic "strange" world for a realistic one, presupposing a frame of a standard time scheme. Once the sequential logic of the story is clear, however, the reader must discard the idea that the narrator might be a madman; it is now much more likely that the narrator himself is at a loss when attempting to interpret this world of inverted causes and effects.

What happens at the beginning of the story in effect what Perry describes as "mistak[ing] a situation for an entirely different one simply because certain indices essential for its recognition were withheld in the text-continuum" (1979: 47). What is withheld in *Time's Arrow* is the fact that the principle of reading time in reverse is at work, and this certainly puts the reader on the wrong track. The question, of course, is why Amis wants to garden-path his

readers at all, as it is likely that some will put the book down in frustration before having fully realized the gimmick of the novel. Moreover, some readers might think it too arduous to have to translate every action described into its proper sequence or might find the annulment of the laws of temporal sequence nonsensical.

Perhaps, what Amis hopes to gain by forcing the reader come to grips with odd patterns of chronology is the construction of a new kind of frame, i.e., a reversed-time frame that, apart from making its own kind of sense also sensitises the reader to the process of reading itself.

However, we shall see that the time trick is not the only device Amis uses to interrogate and manipulate conventional reading strategies. The novel's narrative perspective itself is highly misleading. Seemingly helpful and "conatively solicitous" (Bonheim 1982), the narrating 'I' introduces himself quite early: "I live, out here, in washing-line and mailbox America, innocuous America [...], You're-okay-I'm-okay-America. My name, of course, is Tod Friendly. Tod T. Friendly" (*TA* 14). This type of information mainly helps the reader to instantiate a frame for the narrative situation. But the first cause for puzzlement occurs at the end of that same paragraph, when the narrator talks of a second language "here in Tod's head", adding that "[w]e sometimes dream in that language, too" (*TA* 15) —thus bizarrely turning the first-person singular into a plural that does not look like a generalizing plural. Perhaps even more oddly, from this point onward the reader has to deal with a strict separation of the character Tod Friendly and an ominous "passenger or parasite" who lives in Tod Friendly's head (*TA* 16) and is in fact the narrator of the story. Once again, then, a frame that agrees with common reality patterns (the narrating I = Tod Friendly) has to be replaced by an unusual frame in which the narrator acts as some kind of an inner voice in Tod Friendly, a voice which Tod Friendly is wholly unaware of. But what or who is this inner voice? And what is its precise status? Certain clues in the further course of the story suggest that the narrator is Tod's soul, no less: "Perhaps Irene put it best [...] when she tells Tod that he has no soul. I used to take it personally, and I was wretched at first" (*TA* 62). Or at another point, when the voice remarks: "I happen to know Tod isn't squeamish [...]. But the body I live and move in, Tod's body, feels nothing" (*TA* 33, 34).

But what is the purpose of installing an innocent soul as the story-teller? Without an idea as to why an abstract entity functions as the narrator, the reader will face further confusions in the course of the story's peculiar journey back in time: "Tod", explains the narrator-voice, "won't be Tod for much longer. He'll trade in that name and get a better one" (*TA* 74). Soon

after that, Tod goes by the name "John Young", who works as a surgeon in New York; and after that, he has another identity in Portugal under the name of "Hamilton de Souza". All of these name-changes start to make sense in the last third of the novel, when "Hamilton de Souza" eventually "transforms" into "Odilo Unverdorben". The reader is then told that Odilo Unverdorben is a Nazi doctor in the concentration camp in Auschwitz. Significantly, the chapter in which this clue is revealed begins with a rather relaxed narratorial voice which claims that

> [t]he world is going to start making sense... *Now.* I, Odilo Unverdorben, arrived at Auschwitz Central somewhat precipitately and by motorbike, with a twirl or frill of slush and mud, shortly after the Bolsheviks had entrained their ignoble withdrawal. (TA 124)

When we turn this passage around again, it becomes clear that the whole action depicts the escape of Unverdorben from Auschwitz shortly after the arrival of the Russians. Odilo thus has fled from the camp at the end of World War II, which is the reason why he had to change his names repeatedly —because he was an internationally wanted Nazi criminal.

Only now will the story unfold its meaning; the plot becomes transparent, as do the aim and the implications behind Amis's narrative technique. No matter how strong the sympathy the reader felt for the protagonist in the course of the story, he now discovers —and this comes as a shock— that he has been following the story of a Nazi criminal with whom he identified. Again this is a clear case of recovering from a garden path, and indicative of the way in which Amis questions traditional narrative patterns such as the concept of "round characters" (Forster 1927) with whom readers may identify. Significantly, in an interview with Victoria Alexander, Amis pointed out that "Nabokov said in a lecture once you should never identify with the characters of a novel. You should always identify with the author of a novel and see what he is trying to do" (1994: 581).

This attitude is clearly a key to understanding Amis's novel: by deliberately forestalling straightforward interpretation and thus questioning teleology and fixed meanings, Amis is giving us a new approach to seeing history. What Amis seems to suggest is that the Nazi regime is more than just the effect of a particular causal chain of events, and for this reason he does not present another account of how the Jews were treated in the Nazi concentration camps. Commenting on the conditions in Auschwitz, the narrator states: "Hier ist kein warum. Here there is no why, [...] no when, no

how, no where" (*TA* 128). Rather, to approach the Nazi issue, Amis invites the reader to take a look at things upside down, or as Bernard put it, to let the reader "become estranged from the continuum of life itself, to unlearn the very biological processes which make up existence" (1993: 133). In this way, perhaps, one might better grasp the brutality of the regime and its "style", as Amis calls it in his afterword. The point is that the "nature of the offence", Amis's alternative book title, may be of such a bewildering complexity that it simply cannot be explained satisfactorily. Seen from this point of view, *Time's Arrow*'s incoherent narrative structure becomes a suitable metaphor for the incoherence of history, the inexplicable nature of Hitler's regime. And, in a sense, the garden path experienced by the reader is comparable to the garden path that trapped the German people.

4. CONSTRUCTING A CRIME NOVEL: NIGHT TRAIN

Night Train is Amis's latest novel to date and belongs, like *Time's Arrow*, to the shorter forms of his artistic production. The text comes in the form of a diary and explores two subgenres of the detective story, namely the "hard-boiled detective story", initiated in the 1930s by Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett. It also imitates a lesser known genre, the so-called "police procedural", which appeared in the 1950s and is still popular today, as one can see in TV serials like "Columbo" or "NYPD Blue".

Night Train's garden-path traps can be observed on two distinct levels. Primarily, the reader is led astray by the story's "genre-frame": the text initially presents itself as a crime novel and at the end turns out to be something entirely different. But, along with the detective-narrator, the reader is also garden-pathed by the "case" itself, which is thrown into focus right at the beginning:

> I am a police. That may sound like an unusual statement —or an unusual construction. But it's a parlance we have. Among ourselves, we would never say I am a policewoman or I am a police officer. We would just say I am a police. I am a police. I am a police and my name is Detective Mike Hoolihan. And I am a woman, also. What I am setting out here is an account of the worst case I ever handled. The worst case —for me, that is. When you're a police, "worst" is an elastic concept. You can't really get a fix on "worst". The boundaries are pushed out every other day. "Worst?" we'll ask. "there's no such thing as *worst*". But for Detective Mike Hoolihan this was the worst case. (*NT* 1)

The passage exhibits a striking clash of linguistic registers —at one point, the narrator uses educated phrases such as "parlance", and "elastic concept", and then moves on to slang expressions like "can't get a fix". Beyond this type of stylistic experiment we are instantly led into the world of the Chandleresque "tough guy"-story with its typical mode of straightforward and self-conscious narration. Stylistically, the text's simple syntax and its frequent use of the first person sounds as if it was spoken by Marlowe, Chandler's paradigmatic private detective. In *The Big Sleep*, Marlowe begins his narrative thus: "I was neat, clean, shaved and sober, and I didn't care who knew it. I was everything the well-dressed private detective ought to be. I was calling on four million dollars" (1939: 9).

In the course of the next few pages further typical features of the hard-boiled detective story are quickly confirmed: the story takes place in a big American city where violence is nothing extraordinary. The detective may be female but she is also quite tough: a chain-smoking ex-alcoholic who has seen it all: "Jumpers, stumpers, dumpers, bleeders, floaters, poppers, bursters. I have seen the bodies of bludgeoned one-year-olds. I have seen the bodies of gang-raped nonagenarians" (*NT* 4). And finally, the case she sets out to solve involves the mysterious death of Jennifer Rockwell, daughter of Mike's boss Colonel Rockwell: One day Jennifer is found dead in her apartment —with a gun in her hand and three shots in the head. Jennifer was raised in a secure and happy family, was married to a loving husband, worked as an astrophysicist, and was generally considered a cheerful and charming person. As Mike puts it, Jennifer was a "favorite of everybody [...]. I watched her grow into a kind of embarassment of perfection. Brilliant, beautiful. Yeah, I'm thinking to-die-for brilliant. Drop-dead beautiful. [...] She had it all and she had it all, and then she had some more" (*NT* 7). So as the circumstances of her death are not in line with what Mike calls a "yeah-right-suicide" (*NT* 7), could this have been a murder?

At this stage, readers will draw from their general knowledge of detective narratives or TV crime serials and will install what could be called a "whodunit-frame". Of course, a search for clues and the final revelation of the murderer is central to any detective story. One might even argue that crime literature is *the* "garden-pathing genre" par excellence, since nothing would be more tedious than for the villain to be identified on page one. Think, for example, of Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" which garden-paths its readers on the strength of the natural expectation that the murderer must be a human being. As a matter of fact, a thoroughly enjoyable detective story is

expected to lead to a surprise ending at the end of a path of well-strewn red herrings.

In *Night Train*, Martin Amis certainly gives us a surprise ending, though not before he has his narrator follow up a series of leads. This provides the reader with a large number of explanations that could theoretically complete the "whodunit"-frame. Suicide, to begin with, seems to be ruled out since there is no motive nor does it seem possible to shoot oneself three times in the head. There are also other traits that make the suicide appear a little *too* stereotypical —as if someone had wanted to let murder look like suicide: for example the lithium that the doctors find in Jennifer's blood, or a book of Jennifer's called "Making Sense of Suicide". Among its suspects are Jennifer's husband Trader Faulkner, with a possible motive, jealousy; and Arn Debs, apparently a secret lover of Jennifer's.

All of these possibilities concerning Jennifer's death are investigated step by step by Mike Hoolihan. At the end of her narration, after numerous interviews with the people who knew Jennifer and had seen her shortly before her death, Mike finds herself lost in a maze that is filled with contradictions and inconsistencies. Yet Mike (and we too) still believe that the solution of the case is near. Astonishingly, though, nothing of the kind materializes: instead it eventually begins to dawn on us that none of the clues and suspects lead anywhere. At the end of the day, everything in the tangled web of Jennifer's life points toward an elaborately staged suicide, planned meticulously with false clues designed to exonerate her family of all blame: "As she headed toward death", Mike reasons, "she imprinted a pattern that she thought would solace the living. A pattern: Something often seen before. Jennifer left clues. But the clues were all blinds" (*NT* 146).

And the story? Not a whodunit, but a whydunit —yet one whose question remains unanswered. A hard-boiled police procedural with no *denouément*, no closure, no murderer, no revelation. Naturally, if one flips back to the beginning of the novel there are some giveaways anticipating the end, but on a first reading these are likely to be misconstrued. For instance, shortly before Mike presents her diary of the investigation, she says that she considers the case to be "solved" at that particular moment, but warns us:

> These papers and transcripts were put together piecemeal over a period of four weeks. I apologize also for my inconsistencies in the tenses (hard to avoid, when writing about the recently dead) and for the informalities in the dialogue presentation. And I guess I apologize for the outcome. I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I'm sorry. (NT 5)

Few readers will take this passage to indicate literally that Mike is sorry that there is no "outcome", no revelation in a grand "Columbo" fashion. Failing to fulfill its promise as a detective story, the text turns into a pitch-black psychological study of womankind and human motivation. Yet there is much value in this kind of manipulation of genre and the spoiling of our expectations: not only does it make us aware of how we tend to read, what general expectations we draw from certain text-types, but also springs a surprise on us of a fresh, though rather peculiar, nature. And perhaps it also makes us aware of the artificial nature of other detective stories that often create cheap showmanship, in fact having nothing to do with real life. In real life, there isn't always a showdown, a satisfactory closure, a "motive" that explains what people are like and what life is about. Significantly then, the novel's end undermines the fictionalization of life that Mike herself finds absurd and detestable:

> With TV you expect everything to measure up. Things are meant to measure up. The punishment will answer the crime. The crime will fall within the psychological profile of the malefactor. The alibi will disintegrate. The gun will smoke. The veiled woman will suddenly appear in the courthouse [...]. I'll tell you who wants a why. *Jurors* want a why. They want reruns of *Perry Mason* and *The Defenders*. They want *Car Fifty-Four, Where are you?* They want commercials every ten minutes or it never happened. (*NT* 108)

Refusing to arrange a "perfect" and "grand" ending, Amis eschews all natural frames of closure, leaving behind all fictional stereotypes and conventions. Amis's narrative roads are roughly paved and never lead his readers to where they think they are going.

5. CONCLUSION

David Lodge suggests in his essay "The Novelist at the Crossroads" (1977) that critical attention should be directed towards a certain type of "problematic" narrative, toward "[...] the trick novel, the game-novel, the puzzle-novel, the novel that leads the reader [...] through a fairground of illusions and deceptions, distorting mirrors and trap-doors that open disconcertingly under his feet [...]" (1977: 105). This essay analyzed and isolated only some of the trap-doors in Amis's two novels, but attempted to highlight their modes and functions as well as the consequences they may have for the act of reading.

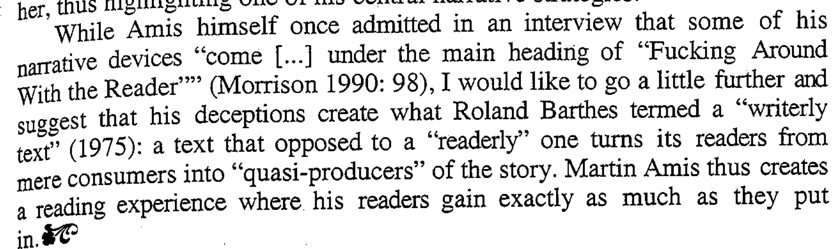
In *Time's Arrow* readers are led astray because of the unique organizing principle of the reverse telling mode, while in *Night Train* the expectations concerning the genre of detective fiction never materialize. As a rule, Amis's garden paths thrive on the reader's lack of contextual knowledge, leaving them no choice but to use the common defaults of ordinary language and ordinary situations. Hence, Amis's garden paths, like all garden paths, are tied to a "dominant readerly preference" (Jahn 1999: 189). Yet to take these preferences for granted may be a risky business because it is also a postmodern truism that "no two readers ever read alike" (Jahn 1999: 191). The question then is whether the principle "no two readers ever read alike" also extends to what one might call, following Grice (1975), narrative co-operation maxims. Counterbalancing all individual readings are "preference rule systems" (Jackendoff 1983, 1987), to which all readers are apt to subscribe —to "a. Prefer to assume that the narrator is conveying something relevant. b. Prefer to assume that the narrator believes what he intends to convey. c. Prefer to assume that the narrator is giving the right amount of information. d. Prefer to assume that the narrator presents his material in an orderly manner" (Jahn 1997: 447).

Then again, reacting to and recovering from garden paths is likely to be governed by specific cultural and situational factors. That is the reason why it is hard to predict how Amis's garden paths might affect a general reading audience. To gauge the effect of Amis's novels here would require a detailed empirical study. Of course, one might also turn the argument around and claim that if readers are garden-pathed identically, it must be a consequence of the existence of similar frame structures and preference rule systems. What I can confidently state at this point is that, no matter whether an individual reader is or is not garden-pathed by Amis's traps, he or she may nonetheless assess their deceptive potentials.

From a more general perspective, it is easy to see that the garden-path phenomenon is a fairly common feature appearing not only in jokes, riddles, single sentences, but also in many other text-types, ranging from nonsense literature and detective stories to unreliable narration: Perry (1979) describes the manipulative power of William Faulkner, McHale (1987) explores the labyrinthine worlds of Victor Borges, and Watts (1984) throws a light on the covert plots in Joseph Conrad's prose. Amis, of course, is an inveterate garden-pather. In his perhaps most ambitious novel *London Fields* (1989), a dark tale set at the end of the millenium, the narrator Samson Young claims to tell the true story of a murder which is just about to happen: "I know the murderer, I know the murderee. I know the time, I know the place" (1991: 1).

Without needing to anticipate the clue of the novel here, it can be said that the end of the novel is also very different from what Young promises at the beginning. This led a critic of the *Guardian* to start her review of *London Fields* as follows: "This book is a cheat. A con-trick. From start to finish, all 470 pages of it, it's an elaborate tease" (Koning 1989). And in Amis's previous novel *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984) there is a writer-character named "Martin Amis", who, like many other characters in the book, plays tricks on the protagonist John Self. At the end Self is told by his ex-girlfriend: "*You know, it can be good fun deceiving people*" [my italics] (1985: 335) —and this does indeed sound as if the author is speaking through her, thus highlighting one of his central narrative strategies.

While Amis himself once admitted in an interview that some of his narrative devices "come [...] under the main heading of "Fucking Around With the Reader"" (Morrison 1990: 98), I would like to go a little further and suggest that his deceptions create what Roland Barthes termed a "writerly text" (1975): a text that opposed to a "readerly" one turns its readers from mere consumers into "quasi-producers" of the story. Martin Amis thus creates a reading experience where his readers gain exactly as much as they put in.



NOTES

[1] In today's psycholinguistic literature, there is usually one example cited as the "classical" garden-path sentence invented by Thomas Bever (1970: 316): "The horse raced past the barn fell". This sentence is incomprehensible unless it is understood as: "The horse (that was) raced past the barn fell". Another example of a garden-path sentence is: "They told the boy that the girl met the story" (Fodor and Inoue 1994: 409), which confronts the reader with the odd semantic construction of someone "meeting a story". Naturally, it is the boy [whom the girl met] to whom the story is told. The present articles's epigraph cited above may be considered a (mild) garden path joke.

[2] Gross (1994) additionally lists the terms "sceneries", and "story grammars". For a detailed overview readers may want to refer to Mandler (1984).

[3] According to Kakutani (1991), an inverted time scheme was used by Pinter in *Betrayal* (1978); Diedrick (1995: 164) draws attention to Vonnegut's

Slaughterhouse Five, in which the character Billy Pilgrim watches a World War II movie backwards.

[4] All references to the 1992 Penguin edition of *Time's Arrow* are abbreviated to *TA*; and the 1998 Vintage edition of *Night Train* is abbreviated to *NT*.

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THE AFRICAN PAST IN AMERICA AS A BAKHTINIAN AND LEVINASIAN OTHER. "REMEMORY" AS SOLUTION IN TONI MORRISON'S *BELOVED*[1]

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1. ALTERITY AND OTHERNESS

An apparently insignificant linguistic parallelism found in both *alterity* and *otherness* enables us to understand a philosophical and literary theme that lies under Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), namely the dichotomy *subject /object*, in which *I=self/ other*. This similarity turns out to be a crucial key to an understanding of *Beloved* as a literary work implying the claim that the absurdity of black existence in white America may be regarded as a past, nightmarish experience that must not influence black people's present days and coming years.

> Despite the dangers of remembering the past, African American artists have insistently based a large part of their aesthetic ideal on precisely that activity [...]. This insistence on the interdependence of past and present is, moreover, a political act, for it advocates a revisioning of the past as it is filtered through the present [...]. It [Morrison's work] must [...] signify on the past which has been constructed out of a denigrative ideology and reconstructing that part which will serve the present. (Rushdy 1992: 567)

Something is altered, but it also alters. Likewise, something is *othered*, made other, but it also *others*, makes other(s). Stated thus, the words at issue are

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similar, not only semantically, but also syntactically, since subject and object are interchangeable: 'I *alter-other* you', and 'You *other-alter* me'. Therefore, if we take into account the traditional linguistic voice-system, both involve either active or passive processes. *Subject* and *object* positions are exchangeable. It is a truth universally acknowledged that the object of an active clause may be the subject of a passive one, and viceversa. Both may *return* to their original position in the clause, to their original self, so to say. This reciprocity, shared also by both *alter* and *other*, accounts for Levinas's theories of Time and Bakhtin's general ideas on the other.

Bakhtin posits two stages in every creative act, to wit, i) *empathy* or *identification*, and ii) *exotopy*, a reverse movement whereby the individual returns to his starting position (Todorov 1984: 99), but now realizing the intrinsic otherness of this original position, since living with the other is not a matter of accepting the other, but also of being in its place, of imagining and making oneself other for oneself (Kristeva 1991: 13).[2]

> Lo otro no es de ningún modo otro-yo, un otro-sí-mismo que participase conmigo en una existencia común. La relación con otro no es una relación idílica y armoniosa de comunión ni una empatía mediante la cual podamos ponernos en su lugar: le reconocemos como semejante a nosotros y al mismo tiempo exterior; la relación con otro es una relación [...] con su exterioridad o, mejor dicho, con su alteridad. (Levinas 1993: 116-117)

Levinas and Bakhtin agree in considering the relationship between one's self and the other not only a total identifying reciprocity, empathy, but also *what I am not*. This is why the fusion with, or penetration in, something or someone else (assimilation, or even appropriation of the other) must be followed by a keeping at a distance, a non-fusion with the other. *Alterity* and *otherness* then show that, given the active/passive voice *(op)position(s)*, the interchangeability regarding subject/object may be comparable to Levinas and Bakhtin's philosophical propositions on the other. In my view, that self and other (subject and object) can be *altered* suggests the identificacion of the *empathy-exotopy dynamism* with the aforementioned syntactic process; hence the importance of regarding the time gone by, the events, phenomena and conditions that have existed or have happened at some earlier time, as literally other(s). Our past may be made *present*, but we must not forget that it is also *absent*.

> The alienness exists not in something not yet known [...] but in something that becomes known only in [a] paradoxical mixture of presence and absence, of proximity and remoteness. In this sense, *the alien resembles the past* to which we gain access by recollection. (my emphasis, Waldenfels 1995: 36)[3]

The *quest*-ion of Time as other is one of the thematic fields developed throughout Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, especially those aspects related to an earlier period of one's life that is thought to be of a shameful, embarrassing and worrying nature, to the extent of endangering one's present and future life; hence Morrison's neologism *rememory*, a complex new term that involves a revised philosophical and literary insight concerning past events in general, on the one hand, and the nightmarish African history in America, on the other.

> Clearly, for Morrison, the questions: "Who am I?" and "Where are we going?" are inseparable from "Where do we come from?", and the two sides —the search for self definition and an understanding of what the past is about— interact constantly throughout her work. (Guth 1993: 575)

In order to explain the meaning of *rememory* I will quote the passage in which the aforementioned term first appears. Denver has seen her mother on her knees in prayer, which, the text says, "was not unusual. What was unusual was that a white dress knelt down next to her mother and had its sleeve around her mother's waist" (Morrison 1991: 36).[4] Denver asks Sethe what she has been praying for. Sethe's answer is worth analyzing.

> Not for anything. I don't pray anymore. I just talk [...] I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my *rememory*. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place —the picture of it— stays, and not just in my *rememory*, but out there, in the world [...] Even if I don't think of it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there.
> Can other people see it? asked Denver.
> Oh, yes. Oh yes, yes, yes. Someday you be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on. So clear. And you think it's you thinking it up. A thought picture. But no. It's

> when you bump into a *rememory* that belongs to somebody else. (my emphasis, 44-45)

Re-memories, then, are places, or better, *pictures* of certain places triggering off *re-presentations*, *vivid* descriptions or accounts. Morphologically, the word *rememory* is formed by prefixation, where i) *re-* occurs originally in loan words from Latin (*memory*), used with the meaning *again* or *again* and *again* to indicate repetition, or with the meaning *back* or *backward* to indicate *withdrawal* or *backward motion* (Webster 1989); and ii) *memory*, the lexical base, the mental capacity or faculty of retaining and re-*viving* impressions, or of recalling or recognizing previous experiences (Webster). In *rememory* we find two semantic levels, i) those meanings involved in the prefix *re-*, to wit, the repeated, constant action of going back (-ward) in time, and ii) those implied by the morphological root, *memory*, and the word *picture*, particularly the meaning conveyed by *(re-) vive* and *vivid* (Latin *re-vivere*, to live again).

The significance of such a neologism remains, however, incomplete. The prefix *re-* hides another concept, as we have seen, *withdrawal*. This is the semantic key that will allow us to understand the literary and philosophical dimensions of the word at issue. *Withdrawal* may convey the meaning of removing oneself (one's self) from some activity, as when thinking repeatedly about the past. This attitude may become an obsession that negatively dominates one's present. I daresay that the affix adds a *transcendental* meaning to the lexical root here, since it modifies, changes, the word by suggesting a very significant nuance. What is more, if we keep on studying Sethe's words in the same section we will reach more conclusions.

> Where I was before I came here, that place is real. It's never going away [...]. The picture is still there and what's more, if you go there —you who never was there— if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you. So, Denver, you can't never go there. Never. Because even though it's all over —over and done with— it's going to always be there waiting for you. (45)

She explains to her daughter that it is not necessary to be or have been physically *present* in the places where those pictures coming from the past have or have had their origin. But when Sethe talks about "a thought picture"

and when she says "you who never was there", she also implies another reading: one may feel the influence from the past even if one is *absent* from it. How? Through storytelling, for instance.

We usually define *presence* as the state or fact of being present, as with others or in a place; attendance or company, immediate vicinity, close proximity (Webster). *Absence*, however, is the state of being away or not being present; not in a certain place at a given time; away, missing; not present; non-existent (Webster). The point is that, etymologically, their ultimate meanings coalesce. As far as content is concerned, they seem to be the same:

-Latin < *praesent* < *praesens* < *praeësse*. That is, *pre-* + *-esse*, *pre-* meaning *in front of* or *before*.

-Latin < *abesse*, where *ab-* is equivalent to *to be away from*.

Pure essence then is unattainable. It is something in between, a constant relational process of building up one's self through others' selves. We can apply this reasoning to the concept of Time. We will grasp *Time's self* only if we accept it as other, only if we comprehend its self as a *differential* self, what remains once the difference between past and present is *dis-covered*. Its *essence* echoes Bakhtin's two stages in building up one's creative self and the similar linguistic behaviour of both *alterity* and *otherness*. And so, Time's being resides in admitting the differential relation between past and present, since differences are relations, neither true entities or essences nor selves.

Time as other is simultaneously presence and absence, empathy and exotopy, alterity and otherness. One must look for the space in between, so to speak. The intersection of remembering and forgetting, the transcendental threshold deriving from the disjunction past/present encoded by the dynamic recollection/oblivion, is further emphasized by Ella towards the end of the novel.

> The daughter [Denver], however, appeared to have some sense after all. At least she had stepped out the door, asked for the help she needed and wanted work [...]. *Ella didn't like the idea of past errors taking possession of the present* [...]. She could not countenance the possibility of sin moving on in the house, unleashed and sassy. Daily life took as much as she had. The future was sunset; *the past something to leave behind, well, you might stomp it out. Slave life; freed life —every day was a test and a trial* [...]. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" [...]. As long as the ghost showed out from its ghostly place —shaking stuff, crying, smashing and such— Ella respected it. But if it took flesh and came

> in her world, well, the shoe was on the other foot. She didn't mind *a little comunication between the two worlds*, but this was an invasion. (my emphasis, 315)

As can be seen from the above, Sethe and Beloved do not take the aforementioned relational difference ("a little communication between the two worlds") into account. Denver, however, will learn this special type of difference, while Paul D ends in a somewhat ambiguous position. We will see these characters' reactions and attitudes below.

Rememory means to transcend one's past without ignoring it. It involves an acknowledgement of one's past (empathy) without allowing it to invade one's present. One must regard one's past as other in order to be conscious of the fact that its individual self is not our own self, that we must return to the *starting-point* (exotopy). Only by seeing this difference can we consider ourselves really free. Notice that Sethe keeps on being a slave; not physically, of course, but figuratively, a mono-maniacal slave of her past.

Sethe is not only victimized by her past. She is also the victim of her *memory*, another word worth commenting on, since it adds interesting data that may help us to decipher the concept of Time as other. *Memory*, as it is conceived in the novel, stands for *nostalgia*. This feeling prevents the characters from interpreting their past through the *rememory process*. And so, we read how Sethe misses her earlier life with her children. This causes deep suffering ("her terrible memory", 7). We are also told that she smiles at the *memory* of Beloved crawling up the inner stairs of Bluestone 124 (196). Moreover, Sethe *memories*, misses, Baby Suggs in the Clearing praying for the black people's unity (209).[5]

> Beloved's resurrection coerces Sethe and the others involved to return to and reenact the past, again like tragic figures doomed to reenact it in memory and deed. Looking back, they begin to understand themselves and to reassess where they have been. They know the ironically named Sweet Home to be the most illusory of Edens. Before Mr. Garner's death and schoolteacher's arrival, it camouflaged the evil enterprise it represented [...]. The Garners were kindhearted people but also participants in the system —nice Nazis, but Nazis nonetheless. By their accommodation of slavery, they made possible the prototypal evil of Schoolteacher. (Otten 1989: 85-86)

Otten's commentaries on the characters' discovery of Sweet Home's true nature illustrate that the characters realize that Sweet Home was actually a *whited sepulchre*. They allow this dis-covery from the past to control their present. Baby Suggs collapses when she realizes that her "insistence on self-love cannot counter the enormity of evil that [...] destroys Beloved, and Baby Suggs has to accept this failure [...]. But she also accuses herself" (Otten 88). We must not forget her neighbours' anger at her elaborate feast the day before Sethe kills her little daughter. Both Baby Suggs and Sethe go to bed to think about colors, which have a flat, even surface with neither *depth* nor history. In the novel, colors lack time. No past can be found in them. Both Sethe and her mother-in-law allow past events to take root in their present. They lack the knowledge of past as other. Consequently, they cannot freely return to their *present*-day selves. No exotopy can be found in their behaviour. Paul D and Denver's attitudes are somehow different as we will see in the following section.

2. BELOVED AS AN ALTERATING OTHERNESS-OTHERING ALTERITY

Though frequently used interchangeably in English, the terms *alterity* and *otherness* are slightly different from a semantic perspective. On the one hand, *alterity* can be described, morphologically, as a deverbal noun whose etymological root is Late Latin *alterare*, meaning to change; hence our *to alter,* to make different in some particular, as size, style, course, or the like; to modify. Both *change* and *alter* mean to make a difference in the state or condition of a thing or to substitute another state or condition. *Change*, however, is to make a (usually material) difference so that the thing is distinctly different from what it was, while *alter* is to make some partial change, as in appearance, but usually *to preserve the identity*. Therefore, *alter* implies that the thing itself is not exchanged for another. On the other hand, *other* can be described as an adjective meaning different or distinct from the ones mentioned or implied, the remaining of two or more (Webster).

Theories on the other usually combine both aspects. They make reference to the similarities and differences between my self and the others. Despite the outer modification of my self, I preserve my identity, and viceversa, I can change the other's identity, but, substantially, it remains the same. The other is, in some way or another, a true friend of our selves, since only someone else's self can give me the feeling that I constitute an individual. It is difficult to "conceive of any being outside of the relations that link it to the

other" (Todorov 94). I need the other (and the other needs me) to form our own subjectivity. We are really inseparable.

In Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, *alterity* and *otherness* imply a subjective viewpoint regarding what *I* am not, by underlying one's particular and personal interpretation of the other, one's own modification and individual reaction towards what is not my self, the characters' past. At the same time, both terms emphasize a collective, universal, social and common approach to what *we* are not, society's attitude with regard to the other, the community's past re-*presented* by, made incarnate in, Beloved.

Levinas's *responsibility* or *responsiveness* and Bakhtin's *answerability* are directly connected with "the response the subject owes to the other in the dialogue of sociality" (Nealon 1997: 131). Let it suffice to say that Beloved does not respect the others' selves. And Sethe's response-answer to Beloved may be regarded as obsessive. While Beloved ignores "the ethics of dialogue" (Nealon 129), by making the most of her mother's physical, mental and spiritual weakening without (unintentionally?) caring for her, Sethe is deeply concerned in making amends for her past, fatal decision and in looking for moral and ethical justifications.

> The relation to the other, as a relation of responsibility, cannot be totally supressed [...]. It is impossible to free myself by saying 'It's not my concern'. There's no choice, for it is always and inescapably my concern. This is a unique 'no choice', one that is *not slavery*. (my emphasis, Hand 1989: 247-248)

Sethe's present depends on her past in an extremely dangerous way. Once again, we must not forget that she does not *rememory*. She *memories*, and so, she is unable to free her self from the other, her past.

3. INDIVIDUAL ANSWER TO THE OTHER

Towards the end of the novel we read: "Anything she [Beloved] wanted, she got, and when Sethe ran out of things to give her, Beloved invented desire" (295). Levinas explains that there are two types of desire, metaphysical desire and common desire. Both types might be applied to Beloved only if we regard her self in the present as that of a human being, as long as we interpret this character as being of flesh and blood.

Common desire is explained as *need*: "En el fondo del deseo comunmente interpretado, se encontraría la *necesidad*; el deseo señalaría un ser indigente e

incompleto o despojado de su grandeza pasada" (my emphasis, Levinas 1977: 57-58). Metaphysical desire is quite different:

> Deseo que no se podría satisfacer [...]. Desea el más allá de todo lo que puede simplemente colmarlo [...]. El deseo es absoluto, si el ser que desea es mortal y lo deseado, invisible. La invisibilidad no indica una ausencia de relación; implica relaciones con lo que no está dado, de lo cual no hay idea [...]. Deseo sin satisfacción. (Levinas 1977: 58)

Furthermore, common desire parallels metaphysical desire if and only if both types involve disappointment, disenchantment. Stated thus, Beloved illustrates a combination of both metaphysical and common desire. She has not been given the chance of becoming a true self through the process of socialization with the others, who re-*present* her past, hence her rebirth. And so, from her present, she desires to recover her past, to rebuild her subjectivity, which is symbolically represented as a fragmented self (152; 164-165), a puzzle whose separate parts must be gathered, put together. She even desires to create her past, since she has literally been denied the possibility of having a personal history, though the text does convert her into a vehicle for the collective past of the blacks.

Levinas considers infinite desire to be invisible (1977: 58). Invisibility implies absence of the other, one's past as not present. The *essence* of selves is the tension between past and present, to be presence and absence at the same time, to achieve the so-called differential relation. The essence of selves is *de-essentialization* in the sense that they are constantly creating subjectivity in an endless process through the other, one's past in this case. In fact, true essence is unreachable. What is more, Levinas explains that invisibility, absence, one's past, implies relations with the other. These relations must be moderated, controlled. This is what Beloved fails to understand. She is not conscious of the difference. Beloved's desire devours the other. Hers is an infantile, obsessive and unrestrained desire that does not recognize an other distinct from the self.

> Desire is sharply distinguished from need. Whereas the latter might reveal a lack or an absence which can be filled, desire is insatiable [...]. Levinas's desire does not seek to restore something [...] lost. What desire desires is transcendence, alterity, the exteriority of the Other [...]. This is desire for the Other, which cannot be satisfied, rather than need for the other, which can. (Davis 1996: 45-46)

Like Sethe, Beloved seems not to believe in Time. "I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it", Sethe says when she deals with the question of rememory (44). In fact, both mother and daughter are dangerously enough preoccupied with one polarity of the *rememory process*, their past. What about the return to one's self in the present (exotopy)?

Levinas's ideas enable us to account for this character's unquenchable thirst and excessive hunger. These are the consequences of her unbounded ambition: " 'She said she was thirsty', said Paul D. He took off his cap. 'Mighty thirsty look like' [...]. The woman gulped water from a speckled tin cup and held it out for more. Four times Denver filled it, and four times the woman drank as though she had crossed a desert" (64); "124 WAS QUIET. Denver [...] was surprised to learn hunger could do that: quiet you down and wear you out [...]. Beloved [...] whined for sweets although she was getting bigger, plumper by the day" (293).

Beloved's peculiar gaze hints also at her limitless, disproportionate and unhealthy desire: "Beloved could not take her eyes off Sethe [...]. Sethe was licked, tasted, eaten by Beloved's eyes" (71); "When her mother is anywhere around, Beloved has eyes only for Sethe" (149). Tzvetan Todorov's commentaries on Bakhtin's fitting remarks concerning the other's gaze remind us of this character's vampire-like way of looking at the (m)other, her past.

> Bakhtin starts from the simplest ground: We can never see our selves as a whole; the *other* is necessary to accomplish, even if temporarily, a perception of the self that the individual can achieve only partially with respect to himself [...]. Only someone else's gaze can give me the feeling that I form a totality [...]. It is not only the external apprehension of the body that needs the other's gaze; our apprehension of our internal selves is also seamlessly bound to someone else's perception. (Todorov 95-96)

Levinas and Bakhtin's subjective agency does not want or seek a monologic unity. The humanistic, bourgeois subject's motto was *I desire (to appropriate), therefore I am.* But "the self is never merely an appropriation machine —but always open, responding or answering— to the other" (Nealon 130; 133). This is not Beloved's attitude. Hers is an apparent intersubjectivity. Her self is, in reality, an extremely dangerous I (eye) that does not take into account the other's answers, questions and reactions. In fact, for Bakhtin, to be means to communicate. This is why storytelling in

"felt warm satisfaction [...] when she listened to her mother talk about the old days" (91). Storytelling then becomes a way to feed her.

> Sethe learned the profound satisfaction Beloved got from storytelling. It amazed Sethe (as much as it pleased Beloved) because every mention of her past life hurt. Everything in it was painful or lost. She and Baby Suggs had agreed without saying so that it was unspeakable [...]. Perhaps it was Beloved's distance from the events itself, or her thirst for hearing it —in any case it was an unexpected pleasure. (72-73)

The point is that Beloved's main activity is listening. She hardly offers explanations or answers to the others' questions. She does not distinguish "between using a conversation partner in order to upbuild one's own self, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, finding oneself changed as the result of listening to the other in a conversation" (Scharlemann 1991: 5). This is why dialogue fails. Beloved then neither *rememories* nor dialogues. Actually, "ethics depends on storytelling, just as storytelling depends on personification: If I cannot name and give a figure to or represent an other, I cannot determine my ethical relation to that person" (Handley 1995: 691). Beloved does not respect the differential relation to the others, the past. As a consequence, she eventually comes to nothing. She also re-*presents* the other characters' former history by a thwarting of their lives. Her speechlessness parallels and is an analogy for the unspeakableness of the others' past.

Sethe's past really enslaves her present. Paul D does not understand such a radical submission: "I just don't understand what the hold is [...] I just can't see why you holding on to her" (83). For Sethe, the past "comes back whether we want it or not" (17). Sethe's *indifferent* behaviour leads her to be assimilated by her past, by the other.

> Beloved bending over Sethe looked the mother, Sethe the teething child [...]. The bigger Beloved got, the smaller Sethe became [...]. Sethe no longer combed her hair or splashed her face with water. She sat in the chair licking her lips like a chastised child while *Beloved ate up her life, took it, swelled up with it, grew taller on it. And the older woman yielded it up without a murmur.* (my emphasis, 307)

This empathy, this total identification with Beloved, constitutes the first

step. Her voice is a "timeless present" (226): "Would there be a little space, she wondered, a little time, some way to hold off eventfulness, to push busyness into the corners of the room and just stand there a minute or two [...]." (22). Past and present are the same for her. She regards them as a unity, an entity, not as a relation based on differences.

> The novel reveals how the condition of enslavement in the external world, particularly the denial of one's status as a human subject, has deep repercussions in the individual's internal world. These internal resonances are so profound that even if one is eventually freed from external bondage, the self will still be trapped in an inner world that prevents a genuine experience of freedom [...]. The novel wrestles with this central problem of recognizing and claiming one's own subjectivity, and it shows how this cannot be achieved independently of the social environment. (Schapiro 1991: 194)

What about Paul D? He is the character who explicity illustrates the idea that individuals are alien to themselves. In fact, as endless, infinite and eternal combinations of different others, we undergo alterity within our own self. This is the reason why Paul D's subjectivity is a mixture of others, of the others' past. He wonders: "But what if the girl was not a girl, but something in disguise?" (156). That is, what if Beloved re-*presents* his ghostly past? 'I scare myself', he says (288).[6]

Denver undergoes two different stages. At the beginning, she rejects the others, her past. Paul D and Sweet Home constitute the best examples: "'How come everybody run off from Sweet Home can't stop talking about it? Look like if it is was so Sweet you would have stayed' [...]. 'Leave her be', said Paul D. 'I am a stranger to her'" (16-17). As far as her past is concerned, she is only interested in the way she was born: "Denver hated the stories her mother told that did not concern herself, which is why Amy was all she ever asked about. The rest was a gleaming, powerful world made more so by Denver's absence from it" (78). She could not cope with the idea that social injustice led her mother to kill Beloved, hence her wilful isolation. Little by little, she feels that she needs her past (Beloved) in order to complete her individuality. When Beloved disappears in the cold house, we are told: "Now she [Denver] is crying because she has no self. Death is a skipped meal compared to this. She can feel her thickness thinning, dissolving into nothing" (151). But she realizes that one must not be enslaved by one's past: "She had her own questions which had nothing to do with the past. The present alone interested Denver" (147). She is the only character who transcends past events without ignoring them. She does return to her self in the present.

Sethe and Paul D's ending, however, is somewhat ambiguous. His is a fragmented self, like Beloved's: "Paul D sits down in the rocking chair and examines the quilt patched in carnival colors [...]. 'The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order' [...]. He wants to put his story next to her" (335). He wants to share his future with someone suffering from (moral) paralysis. Sethe's past as other anchors her. "'You your best thing, Sethe. You are'" (335). He is alluding to the return to one's self. We do not know for sure whether Sethe will recover from her illness. Paul D himself is depicted as sitting on a rocking chair, traditionally a symbol standing for passivity and wavering.

> Sethe is not only a part of Morrison's text but also a figure representing the mother-self who generates the "text" (the baby, the story of its murder, and the inscription on the headstone) which becomes the figure of "Beloved". Hence the importance she places on this reduction of her identity through a process of reading and writing reveals the novel's own occupation with textual concerns. Ironically, it is Sethe's fear of Beloved's being violated that leads to Beloved's being made into a written image —Sethe's image in the sense that Beloved is her own imagined self-reflection, and her written image in the sense that *this image can be seen and read by others within and outside the story*. (my emphasis, Stryz 1991: 423)

This is to say, could the ending be anything else but open? The novel has to maintain its otherness even in its conclusion. After all, "by keeping us in touch with other worlds, literature brings us back to ourselves, albeit changed and different [...]. This encounter constitutes an experience that transforms the very boundaries of self and other" (Schwab 1996: xii).

4. SOCIAL ANSWER TO THE OTHER

Beloved is connected not only with certain individuals but also with a whole society's past, which must be *socially rememoried*, as well. Beloved's monologue is a clear example. It *rememories* the number of black Africans who did not become slaves, those who died either as captives in Africa or on the slave ships.

> Clearly she [Beloved] is a composite symbol, not just Sethe's dead child come to exact judgement, but also the representative of the "Sixty Million and More" to whom Morrison alludes in her headnote [...]. Water serves not only to symbolize rebirth but the tortuous passage of a slave ship en route to America [...]—the ship as grave. (Otten 83-84)

The blues is another element that illustrates the community's judgement regarding Beloved, their common past. Actually, the term *blues* is a shortening for *Blue Devils* meaning, i) low spirits, depression, and ii) *delirium tremens*. In fact, Beloved, alluded to on several occasions as evil (314-315), is a true devil: Greek *diá-+ -áboulos*, irreflexive, non-sensible, indifferent, careless. These adjectives match what I have explained about her so far. Besides, given her infinite and unsatisfied self, she might be said to be constantly depressed in spirits. The term *devil* may also be said to have its etymological origin in another Greek word, namely, *diábolos*, from *diá- + bòlos*, where *bòlos* means whoever traps, throws a net to hunt or catch something or someone. In this sense, Beloved entraps the weakest individuals of the community; hence the latter's final reaction, that *delirium tremens* (blues) in virtue of which they try to rescue Sethe. At the same time, they are liberating themselves as a community from Beloved's (the other, their past) thwarting power.

Rather than a personalized form, "the blues offer a phylogenetic recapitulation —a non-linear [...] nonsequential mediation— of species experience. What emerges is not a filled subject, but an anonymous (nameless) voice issuing from the black (w)hole" (Baker 1984: 5). This social, freely associative artistic movement suggests History's circular dynamic. The novel seems to follow this structural pattern.[7] Indeed, it reflects the unchanging status of African people, a continual cycle of oppression. Solidarity seems to be hinted at as solution (Mbalia 1991: 87). And so, after the community's mean reaction to Baby Suggs's elaborate feast and Sethe's pride, they first group, at Denver's request, "murmuring and whispering" (319), and then they sing in front of 124 Bluestone (*blues tone*) in order to exorcise the ghost, their past.

> The celebration of suffering as a means of gaining full subjectivity may provide a palatable means of acknowledging the seemingly inevitable agony of the human condition. But the significant transition from acknowledging pain to depending on it for our own validation is dramatic and by no means inevitable [...]. *The blues articulation* [...] *expands into a public realm what had hitherto been a private experience of suffering, taking the individual outside of himself and his private pains*, which might otherwise make the self so achingly present that the world disappears. (my emphasis, Boudreau 1995: 448-449)

The only practical solution for African people in America is a *rememorying* collective struggle; hence Morrison's historical novel about the most oppressive period of African Americans.

> It is a mark of Toni Morison's heightened consciousness that she depicts the life that Paul D struggles to build with Sethe as one based on common history and a common struggle that both shared in Sweet Home [...]. Together, Paul D and Sethe must stuggle to forge a positive life under the most oppressing conditions. And, of course, since the novel is to serve as a lesson for her people, the same struggle must be waged between African men and women today. (Mbalia 194)

Unbiased, altruistic love helps the characters to survive. African people must *rememory*. They must not *cry over spilt milk*, as Sethe does, both literally and symbolically. In other words, they have to learn to *disremember* (Latin < *dis-*, *bis*); they must *remember twice* (re-memory). Indeed, "all the memories repressed and silenced [...] need somehow to be released from their bonds of guilt and shame, need somehow to be given a purpose that ensures renewal and re-creation" (Bjork 1994: 158). The ending, through repetition, strengthens the thematic and structural significance of the epilogue. African people must re-create their past. They must not feel haunted by it. The negative must be dealt with and turned away, and the positive, solidarity through (artistic) communication (storytelling and the blues), must be collectively remembered and accomplished again (Mbalia 194).

Morrison's novel makes clear the message that Art can be used as an *expressing* device through which past events can be distanced from black people's present. *Beloved* is and was a story *not to pass on*, neither to be utterly transmitted and repeated generation after generation nor wholly forgotten. We must not ignore it (empathy). We must come to the present, to our selves (exotopy). We must *rememory* and regard History as other.

NOTES

[1] I gratefully acknowledge the invaluable research assistance extended to me by Professors José Liste Noya, Cristina Blanco Outón and Patricia V. Fra López.

[2] Though Bakhtin is thinking in artistic (literary) terms, his theories can be applied to different fields of the empirical world. Likewise, Levinas's philosophical ideas, mainly devoted to social dimensions, can be used to exemplify other aspects of life.

[3] In all the quotations, the emphasis (italics) is mine.

[4] Page numbers hereafter in parentheses in the text.

[5] It is worth mentioning that *nostalgia* is a Greek word which has been introduced in the language through Latin. It is formed by morphological compounding of Gk. *nóstos*, a return home, and *álgos*, pain; the pain that is incurred when the characters go back to their past, to Sweet Home.

[6] Paul D's dilemma can be further analyzed by considering his face-to-face sexual encounter with Beloved (the other, his past) and the role of Mister Rooster the cock: "Mister Rooster, he looked so ... free. Better than me [...] *Mister was allowed to be and stay what he was. But I wasn't allowed to be and stay what I was* (my emphasis, 89).

[7] There are several instances that exemplify the main characteristics of this style of music, to wit, repetitions, syntactic parallelisms and circular structures: Sethe's periphrasis when she tries to explain to Paul D her past, fatal decision (197); "Nobody saw them falling". This clausal structure is repeated four times (213-214); "It went on that way, except / but one evening, after supper, after Sethe [...]." (140-141); "His coming is the reverse route of his going" (323-331); "I want you to touch me in the inside part and call my name" (143; Paul D and Beloved's sexual encounter).

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FASHIONING THE SELF FROM THE CHASM: DE PROFUNDIS AND THE CHRONOTOPE OF POST-PRISON TIME

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DE PROFUNDIS: A PROLEPTIC AGENDA

One way of describing the letter known as *De Profundis*, Wilde's longest letter (some 50,000 words written in Reading Gaol after his imprisonment for "gross indecency"), is to leave the job to Wilde "himself".[1] Wilde called the letter "the most important letter" of his life and stressed that it dealt with his "future mental attitude towards life": i.e. how he was to confront the world after release, the development of his character, his losses, self-realization and goals.[2] Given this proleptic agenda I shall concentrate on one narrative strand within the letter: i.e. that of the future. Why the stress on future time? Because it is the continuum in which identity (both self and other) can be forged with relation to the immediate past and the material conditions of the present. This brings me on to the theoretical basis of the essay. Within a semiotic framework, I shall adapt Bakhtin's idea of the chronotope (as a structuring device of narrative).[3] I call this management of time and space the chronotope of post-prison time which will consist of a certain "Lac(k)anization" of it.[4] So, by knitting together these diverse approaches I attempt to account for Wilde's fashioning of the self, whose composition, dynamic, and survival may be seen in terms of economic and phallic laws. This will involve discussion of the letter's addressee, a topic that has not received much detailed criticism.[5] Rather than insist, as in much contemporary criticism of Wilde, on questions of gender, sexuality and the homophobic,[6] I shall put emphasis on what I call "the economy of the homomorphic"; which not only focuses on the fashioning of the self but shows how that fashioning is partially dependent on the insistence that the other fashions itself in its own image. If this sounds partially Greenblattian, then it is. But more of this later.

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1. NEGATIVE SPACES AND THE SUPREME VICE OF SOCIETY: A SECTION IN WHICH THE PHALLUS MAKES A TIMELY ENTRY

Wilde, in Reading Gaol, was paying his debt to society affirming that what lay before him in the days that remained of his sentence was "to absorb into [his] nature" all that had been done to him and "accept it without complaint, fear or reluctance". This leads to the assertion: "The supreme vice is shallowness" (Hart-Davis 1962: 915-916). This absorption of everything to deepen the soul involves the teaching of the self not to be ashamed of being "the common prisoner of a common gaol" (916). Even though Wilde admits that there were many things he was convicted for that he had not done ("and a still greater number of things" for which he "was never convicted at all") he concludes that he must accept the punishment because "if one is ashamed of having been punished, one might just as well never have been punished at all" (916).

From the Lac(k)anian perspective Wilde seemed to accept the authority exercised in culture and symbolized in the Lac(k)anian system by the Phallus (I capitalize the word to indicate its symbolic worth). On the one hand Wilde is prepared to submit to or accept the punishment that has been meted out to him; on the other (as I shall try to show), in accepting these conditions, he was striving towards what the Phallus can concede (at a symbolic level): namely the following old Lac(k)anian chestnuts (which might have been dispensed with but for the fact that they may still —in the present context— retain some descriptive value): a certain (illusory) power expressed in authority over the self (in forms of perfection or realization), in security, authenticity of meaning, or undivided wholeness of being (which subjects desire but ultimately lack).[7] The acceptance of the rules, regulations and prohibitions of authority effectively provide the basis for a construction of the self.

2. WILDE AS HOMO ECONOMICUS: BACK TO THE FUTURE OR SYMBOLIC EXCHANGE AND DEBT[8]

In the final paragraph of the letter, which contains one of Wilde's many paradoxes based on a simple antithesis, he claims that: "What lies before me is my past" (957). This involves the question of having to make himself and others (including God) look on his past life with "different eyes". This follows a passage where Wilde asserts his phallic power and claims that things in their essence are "what we choose to make them". However, there

was at least one area that was not open to hermeneutical or ontological negotiation, where the interpretive phallus was apt to shrink into useless detumescence: the question of his debts. Thus one of the connecting themes of the chronotope of post-prison time is one of the material contexts of the letter, the idea of payment. At this point it may be convenient to remind the reader that, although the addressee's name was systematically erased from all early editions of the letter, it was addressed to Lord Alfred Douglas (Bosie), whose family played such an important part in Wilde's fate.[9]

The idea of payment in the letter takes two forms: one which pertains to Wilde, the other which applies to Douglas. The first form of payment, which was hermeneutically non-negotiable, was related to the paying of monetary debts left unpaid by bankruptcy. The second form of payment (which related to Douglas) was the symbolic honouring of the past in the form of a kind of settling of the wages of dissipation (a form of unreturnable return). So Wilde's notion of future selves can be seen literarily (Wilde as bankrupt) and metaphorically (Douglas as morally bankrupt).

Like most sections of the letter the thematics of bankruptcy can hardly be separated from the abiding binary presence/ absence of Douglas. Wilde begins his discussion of his future economic life by reminding Douglas of the past, the extent of his losses, the deleterious effects of maintaining a friendship with him, the extent of the debts accrued on account of Douglas' immoderate demands, and the impossibility of restitution. He reminds Douglas that he had spent his art, life, name and place in history on him and that even if Douglas' family had "all the marvellous things in the world at their command" it would not be enough to repay "one tithe of the smallest things" that had been taken from him, or "one tear of the least tears" that had been shed (952). This is hardly to be wondered at given Wilde's notorious fashioning of himself :

> I was a man who stood in symbolic relations to the art and culture of my age. I had realised this for myself at the very dawn of my manhood, and had forced my age to realise it afterwards. Few men hold such a position in their own lifetime and have it so acknowledged ... The gods had given me almost everything. I had genius, a distinguished name, high social position, brilliancy, intellectual daring ... (912)

This exercise in positive self-fashioning at the "expense" of Douglas establishes the impossibility of adequate repayment in terms of non-monetary metaphorical forms of debt. Wilde follows these assertions with the phrase, "of course, everything one does has to be paid for" thus drawing himself and

Douglas into a complex of symbolic/ economic relations. However, what Wilde has lost cannot be repaid —the signs of art, life, name, place in history have no adequate exchange value in the economy of inter-personal relations.

3. LITERAL DEBTS: FROM THE HAPPY PRINCE TO THE DOOR-SCRAPER: CONFISCATION AND THE LAW

Wilde explains how his being made bankrupt (a condition laid at the Queensberry family's door for reneging on their promise to honour the payment of the court costs of Wilde's trials) involved the confiscation of all his property ("everything in fact from *The Happy Prince and Lady Windermere's Fan* down to the stair-carpets and the door-scraper of my house ..." (952)). The law forces debtors like him "to pay every one of his debts", and if he fails to do so leaves him as "penniless as the commonest mendicant who stands in an archway, or creeps down a road" (954). Wilde is aware that not only had the law taken everything he possessed but everything he was going to possess in the future.[10] This included his interest in the family estate which draws the comment: "Your father's seven hundred pence - or pounds is it? - stand in the way, and must be refunded"; a reminder that it was the unpaid court costs which the Queensberry family had promised to pay that precipitated Wilde's complete financial ruin.

However, the following paragraph indicates that forms of insolvency predated the trials ("Even when I am stripped of all I have, and am ever to have, and am granted a discharge as a hopeless Insolvent, I have still got to pay my debts" (952)). A long list of dinners at the Savoy, and suppers at Willis's brings out something of the sumptuousness of life with Douglas, and the way in which Wilde fashions the expenditure in terms of how much of it was directed towards Douglas' tastes (Wilde slipping in phrases such as "Dagonet 1880, I think, was your favourite wine?"). Douglas seems fashioned not only as co-consumer but also as an ingrate incapable of appreciating the generosity that had been lavished on him. At the same time, although Wilde shared in this opulent way of life, he tends to represent himself as remaining on the outside —a more sober man, the creative intellectual drawn in by the excessive demands of the young profligate.

Why the references to the past? Part of the chronotope of post-prison time includes the idea that if Wilde is to pay materially for the past then Douglas will need to honour some debts of his own, which introduces the notion of *symbolic exchange and debt*. "And what is true of the bankrupt" Wilde stresses, "is true of everyone else in life. For every single thing that is

done someone has to pay" (953). This, however, will not take the form of financial remuneration but "atonement": "Even you yourself - with all your desire for absolute freedom from all duties, your insistence on having everything supplied to you by others, your attempts to reject any claim on your affection, or regard, or gratitude - even you will have some day to reflect seriously on what you have done, and try, however unavailingly, to make some attempt atonement" (953). Wilde explains that this will not be possible, but the fact that Douglas will not be able to do so will be a part of "his [Douglas'] punishment". There is a sense in which, paradoxically, the pound of flesh will need to be exacted, but its very impossibility will be part of the punishment. Within the metaphorical terms of economy, the exchange value of Wilde's loss is nothing. And it is this lack, in what might be seen as a precursor of the Lac(k)anian view of subjectivity, which will, as a condition of being, be its own punishment. Lack, though, is insufficient currency. It would promise no return (on the unreturnable), and so the only thing left for Douglas is to acknowledge the unpayable debt. What this means is that Douglas will have to go through a process of self-realization (as Wilde claimed he himself had to) which will involve the recognition and worth of the other:

> You can't wash your hands of all responsibility, and propose with a shrug or a smile to pass on to a new friend and a freshly spread feast. You can't treat all that you have brought upon me as a sentimental reminiscence to be served up occasionally with the cigarettes and liqueurs, a picturesque background to a modern life of pleasure like an old tapestry hung in a common inn ... Either today, or tomorrow, or some day you have got to realise it. (953)

This introduces what might be called an economy of the homomorphic: Wilde wants Douglas to fashion himself in his own image as penitent and to become fully cognizant of what he has done (as society must realize what it has done to Wilde in the way of punishment). The reason why Douglas must atone has to do with another notion which characterizes Wilde's future life: self-realization through the faculty of imagination. Otherwise Douglas may "die without having done so", which would result in a "starved, unimaginative life". Wilde bids Douglas to "remember that imagination is the quality that enables one to see things and people in their real as in their ideal relations ... I have had to look at my past face to face. Look at your past face to face ..." (953). The future is to be characterized (as a moral imperative) by the two men following parallel paths of self-realization and understanding; in the absence of the unreturnable return the two men are

joined in the mutual homomorphic business of deepening the self and avoiding trivialization.

4. MORE MORAL IMPERATIVES AND THE ZEITGEIST OF AN AGE THAT HAS NO SOUL: PHALLUS EXCHANGE STANDARD[11]

Earlier in the letter Wilde had drawn Douglas' attention to the fact that when he (Wilde) used to suggest that Lady Queensberry should supply her son with the money he wanted, Douglas always replied that he could not ask his mother for more than she was giving because her income was already inadequate to one of her position and tastes. Wilde's reply is that "You were quite right about her income being one absolutely unsuitable ... but you should not have made that an excuse for living in luxury on me: it should on the contrary have been a suggestion to you for economy in your own life" (946). This economy of life brings Wilde to another form of exchange value:

> The fact is that you were, and still are I suppose still, a typical sentimentalist. For a sentimentalist is simply one who desires to have the luxury of an emotion without paying for it ... The intellectual and emotional life of ordinary people is a very contemptible affair. Just as they borrow their ideas from a sort of circulating library of thought - the Zeitgeist of an age that has no soul - and send them back soiled at the end of each week, so they always try to get their emotions on credit, and refuse to pay the bill when it comes in. You should pass out of that conception of life. As soon as you have to pay for an emotion you will know its quality, and be the better for such knowledge. (946)

Given the lack of any adequate return for his generosity, Wilde constructs a kind of Phallic exchange standard —Phallic because it functions as a moral imperative: it makes Douglas liable. Here emotions become commodities with their use and exchange values. "Intended on the one hand", to adapt Baudrillard's words, "for the abstract finality of the "needs" that they "satisfy", and on the other hand to the structural form that governs their production and exchange".[12] So despite Wilde's assertion that reforms in morals were a piece of "unscientific cant" (935), behind his arguments is the moral imperative, bound to a law of value, that Douglas should develop and improve within the homomorphism described above —something which involves the renunciation of the "intellectual and emotional life of ordinary

people". Douglas has been living on credit too long, and abuses the political economy of inter-personal relations by simply refusing to pay the bill: he is able to congratulate himself and revel in the moral rectitude of saving his mother money, but only at Wilde's expense. Wilde, here, may be compared to a national bank pouring money into a failing currency: his investment makes no return and only serves to line the pockets of others.

Another way Douglas can achieve the goals of atonement is by speaking to his brother, Percy, and allowing him to read the letter that is in the process of being written, just as Douglas is implored to allow his mother (whose weakness is seen to be a contributory factor to Douglas' selfishness 945f.) to read sections of it. So part of the future should be characterized by the circulation of the letter amongst the Douglas family —something which was never to be realized. This connects these passages, through the chronotope of post-prison time, to Wilde's concern about history and how he will be viewed in the future (e.g. Wilde's attempt to provide, in Barthes' terms, an alternative proairetics (Barthes 1975:19)). The letter, then, itself is to enter into the relations of use and exchange value. It is to be a kind of commodity catalyst which remains stable but which will provoke others into change by converting their vision of people and past events. One of the proleptic functions of the letter as catalyst is in its use value: i.e. its role in changing Lady Queensberry's mistaken view that Wilde, as older man, exercised a negative influence over her son. Wilde rouses himself on the matter to excoriate Douglas as the negative other:

> I need not ask you what influence I had over you. You know I had none. It was one of your frequent boasts that I had none, and the only one indeed that was well-founded. What was there, as a mere matter of fact, in you that I could influence: Your brain? It was undeveloped. Your imagination? It was dead. Your heart? It was not yet born. Of all the people who have ever crossed my life you were the one, and the only one, I was unable in any way to influence in any direction. (945)

This disclaimer seems to invalidate, or make futile, one of the dominant strands of the chronotope of post-prison time: i.e. Wilde's seeming efforts to influence Douglas for the better. In this Wilde seemed to be asking a lot from a man he had characterized as from "the mad, bad line" and who he portrayed, amongst other things, as witless, remorseless, reckless, thankless, heartless and feckless. Douglas, in short, was a bad investment.

5. A NAMELESS MEETING ACROSS THE CHASMS

Despite the rather inauspicious signs which Wilde finds in Douglas' character, part of the chronotope of post-prison time deals with a possible meeting between the two men after Wilde's release from prison. If the meeting takes place it will be under circumstances that will divest Wilde of two of the principle categories that might define him: he will be a man who belongs to no place and will have no name. Given that "Society" will have no place for him after prison, Wilde is destined to wander a homeless man, although "Nature, whose sweet rains fall on just and unjust alike" will have "clefts in the rocks" where he might hide. Benign nature, if it serves to offer a homeless home and purify (it will "cleanse" Wilde in "great waters"), will also serve to hide Wilde from the eyes of others and erase the visible signs of his existence: "she will hang the night with stars so that I may walk abroad in the darkness without stumbling, and send the wind over my footprints so that none may track me to my hurt" (955). The "clefts" in which Wilde will hide could be said to form an important part of his identity with relation to any future meeting with Douglas. This will relate to a series of lacks: lack of home, lack of name and what might be called a certain "lack of common ground" between the two men.

6. ABANDONING A NAME, ONCE SO MUSICAL IN THE MOUTH OF FAME: A FEW SPECULATIONS FROM THE CHASM

Towards the end of the letter Wilde outlines "the conditions, circumstances, and the place" of a meeting with Douglas. Within these paragraphs Wilde indicates, as described above, that society will have no place for him and goes on to name the possible place where a meeting may take place:

> At the end of a month ... I will, if I feel able, arrange ... to meet you in some quiet foreign town like Bruges ... For the moment you will have to change your name. The little title of which you were so vain - and indeed it made your name sound like the name of a flower - you will have to surrender, if you wish to see me; just as my name, once so musical in the mouth of Fame, will have to be abandoned by me, in turn. (955)

This symbolic exchanging or replacing of names (a kind of metaphoric "deflowering") for anonymity results in a form symbolic devaluation which

links to the idea of homomorphism: just as Wilde had lost his social-artistic position so Douglas, through the loss of his name, is no longer to be marked by his social status. Wilde here takes upon himself the phallic power in expressed forms of authority over the self and the other. Wilde, having submitted himself to the rules, regulations and prohibitions of authority, now, in the Phallic exchange, takes them up himself to lay down the law (of the Father) to Douglas. Wilde, having established the conditions of the meeting, adds: "I hope that our meeting will be what a meeting between you and me should be, after everything that has occurred". This provides one of the enigmas of the concluding paragraphs of the letter because Wilde seems ambiguous about what the meeting "should be".

On the one hand the substitution of names will allow Wilde to cash in, as it were, on anonymity, for the meeting seems to herald a possible reconciliation between the two men. This interpretation appears to receive some support from Wilde's talk of love ("Even if I had not been waiting [for a letter] but had shut the doors against you, you should have remembered that no one can possibly shut the doors against Love for ever ... There is no prison in any world into which Love cannot force an entrance" (956)). Here in the symbolic reversal, which involves an ironic exchange, Douglas, as the bearer of love, is put into the position not of the man of bad credit who never honours his debts but of a criminal who will force an entrance. This entrance (following his metaphorical deflowering) will not be into the usual deposit (the bank), but the place which holds the sexual dissident, or the man who has enjoyed forbidden pleasures. The symbolic debt will be paid for through satisfying what lies behind all investment: desire. (The structure here, given the way I have worded it, might serve another form of desire: that of vulgar Freudianism.)

On the other hand, the possible future coming together, if it occurs, will threaten to reveal an unbridgeable rift between the two men. Earlier Wilde had written that he hoped that between himself and art there was no gulf (936) but Wilde suggests at the end of the letter that an enormous gulf had always separated him from Douglas, which, given the recent past was even wider: "In old days there was always a wide chasm between us, the chasm of achieved Art and acquired culture: there is a still Wider chasm between us now, the chasm of Sorrow ..." (956).

However, the idea of gulfs or chasms, either within the self or between the self and Douglas, does not seem to stand in the way of a reconciliation: "but to Humility there is nothing that is impossible, and to Love all things are easy" (956). So the entire economy of symbolic exchanges with their unpayable debts is conducted in the name of Eros, whose wings will bridge

the chasms of art, culture and suffering which threaten to separate the two men. Despite vitriolic attacks on Douglas, the living embodiment of the Zeitgeist of an age that has no soul, his place in Wilde's future cannot be dispensed with. He may be the negative other, but his place as lover can be assured by subordinating himself to something which resembles Foucault's analysis of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century administration of punishment (Foucault 1975). By subjecting himself to an internalized House of Correction he can become worthy of continued acceptance. Becoming a worthy object of affection, he can join in the struggle to avoid the death of mutual desire, which seems so important to the integrity of Wilde's self. This involves a particular view of history. Two paragraphs after the passage on the chasms which separate, Wilde asserts that the past is not "irrevocable" and that things are in their essence "what we choose to make them". (Earlier in *De Profundis* Wilde had characterized the past as a "Symphony of Sorrow" (884) which tended to reinforce the unchangeable nature of a determinist history endowed with, in hindsight, a fixed and recoverable thematics).[13]

As a seme (a semantic possibility, and a gap) this passage could be interpreted in many ways: did Wilde, towards the end of the letter, begin to lose heart in his rejection of Douglas or his construction of him? Would this account for an ambiguous relation to history as fixed, predetermined, and yet open to hermeneutical negotiation? Did a flexible or negotiable model of history offer the possibility of changing his fashioning of Douglas? Had Douglas' presence/ absence become so vital to Wilde's sense of self that its loss would entail the loss of that self?

The final line of the letter may lead to a plausible reply (if a little psychologism is allowed). "Perhaps", Wilde concludes, "I am chosen to teach you something much more wonderful, the meaning of Sorrow, and its beauty" (957). This in turn puts the letter back into the context of the discourse of self-realization; only here Wilde fashions himself as the necessary other half in the pedagogical relation between teacher and pupil. Now the letter can be seen, not so much as a confession (as a number of critics have represented it: e.g. Gordon 1970; Kail 1979)[14] but as a pedagogical tract, in the epistolary form. The final justification within the chronotope of post-prison time is that the *proleptic* Wilde will continue the work of edification —not only in instructing and improving Douglas but, to return the word to its Latin root (*edificare*), to continue the process of construction. Why? Because this "edification" of Douglas, within the terms of the letter, is the negative "other" so necessary to the construction of the positive self —the loss of the one, in gulfs or chasms, could all too easily lead to the loss of the *Other*. This would entail, from the Lac(k)anian point

of view, not only the loss of the "other" as *objet petit a* (if this is understood as a necessary and indistinguishable complement to the self)[15] but also the loss of the desiring self, because the complement, the negative in Douglas' case, would remove the binary structure upon which a sense of positive identity was based.

And this is where the present study, with its theoretical debts to semiotics, Lac(k)an and Bakhtin, partially overlaps with Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. Greenblatt observes that self-fashioning in sixteenth-century England is achieved "in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile" (9), a role Wilde ascribes to Douglas. This "threatening Other", for the Renaissance self-fashioner has to be attacked and destroyed; however, *fin-de-siècle* Wilde cannot go so far because the effect would be internecine. Another aspect of the generalizations that Greenblatt extracts from his readings of constructed selves from More to Shakespeare can be moulded more fully to fit the Wilde fashioned in this article. Greenblatt concludes his introduction (which may serve as part of my conclusion) that: "... self-fashioning occurs at the point of encounter between an authority and an alien, that what [sic] is produced in this encounter partakes of both the authority and the alien that is marked for attack, and hence that any achieved identity always contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss" (9).

Within this Greenblattian framework what might have looked at the beginning like an incompatible mish-mash of theoretical approaches can be combined into a theoretical mongrel to fashion the portrait of Wilde concocted here. The chronotope of post-prison time can be seen as one of perpetuation and survival: economic and Phallic laws must be obeyed (Wilde must pay his literal debts and accept the law. But in accepting the law he perpetuates it by attempting to exercise it over Douglas while using it to construct a coherent self and realize desire). Douglas' debts cannot be paid, but as lack is insufficient currency which would promise no return, Douglas is to acknowledge the unreturnable. What this means is that Douglas will have to go through a process of self-realization (just as Wilde claimed he himself had to) in order to maintain the economy Wilde was setting up in the letter; this involves the recognition and worth of the other. Given the lack of any adequate return for his generosity, Wilde constructs a kind of Phallic exchange standard —Phallic because it functions as a moral imperative (although there can be no literal payment there is still a law of obligation), and because Douglas must be primed to fulfil his role in the realization of desire. Here emotions and attitudes become commodities with their use and exchange values. Eros functions not only as the classical god of

love but as he does within the modern mythology of psychoanalysis as the great preserver of life. Although Wilde tends to privilege suffering over pleasure he is not prepared to go "beyond the pleasure principle":[16] he stops at desire. It could be said, in a variation on a theme found in Derrida's "White Mythology", that the "general economy" that Wilde sets up is one that attempts to profit from reconciliation but is based upon the threat of an irreducible loss, an "expenditure without reserve", which (rather than cash in on union/ love) menaces him with an unbridgeable gap.[17] In the absence of the unreturnable return the two men are to be joined by the terms of a one-way pedagogical exchange, and through the homomorphic business of deepening the self and (through love/ desire) avoiding gaps, chasms and trivialization. This was the future. The alternative, perhaps, would only have added to the already painful and rebarbative present —symbolic loss of self and other.

NOTES

[1] The title *De Profundis* was not chosen by Wilde (Hyde 1976: 408) but by his literary executor, Robert Ross. The letter was written in Reading Gaol but never posted. See Hart-Davis (1979: 152f.) for a brief overview of the letter's publishing history. All references to the text are to the Collins edition (1978). At the risk of teaching the reader to suck eggs... prolepsis is, of course, taken from Genette (1980).

[2] See the opening sections of the letter and one written to More Adey on the writing of *De Profundis* (Hart-Davis 1962: 419).

[3] The chronotopes, to simplify Bakhtin, are coordinating principles of any narrative. In short, a chronotope tries to give an account of what kinds of event govern a narrative and how these events are organized in time (Bakhtin 1981: 250).

[4] I use the spelling I usually adopt when writing Lacan's name —as a means of keeping in mind the importance of lack to Lac(k)anian theory— and remind myself and my readers that my deployment of Lac(k)an is as subject to lack as anything else. In using Lac(k)an I am not so much interested in exploring the mechanisms of the unconscious as in adapting some Lac(k)anian ideas to suit my own aims. As Althusser claimed, as Lac(k)an's ideas gradually pass into the public

domain, critics tend to use what they find in their own ways, and to their own profit (Althusser & Balibar 1971: 13).

[5] Wayne Koestenbaum's essay, "Wilde's Hard Labour and the Birth of Gay Reading" (in Boone & Cadden 1990) addresses the role that Douglas played in the letter. Although I limit the addressee here to Douglas, an argument might be made for the letter indirectly addressing other readers like Douglas' family, Wilde's friends, the prison authorities, and even future generations.

[6] Four fairly recent books which have made an impact in these areas of discussion on Wilde are Dollimore (1991), Cohen (1993), Edelman (1994) and Sinfield (1994). Of course, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1991) has inspired much research into questions of the homosocial and homophobic.

[7] For Lac(k)an's *Phallus*, as it were, see "The signification of the phallus" (1977: 281).

[8] Here I adapt the title of Baudrillard's book entitled *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1993).

[9] For an account of the letter's publishing history see Hyde (1976) and Roitinger (1980).

[10] Much anxiety about his financial future was brought about by the terms of an allowance he was to receive from his estranged wife. For the terms see Ellmann (1988: 468, 522-523). Lord Queensberry brought about Wilde's bankruptcy by suing him for the costs of the first trial (Wilde, at the instigation of the Queensberry family, had originally tried to sue Lord Queensberry for libel but lost the case).

[11] This title is borrowed from Baudrillard (1993: 114) and has only the most peripheral relation to the context in which he uses it (i.e. he is analyzing the economy of the body as a sign).

[12] These words actually describe the situation of material goods, language and sexuality (the body) since the Industrial Revolution. However, they work just as well in the present context which could be "economized" in a similar way if space permitted (Baudrillard 1993: 114).

[13] To justify this claim it is worth quoting the passage more fully. Wilde wrote that:

So much in this place do men live by pain that my friendship with you, in the way through which I am forced to remember it, appears to me always as a prelude consonant with those varying modes of anguish which each day I have to realise; nay more, to necessitate them even; as though my life, whatever it had seemed to myself and others, had all the while been a real Symphony of sorrow, passing through its rhythmically-linked movements to its certain resolution, with that inevitableness that in Art characterises the treatment of every great theme. (884)

[14] I agree with Rodney Shewan that the letter, while containing confession, is a "curious hybrid" (Shewan 1977: 194), but would add the dimension of pedagogical tract which, as far as I can make out, has not been suggested.

[15] The term *objet petit a* (short for *objet petit autre* —literally "the little object of the other") can be understood, very simply, as anything which is outside the self (voice, gaze, etc.) but not perceived as such. Lac(k)an, however, in a translator's note to *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis* refused to define the term, leaving readers to make up their own minds (Lacan 1979: 282). The definition I offer here has been influenced by Kaja Silverman's way of seeing it in her book *The Subject of Semiotics* (1983).

[16] It is beyond the pleasure principle where the life instinct (Eros) encounters its aim and opposite (Thanatos) (Freud 1961).

[17] See the Exergue to the essay. I have adapted the words of the translator's note which reads (and quotes from Derrida): "For Derrida, the "general economy" is the one that shows how metaphysics's eternal attempt to *profit* from its ventures is based upon an irreducible *loss*, an "expenditure without reserve" without which there could be no idea of profit" (Derrida 1982: 209).

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THE CULT OF AUTHENTICITY: INDIA'S CULTURAL COMMISSARS WORSHIP "INDIANNESS" INSTEAD OF ART

VIKRAM CHANDRA

Two years ago, Sunil Khilnani, Ardeshir Vakil, and I did a reading at the British Council in New Delhi. As we trooped up onto the stage, I scanned the hall, trying to get a sense of the chemistry of the room, a feeling for what sort of beast this audience was going to be. I recognized a couple of faces —university professors, literary editors, and suchlike— and a few others seemed familiar from newspapers and magazines. The Delhi literati and chatterati had come out for us. "This is going to be easy", I thought. "Good room".

Sunil Khilnani read first, from *The Idea of India*, and Ardeshir and I followed. The moderator then opened the floor for questions from the audience. One of the first queries came at Sunil: "How can you live abroad and write about India?" Sunil answered, and as he did, I thought about what an odd question this was, coming from a room full of Indians who had probably studied Wordsworth under neem trees and written authoritatively about the idea of Byron from Allahbad. A few minutes later, a passage from Ardeshir's novel, *Beach Boy*, became the subject of enquiry. In this passage, Ardeshir's young protagonist, Cyrus Readymoney, watches a street-vendor make his beloved bhelpuri. Cyrus is a dedicated gourmet, and the process is a wonder to him, and he watches in an ecstatic trance: "I swallowed hard on the saliva that had gathered in my mouth. Flies buzzed around the food, my eye was caught by the large bosom of a girl in a blue frock. The bhaiya cuts a lime in half, he chops a green mango into tiny squares, he shreds some coriander leaves, he lifts up a box and slides out a sheaf of pages torn out

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from a magazine. The paper is thick and durable but not glossy —perfect for the food it will hold. He folds one sheet over and makes a wide cone-shaped vessel. Now comes the delicate throwing together of ingredients, dry and wet, that delights the heart". I had delighted in this evocative passage when I had read it, in the whole of this lovely novel, which moves along streets I'd grown up on. But now a member of this audience was suspicious of Ardeshir's motives: "Why was there that long passage about the preparation of bhelpuri? We Indians all know how bhelpuri is made. Was that an emigrant's nostalgia, or was it written for the Westerners who don't know what bhelpuri is?" Ardeshir answered ably, but the question seemed so amazingly preposterous to me that I felt impelled to jump in. To delight in the mundane is what an artist does, I said. And so on. I should have saved my breath. I got it next.

A woman in the audience, somebody I didn't recognize, raised her hand and asked, "Why do the stories in your collection *Love and Longing in Bombay* have names like "Dharma" and "Artha" and "Kama"?" I answered. I talked about wanting to see how these principles —Duty, Gain, Desire— worked their way through ordinary lives. But my interlocutor was not satisfied. "But your stories are so specific, and these titles are so abstract". That's precisely what I like about the titles, I said, the burnished glow of the Sanskrit, their seeming distance from the gritty landscapes of the stories themselves. "No", she said. That wasn't it, according to her. "These titles are necessary to signal Indianness in the West", she said. By this time, I was annoyed. I'm afraid I was a little short with her. Absurd, I sputtered, I used these titles because of the energy inherent in them, in the electric charge between the abstraction and the concrete.

After the discussion was formally closed, the audience and the writers milled around in the courtyard of the British Council building. I was deep in the middle of a much-needed whisky when the person who I was by now thinking of as Title-Lady walked up. "You misunderstood what I said", she said. "I meant that since ordinary people don't think about such things as dharma, or use that kind of language, the titles couldn't have arisen from the stories but were tagged on to signal Indianness in a Western context". I was again bewildered. What I wanted to say was, "then perhaps you and I live in different Indias, or even on different planets". We were standing, after all, in the capital of a nation that had watched the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* on television in numbers that had set all-time world records, a nation that had experienced the rise of the BJP and the destruction of the Babri Masjid and widespread riots. I myself was from a city that had been ripped apart by

bombs, where a single saffron-wearing man ran the government by remote control and lectured us often about dharma.

But I didn't say any of this to Title-Lady. I'd just started working on a new novel about the underworld, about Bombay cops and Bad Guys. So, I told her about an evening I'd spent the week before with a police inspector, a man who at the time was working in the criminal investigation department in one of the western suburbs. In a bar, over a beer, he told me about a murder case he had been investigating. He had caught one of the shooters, and then, when he felt he was getting close to the man who had paid for the killing, a man of some influence and power and wealth, he had been told in no uncertain terms by his superiors to back off. "What did you think of that?" I'd asked. He said, "Sometimes I feel that I'm suffocating. But you tell me, Vikram, what is my dharma?" So I told Title-Lady about this, and she nodded, and said, "That's what I wanted to hear", and was off like a shot into the crowd. I drank the rest of my whisky feeling somewhat dazed.

Later that evening, as we were leaving the British Council, I told my friend Tarun Tejpal about this strange encounter. He laughed, hard, and said, "Do you know who that was?" I shook my head. "That was Meenakshi Mukherjee", he said. "You know, professor at JNU she used to be".

"Ah", I said. "Professor. JNU. Of course".

As I thought about this evening, as the months passed, I noticed the constant hum of this rhetoric, this anxiety about the anxiety of Indianness, this notion of a real reality that was being distorted by "Third World cosmopolitans", this fear of an all-devouring and all-distorting West. I heard it in conversations, in critical texts, in reviews. And Indians who wrote in English were one of the prime locations for this rhetoric to test itself, to make its declarations of power and belonging, to announce its possession of certain territories and its right to delineate lines of control. A friend told me about a meeting of the Delhi University syllabus revision committee, where they were trying to decide on the one Indo-Anglian novel that should be prescribed in the one course on modern Indian literature. My friend suggested *Midnight's Children*, and she was shouted down. Salman Rushdie isn't Indian, the majority of the professors asserted. Amitav Ghosh, however, was found to be sufficiently Indian, and so his *Shadow Lines* was accepted into the canon. The issue was decided not on the basis of the relative merits of the books, but on the perceived Indianness of the authors, and by implication, the degree of their assimilation by the West.

Meanwhile, I continued my wanderings through Bombay. I met one afternoon with Arun Gawli, one of the great Bombay mafia Dons. I went to meet him at Dagdichawl, his fortress-home in the heart of the old mill area of Parel. I waited, sitting on a plastic chair alongside other supplicants, under a grey hulk of a building. Above us, from a balcony, Gawli's boys, his young soldiers, watched. Finally, I was led up a narrow staircase, and a left turn took us into a large gold-Formica-paneled room, where I waited again, sitting on a shiny maroon sofa under a very large silvery chandelier. The walls were covered with large gold-framed pictures of gods and goddesses. Gawli was a fervent Shiva-bhakt, I knew this already. It was part of his legend. It was said that on some days his Shiva-puja lasted for three hours. Outside, on a large balcony, young men spoke urgently into cell phones. Gawli's children watched cricket on a color television. Another fifteen minutes, and then Gawli himself came in and led me to another large room, this one with mirrors rising to the ceiling, and again a chandelier. It felt like a durbar hall, but Gawli himself was a very small man dressed in a white shirt, white pajamas, and a Nehru cap. He was very polite, and it was only when he spoke of his mortal enemy, the mafia boss Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar, that his eyes grew still and hard, and I felt a chill. We spoke, and he told me about his life, and then I asked him how a man as religious as himself could do the things he has been accused of doing. "When a man is fighting for justice", he said, "what is adharma becomes dharma. We do what is necessary". We spoke for a while about right action, and then I took my leave.

Almost a year later, my friend the crime journalist H. Zaidi and I waited on a street corner in Jambli Mohalla, in Dongri, the mafia-ridden locality that Bombay newspapers refer to as the "Palermo of India". My cell phone rang, and a voice told us to move to a certain street corner. Zaidi led the way through the narrow, crowded lanes. Go right, go left, we were told. And then a boy, a young man, walked over to us, nodded at Zaidi and led us rapidly through some more turns, and then through a door, up a narrow staircase. A brown door opened for us, and as I went in I touched it with my hand and realized that it was metal. Inside, the man we had come to meet, Hussain Ustra, Hussain the Razor, was patting cologne onto his cheeks. Behind him, a bank of closed circuit television screens switched through multiple cameras. They had been watching us come up the street. Ustra himself was a dapper, slightly paunchy man, dressed in a tailored white shirt and pants. He would have been completely at home at a Nariman Point lunch for stockbrokers. He had an elegant haircut and sophisticated Urdu and a very direct stare. He told me about his life, about his early use of straight-razors to settle arguments, and his rise to commanding his own company, or gang. He told me about *his* war with Dawood Ibrahim. In passing, he mentioned that his company followed strict Islamic rules, that none of his boys smoked or drank. "What about women?" Zaidi asked. Ustra grinned. "Who doesn't like women?" he said. We talked on. As Zaidi and I were leaving, Ustra passed close to me, and I asked, "What's the cologne?" He smiled a shaukeen's satisfied smile, and said with the pride of a connoisseur, "Paco Rabanne".

Six months later, Ustra went to a rendezvous with his mashooq, his beloved. The Bombay underworld says "mashooq", not "mashooqa", which would be feminine and grammatically correct; "mashooq" is in keeping with the traditions of Urdu poetry, in which the beloved, is always male. Ustra's mashooq was reportedly related to Dawood Ibrahim by marriage; to be with her was a risk. But Ustra went alone, with no bodyguards, only a driver. He went up, spent his time with his mashooq, and then came down. He opened the door to the car, bent to get in, and somebody stepped up close behind him, and fired two bullets into his temple, one into his neck as he fell, and one more into his back. And that was the end of Hussain Ustra. That winter, when I came back to Bombay, I spoke to a senior police officer who had known Ustra. We talked about Ustra, the religiosity of gangsters, Gawli, Shiva, and then again about Ustra. "Why did he go there?" I said. "And after all his closed-circuit televisions and metal doors, why alone?" "Who knows?" the policeman said. "How many times I told him not to go there. Bastard had become a fucking Majnoon". I shook my head, and the policeman shrugged, and said, "But who can escape from Love? Not even Bholenath". The policeman's allusion was to Majnoon, the exemplary lover of Persian and Urdu poetry, who leaves behind sanity and life itself. But he also was speaking of Bholenath, Shiva, who was stung by Kama's darts, and felt himself giving in to desire.

And now, recently, a couple of months ago, my friend Anuradha Tandon e-mailed me. She wrote, "Hey, that Mukherjee person's been talking about your titles again, and this time at some lecture in Bern". Anuradha had found, on an Internet mailing list, an account of Dr. Mukherjee's lecture by a cross-culturally named "Chandra Holm", and she forwarded this description to me. Ms. Holm's summary of the talk —which I've since checked for accuracy with Dr. Mukherjee herself and rephrased accordingly— goes in part like this: "Today (on April 12, 1999), Meenakshi Mukherjee gave a talk on "Indian Fiction in English: the Local and the Global" .... She spoke about a book called *Love and Longing in Bombay* by Vikram Chandra. It has as titles of chapters the Sanskrit words, dharma, kama, artha, etc.... Such language (and choice of words) would embarrass any regional writer writing in an Indian language. The worst first sentence ever written for a novel is the first

sentence of *The Madwoman of Jogare*, written by Sohaila Abdulali, "The koel sat in the tamarind tree and called urgently, despairingly, coo-ooo! Into the sun and onto the earth". Koel and tamarind are commonplace Indian realities. These writers have to accentuate these realities, to exoticize the Indian landscape to signal their Indianness to the West, in the context of the Western market". Dr. Mukherjee then quoted Borges quoting Edward Gibbon, who asserted that in the Koran the word "camel" is not mentioned even once "because the Koran was written originally in Arabic, and the camel is so Arabic that there was no need to mention it. If the Koran would have been written originally in English, the word camel would certainly have appeared in it to show the Arabian connection".[1]

This Borges reference was mystifying. It might be too much to ask of a historian looking for lessons, or an academic in full polemical flight, to remember that another Arabic book par excellence, *The Thousand and One Nights*, is full of camels, of caravans of camels and dogs and cats and birds, and even a writing ape. But Jorge Luis Borges? Our Borges? The writer who loved *The Thousand and One Nights* so much that he wrote an essay about its various translations?

A quick look at the Borges essay from which these lines were taken was sufficient to dispel my puzzlement. The essay is called "The Argentine Writer and Tradition", and was written in 1951 in response to a polemic by a faction of Argentine writers and academics who might be roughly described as the Local-Color Epic Gaucho School. These worthies demanded that Argentine writers confine themselves to writing of local color and nothing but local color, in language and metaphors inflected and infected by local vernaculars. They proclaimed that Argentine writers who were cosmopolitans, who engaged themselves in a literary and cultural conversation with Europe, were un-Argentinian, deracinated, and literary traitors. The exhaustively cosmopolitan and erudite Borges is arguing in this essay for the freedom of artists to choose their tropes from wherever they see fit. He writes, "What is Argentine tradition? I believe that this question poses no problem and can easily be answered. I believe that our tradition is the whole of Western culture, and I also believe that we have a right to this tradition, a greater right than that which the inhabitants of one Western nation or another may have". Which is to say that Argentine writers have the right, and the ability, to call on Dante in *addition* to gauchos.

It seems to me that Borges has absolutely nothing against local color. He was after all the writer who began a story like this: "I remember him (I have no right to use that sacred verb; only one man on earth had the right, and that man is dead), I remember him with a dark passionflower in his hand, seeing it as no man has ever seen it, though he might look from dawn until twilight for a lifetime. I remember him, his face still and Indian-like, and singularly remote, behind his cigarette. I remember (I believe) his sharp leatherbraider's hands. I remember, near those hands, a mate gourd engraved with the arms of the Banda Oriental". These are the opening sentences of "Funes, the Memorious", which is, mind you, not a local-color story at all but one of Borges' metaphysical paradoxes, about a man with a perfect memory. And yet, here we have a passionflower, as common in Uruguay as, say, tamarind trees in Maharasthra; we have a stereotypically impassive American-Indian face; we have angular leatherbraider's hands (leatherbraiding being one of the crafts of Uruguayan Indians); we have a mate gourd (mate is a bitter tea that is as folklorically a beverage of the Southern Cone as bhelpuri is a snack of Bombay), a gourd engraved with the arms of the Banda Oriental, meaning that colonial territory which —under the rule of the Spanish crown from the early sixteenth century until independence at the beginning of the nineteenth— comprised present-day Uruguay and southern Brazil. Even the cigarette could be accused of participating in local color, since the practice of smoking tobacco originated with the indigenous peoples of America. And if we stare a little longer at that dark passionflower, as Funes does, we may begin to remember that this creeping plant, "passionara" in Spanish, is, according to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "often used to symbolize events in the last hours of the life of Christ, the Passion of Christ, which accounts for the name. Thus, the corona represents the crown of thorns; the styles represent the nails used in the Crucifixion; the stamens represent the five wounds; and the five sepals and five petals represent ten of the apostles, excluding Judas, who betrayed Jesus, and Peter, who denied him three times on the night of his trial". The passionflower is doubly local, then: not simply an allusion to the local flora but to the Catholicism that permeates the local culture.

So, Borges has no problems with local color. For him, the local and the global —and, indeed, the eternal— exist in the same place, in the same passionflower. But he is against ideological restrictions being imposed on writers, and he is very much against bad writing. To trot out too many camels, and only camels, a surfeit of camels or a surfeit of gauchos is an aesthetic sin, but the ruthless excision of camels or gauchos —or bhelpuri— would constitute a bizarre self-censorship. Good artists tend to caress the landscapes they live in, to notice and delight in what is *there*, what is *present*. In the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, for instance, we are treated to a vast variety of local color, including cranes and herons, lizards, turtles, monkeys, fishes, worms, scorpions, frogs, hedgehogs, iguanas, boars, deer,

eagles, vultures, mongooses, cats, mice, elephants, tigers, lions, dogs, rhinosceri, leopards, apes, cobras, and boas. And this is just the very short list. And I mustn't forget cows. There are plenty of cows in these epics, and I think we may safely assume that our epic ancestors were as close to their cows as any Arab to his or her camel. My favorite epic cow is of course Kamadhenu, the Cow of Plenty, or the Cow Who Grants all Wishes, who is born during the churning of the oceans by the gods and asuras. The epic poets linger lovingly over Kamadhenu, and tell us about the sweetness of her breath, and the gentleness of her gaze. Lovely Kamadhenu is always getting kidnapped, and during one of these episodes she decides to take decisive action. She asks her owner Vashishta's permission to retaliate, and routs the kidnapping king's armies by creating dreadful Pahlavas and Shakas (varieties of Iranians), and Yavanas (Ionians or Greeks), from her "roar" or "bellow"; more Pahlavas then come from her udders, more Yavanas from her vulva, her yoni, and more Shakas from her anus, and do dreadful damage to the enemy, until finally Vashishta burns the remaining warriors to ashes with the syllable "Hum!"[2]. This is a rather cosmopolitan cow, and I think Borges would have liked her.

But not Dr. Mukherjee: to put a cow, any cow, even one cow, into an Indian story is, I suppose, to "signal one's Indianness in the context of the Western market". Without doubt, one koel in an Indian narrative causes all sorts of conniptions. This despite the fact that every day in Maharashtra substantial koels sit on substantial tamarind trees in their thousands, as they have been doing for thousands of years. And certainly, to title a story with a resonating abstraction like "Dharma" or "Shakti" is to use language that a "regional writer" would be "embarrassed by". Putting to the side this puzzling insistence that there is shame in doing something that "regional writers" don't, I had thought that in my choice of titles I was walking along a well-trodden path. The Hindi writer Narendra Kohli had written novels titled *Karma* and *Dharma*. The title of Kulwant Kochar's Hindi novel *Man Kurukshetra* conflates the mind and the fabled battlefield of the Mahabharata. The Bengali writer Sunil Gangopadhyay had written the novel *Maya Moh*, whose title alludes to our attachment to the shifting illusion that is the world. I was certain that the iconic Hindi writer Prem Chand had written a renowned novel called *Karmabhoomi*, or the *Field of Karma*. And certain, too, that the famous Bengali writer Maitreyi Devi had written the Sahitya Akademi award-winning novel *Na-Hanyate*, which is Sanskrit for *It Does Not Die* and is a fragment from the famous passage of the Gita that asserts that the soul cannot be killed. I imagined the scrupulous and ascetic Munshi Prem

Chand blushing with shame under Dr. Mukherjee's strict gaze, and I shuddered.

I come from a family of film directors and writers and producers, and I was certain that I'd grown up watching movies with titles like the ones I'd used. So I phoned Ashish Rajadhakshya, editor of *The Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema*, and asked him to put some queries to his database. He came back with some interesting numbers. It seems that to date, 31 feature films called "Dharma" have been made in India; if you allow for variations on the word (like "Dharma Yudh"), that number goes up to 84. Similarly, thirty movies called "Shakti" have been produced; it's 54 if you allow variations. For "Shanti", the numbers are ten and eighteen. For "Kama", three and three. For "Artha", one and six.[3] I suppose some overworked clerk at the Ministry of Permissible Language forgot to send out the right memo to the film industry.

I could go on, and tell you about the soldiers I met one very early morning at Dadar station, on their way to a northern front, who were reading the Gita and eating a breakfast of vada-pao and chai and Coca-Cola; about a very famous and very good actor named Kiran Kumar speaking in a recent interview in *Zee Premiere* magazine about his karma as an actor, about his longing for shanti, peace. But I mustn't. I hope you'll forgive me for lingering on this rather anecdotal, personal history. My purpose in lingering is not merely to grind an attack on my beloved stories under my iron heel, although, as you can probably tell, grinding gives me glorious pleasure. My purpose is also to give you some sense of the texture of the world in which I live and write, and therefore also a sense of the sheer effort it takes to sustain and drive this censorious rhetoric about correct Indianness, and a sense of the galloping vastness of its elisions. This rhetoric lays claim not only to a very high moral ground but also a deep, essential connection to a "real" Indianness. Despite all their demurrals about not essentializing Indianness, and their ritual genuflections in the direction of Bhabha and Spivak, the practitioners of this rhetoric inevitably claim that they are able to identify a "Real India", and so are able to identify which art, and which artists, are properly Indian. The maneuvers typically used in this rhetoric might be summarized as follows:

To write about India in English is at best a brave failure, and at worst a betrayal of Indian "realities". In a 1993 essay titled "The Anxiety of Indianness", Dr. Mukherjee tells us, "the normal ground conditions of literary production, where a culture and its variations, a language and its dialects, centuries of oral tradition and written literature, all interact to create a new text —do not exist in the case of English in India. Take for example, the case

of Malayalam, which is not only the spoken and written language of the geographic space called Kerala, but of its films —both commercial and serious— its folk tales, riddles, nonsense verse, nursery rhymes ... a fictional text that is produced in this language today draws upon, and echoes, the reverberations of this layered plurality that surround and nurture it. English in India on the other hand functions on relatively fewer registers and it would not have been surprising if this remained a permanent liability, allowing the novelist to operate only within a limited parameter". And further, "Those who write in English do so because —no matter what language they speak at home— they have literary competence only in English.... It may be more useful to us to understand the circumstances that lead to the loss of the mother tongue than to charge these writers with for capitalizing on their loss".

Indo-Anglian writers write for a Western audience. Again, Dr. Mukherjee writes, "I am neither trying to privilege ethnographic documentation in fiction over other aspects nor insisting that mimetic representation should always be the desired narrative mode, but merely suggesting that in the English texts of India there may be a greater pull towards a homogenization of reality, an essentializing of India, a certain flattening out of the complicated and conflicting contours, the ambiguous and shifting relations that exist between individuals and groups in a plural community. This attenuation may be artistically valid when the narrative aspires to the condition of allegory but for the Indian writer in English there may be other unarticulated compulsions —the uncertainty about his target audience, for example. An O. V. Vijayan or a Bhalachandra Nemade knows his exact constituency and is secure in the knowledge of the shades of response his associative word-play or ironic under-statement will evoke in Malayalam or Marathi readers who are equipped with the keys for decoding these oblique messages. But R. K. Narayan's audience is spread wide and far, within India and outside, hence the need for an even-toned minimalistic representation that will not depend too much on the intricacies and contradictions in the culture and the inflections of voice which only an insider can decipher".

Indo-Anglian writers make too much money. Here is Dr. Mukherjee again, writing a review of a recently translated Bengali novel in *Outlook* magazine: "The author of *Aparajito* can't appear on television chat shows because he died nearly a half a century ago. A book launch in the capital is out of the question because no advance in hard currency has been offered for the book. The review circuit in London or New York has not told us what to think of this novel. Consequently one of the major fictional texts of our

century is likely to remain unnoticed by the media even though it's available in English now".

A lot of Indo-Anglian writers live abroad, so they are disconnected from Indian realities, and are prey to nostalgia; and besides, the bastards are too comfortable over there and don't have to face Delhi traffic jams and power cuts and queues for phones and train tickets and busses, and so they don't suffer like us and so they can't possibly be virtuous enough to be good artists. And here is Namita Gokhale, writing in *Sunday* magazine about Kiran Desai: "The daughter of a famous Indo-Anglian novelist, she makes a cushioned landing into the world of people-like-us literati, with a fat advance from Faber and fleeting visits to the fatherland.... Kiran Desai typifies a tendency of contemporary Indo-Anglian writing, of the author as a glib tourist guide of an alien sensibility rather than an introspective insider chronicling the life and times he or she lives in".

You'll have noticed that references to "regional writers" are an essential rhetorical device in these maneuvers. "Regional writers" presumably live in regions, which is to say in properly dusty parts of India, not in faraway air-conditioned regions of *vilayat*, abroad; "regional writers" write in regional languages, which is to say any language other than English; "regional writers" therefore presumably don't write for a Western audience, or an international one; and "regional writers" presumably don't make money, at least not in large hard currency amounts. "Regional writers" are therefore the opposite of Indo-Anglian writers in all ways, and are therefore virtuous and pure. Indo-Anglian writers are the opposite of "regional writers", and are therefore corrupt and impure. This moral positioning became especially noticeable and fervent in reaction to Salman Rushdie's infamous assertion that "the prose writing ... by Indian writers working in English is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced ... in the so-called "vernacular languages"". Critics and academics and mandarins, especially the English-speaking and English-writing variety, vociferously and properly defended the aesthetic achievements of the "regional writers". But the aesthetic argument was speedily subsumed by furious barrages of tidy moralizing. It wasn't nearly enough to argue that such-and-such Marathi writer was as "strong" as or more "important" than his or her Indo-Anglian peers. Indeed, as the critics rushed forward to do combat with Rushdie, many of them seemed to forget aesthetics altogether. Instead, many of them assigned to "regional writing" a pristine purity of content and purpose, an austere and lofty nobleness of intent, and following from this virtuous abnegation, an ability to connect to a "Real India" that could not possibly exist in Indo-Anglian writing.

It's a curious term, this "regional writing". It clumsily clubs together dozens of literatures, and thousands and thousands of writers. The attempt to locate Indianness in "regional writing" is inevitably problematic, since —in a nation battling numerous secessionist movements— regional specificity is inevitably in conflict with generalized national traits. But "regional writing" is always connected to the soil, to "Real India". And when it's opposed to "Indo-Anglian writing", the term "regional writing" implies that writing in English is not regional, that it's pan-Indian or, worse, cosmopolitan, belonging to nowhere and everywhere. "Regional writing" is sometimes referred to, in a fashion more *au courant* on Indian campuses, as *bhasa* writing. *Bhasa* is literally "language", and therefore Indo-Anglian writing is non-language writing. Indo-Anglian writers, then, are writers from nowhere who write in a non-language. This is all rather neat, and one has to admire the elegance of the construction.

And yet, and yet. Life, or at least the life I live, is very messy indeed. My entire region is entirely messy. Yes, I must respectfully submit that I too am a "regional writer". I will not presume to claim Maharashtra or even the entire city of Bombay as my region. I will only claim part of the western suburbs, let us say north from the highway junction at Mahim causeway, roughly an area containing Dharavi, Bandra West, Khar, Santa Cruz, Juhu, Andheri West, and Goregaon West. This is my region. I live in it, in the locality of Andheri, in the colony called Lokhandwalla.

My region is a hugely cosmopolitan place. Every single person who lives in my region is a cosmopolitan. I am of course a cosmopolitan; I travel away from my region every few months to make a living. My neighbors do also. There are the Gujarati diamond merchants who spend three weeks out of every four travelling from Africa to Belgium to Holland; flight attendants who fly to Beijing; businessmen who sell textiles in Australia; mechanics and welders and engineers who keep Saudi Arabia running; merchant navy sailors who carry cargo to Brazil; nurses who give care and nurture in Sharjah; and gangsters who shuttle between Bombay and Indonesia and Dubai as part of their everyday trade. But there are many other cosmopolitans in my regions. I mean the men who have left their homes in Muzzafarnagar and Patna to drive cabs in Bombay; the chauffeurs who send money home to Trivandrum; the road-laborers from Madhya Pradesh; the maids from the Konkan coast; the cooks from Sylhet in Bangladesh; the Tamil bakers; the struggling actresses from Ludhiana; the security guards from Bihar; the painters from Nashik who stand on roped lengths of bamboo three hundred feet in the air to color Bombay's lofty skylines. They are all cosmopolitan. A woman born and bred in Dharavi, in the heart of the city, is a

cosmopolitan because she lives and works in this city of many nationalities and languages, this city that has become a *vatan* or homeland for people who have travelled very far from their *vatans*.

Now, in this, my region, it is very very common for a person to speak one language at home, use another on the street, do business in a third, and make love in a fourth. We do it so often and so universally that to do so excites no comment. It is a part of the way we live. Indians have lived in many languages simultaneously for thousands of years. Did the great Sanskrit playwright Kalidasa speak Sanskrit at home? Maybe he did, and maybe he spoke a Prakrit. We'll never know for sure. But we do know for certain that the Bombay poet Kalidas Gupta, whose *takhallus* or nom-de-plume is "Raza", was born in Jullunder, Punjab, in a Punjabi-speaking household. Raza first wrote in Farsi, then in Urdu and English. Raza told me that there are many, many other Urdu poets like him in Bombay, poets like Khawar Bankoti, who speaks Konkani at home, and Abdul Ahad "Saz", who is a native Kutchi speaker. If we look a little further into the subcontinent, we encounter writers like Kaka Saheb Kalelkar, who was a Maharashtrian, but who wrote his travelogues, memoirs, and short stories in Gujarati, and was so ardent about the language he wrote in that the Gujaratis themselves called him "Savai Gujarati", or "One-and-a-quarter-times Gujarati", more Gujarati than the Gujaratis. Vaidyanath Mishra Nagarjuna was born in Bihar, and spoke to his mother in Maithili; he first wrote poetry in Sanskrit, then in Maithili. He won a Sahitya Akademi prize for a Maithili collection, but then switched to writing in Hindi. Raj Kamal Chaudhari was also a Maithili-speaker at home, but wrote his pathbreaking novel about homosexual love, *Ek Machili Mari Hui (One Dead Fish)* in Hindi. Abbas Wasi "Mareez", the hugely famous poet who is widely regarded as the "Ghalib of the Gujarati ghazal", was an Urdu speaker. Rajinder Singh Bedi was from a Punjabi-speaking Sikh household, but he created literary landmarks in Hindi.

I was born into a household that on a census form would undoubtedly be tagged as "Mother Tongue: Hindi". But I called my mother "Mummy" and my father "Daddy". They spoke to me in Hindi sprinkled with English. Sitting on my mother's lap, I read newspapers in English. English was everywhere in the world I grew up in, and continues to be an inextricable thread in the texture of every day I live in Bombay and in India. English is spoken on the playgrounds, and we tell folk tales in it, we riddle each other and joke with each other in it, and we make up nonsense verse and nursery rhymes and films in it. Along with many other languages, it is spoken in the slums, on the busses and in the post offices and the police stations and the court rooms. English has been spoken and written in on the Indian

subcontinent for a few hundred years now, certainly longer than the official and literary Hindi that is our incompletely national language today. I for one hear registers aplenty ringing away in it, and as it is spoken and written more widely, these registers will expand. A language is a living thing. A patois born in soldiers' camps not so long ago became Urdu, whose beauty ravishes our hearts. To love Urdu for her low origins and her high refinements, for her generous heart and her reckless love, is not to give up Punjabi. What a mean economy of love and belonging it must be, in which one love is always traded in for another, in which a heart is so small that it can only contain one *jannat*, one heaven. How fearsome must be this empty land where each new connection must inevitably mean the loss of all roots, all family, each song you may have ever sung in the past. Any ghazal-maker, any Mareez, I think, would flee from such a hellish wasteland. But my region, where Kalidas Gupta Raza continues to sing his passion for Urdu, is different. If Hindi is my mother-tongue, then English has been my father-tongue. I write in English, and I have forgotten nothing, and I have given up nothing. And I know the tastes and quirks and nuances of my regional audience, of the people who live in the locality of Andheri, in the colony of Lokhandwalla, as well as or better than any Bengali poet knows her regional audience.

Every citizen in my region understands the uses of English, and the costs of not having it. Those who have no English understand that certain avenues to power are closed to them, that there are many jobs for which they are instantly considered unfit, that they are closed out of certain discussions, that they are socially marked. English in India today is very obviously the lingua franca of power, of business, of cultural exchange, of politics. It is possible to become powerful and rich and content without English, but to be poor without English is to know that this is the language of opportunity, of money, of advancement. The advantages of having English are grindingly obvious: a journalist who writes a story in, say, Kannada, will know without doubt that a colleague writing exactly the same story, or a lesser one, in English, will be paid three times as much. To not speak English, or even to speak broken English with a strong Tamil or Gujarati accent, is to identify yourself as not belonging to a certain class, as being an obvious non-member of a very powerful club. That is why walls in very small towns are covered with hand-stencilled messages offering "English Coaching Classes". To those who have never had English, who don't have it, the advantages that flow from it are as palpable as the healing effects of amrit, ambrosia, and the struggle to acquire it is frequently lacerating and painful: you can swallow the poisonous metallic mass of this sharp language, but it will cut your throat and linger in the skin like a blue bruise.

For the sins of their advantages, the gods visit upon some of the comfortable in India a powerful guilt. Those who are comfortable and speak English are burdened by a double guilt. Convinced that they are marooned by their comfort and their language, these good burghers are assailed by a constant, oppressive sense of unreality. If you've spent any time in Delhi, or read much Indian critical writing, you will have met the FabIndia-kurta wearing gentleman and the ethnic-bindi wearing lady who will wave their Scotches in your face and tell you that the "Real India" is anywhere but where you are, that the "Real India" is in the urban slums, in the faraway villages of Bihar, in the jungles of the tribals. So if you write in English, and are improperly contaminated by the West, if you've travelled across the Black Waters and lost your caste, then the "Real India" is by definition beyond your grasp. "Real India" is never *here*, it is always *there*. "Real India" is completely unique, incomprehensible to most, approachable only through great and prolonged suffering, and unveils herself only to the very virtuous.

Our friend Jorge Luis never wrestled with this ancient mystery, but he struggled in a comparable fashion with the belief that the "Real Argentina" was so new that it was completely unique. He writes, "According to this singular point of view, we Argentines are as if in the first days of creation; our search for European subject matters and procedures is an illusion, an error; we must understand that we are essentially alone, and cannot play at being European. This opinion strikes me as unfounded. I understand why many people accept it: such a declaration of our solitude, our perdition, and our primitive character has, like existentialism, the charms of poignancy. Many people may accept this opinion because, having done so, they will feel themselves to be alone, disconsolate and, in some way, interesting". I must confess that as I quote him here, I feel a strong onrush of affection for my Argentinian friend; I shall from now on refer to him as "Borges-bhai". "Bhai" is, of course, "brother," but in Bombay it also means a Man of Respect, a Wiseguy, a Made Guy. Borges-bhai, then, in his ever-inimitable fashion, offers a hint that might help us unlock that opposition so beloved of certain literati: the Indo-Anglian writers versus the Regional Writers. If we are *here*, comfortable and Anglicized, then "regional writers" are *there*. If we, as cosmopolitans, wear the colognes of globalization, then "regional writers" give off whiffs of the poignantly original and primitively undiluted perfumes of *there*.

This is why Indo-Anglian writers are told, by critics of various political hues, to be more like their elder "regional" brothers and sisters, and this is why Indo-Anglian writers are forbidden to engage in activities that their "regional" siblings would be "embarrassed" by. Virtue lies in being more like

the virtuous "regional writers". Therefore, Dr. Mukherjee praises *A Suitable Boy*, which, she asserts, "might just as well have been written in Bengali where a tradition exists of long three-decker realistic stories about families". Therefore, the critic Namvar Singh asserts that *Shadow Lines* is a good novel because "it is a Bengali novel in English". Now, it is true that *Suitable Boy* and *Shadow Lines* share elements and tropes and structures with earlier Bengali novels, but I think they're good Indo-Anglian novels because they are good Indian novels in English, books of their time and place and language, not because they're faux Bengali novels, imitating Bankim Chandra and Tagore. To see these books as Bengali novels in English drag requires a muscle-straining skipping around the shape and textures of these narratives, and a mind-bending faith in the untouched and original Indianness of "regional writing". The Indian novel itself is a form that grows out of interactions between Indian and western forms of narrative. Good Indian writers have never been self-isolating, inward-looking mandarins afraid of the pollutions of foreign contact. Bankim Chandra was an avid reader and follower of Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens, and Tagore —whose very name is an Anglicization— was widely despised by his orthodox Bengali contemporaries for his loose Westernized ways and his new-fangled, imported ideas. Indeed, these writers were cosmopolitan in their very Indianness, and this has been true of novelists and artists all over India. Hindi literature, for instance, has had a long and extended conversation with ideas from other parts of the world, and has necessarily struggled with and absorbed everyone and everything from Marx to Freud to modernism to post-modernism. In fact, the critic Jaidev has issued stern diatribes against various Hindi stalwarts, accusing them of indulging in mere "bandarpana", a monkey-see-monkey-do aping of the latest Western intellectual and artistic fads. I cannot help savoring the fact that in order to be able to recognize this bandarpana, Jaidev must himself be a walking, talking perfect model of the postmodern. A similarly delicious irony flows from the damning Bengali-centric praise of Meenakshi Mukherjee and Namvar Singh: if one has written an Indo-Anglian novel that is *exactly* like Bankim Chandra's *Ananda Math*, then one has written a novel that is at least *something* like *Ivanhoe*. Alack! Pollution is everywhere!

The greatest pollution, in this view, flows from the market, from the awesome sums that distort gravity and cause tidal flows of media. In some of the recent agonizing over the Western interest in Indian writing, Indo-Anglian writers have been reconstructed as the hapless tools of a global market. Thus, Dr. Mukherjee asserts that "R. K. Narayan's audience is spread wide and far, within India and outside, hence the need for an even-toned minimalistic representation". What is bizarre about this contention —about this "hence"— is its absolute confidence, its tone of intimate and inside knowledge, its unwillingness to concede the slightest ethical or aesthetic volition to the artist himself. It apparently never occurs to Dr. Mukherjee that style is something that one feels in the pit of the stomach, that Narayan may be interested in a minimalistic representation because it grows from the marrow of his Malgudi bones, that perhaps when Narayan sits down at his desk with his pen and his paper, he is not thinking of his pan-Indian or international audience, not any more than Ernest Hemingway and Raymond Carver were thinking of their audiences in Ghaziabad and Vishakapatnam when they chiselled their laconic turns of phrase. But no, in this understanding of the universe, to write in English is to be transparently vulnerable to the demands of the market, any market. And conversely, to write in anything but English is to be preternaturally chaste and upright.

And yet, and yet. In 1998, the ever-watchful Namvar Singh, along with the Marathi writer G. P. Deshpande, publicly accused the Jnyanpeeth Award-winning and popular Marathi writer V. S. Khandekar of being "commercial and Mammon-hungry". Ranks of other Marathi luminaries lined up to defend Khandekar, and as this developed into a lovely dust-up, the Marathi poet Grace remarked that the Marathi literati had now formed gangs along the lines of Dawood Ibrahim's D-company. The next year, even as the official *sammelan* or convention of Marathi writers spoke out against the rightist, fascist tendencies of our state government, two rival *sammelans* were organized against the official *sammelan*, to protest against the allegedly exclusionary and Brahmanical character of the official *sammelan*. Further north, in Gujarat, almost two decades after the death of Mareez, the Ghalib of Gujarat is still not part of the university curriculum, despite the extraordinary quality of his *ghazals*. Mareez, a Muslim from Surat with a fourth-grade education, was very much from the wrong side of a lot of tracks. A friend of mine describes the efforts by academic poets to keep Mareez out of the Gujarati canon, both before and after his death, as "shameful, disgusting".

Dr. Henry Kissinger, that seasoned academic and grandmaster of realpolitik, warned us that sometimes the most egregious corruption and vicious combat happens when there is precisely no money at stake. To imagine that "regional writers" work in an Eden of innocence, free of the temptation to write badly, free of the pressure to write according to some prevailing ideology, is to indulge in fantasy-making of the most profoundly nostalgic sort, and to indulge in nostalgia for something that has never existed, that never will exist. There will always be a prevailing market and a prevailing ideology, and a head of department who fiercely upholds that

prevailing ideology, a head of department whose cousin owns the press that publishes the books, whose cousin's best friend reviews the books for the Sunday paper, whose cousin's best friend's cousin gives out the government grants and the fellowships to Paris. All art is born at this crossroads of ambition and integrity, between the fierce callings of fame and the hungers of the belly and the desires of one's children and the necessities of art and truth. Michelangelo knew this, and Ghalib knew this. There is no writer in India, or in the world, no artist anywhere who is free of this eternal *chakravyuha*, this whirling circle that is life itself. To have less money does not mean you are more virtuous, to have more money does not mean you are less capable of integrity. Those who believe in the salutary effects of poverty on artists have never been truly hungry, and are suspicious of money from the safety of their own middling comforts. Finally, I suspect, whatever language we write in, we are all equally capable of cowardice and heroism. And I don't mean to cast particular aspersions on Marathi or Gujarati writers, so please, no angry brickbats, at least on this score. In case it makes anyone feel any better, let me state for the record my considered opinion that for sheer incestuousness, for self-serving pomposity, for easy black-and-white moralizing, for comfortably sneering armchair wisdom, for lack of generosity, for pious self-interested victim-mongering, for ponderous seriousness and a priggish distrust of pleasure, there is no group on earth that can match the little subcaste that is the Indo-Anglian literary and critical establishment. I say this with full cognizance of my own somewhat contested membership in said establishment. But, to get back to "regional writing" —if you write in Marathi or Gujarati, of course it is hugely angering to be told that you are not as "strong" as a bunch of toffee-nosed English-speaking brats, and of course it is annoying to enjoy less than your fair share of any pie. But when a certain set of people start referring to you collectively and generally as "regional writers", and when they start locating in you a paranormal connection to reality and lost innocence and original virtue, and using you as a stick to beat other writers over the head with, you may be absolutely certain that you are being simplified, exploited, and used. Saintliness may have its temporary and ethereal satisfactions, but for any artist, it is finally a trap.[4] But why this search for saints? And why this inquisition, this desire to fix and vanquish sin? Why, I wonder, this frantic searching for purity of purpose? I recall, now, E. M. Forster's observation about "reformers who are obsessed with purity and cannot see that their obsession is impure". Perhaps, to extend Forster's notion, the ones who see the anxiety of Indianness everywhere are in truth eaten at by this anxiety themselves, and the ones who battle the malign hand of the West in every action of every day are

completely determined by the West. To be obsessed with defeating the devil is to be his servant.

And the devil is of course within ourselves: the most vociferously anti-Western crusaders I meet are inevitably the ones who are most hybrid. It is these comfortably situated citizens, these Resident Non-Indians, who, beset by a consciousness of their own isolation from "Real India", feel an overpowering nostalgia for an Indianness that never was, for a mythical, paradisaical lost garden of cultural and spiritual unity. From their fear of the mongrel nature of their own selves, from their fear of the new Indian tongues spoken by their mongrel children, grows the golem-demon of the All-devouring West, in whose dread shadow a koel becomes a secret signal of betrayal, and the word "dharma" a fatal compromise. To alleviate this loss, to vanquish this terror, they perform a rather complicated ritual war-dance against the West, or against an idea of the West. The central mystical paradox in this ritual is the absolute necessity of Western recognition, or even any foreign recognition, as an imprimatur of quality, and a simultaneous belief in the corrupting power of such recognition. Indian, in-house awards are all very well, but only an award from somebody in Singapore or London can mark you as a world-class player; but winning such an award also means, without doubt, that you must have sold out, that you've gone far from "Real India". So, "regional writers" are luckily isolated from the dread forces of globalization, their virtue kept intact, and yet the lack of recognition for "regional writers" by those very forces is the wellspring of much anger. So also, the comedy of Pankaj Mishra's review of *Ground Beneath Her Feet* in the magazine *Outlook*. In this review, which felt to me more like an Oedipal assassination attempt than a critique, Mr. Mishra accused Rushdie of being merely a subcontinental importer of narrative methods from other parts of the world, of producing —over an entire career— only a commodified "anti-literature" that the Western market is eager for. And yet, Mr. Mishra's own tag line, the only introduction thought necessary by the magazine, was this single sentence: "Pankaj Mishra's novel *The Romantics*, due to be published next year, has been sold around the world for over half a million dollars". This double movement, this love-hate, may have its origins in the crushing defeats of colonialism, in the Brahmanical obsession with pollution, in the tumbling disillusionments after Independence, in the self-rending narrative of the Indian state during the American century, in the ontological uncertainties of the bourgeois Indian self. Wherever its origins, this complex ambiguity is widely noticeable in India, not just in literature but in politics, in business, in film. And so, curiously, in a culture famously open-ended and various and hybrid, writers and other artists are subjected to tests of Indianness, to

interrogations of authenticity, and their books are rejected or accepted according to these mysterious and arbitrary calculations.

How should a writer work, in these circumstances? What must an Indian artist do? We could of course turn around and ask these self-proclaimed guardians of purity and Indianness exactly how authentic they are themselves. We would speedily discover that when judged by their own rather bizarre standards, these gatekeepers are about as "authentically Indian" as Pamela Anderson. When we hear a sentence that starts, "I am neither trying to privilege ethnographic documentation in fiction over other aspects nor insisting that mimetic representation should always be the desired narrative mode", should we raise our hands and ask, "Sister, how freely and authentically *Indian* a sentence is that, and exactly who are *you* writing for?" Should we point out that all modern Indian institutions, and especially Indian academies of learning, are products of interaction between India and the West? Should we argue that Indian universities are wholly-owned subsidiaries of the huge engine of Western academia, that Indian campuses are off-shore production plants where Indian academics are farm-grown and encouraged to perform what Ashis Nandy has called "gladiator-like acts of ritual defiance"? And when we hear of Indian academics lecturing in Bern, should we be suspicious of titles like "The Local and the Global", and charge the speaker with peddling false oppositions to a rich Western audience? Should we stand up and wave our fists and thunder, "Madam, you have sold us out for Swiss chocolates?"

No, no, no. That way lies madness, or at least quivering insecurity and profound defeatism. So what must we artists do? I was pondering this recently, in Lokhandwalla, in my region, and my mother noticed my furrowed brow, and said, "Vikram, go for a walk". My mother is a wise woman, and so I picked up a proof-copy of "Selected Non-Fictions", by Borges-bhai, to keep me company, and I went for a walk. I walked to the rear of Lokhandwalla, past the power station, along the road that leads into a swamp. I walked further out towards the sea than I usually do, and now I noticed a pathway I'd never seen that angled off from the road. Down this pathway I went, and I walked for a long time. I was lost in thought, and when I came back to myself I saw that I was walking in a great flat wasteland. And then suddenly the ground fell away beneath my feet, and I rolled down a slope, and when I stood up, a quick thrill went jigging up my spine. I knew instantly that I had found, without really looking, the Lost Valley of the Lefties. I knew this was the Lost Valley of the Lefties because there were absolutely no koels in it. Looming over me was Mount Restoration of the Righties, and on their common border the Lefties and

Righties were blasting away at each other. I could hear their war cries. "This is Indian", they were shouting. "That is not Indian". And then again, "That is not pure of intent. This is". As the shells whizzed over my head, I was afraid. I hid under a rock and read Borges-bhai. "I believe that this problem of the Argentine and tradition is simply a contemporary and fleeting version of the eternal problem of determinism", Borges-bhai wrote. "Everything we Argentine writers do felicitously will belong to Argentine tradition, in the same way that the use of Italian subjects belongs to the tradition of England through the work of Chaucer and Shakespeare. I believe, moreover, that all the foregoing discussions of the aims of literary creation are based on the error of supposing that intentions and plans matter much.... Therefore I repeat that we must not be afraid; we must believe that the universe is our birthright and try out every subject; we cannot confine ourselves to what is Argentine in order to be Argentine because either it is our inevitable destiny to be Argentine, in which case we will be Argentine whatever we do, or being Argentine is a mere affectation, a mask. I believe that if we lose ourselves in the voluntary dream called artistic creation, we will be Argentine and we will be, as well, good or adequate writers". So I read Borges-bhai and I was comforted. But now it grew dark and the clamor of the fighting ceased. I emerged from my shelter, and saw a glow in the distance. As I walked towards the flickering light, I saw that the Lefties and Righties were now holding hands, and were moving in circles, and now I could hear the words they were singing: "Be pure in location, be pure in tradition, be pure in audience, be pure in intent". And now I saw that the Lefties and the Righties were dancing around a god, a huge idol who sat on the border between the Lost Valley of the Lefties and Mount Restoration of the Righties. Standing next to this god, I realized that the Lost Valley and Mount Restoration were exactly alike, that they were mirror-images of each other. The god towered over me, gigantic and terrible, and he was double-faced, and looked both ways at once, and he had huge bronze arms, which the Leftie and Rightie priests moved by means of intricate mechanisms. The god's mouths opened and closed, opened and closed, and the arms gathered up offerings and dropped them into his maw. Long processions of Lefties and Righties brought these offerings, and I saw that these offerings were books, and paintings, and sculptures, and poems. The offerings were eaten by the god, and in his belly was a furnace, and the books burned in a roaring flame. I was afraid again, and I cried out, "Who is this terrible god you worship with these living sacrifices?" And the Lefties and Righties answered in one voice, "This is our God of Authenticity. Pay homage or you will suffer".

With Borges-bhai hidden under my shirt I fled from them. As I ran around their god, I heard a voice from his belly. As I looked into the fire, I saw pale blue eyes, a toothbrush of a moustache, and I heard a thousand amplified voices speaking as one, "In art, too, there will be only one guideline for action from now on, and that guideline is a philosophy drawn from a passionate national and state consciousness anchored in the realities of blood and history! Art shall serve the growth and strengthening of this folkish community.... [We] expect not only that materialism, Marxism, and Communism will be politically persecuted, outlawed, and eradicated but also that the spiritual battle ... will also be taken up by the people as a whole and that Bolshevist nonart and nonculture will be doomed to destruction....All products of cosmopolitan or Bolshevist nature will be removed from German museums and collections.... In the future we in this country will not have to look at apartment blocks or churches that look like greenhouses with chimneys or glass boxes on stilts and ... ways will be found to claim restitution from the criminals who grew rich perpetrating such insults against our native culture.... Sculptures that are offensive to the national sensibility and yet still desecrate public squares and parks [will] disappear as quickly as possible, regardless of whether these works were created by geniuses like Lehmbruck or Barlach. They must give way to the scores of artists loyal to the German tradition".[5]

Frightened, I ran to the other aspect of the god, and again I heard loudspeakered voices. In the belly of the god, I saw an avuncular man with a bald head and greenish teeth. Again, amplified voices proclaimed in unison, "New-democratic culture is national. It opposes imperialist oppression and upholds the dignity and independence of the Chinese nation. It belongs to our own nation and bears our own national characteristics... To advocate "wholesale Westernization" is wrong. China has suffered a great deal from the mechanical absorption of foreign material... Chinese culture should have its own form, its own national form. National in form and new-democratic in content —such is our new culture today.... New-democratic culture belongs to the broad masses and is therefore democratic. It should serve the toiling masses.... To attain this objective, written Chinese must be reformed, given the requisite conditions, and our spoken language brought closer to that of the people".[6]

And I was afraid. And then I heard a dry chuckle from inside my shirt, next to my chest, and I realized that Borges-bhai was laughing. I stopped running, and I began to laugh. Loudly I laughed. And in my laughter, I was restored. I shouted the syllable, "Hum", and I was delivered from the Lost

Valley of the Lefties and from Mount Restoration of the Righties. I was back in Lokhandwalla.

Such was my journey into the wilderness, from which I was delivered by the laughter of Borges-bhai. Having made this journey, I must speak now to my own *biradari*, my brothers and sisters who are artists. To them, I say: ignore the commissars, whether they come from the left or the right, up or down, India or abroad. Be wary of their praise, because their hospitality is a prison. They will kidnap the cow of your plenty. Be ruthlessly practical, like the bhais of Bombay, those CCTV-using, Glock-firing, Bholenath-worshipping gangsters. Do whatever it takes to get the job done. Use whatever you need. Swagger confidently through all the world, because it all belongs to you. And don't worry about tradition. Whatever you do felicitously will be Indian. It cannot be otherwise. If Bholenath speaks to you, put him in your painting, or your story. The inevitable fact that some reader in New Jersey will find Bholenath's tiger skin and matted hair "exotic" is wholly irrelevant. To be self-consciously anti-exotic is also to be trapped, to be censored. Be free. Give up nothing, and swallow everything. In your work, don't be afraid of elephants and snakes and mystical India. If repetition and misuse have emptied out an image, a metaphor, a trope, rendered it void of meaning and substance, your job as an artist then is to be wily; you must slide sideways under the metaphor, take it onto your skin and inhabit it, then twist it, mangle it, pervert it, until it becomes your own and therefore comes alive again. You have to repossess what was once yours, what is still yours. To give up a metaphor because someone else has abused it is reflexive stupidity; you are again letting "them" take the initiative, letting them decide what is still yours and what is not. You are giving up ground. India *is* full of elephants and snakes and mysticism, and also cell phones and nuclear weapons and satellites. Give up nothing, and swallow everything. Be fearless, like that suave cosmopolitan M. K. Gandhi, that most international of khiladis, who told us repeatedly that while his political gurus were Gokhale and Ranade and Tilak, his spiritual gurus were Tolstoy and Thoreau and Ruskin, and that he got his non-violence not from the Gita, but from the Sermon on the Mount. Remember that Gandhi's audience was not just Indian, but also everyone else; that all his actions, the spectacle of his revolution and the revolution of his self, were performed simultaneously before a local audience and a global one. He spoke to us, to those he loved, but in speaking to us he was also speaking to all the world, and in speaking to the world he wanted nothing less than to change all of it. Be fearless, speak fearlessly to your readers, wherever they are, and be aware that as you speak, you will inevitably be attacked by some critics for being not Indian

enough, for being too Indian, too Westernized, too exoticized, too rich, for being a foreigner, an agent of the CIA. This is also wholly irrelevant. Do your job. Be kind to other artists, whether they paint in Gujarati or Marathi or English. Be generous. Take care of each other, and give shelter to each other against the depredations of the commissars. Finally, once our personal quarrels are over, what is good for a Gujarati painter is good for an English writer is good for a Marathi poet.

As you work, don't fear the God of Authenticity, for he is a weak god, a fraud, a fake, and —for all his posturing— completely irrelevant. Do your job, and your goddess will protect you and bless you. She is your mashooq, this One who is always absent. You know who she is, this One you follow always, the One who is untidy, elegant, blowsy, impossibly glamorous. She is the goddess Beauty, who has been frozen in liquid oxygen by the party bosses on Mount Restoration of the Righties, who has been declared dead in the Lost Valley of the Lefties. But you know your mashooq, and you can feel her power and her grace, how alive she is. She will always elude you, but you must risk everything for her. At the end of each day of work, the only question she will ask you is, did you write well today? And if you can honestly say, yes, I wrote well today, she will come a little closer to you, and you will sense her presence, and as you caress your mashooq, as she ravishes you with pleasure, you will know how absolutely real she is, this shape-shifting phantom. Then she will flee again. This absence is the only true grace you will ever know, or need. Believe in your mashooq, lose yourself in the dream of Her, and you will be Indian, a good artist or an adequate one, local and global, soft as a rose petal, and as hard as thunder, not this, not that, and everything you need to be. You will be free.

NOTES

[1] Such is the awful majesty of Gibbon that I accepted his assertion about camels unquestioningly, as Borges apparently did also. But an earlier draft of this essay was recently being discussed online, and two friends told me about a posting by a properly skeptical Fatima Hussain. Ms. Hussain searched on online Koran and found no less than eighteen mentions of the unprepossessing camel. So there is local color even in the holy book, and perhaps a sharp moral lesson —especially for writers of essays— about not trusting great authorities, and about the powers of cyberspace.

[2] I'm grateful to my colleague Alf Hiltebeitel for introducing me to this vengeful aspect of the gentle Kamadhenu. Lest Dr. Mukherjee accuse me of alluding to an epic cow who "ordinary people" have no connection with, I hasten to add that not very far from my home in Lokhandwalla is the Kamadhenu Shopping Centre, where ordinary citizens avail themselves of a veritable plenty of electronic goods, computer lessons, make-up salons, chartered accountants, and so on. For reasons of space, I'll leave aside the interesting problem of why Dr. Mukherjee feels that artists must only use allusions that "ordinary people" would understand; and also the problem of exactly who is "ordinary".

[3] The relative numbers are certainly interesting: 31 movies titled "Dharma", and only three called "Kama", and one called "Artha"? Does this truly reflect our national preoccupations, or perhaps only our willingness to talk about certain preoccupations? But that's another essay.

[4] It is certainly true that regional writers don't get enough attention in the national press. They don't even get enough attention in the various regional presses. And they usually make even less money than the average Indo-Anglian writer. But this is a situation that predates the current "boom" in Indo-Anglian writing, that has existed for long decades due to the complex inter-workings of many national and regional factors. But that, too, is another essay.

[5] From a 1933 manifesto, "What German Artists Expect from the New Government", published in *Deutscher Kunstbericht (German Art Report)* by the Fuehrerrat der Vereinigten Deutschen Kunst (Fuehrer's Council of the United German Art and Cultural Associations). Quoted by Sherree Owens Zalampas in her book *Adolf Hitler: A Psychological Interpretation of His Views on Architecture, Art, and Music* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Press, 1990).

[6] From "A National, Scientific And Mass Culture", part XV of *On New Democracy*, by Mao Zedong. Excerpted in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1967. This text worked as a manual for the Red Guards, the shock troops of the Cultural Revolution. In his book, *The Search for Modern China*, Jonathan Spence observes, "Red Guards eager to prove their revolutionary integrity turned on anyone who tried to hold them in check, anyone who had Western education or dealings with Western businessmen or missionaries and all intellectuals who could be charged with "feudal" or "reactionary" modes of thinking. The techniques of public humiliation grew more and more complex and painful as the identified victims were forced to parade through the streets in dunce caps or with self-incriminatory placards around their necks, to declaim their public self-criticism before great jeering crowds and to stand of hours on end with backs agonizingly bent and arms outstretched in what was called "the airplane position". With euphoria, fear, excitement, and tension that gripped the country,

violence grew apace. Thousands of intellectuals and others were beaten to death or died of their injuries. Countless others committed suicide.... Many of the suicides killed themselves only after futile attempts to avoid Red Guard harassment by destroying their own libraries and art collections".

LISTENING TO VIKRAM CHANDRA: "ALL STORIES HAVE IN THEM THE SEED OF ALL OTHER STORIES"[1]

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Working on Vikram Chandra's fictional writing is much more than an academic experience. For me, he is not only an author to read and admire. He has become a daily presence, a real person that I can reach, somebody to talk to. Thus, the purpose of these pages is to go on engaging in a dialogue with him, listening to his own voice. Vikram Chandra spends his time shuttling between Bombay, where he writes, and Washington, DC, where he teaches creative writing at George Washington University. Born in New Delhi in 1961, he was educated both in India and America. He completed most of his secondary education at Mayo College, a boarding school in Ajmer, Rajasthan, a desert state in the north-west of India, and traditional home of the Rajput warrior clans. After that, he stayed some time at St. Xavier's College in Bombay, and finally went to the United States. Vikram graduated from Pomona College (California) in 1984, concentrating on creative writing. Later, he attended the Film School at Columbia University in New York. There, in the Columbia library, by chance, he found the autobiography of Colonel James "Sikander" Skinner, a legendary nineteenth-century soldier, half-Indian and half-British. In a way, this became the inspiration for Vikram's first book, the novel *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*. Reading the English translation of Sikander's autobiography, originally written in Urdu, Vikram began to consider "the large interpolations and excisions made by the translator.[2] I thought, then, about language, about speaking in alien tongues, and being made to speak in someone else's voice, and about history and memory and the preservation of the past" (personal communication, 17th September 1999).

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At that moment, Vikram left school to start exploring and working on the novel, which was written over six years, at the writing programs at Johns Hopkins University and the University of Houston. The author obtained an MA at Johns Hopkins, where he worked with John Barth, and an MFA at the University of Houston, with Donald Barthelme. While writing *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*, Vikram taught literature and writing, and also worked independently as a computer programmer and software and hardware consultant. His clients included oil companies, non-profit organizations, and the zoo of Houston. Finally, *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* was published in 1995, by Penguin/ India in India, Faber and Faber in the United Kingdom, and Little, Brown in the United States. The book was received with great critical acclaim, and in 1996 it won the David Higham Prize for Fiction and the Commonwealth Writers Prize for the Best First Published Book. Essentially, oral storytelling is the heart of *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*. In this text we find a nineteenth-century epic story intermingled with a contemporary road trip across the United States, from California to Texas. One of the main narrators is Abhay, restless and confused, alienated both in USA, where he studies anthropology, and India, where his parents live, where his memories are. The other principal storyteller, Sanjay, is a nineteenth-century Indo-Anglian poet now reincarnated as a monkey. He will only stay alive if he can entertain an audience with his storytelling, that constantly entwines with that of Abhay. Both storytellers share the hybrid condition of their identities. Chandra's multifaceted book develops as a knot of stories, a literary zapping, a huge tapestry, a spiralling quest. Diverse narrative frames construct the whole texture, by means of different first-person discourses that create a kaleidoscopic interacting of past and present, from the battlefields of the British Raj to the freeways of contemporary United States.

Chandra's second delivery, *Love and Longing in Bombay*, a collection of short stories, appeared in 1997, edited by the same publishing houses. Two of the stories had been formerly published in the *Paris Review* and *The New Yorker*. Indeed, in 1995 the story "Dharma" was awarded the Discovery Prize by the *Paris Review*. *Love and Longing in Bombay* obtained the Commonwealth Prize for the Best Book for the Eurasian Region in 1998. As in Vikram's first work, the five stories gathered here are linked by a powerful oral storytelling frame. In a smoky Bombay bar, Subramaniam, the storyteller, is able to captivate the book's main narrator, Ranjit. This young man, as Abhay in *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*, evolves from his initial skepticism towards a deep appreciation of the storytelling rite. As the title indicates, all the stories speak about love, longing and Bombay. In fact, the city itself becomes one of the main characters throughout the whole

collection. Bombay is depicted as the modern city it is, with its traditions, contradictions, differences, great passions and mysteries.

At the moment, Vikram Chandra is working on his third book, a new novel, a detective story set in Bombay. As a sort of foretaste, in a special issue of *The New Yorker* (June 23 and 30, 1997) he has already published "Eternal Don", which will be the first chapter of this new work. Furthermore, he does not forget one of his beloved projects: writing a film script. Indeed, cinema is a very familiar world to Vikram, who comes from a filmmaking family of producers, directors and script-writers. The deep influence of his mother's passion for writing can be clearly seen in his work. About her, Kamna Chandra, a successful screenplay writer for Indian cinema, Vikram states that he cannot remember a time when she was not creating.

Apart from writing, teaching and lecturing, Vikram Chandra carries out many other activities that echo his ideas about the creative process. In 1998, together with the literary agent Jenny Bent, he set up a living forum in Washington DC, named *Adda*. This Hindi word could be translated in many different ways, the most important being stand or base, meeting place, or resort. Local writers, published or not, gather at this literary space on the first Tuesday of each month, at U Street's Chi-Cha Lounge. However, the origins of *Adda*, chiefly designed to foster interaction and conversation between artist and audience, should be traced back to Bombay. There, in July 1997, Vikram created a first *Adda* with his filmmaker friend Anuradha Tandon, who runs it now.

Step by step, Vikram is being recognized as one of the leading voices of Indian literatures in English. Favourable reviews and international awards praise his creation, which is beginning to be included within undergraduate and postgraduate literature programs at different universities around the world.

Without a doubt, the Indian oral tradition of storytelling is the matrix of Vikram Chandra's narrative project, both living and fictional. Stylistically charming, Vikram is a virtuoso creator of vivid descriptions that enliven smells, tastes, thoughts, feelings, that show how voices sound, how silences appear.... In spite of the technical complexity of framing interconnected stories, his prose carefully introduces the reader into a calm, flashing, yet ever-changing narrative flow, constantly showing an ongoing dialogue between tradition and modernity. Hopefully, certain traditions survive in our paradoxical (post)modern times, and Vikram's fiction helps to restore memory to its true abode.

IN CONVERSATION WITH VIKRAM CHANDRA[3]

DS. Let's start with a big question. What role do you think literature plays nowadays, in a world in constant transition and change at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

CHANDRA. Well, much has been made in recent times of the "death of the novel." And yet, we are also told that more novels, more fictions are being published now than ever before in the history of the human race. So literature is still very much alive, as a living presence in the lives of ordinary people. What has happened, certainly, is that the novel has been moved aside from a kind of cultural centrality, from its occupation of a space that has been now taken over by film and television and, lately, perhaps the Internet. If one reads accounts, for instance, of novel-reading in nineteenth century England, one sees that the novel, which is itself a kind of technology, had an immense glamour, an all-encompassing power. Lending libraries were chic places, the rich and powerful competed to read the latest novels first, and the guardians of public morality and order preached angry sermons against the hugely destructive effects of novel-reading. So, other technologies are now understood to have that kind of transforming power. But it's clear that the birth of a new technology doesn't necessarily kill other technologies. Television should have killed radio, but it didn't. Centres and peripheries shift and dissolve, but much remains alive that is supposed to be already dead. And reading is still very much alive, and so is writing.

DS. Reading your books, it seems clear that you consider stories as living entities, and writing as a communicative and dynamic process. Though definitions are always difficult, how would you tell us what literature is and means for you?

CHANDRA. "Literature" is a big word, isn't it? And one that raises a lot of questions and hackles. Let's talk about stories and story-telling instead. That I can be very clear about: stories are life. We are narrative beings, compelled to tell stories, and listen to them, and live through them and inside them. We are human because of stories, and we are trapped in stories. I cannot imagine a life without listening to a story, or a day of not telling one. To tell a story to someone is to change their insides, and it also means that you need them. To be a storyteller is to be most powerful, and also powerless.

DS. How would you say that the big publishing houses influence a young writer? Have you felt any limit or restriction of any kind?

CHANDRA. I suppose one could argue in rather generalized terms that the big corporate houses set an agenda, etcetera, etcetera. Certain academics often claim to be able to identify the workings of this invisible, all-consuming agenda in specific works of fiction. I'm somewhat resistant to this kind of claim, because it's often made in a very very vague, unsupported fashion, and it removes all volition and intention from the artist. The art becomes just the working-out of these mysterious movements of language and commerce. The interaction between individual writers and this notion of what publishing houses want is of course a much more complicated one. I suppose if you were worrying about it as you wrote, it might be very destructive to the narrative you are trying to construct. When I was writing my first book, I had no idea of whether it would ever be published, or who would publish it, or when. I had an urgent need to write out this story, and I did. That somebody wanted to publish it was very pleasing, but it wasn't something that I knew for certain, or depended upon. In fact, I wrote this novel within an American creative writing program, as a thesis for my Master's degree. At my thesis defense, one of the professors on the committee, an American fiction writer herself, laughed and said, "Well, you've written a big book. Good luck with ever getting it published." The possibility that it would get published looked pretty bleak, then. In general, I think young writers have to do what young artists have always done: know what you are doing, and why, and defend your voice and preserve it. It is a good thing to be published and read, but you have to decide exactly what you are willing to do for this, how much of yourself and your work you are willing to risk.

DS. Are you aware of the market when you write? Have you a particular audience in mind?

CHANDRA. I do have a very particular audience in my mind when I write. I write for a few people I love: my sisters, my mother, and a couple of friends. These people read my manuscript as I work on it, page by page. So they are the audience I am telling the story to, these well-known and well-

loved faces. Just as in my previous two books, in which the storytellers have had an audience, a group of people they tell the stories to. As for the market, I have no idea how to imagine a market. How do you imagine this huge, anonymous, faceless audience? How do you write to them? I really have no idea.

DS. Neither do I, indeed. But, how do you feel being a successful author? What are the rewards and difficulties of being read across different countries and cultures? Do you feel a privileged person?

CHANDRA. Well, being a successful author, whatever the degree of one's success, is a lot better than being a struggling or unsuccessful author. For one thing, you're not worried about where the next rent cheque is going to come from. Which, in my very firm opinion, makes for better work, better art. It is of course very strange to imagine that something that was once inside your head is now an object being read and being imagined into by people on the other side of the globe. It's certainly very pleasurable and flattering, but I don't think —at least for me— that this knowledge enters into a very intimate dialogue with the actual making of the work. As I said, I imagine a very small audience, of people I know well. That other people outside this small circle want to read your work is amazing and wonderful, but I can't imagine them. I can't see them. In *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*, the narrator-monkey tells a story to his adopted family, inside a small room. The pages he types are then passed outside to a much larger audience on the maidan. This larger audience, that stretches away to the horizon, is an unknowable beast. What they do with the stories you tell is also unknowable, unpredictable, and very often, completely surprising. And yes, I do feel very privileged. I make a living doing something I love. That's something quite rare in the world.

DS. Do you consider the study of Indian literatures by Western readers as positive or do you have reservations regarding academic readings and labels such as "post-colonial literatures"? In any case, you know that I would rather speak about narrative transculturation.

CHANDRA. Oh, I think everyone should study Indian literatures. Of course there will be readings I love and some readings I hate. But that's the way of all readings. To feel perpetually threatened and to be perpetually defensive is silly. I think we're complicated enough and strong enough and old enough to withstand a lot of readings. That said, it seems to me that the "post-colonial" reading is sometimes used in a reductive way. Modern Indian literatures come after thousands of years of other histories, as well. Colonialism was one event among many, a late one that itself was post-Mughal, post-Vedic, post-everything-else. All those complexities hum through the literatures, and the culture.

DS. Where do you get your inspiration from? Or what happens to personal experience in your hands to make it grow into a story?

CHANDRA. That's a hard question to respond to in a really coherent fashion. I usually start with an image, a fragment of sound and smell. If I pay enough attention to this persistent image, it starts to reveal itself to me, starts to become more complicated and interesting. A story then unreels out of it. I usually have a strong sense of the general direction of where the narrative is going, but not a specific outline of the plot. That reveals itself as I write. I sometimes recognize, as I write, little bits of information or ideas or incidents or people that I have observed in the world. But they are usually quite transformed, mixed up together and changed quite considerably. There's no one-to-one correspondence between fiction and reality.

DS. You really appreciate audience's responses and feedback, mainly because you define yourself as a storyteller, not as a writer in the traditional sense. Indeed, the narrating act and the transmission-reception process is staged in your works. I believe that this identification subsumes a relevant ontological difference in your view of what literature is, what an author is, and how the interaction between author and audience is meant to be. Comment?

CHANDRA. Perhaps, under the glossy celebrity skin of every author is a dusty old storyteller. That primal desire to tell somebody "Once upon a time" is where all authorship comes from. In our time especially, the relationship between "autor" and "audience" is complicated by modern methods of mass production, by the whole structure of industry and packaging and consumption. One might feel the impulse to retreat from this whole spectacle, into the interiorly-directed world of the author, to one's country villa where one composes perfect lyric gems. And yet, even the most reclusive of authors has an ideal listener inside his or her head, this loved one

you caress with your poem. Maybe you find this reader in the world, maybe not. But you speak to this reader anyway. The danger of course is that the pressure to speak to that huge mass audience —which may be internally created or externally— this pressure may cause you to lose sight of that ideal reader. I'm interested in the reactions of individual readers to my work, because in those interactions there is the movement of a story, an erotic exchange. But I'm not so interested in the reactions of some imagined, collective "they".

DS. When I asked you two years ago about which literature had influenced you most, you named first and above all the traditional Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Also Indian authors such as R. K. Narayan, Khushwant Singh, Anita Desai and Salman Rushdie; Victorians including Trollope and Thackeray, and Americans, namely Fitzgerald, Hemingway and the noir writers. From this heterogeneous and intercultural "family", I know that you feel emotionally attached to the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, their great poets, Valmiki and Vyasa, and the way in which narratives entwine. Could we say that these epics, together with Indian cinema, are the deepest references for your fiction?

CHANDRA. Yes, I think that's right. That's quite a mixing of high and low, isn't it? I suppose that's another kind of border area that I'm interested in, another kind of crossing. There's a tremendous energy I feel in the intertwining of these contradictory connections, that I draw upon in my work and my life.

DS. Traditionally, Indians who wanted to study abroad went to the United Kingdom. However, now there seems to be a shift towards the United States. I'm thinking about contemporary Indian authors settled there, namely you, Vikram Seth, Bharati Mukherjee, or Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, among others. Can you comment on this? Do you feel related to them? Could we speak of any sort of group or generation, or are you creative voices that only share a birthplace called India?

CHANDRA. This shift would be obviously part of the larger cultural movement towards the United States, in the age of the American empire. It's inevitable that people would be drawn towards New York, which is the new centre of the world, as London once used to be. And it's also inevitable that

people will also resist New York, in the way that London was resisted. I know some of these writers you've named, and share a cultural kinship with them, and a certain commonality of culture and class and location, we're mainly urban, English-speaking, middle or upper-class. I don't think there's really an ideological grouping, or an aesthetic drawing up of ranks, which I'm rather grateful for. People are doing a lot of interesting work in different modes. I have friendships with artists in Bombay and elsewhere, in various disciplines, and those relationships are nourishing to me. These people, these friends aren't necessarily writers.

DS. In *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* you introduce the experiences of a young Indian educated in America: Abhay, who studies anthropology in the United States. All in all, I would not speak about exile, but about a constant travel or migrancy, a permanent liminality, being in both places at the same time. Regarding the cultural and emotional problems of borders, cross-cultural or transcultural identities and living experiences could be really tragic, as it is revealed at some points in *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*. But nowadays multiculturalism defines most of our societies, and migrancy is something we live with, day after day. Intercultural communication is something we need to face and creative writing can be a bridge towards the understanding of differences. In this sense, once you told me that Indian identity is like a knot of stories, their knottiness is enhanced and they become something. Indeed, transcultural identities are mixture, addition, multiplicity of interspersed threads, twist, exchange, dialogue between cultures. But, they are also loss, somehow. Memory is endless, but is it powerful enough? Do you feel you have lost anything on the way?

CHANDRA. Travel, journeys, and "multiculturalism" have always been with us, I think. We tend to think of these trends as uniquely modern, and look with nostalgia at a past in which we imagine people to have stable cultural and psychological identities. We tend to exaggerate the arcadian, unchanging stability of a medieval and ancient world that was actually very tumultuous, full of encounters that were at least analogous to ours. The story of *homo sapiens* is a story of movement, of change, from that very first trek out of Africa. What we become is a result of what we carry within us and its interaction with what is outside. The contours of your body and your self are memory itself. Of course, in these changes, many of which are forced on us, there is tremendous pain, sometimes damage, loss, suffering, death. There are stories which will no longer be told, and that is a tremendous loss. But to be

frightened into only clinging to these stories, and refusing the ones that might be forming, that are in themselves memory and more than memory, that are action, that is also a great loss.

DS. In *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* we can observe East and West communication and dialectics, whereas *Love and Longing in Bombay* depicts this city's many hues. The novel you're writing right now also features life in Bombay. This being so, Abhay's homecoming in *Red Earth...* seems to be a statement that finds its continuity in your later narrative. In a recent article, Rachel Dwyer (1998) discusses the novels of the Indian author Shobha Dé, drawing attention to their lack of interest in the West and their featuring of popular culture (chiefly cinema) in the novel. In relation to this, I consider that your own fiction is moving towards a transcendence of the "writing back" paradigm widely posed by post-colonial theory and criticism. I would rather relate your storytelling to Homi Bhabha's powerful rethinking of cultural identity in *The Location of Culture* (1994), where he explains his contentions about cultural hybridity, going beyond the politics of polarity between East and West, enhancing the spaces in between. Moreover, you have chosen to write in English, following a path that began with Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), who amazingly seems to be fictionalized in *Red Earth and Pouring Rain.* However, assuming that English is used in a differential way, your prose contains many untranslated indigenous terms, and its texture shows a spirallic flow coming from diverse Indian languages. In *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*, Sorkar, one of the nineteenth-century characters, forced to learn the English language, uses a sharp metaphor in order to describe his learning process: "from a foreign jungle I have made it mine own garden". Would you say, with the Indian poet Kamala Das, that the important thing is not the language one employs, but the thought contained in the words?

CHANDRA. Oh, I do think that language matters tremendously. The deep structures of a language, its words, its syntax, its arrangements, all these things form the world that the speaker and listener experience. But a language is a living thing, constantly in interaction with its surroundings, with other languages. So the English I've grown up within, that I partially live inside now, is an English that has cohabited with the Indian landscape and Indian languages for hundreds of years now. It is a language that is very different from what might have been spoken in London three centuries ago. The world that it makes is my world, and that world is as Indian as any Gujarati or Punjabi landscape.

DS. Regarding multi-lingualism, multi-culturalism and creative writing, I remember how the Puerto Rican author Rosario Ferré, who has written in English part of her work, has underlined the fact that, above all, Spanish is the language of her dreams, while writing in English remains for her a cultural translation. Which is the language of your dreams, Vikram?

CHANDRA. It's a hearty, rich mixture of Hindi and English and Punjabi and all the other languages that are spoken on the streets of Bombay.

DS. Reading *Read Earth and Pouring Rain*, we would say that at some points there is an ironic gaze concerning history and chance. Moreover, it seems that you prefer to account for history and reconstructions of the past by means of personal (hi)stories. Do you think that literature can heal big historical wounds somehow?

CHANDRA. As many writers have done with fiction, I like imagining a version of history that is an alternative to official and semi-official narratives. The substance and pleasure of doing this is a certain complexity you might open up, a tracing of the network of connections that make an event, a history. If your readers understand and engage with this complexity that you are positing, their understanding of this history may change. Certainly they may experience what one could call "healing," although I'm reluctant to assert that the first task of literature is to apply bandages to old wounds. One should also remember that various kinds of fictions, that are literary and otherwise novels, but also news reports, songs, cartoons, films, all of these narratives can be used also as weapons. Political mass murderers, for instance, always have a historical narrative, a history, that justifies their actions. Literature can cause wounds as well as heal them.

DS. The storytelling form and structure of *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* and *Love and Longing in Bombay* show an overt concern with time, space, memory and voice. At the same time, thematically, love is a central axis for both works. Would you say that these outlines define your narrative project as a whole?

CHANDRA. Yes, I think that's an interesting insight, one that didn't occur to me except in retrospect, that at the centre of the stories there is this unquenchable longing for love, and always the risky exercise of the ability to love. I suppose that's not so surprising really, since one might argue that this longing is the first and last human impulse.

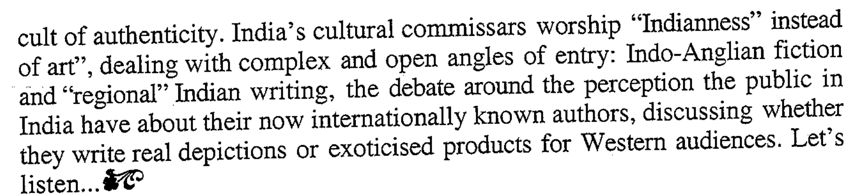
DS. The idea that storytelling will never end is clearly put forward in your narrative. In *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* diverse forces of religious and political fights try to silence the storytelling circle, though they fortunately fail. Above all, Abhay has learnt Sanjay's vital lesson. A lesson that Subramaniam passes on to Ranjit in *Love and Longing in Bombay*. Do you mean that literature is an aesthetic socio-cultural discourse that goes beyond any kind of restriction?

CHANDRA. Yes. But also that in a more basic sense, human beings cannot exist without stories, that we exist only through stories. And to paraphrase what a critic said about *Love and Longing in Bombay*, that we can only know ourselves through the stories of others.

DS. Finally, could you let us know anything about the work in process of the book you're writing at the moment? "Eternal Don" is promising to grow into a detective novel where storytelling finds new and surprising paths.

CHANDRA. The novel starts in Bombay, in an encounter between a Bombay police inspector and a gang boss, a Don. So, the story starts in the world of cops and organized crime, in that deadly terrain. But the narrative then moves outside of Bombay, and engages with larger cultural and political forces. It's becoming a much larger book than I had originally thought it was, both in size and conception. Which makes it very pleasurable and very terrifying to be in the middle of writing it. When something grows like that, you know it's alive. But you also don't know where it's taking you. It's another one of those long journeys into the unknown, full of its own rewards and risks.

DS. Well, Vikram, thank you very much for sharing your feelings and thoughts so generously. Now we are going to "listen" to your essay, "The



cult of authenticity. India's cultural commissars worship "Indianness" instead of art", dealing with complex and open angles of entry: Indo-Anglian fiction and "regional" Indian writing, the debate around the perception the public in India have about their now internationally known authors, discussing whether they write real depictions or exoticised products for Western audiences. Let's listen...

NOTES

[1] I would like to express all my gratitude to Vikram Chandra, for the patience and friendship. My research has been financed by the Generalitat Valenciana. FPI00-07-210.

[2] This is a question that has been studied in depth by the so-called "Manipulation school" in the field of translation studies. See, for instance, Lefevere (1992).

[3] This interview has been carried out via e-mail.

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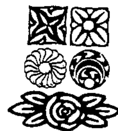

John Pier, ed.

RECENT TRENDS IN NARRATOLOGICAL RESEARCH: PAPERS FROM THE NARRATOLOGY ROUND TABLE/ ESSE4- SEPTEMBER 1997- DEBRECEN, HUNGARY/ AND OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS.

(GRAAT - Groupe de Recherches Anglo-Américaines de Tours, 21). Tours: Groupes de Recherches Anglo-Américaines de l'Université François Rabelais de Tours, 1999.
227 pp.

The contributions to this volume by Dieter Meindl, Gordon Collier, Elizabeth Deed Ermath, Jon-K Adams and John Pier originated as papers presented to the ESSE narratology panel (Debrecen, 1997) convened by Monika Fludernik, whose paper is also included. There are additional contributions by Martin Löschnigg, Ansgar F. Nünning, Pierre Gault (a good paper), Manfred Jahn (one of the best) and Uri Margolin (the best). All the articles are readable and interesting enough in the questions they address, although was often the case that the answers which suggested themselves to me as I read differed from the answers proposed by the authors. As the editor John Pier makes clear in the introduction, narratological theories are by nature given to model-building, and model-builders will certainly find much to engage their attention in this volume. The models proposed here tend to be local ones, addressing a given problem of literary expression or a particular genre. Indeed, several papers suffer in my opinion from the lack of a comprehensive theoretical framework for the pragmatics of narrative, of the overall phenomenological structure of narrative and of the general discursive processes involved in narrative. Such is the case with John Pier's paper on the dimensions of space in the narrative text: the term "space" is used in various senses (some of them literal and some metaphorical) which do not exhaust the possible dimensions of the analysis of space that might emerge from a more fully worked-out semiotic model of narrative. The models most authors in this volume propose remain likewise too narrowly conceptualized.

Take, for instance, the discussion in Dieter Meindl, "A Model of Narrative Discourse along Pronominal Lines", abounding in unwarranted generalisations. For example, "In structural terms, every character speech in third-person narrative is a first-person narrative *in nuce,* provided the characters make statements about their reality (identical realms of existence of

the enunciator and the enunciated) rather than narrating a fiction" (1999: 21). There is, obviously enough, a partial truth contained in this sentence, but the *caput mortuum* dwindles the closer we look into it. What if the character speaks "in the third-person" about another character, not h(er/im)self? What if the speech is an order, or a description, or any type of non-narrative speech act? Doesn't this happen in first-person narrative as well?— etc. This kind of imprecision plagues the writing of several contributors. That is, the individual sentences work reasonably well in the context of the argument, but quite often they cannot be relied on for overall conceptual accuracy. Meindl's paper draws on Benveniste's and Hamburger's theories, which emphasize the contrast between first person and third person narrative modes. One of the main points of the paper is that "first-person narrative invites us to entertain the notion of the (un-)reliability of the enunciating subject, a fictional character". Meindl uses two pairs of oppositions (particularization/generalization and concretization/ abstraction) to define four narrative movements: comment, scene, report and metaphor. These modes figure "as theoretical reference points that narrative discourse can in practice only approach, but never reach" (18). Meindl then defines the concept of "transposition" of pronominal reference (narratorial "I", narrateerial [my coinage, please do not blame Meindl for this!] "you") to another frame of reference, or another level, understood in Genette or Bal's terms. That there are many useful elements in the model proposed can easily be granted. But the notion of level is too mechanically conceived, since for instance the fictional editors in *Gulliver's Travels* or *Lolita* are considered to introduce additional frames of reference; the specific discourse acts "editing" or "writing a preface", not to speak of their fictional modalities, are shoehorned into the categories provided by a theory based on verbal enunciation. The analysis of free indirect discourse often rests here exclusively on the pronominal frame of reference, obscuring other important issues which transcend the model being proposed, such as the narrator's evaluation and attitude. An excessive aprioristic reliance on the (supposed) potentialities of the pronouns informs much of Meindl's approach, often resulting in sweeping generalisations. Thus, on the matter of second-person narration, Meindl holds that "the reader, confronted with one character addressing another or the self as "you" and thereby providing a story, finds it easier to conceive of the addressor as thinking than as speaking". But the addresser may well be writing, and the issue may well be clear to the reader beforehand by the use of a letter as a motivating device. Genette's classification of narrators and his differentiation between voice and perspective also come in for some criticism, which for the most part I think unjustified.

Martin Löschnigg ("Narratological Categories and the [Non-]distinction between Factual and Fictional Narratives") draws special attention to the applicability of discourse-level narratological categories (time, mode, and voice) to the analysis of historical texts. Formalism here surfaces in the question "whether we can identify discursive criteria to distinguish between fictional and factual narratives" (35). Surely those criteria should be established not at the intratextual level, but in the discourse protocols which regulate the production and use of fiction and of non-fiction —if our theory of discourse is aware of the actual circumstances and uses of speech events and of the disciplinary constraints on discourse, the distinction between factual and fictional is a given, not a problem to be solved by stylistic analysis. It may become a pseudo-problem if we try to solve it on purely formalist or structural terms. (Structural in the narrow sense, that is —personally I am in favour of a wider interpretation of "structuralism", one which does not favour structure at the cost of neglecting context and process, and which takes into account the social system of communication as well as of interpretation, not merely what we usually understand as the "structural" characteristics of texts, defined within a formalist paradigm).[1] Löschnigg explores some differences in the application of time, mode and voice. In time, "different patterns are very likely to emerge" in fiction and nonfiction, although any given temporal structure may appear in fiction as well as in historiography. His analysis of mode abounds in too sweeping generalizations, following Hamburger's dichotomy of an ontological difference between first-person and third-person narratives, and ascribing to linguistic structures (and necessity) what is a matter of traditions or conventions (and convenience). A quotation he draws from *Northanger Abbey* is self-defeating: "... a great deal of [history] must be invention. The speeches that are put into the heroes' mouths, their thoughts and designs —the chief of this must be invention" (quoted in Löschnigg, 39). For Löschnigg, this shows that Jane Austen already knew "that the presentation of a character's thoughts and feelings can serve as a criterion to distinguish between factual and fictional discourse". But surely it shows, too, that so-called "fictional" discourse and its modes pervade the supposedly "factual" genre of history so that quite often we will be hard put to tell between fact and fiction in history (as Ricœur has shown, factual/ fictional does not equal truthful/ untruthful). Then Löschnigg abandons description and becomes prescriptive when he argues that "a historian's account of a person's inner life should either be accompanied by a 'perhaps' or a 'maybe' or, when there is reason for more conclusive conjectures, a 'he/she must have thought'", and should reserve free indirect discourse for the "sole grammatical locus" reserved to it by Hamburger, namely "narrative literature" —which

leaves one wondering whether Lytton Strachey's biographies, which are being chided here as insufficiently scrupulous in their use of f.i.d., are not "narrative literature". In sum, Löschnigg's claim that focalization presents "a decisive criterion in such a distinction" (i.e. fiction vs. nonfiction) seems unwarranted. As to the analysis of "voice", Löschnigg joins Genette (and Nünning, see below) as one of those who think one can do away with "that eminently superfluous category, the 'implied author'" —as if one did not need this concept and all of the refinements and sub-divisions one can think of in order to account for actual narrative communication. A review is not the appropriate context for the refutation of such notions.[2] Any informed reader will immediately grasp that authors do manipulate their self-image, and that any belief that a textual image of the author is "the author" *tout court* is naive. In order to theorise criticism which addresses these problems in illuminating ways, such as Maurice Couturier's *La Figure de l'auteur* or Michael Wood's *The Magician's Doubts: Nabokov and the Risks of Fiction*, we need authors, implied authors, unreliable authors, implied narrators and more things than are dreamt of in many a narratological model. The conclusion that "voice (...) does not necessarily become distinctive on the level of discourse" is unsatisfactory, since it leaves out of the level of "discourse" the very heart of the matter, the author's use of literary discourse. One cannot but agree with Löschnigg that narratology should address the question of the difference between fiction and nonfiction, and contribute to its theorisation; but in order to do that we need a more comprehensive narratology than the Genette/ Hamburger models favoured by Löschnigg.

In "Story Modalised, or the Grammar of Virtuality", Uri Margolin contributes much of the material also published as "Of What Is Past, Is Passing, or to Come: Temporality, Aspectuality, Modality, and the Nature of Literary Narrative" in David Herman's volume on *Narratologies* (a highly recommendable book for narratologists, incidentally). Basically, Margolin deals with areas of "non-factivity" in literary narrative (the disnarrated, counterfactuals, hypothetical inferences, possibilities not actualised, etc.), as they occur in present-tense, past-tense or future-tense narratives, as well as some speculations on the possible reasons for the growth of non-factual narrative in contemporary fiction. He leaves largely out of consideration, though, the major non-factual phenomenon, namely fictionality itself, as he brackets the problem of truth within the narrated world —what is factual or nonfactual for the narrating voice. Margolin might also want to consider a more complex classification of narrating time, one which took into account the author's time, and not just the narrator's. Nonetheless, the analysis is often illuminating and especially fruitful in approaching contemporary

metafictions and experimental novels. Students in a postgraduate seminar where I used both papers by Margolin as set texts thought them useful, suggestive and readily applicable for analytical purposes. We also discussed in the seminar Jon-K Adams's paper, "Order and Narrative", and found there both interesting observations and muddled general notions. Adams addresses the cognitive structure of anachronies, and points out that narrative does not aim to establish an absolute chronology of all events, since many temporal relations between the anachronical segments will be left indeterminate as they are not cognitively relevant. Some good points in Adams's paper are marred by a confusing discussion of the way plot is "destroyed" if we restore chronological order (which any reading must do, we might argue, and that in order to *construct* plot).

Ansgar Nünning's paper suggests "Reconceptualizing the Theory and Generic Scope of Unreliable Narration". We should avoid postulating "anthropomorphized" entities such as the implied author or the unreliable narrator, and reinterpret unreliable narration in the context of frame theory, as an interpretive strategy used by the reader (a definition which does not account for the use of unreliable narrators as a deliberate strategy on the part of the author). One wonders how the process of constructing textual characters could avoid a measure of "anthropomorphization", since it is human communication we are dealing with here, and any narrator, whether he is an "anthropomorphic" character or not, derives in the last analysis from the model of a human speaker. Nünning suggests, furthermore, that "the implied author's norms are impossible to establish and that the concept of the implied author is dispensable". Here I can only refer the reader to Wayne Booth's works on the subject, and recall that reading narrative fiction consists to a large extent in establishing those norms; any given construction will be open to critical debate, but reading without establishing them amounts to reading only superficial linguistic aspects of the text, not the coherent narrative discourse of literature. Of course Nünning's critique is based on a basic misunderstanding of the notion of the implied author. The implied author is supposedly "voiceless"! One wonders to whom we should attribute then the overall act of discourse of "writing a novel" or "a play". "To the real author", Nünning would no doubt answer, but "implied author" is a way of saying "real author as inferred from the work". The ghostly and voiceless implied author attacked by Nünning is a man of straw, a figment of the mind of critics who like him oppose the notion of implied author "which is ill-defined" —as is the case here— "and potentially misleading" —but then anything is potentially misleading if you are easily misled. As to the unreliable narrator, a careful reading of Nünning's third paragraph on page 69

shows that he does not understand this notion. A discrepancy between a narrator's view and the reader's grasping of the state of affairs seems to him a sufficient definition of unreliability —this would make Homeric or Miltonic narration unreliable to me, for instance, since my values are at odds with the narrator's. In this paragraph Nünning is unable to differentiate unreliability from mere ideological discrepancy, and no wonder, as he has jettisoned the overall values of the work, as distinct from the narrator's, as a relevant third set of values. Note however that the overall set of values of the work resurfaces in the following paragraph (p. 69, par. 4) —a muddle, once again. As Nünning says, the limitations of his question "Unreliable, compared to what?" "can be summed up in one brief sentence": "unreliable, not compared to the implied author's norms and values, but to the reader's or critic's preexisting conceptual knowledge of the world and to his or her (usually unacknowledged) frames of reference" (p. 81; sic). For Nünning, the term "unreliable narrator" is not "structural", but "pragmatic" (p. 74), a definition which shows that Nünning does not contemplate the structure of a work as incorporating pragmatic elements —*represented* pragmatic protocols which are therefore structural. The application of interpretive frame theory can indeed result in a more adequate definition of the notions of "implied author" or "unreliable narrator", but that will hardly be the case if the analysis proceeds from a basic misunderstanding of both concepts.

Manfred Jahn's "More Aspects of Focalisation: Refinements and Applications" uses concepts drawn from cognitive science which provide many interesting perspectives on concepts which have already been studied; still, not much is added to the initial formulations by Genette and Bal, apart from some theoretical corollaries and the streamlining of the most useful central notions which results from their being reformulated from an alternative perspective. Bal's conception was already "cognitivist" enough, even though it lacked the terminology of modern cognitive science. But there is still much work to be done in the interface of narratology and cognitive science, and this paper is recommended reading to any narratologist.

Gordon Collier's analysis of "Apparent Feature-Anomalies in Subjectivized Third-Person Narration" is also inspired by frame analysis; it deals with subtle effects of voice and perspective in the work of Patrick White, with characters absorbing elements of third-person narration; it is a very interesting paper on the analysis of the modalities of reference in represented speech and thought. As is the case of other papers in the collection, this one deals with exceptions, interstices and modulations of the more ordinary or central narratological structures. Experimental or style-conscious fiction figures prominently in most papers of this volume as an

object of analysis, as in most works on narratology. Thus, Elizabeth Deeds Ermath (in a paper reprinted from *EJES*) analyzes some narratological consequences of postmodern parody as it relates to the workings of the different levels of the narrative text: style plays against plot; the voice- or perspective-building categories modulate a story which is deliberately plotted along time-honoured lines.

Monika Fludernik's "The Genderization of Narrative" deals with problematic or ambiguous cases of sexual or generic identity in narrative voice, analyzing the textual clues we use to determine gender identity, including a survey of readers' responses and cross-linguistic grammatical observations. This is an extremely interesting paper in many respects, although the analysis is weakened by a partial neglect of the very point of the experimental texts playing on generic ambiguity. Fludernik argues that the refractority of novelists like Winterson in *Written on the Body,* "refusing a very determinate gender allocation, ultimately destroys the interpretative accessibility of the text, since any evaluation of the novel needs to first establish the 'facts' of the plot, and these, in our cultural understanding, crucially relate to the over-all schemata that we project on the text" (171-172). But surely the point of these texts is to play with interpretive accessibility —that is, they place the reader in a position in which s/he is required to deconstruct preconceptions about gender, and it is that frame of reference, one requiring a more complex reading and not a reading for the plot, that makes the text accessible, even though some aspects of plot or character will remain strategically inacessible. What I miss most from the discussion is, once again, the higher-level discursive parameters: what is the point of sexual or generic ambiguity in narrative? The answer would have to consider the authors' sexual politics as well as the contemporary feminist debates and the issue of gay and lesbian rights; these texts seem to be much more ideologically driven than Fludernik's analysis suggests. Such a reading, however, would work on the interface of narratology and ideological critique, while Fludernik's interest is more strictly narratological.

Although strictures or disagreements are prominent in this review, many of the articles are interesting, carefully written and rewarding; the volume is well worth buying for any researcher interested in narratology, and deserves a wider print run than the "250 exemplaires" of the copyright page. The efforts of the editor and the convenor of the Debrecen narratology panel to make these papers available deserve recognition. There are, I insist, many untenable or mistaken notions in some papers, of the kind which should not be allowed to survive a more "intrusive" editing. Still, I am aware that the fact that I find in many papers so many things which I consider to be downright mistaken

does not reflect so much on the quality of the volume as on the still undertheorized status of narratology, a field of study with promising foundations in poetics, semiotics, pragmatics, linguistics and cognitive science which, however, do not yet amount to a disciplinary consensus on many seemingly basic issues.

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1. That Löschnigg is working within a formalist paradigm seems especially clear when he opposes the "discourse" of the work to the "work itself" (41) —a distinction which is surely artificial and formalist.
2. See my Acción, Relato, Discurso: Estructura de la ficción narrativa (Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1998).

Ellen Mc Cracken,

NEW LATINA NARRATIVE: THE FEMININE SPACE OF POSTMODERN ETHNICITY.

Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1999.
233 pp.

In the 1960's many Latino writers fought to establish a channel for the voicing of their particular ethnic realities within the United States. However, most of these voices were male voices and it was not until a decade later that Latina writers, particularly poets such as Gloria Anzaldúa or playwrights such as Cherrie Moraga, began to be heard. Latina narrative took off as of the 1980's with a great upsurge of production and impact on American letters. Ellen McCracken analyzes this body of work in her book *New Latina Narrative: The Feminine Space of Postmodern Ethnicity*. This study looks at the work of twenty-four novelists or short story writers of Mexican, Cuban, Puerto-Rican, or Dominican descent and it focuses primarily on the process of commodification of exotic images of minority women within American literary and popular culture. Mc Cracken argues that many of these works are examples of post-modern ethnic narrative which struggle against the containment imposed from without, and finally succeed in defending a feminine space of their own within multiculturalism. The author applies interesting ideas of postmodern commodification to the narratives analyzed, including not only the interpretation of the novels or short stories in themselves, but also the marketing strategies involved in their mainstreaming, such as advertising, cover designs, illustrations, publication of articles and excerpts in the media, bestseller listings, and book reviews. The marketable exoticism of these authors, foregrounded by the publishers, who want to give an external appearance of multiculturalism within the safe boundaries of a controlled image, contrasts with the transgressive elements which each of them introduces into their work.

The introduction gives a very brief overview of the Latino situation in the United States between the 60's and the 80's and the social changes which arose in those decades in order to present the female authors that will be discussed in the subsequent chapters. Chapter 1 focuses on four of the best-known and most successful Latina novelists: Sandra Cisneros, Cristina García, Julia Álvarez, and Ana Castillo. There is an in-depth analysis of *Woman Hollering Creek and other Stories*, *Dreaming in Cuban*, *How the García Girls Lost Their Accent*, and *So Far From God*, discussing how these

four authors contest the closure imposed by mainstream editors and publishers who attempt to make them into postmodern ethnic commodities. Diversity is celebrated in order to silence disturbing social contradictions which these writers manage to point out. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss how master texts are decentered in order to question received notions of history and a gendered ethnic identity. Chapter 2 focuses in particular on how writers engage with the politics of signification in the construction of identity discussing the texts of Graciela Limón, Mickey Fernández, Aurora Levins Morales, Rosario Morales (mother and daughter as co-authors), Helena María Viramontes, Nicholasa Mohr, Luchi Corpi, Roberta Fernández, and Demetria Martínez. Chapter 3 deals first with Latina narratives that stress the role of community and its creation and then goes on to link these ideas with questions of individualism within the novels and short stories of Denise Chavez, Aurora Levins-Morales and Rosario Morales, Sylvia López-Medina, and Sandra Benítez. Chapter 4 deals with orthodox and non-orthodox religious practices of U.S. Latinos illustrated by discussion of texts by Roberta Fernández, Sandra Cisneros, Lucha Corpi, Demetria Martínez, Julia Álvarez, Cristina García, Judith Ortiz Cofer, Mary Helen Ponce, and Denise Chavez. Chapter 5 points out the breaking of sexual taboos, and the subcultural transgression of norms through the linking of sexuality to religiosity in texts written by Alma Luz Villanueva, Ana Castillo, Nicholasa Mohr, Cristina García, Pat Mora, Julia Álvarez, Mary Helen Ponce, Denise Chávez, Sandra Cisneros, Aurora Levins Morales, Rosario Morales, and Helen María Viramontes. Finally, Chapter 6 looks at gender, ethnicity, and politics, and whether they are viewed as integrated elements of the fiction by Sandra Cisneros, Helen María Viramontes, Carmen de Monteflores, Graciela Limón, Cherrie Moraga, Julia Álvarez, Roberta Fernández, Himilce Novas, and Margarita Engle. Throughout all of the chapters the two dozen Latina authors mentioned are used as illustrations of the points made about the self, religion, politics, ethnicity, and subculture and transgression.

Mc Cracken warns of the dangers of creating a "monolithic conception of the Latina narrativist" arising from the grouping of these women of different descent into one single category. The author is in fact conscious that even her own decision to bring all these authors together may in some way contribute to their homogenization and commodification. The constant tension between the foregrounding of difference and the pull of assimilation through containment of the elements that make them different from one another and from traditional American culture, is not only analyzed in the pages of the study but it is also a danger and an issue that lies within the study itself. However, the diversity of examples provided by McCracken and

the many possible implications of the narratives analyzed provide the reader who wishes an overview of the fiction written by women of Latina Descent within the United States with a very extensive picture of the possibilities of this "feminine space of postmodern ethnicity".

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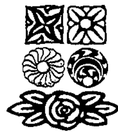

Bronfen, Elisabeth.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON'S ART OF MEMORY. SPACE, IDENTITY, TEXT.
(Trans. of *DER LITERARISCHE RAUM. EINE UNTERSUCHUNG AM BEISPIEL VON DOROTHY M. RICHARDSONS ROMANZYKLUS* PILGRIMAGE. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1986.)

Trans. Victoria Appelbe. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999.
254 pp.

The translation of Elisabeth Bronfen's book on Dorothy Richardson, published fourteen years ago in German, constitutes an outstanding contribution to scholarship on *Pilgrimage*. Since its publication in German, there has been a feeling among Dorothy Richardson's readers and scholars that Bronfen's work should be available to a wider readership. In fact, the announcement of this translation was greeted with great enthusiasm by the majority of delegates to the Conference "Dorothy Richardson and Modernism", held at Queen Mary and Westfield College (University of London) on 11th June 1999. In the context of this Conference, mainly featuring postmodern interpretations of Richardson's work, Bronfen's monograph was feel to be a serious and thoughtful survey of Dorothy Richardson's fiction, carried out from a more traditional approach. Bronfen's preface acknowledges the doubts that may arise when one is publishing "a piece of scholarship based on work done in a rather different form more than a decade ago in another language". However, she also points out that "precisely because *Pilgrimage* has been recuperated from oblivion primarily as a voice of feminine modernism, the philosophical underpinnings to Richardson's work are sometimes overlooked". It is precisely to call attention to the philosophical issues present in *Pilgrimage* that is precisely the task of Bronfen's book, whose subtitle, *Space, Identity, Text*, highlights the importance of "how identity emerges as a result of both corporeal as well as cultural enspacement" (vii). In her preface to the translation, Bronfen explains that she has chosen not to reformulate her discussion of the importance of corporeal emplacement, psychic topologies, and spatial textuality in terms of the more recent terminology dealing with these issues, in the hope, she says, that the phenomenological discourse she had initially used might invigorate

the current debate due to its unfamiliar ring. However, she has updated her bibliography, notes and appendix of critical literature on Dorothy Richardson including references to texts published between 1986 and 1999.

The author finds a principle of unity for *Pilgrimage* in the semantization of textual space, and the study of these aspects was in 1986, as it is in the year 2000, a rescue from a critical preoccupation mainly focused on biographical and feminist studies. By calling attention to an analysis of space, Bronfen demonstrates that *Pilgrimage* contains both intellectual and formal coherence. Her exploration of how tangible and metaphorical spaces are used, functionalized and semanticized in *Pilgrimage* could be taken as a valid model for the creation of a model for describing literary space in other works of fiction. The book is tightly structured around three parts of space: actual, material spaces, metaphorical spaces and textual space/ spatial textuality.

Part one provides an analysis for space in *Pilgrimage* in its more literal and tangible sense, focusing on the localities inhabited by Miriam, especially the correlation between location and human existence. The interior spaces of houses, churches, flats, cafés, restaurants and clubs and exterior spaces like gardens, fields, and streets are systematically classified and explained. Here Bronfen draws on the theoretical approaches of phenomenologists such as Binswanger and Heidegger, architecture theorists such as Bloomer, Moore, and Norberg-Schulz, and literary critics such as Bachelard, Lotman, Lodge, and Bakhtin. Thus, the author attempts to establish the precise relation between space and character development. The subject's mood alters the expression of the world, so that any change in experience brings about a change in the subject's experience of the spatiality of the world. In *Pilgrimage*, Miriam's moods are transposed onto her lived surroundings, which come to register her emotional state: "This correlation between spatial situation and psychic reality gives voice to the fact that an expansion of the psychological horizon [...] is mirrored by a corresponding expansion of the spatial horizon" (58). For Miriam, her room is a place that engenders a feeling of transcendence which heightens and accumulates impressions. However, neutral space involves an ecstatic transcendence into nowhere, which disperses and scatters thought and does not encourage any transformative synthesis. Only in her room can Miriam convert transcendental experiences into writing and transform an experience of dematerialisation or of experiencing places simultaneously into artistic representation. Bronfen adopts Elisabeth Ströker's tripartite model of phenomenological existence, which discusses the subject's enspacement according to three experiential modes: atmospheric space, action space and

contemplative space. Finally, part one concludes by discussing *Pilgrimage*'s remembered and imagined spaces, which provides an adequate transition to the second part, entitled "Metaphorical spaces".

In part two, Bronfen draws upon Goodman's definition of world-making in order to describe Miriam's cognitive strategy. The spatial self-consciousness of *Pilgrimage* is highlighted by maintaining Richardson's terminology, such as "surface", "inside pattern of life", "world within", "centre", and "distance" among others. For Bronfen, *Pilgrimage* possesses an organizing principle that makes it unfair to read it as a random succession of Miriam's impressions and feelings: "The text is not a mere accumulation of Miriam's immediate impressions; rather it depicts 'her own images' and expresses her mode of organizing experience and of understanding it by organizing it" (114). Miriam "recognises that it is not by rejecting the world completely, but rather by upholding a dynamic interplay between subject and world, that she will preserve her own reality [...] as well as those moments of ecstasy, 'happiness and realization' which may only be experienced in solitude" (131). For Miriam, solitude is not conceived as a place of recognition of the real, but as a place which actually effects a recreation of reality. She imagines her own world as a synthesis of different irreconcilable aspects belonging to the outside world. Her self-image is in an intermediary position that is caused by her desire to share in multiple worlds. The treatment of memory in *Pilgrimage* involves presenting time as space. Thus, Miriam's understanding of her own past is conceived as a spatialization of time. Her creation of a coherent autobiographical narrative involves substituting a method of ordering events temporally for one which is determined spatially.

Part three, "Textual space/ spatial textuality", provides a spatial analysis of the text itself. This discussion is theoretically supported by Eco, Frank, Genette, and Barthes, and it explores issues such as the relation between speech and writing, space and textual time, and between writer, reader and the text. In Bronfen's view, the reader must be prepared to engage in creative writing. Textual omissions encourage the reader to appropriate the spatial experiences and reconstruct the significance of events. In this part, Bronfen's argument reaches its highest degree of abstraction after a laborious dissection of the most literal and tangible spaces in *Pilgrimage*. The final chapter concentrates on a discussion of the formal treatment of spatial textuality and its implications for the reader.

Although Bronfen's detailed readings of some passages from *Pilgrimage* are sensitive and fair, a lack of precision can be felt in her statement that "Miriam does not associate London, her room at Mrs Bailey's nor her work

as [sic] the Wimpole Street practice with role-play and pretence" (124).[1] In fact, London is sometimes seen as a massive theatre for the performance of fictional works. In *Revolving Lights*, London's porticoes are referred to as "permanent exits and entrances on the stage of the London scene; [...] on the pavements, the trooping succession of masked life-moulded forms, [...]" (240). Miriam's work at the Wimpole Street practice is also far from being free of role-play. Bronfen herself contradicts her previous assertion on page 126 –"the precise significance of role-play, which is necessary in order to participate successfully in Hancock's social world, now becomes clearer, since it is seen in direct relation to a specific understanding of reality which Miriam can accept"– and page 132 –"Miriam's recognition that she is capable of entering the masculine world only by practising a certain degree of deception is not confined to Hancock's 'social world'". In fact, the dentists' world is a privileged site of theatrical displays. Thus, in *Deadlock*, Miriam mentally compares "a society novel" (52) with a conversation that is taking place between her and the dentists about a bizarre hat that she is wearing while they are having lunch. Mr Leyton tells Miriam that her hat looks like "a musical comedy" (*Deadlock*, 51) and Miriam is glad about "the pantomime effects" of her hat (*Deadlock*, 52). Miriam places herself on a superior level to that of the dentists by adopting a detached and patronizing attitude and claiming that she has access to both their theatrical displays and the real situation behind them:

> the shifting of the love-story into the midst of the Wimpole Street household, making her room like a little theatre where at any moment the curtain might go up on a fresh scene. Knowing them all so well, being behind the scenes as well as before them, she had watched with a real cruel indifference, [...]. The acting of the play had been all carefully according to the love-stories of the sentimental books, would always be, for good kind people brought up on the old traditions [...]. They were all proud of playing these recognizable parts. (*Revolving Lights*, 274)

Miriam ironically considers the dentists "one and all bright figures of romance" (*Revolving Lights*, 243) and she herself is identified as a heroine of romance when her sister Sarah presents her to the Babingtons as "a sister who had chosen not to marry into Harley Street" (*Clear Horizon*, 392).

Bronfen's book requires careful and slow-paced reading, so that the various theoretical approaches on which the author draws can be satisfactorily understood in relation to the copious textual evidence provided. The exhaustive thoroughness of *Dorothy Richardson's Art of Memory* makes it a

monograph of invaluable significance for the study of the textual space of *Pilgrimage*. Its translation into English will undoubtedly be welcomes by Dorothy Richardson's many English-speaking enthusiasts and should enliven the ongoing debate on her work.

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1. The translation of Bronfen's *Dorothy Richardson's Art of Memory* is plagued with misprints. Eleanor Dear is referred to erroneously as "Eleonor" on several occasions (112 and 124), Vereker is called "Vereka" (153), Guerini is called "Guerinin" (173) and Mendizabal is called "Mendizabel" (180). Sometimes omissions—"instead emphasising" (162)–or repetitions mar the translation, such as in the following sentence: "[. . .] during her stay in London, Miriam talks to Amabel about Richard Roscorla with Amabel, [. . .]" (161) Elizabeth Ströker's three experiential modes of phenomenological existence–atmospheric space, action space and contemplative space–are quoted as "the space of human action, the space of human action and the space of human contemplation." (47) The sentence beginning "For, by shifting her gaze on to the spatial dimension" on page 186 lacks clarity and seems to be translated inadequately. Some misprints include "perpection" (28) (perception), "particalar" (61), "mannner" (73), "contians" (95), "listening for the first tune"–instead of "for the first time"–(118), "her work as the Wimpole Street practice" (124), "immitable" (162), "Bernecke Rare Book Library" for Beinecke Rare Book Library (172), "one of the key's to Miriam's poetics" (167), "ecstacy" (181), "intelligible though spatialization" (187), "representating" (191), "Hanscome" for Hanscombe (231), "a second of feminist criticism" (231), and "Gevritz" for Gevirtz (241). Finally, Bluemel's *Experimenting on the Borders of Modernism* is quoted as *Experimenting on the Border of Modernism* (241) and Fromm's article "Through the Novelist's Looking-Glass" is quoted as "Through a Novelist's Looking-Glass" (241).

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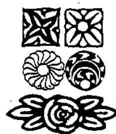

ABSTRACTS

THE END OF HISTORY. OR, IS IT? CIRCULARITY VERSUS PROGRESS IN CARYL PHILLIPS' *THE NATURE OF BLOOD*

Ángeles de la Concha

In the wake of the revisionist thinking of the Enlightenment and its self-legitimising narratives, history is no longer accepted as linear time projected into a future ever open to gradual progress and freedom. This breakdown of linearity together with the acknowledgement of the discipline's textual fabric and discursive nature are accountable for a new, apocalyptic version of the ultimate stage of historical development termed the end of history, in which circularity and bleak repetition are now rampant.

In this essay I explore one of the ways in which the central grand story of Western civilisation has been questioned through the narratives of novelists belonging to alternative races and, therefore, hitherto excluded from canonical historical versions. For this purpose, I have chosen *The Nature of Blood* (1997) by Caryl Phillips, as a dramatisation of the endless recurrence of subjugations which, according to Foucault, need to replace history's self-complacent narrative of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies.

Key words: Historiography, historical novel, postmodernism, Caryl Phillips.

POST-BAROQUE SUBLIME? THE CASE OF PETER ACKROYD.

Jean-Michel Ganteau

This paper focuses on Peter Ackroyd's *English Music* as a landmark in contemporary manifestations of the baroque tradition in British literature. It is based on contemporary approaches to the baroque as an aesthetic constant or strain —more than on a periodization-theory of the baroque. The demonstration is tripartite in structure. I first concentrate on the ingredients of what may be called a "baroque diction" (flux, hyperbole, overflowing of the frame, etc.). I then move on to the representation of artifice and the artifice of representation, by concentrating on the baroque *topos* of the world as a stage, the examination of metaleptic ploys and their implications in terms of ontological or transcendent potentialities. The last part addresses the question of the baroque as a way to probe at the boundaries of traditional, phenomenal realism, as a force meant to extend the province of traditional *mimesis* by replacing representation with presentation. I conclude with some reflections on the expressionist functions of the baroque as an avatar of romanticism.

Key words : Allegory, baroque, diction, excess, expressionism, postmodernism, presentation, redundancy, romanticism, sublimity

CARIBBEAN WOMEN POETS - DISARMING TRADITION

Christine Harris

This article sets out to explore the way in which women writers of Caribbean origin express various concerns relating to their heritage through poetry which encompasses not only their position as women seen from a feminist perspective but also from historical and contemporary positions in contrasting societies. It argues that an overall need to find an identity linked to the past is paramount for establishing a position for women in the future, and that the poetry achieves this through breaking with the traditional notions of women

and poets. The article focuses particularly on the work by Grace Nichols and Lorna Goodison.

Key words: Caribbean, Postcolonial, Poetry, Women Poets, Tradition, Culture, Creoleness, Feminism, Slavery.

MAY SINCLAIR'S *THE THREE SISTERS* AS AN EARLY EXAMPLE OF MODERNIST FICTION

María Francisca Llantada Díaz

This paper analyses May Sinclair's novel *The Three Sisters* as an early example of the transition from the classic realist text to modernist fiction in English literature. *The Three Sisters* is here characterized as a lyrical and psychological novel, influenced by Imagism and structured around epiphanical moments, images and symbols. In addition, Sinclair's first psychological novel is considered here in the light of some of the formal and thematic principles and of the prototypes of female heroine that she was to use in her later more fully modernist novels. Thus, her later novels *Mary Olivier* and *Harriett Frean* can be understood as variations of *The Three Sisters*, where the representation of the unconscious feelings of the characters points to Sinclair's deep knowledge of psychoanalysis and the relevance of internal reality, a typical modernist trait.

Key words: Sinclair, modernism, Imagism, psychoanalysis, epiphany.

RAVING ABOUT THINGS THAT WON'T SOLVE: MARYLEE HADLEY IN *WRITTEN ON THE WIND*

Vicky Luzón

The contemporary feminist vindication of classical Hollywood melodrama has attempted to identify the conflicting views on gender and the family that constituted the raw material for this genre. The aim of this paper is to identify these clashing discourses on femininity and female sexuality within the framework provided by Douglas Sirk's popular film *Written on the Wind* (1956). I will try to demonstrate how the workings of ideology, which usually culminate in the ideologically correct traditional "happy ending", are subverted through the imposition of an arbitrary and quite implausible resolution. From here, I shall attempt to read the ending of the film against the grain of received "ideological correctness" in order to vindicate the role of the marginal characters in the story, and that of Marylee Hadley in particular.

Key words: Melodrama, Douglas Sirk, *Written on the Wind*, Gender issues, the family.

MEETING THE CIVILISED BARBARIAN: BRAM STOKER'S *DRACULA* AND JOSEPH CONRAD'S *HEART OF DARKNESS*.

Sara Martín

Even though there was no direct relationship between Bram Stoker and Joseph Conrad, there are sufficient grounds for a comparison between their two masterpieces, *Dracula* and *Heart of Darkness*, respectively. Both texts were first published in the same year, 1898, and both voice similar concerns regarding the onset of the crisis of masculinity still making itself felt today and the position of Europe regarding the margins of the colonial world. Both Conrad and Stoker were aliens living in England, which lent an intriguing dimension to their views of the colonial and imperial question. These links have been recently stressed by the filming of *Apocalypse Now* (an adaptation

of *Heart of Darkness*) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* by the American director Francis Ford Coppola. Coppola has re-read the crisis of masculinity and the imperial question, transforming them into a valediction to the death of a form of patriarchal masculinity that he romanticises.

Key words: Stoker, Conrad, Coppola, masculinity, colonialism.

GARDEN PATHING IN MARTIN AMIS'S *TIME'S ARROW* AND *NIGHT TRAIN*

Daniel Oertel

Critics often describe the novels of British writer Martín Amis as prankish artefacts that neglect story and plot for a highly misleading set of postmodern pyrotechnics. In this article I attempt to explore a literary phenomenon that is often paraphrased as "teasing the reader", arguing that one of the chief glories of Amis's prose lies quite paradoxically, in the ambiguous narrative structures and in the ways readers are "led up a garden path" in the course of his fictional worlds. Drawing on a selection of recent criticism from Artificial Intelligence (Minsky), cognitive narratology (Jahn) and general reader reception theory, I will analyse Amis's novels *Time's Arrow* and *Night Trains* and propose that the narrative traps employed are highly functional. Rather than just Hanoi readers, they actually lead "somewhere", producing various aesthetical effects and ultimately turning the novels into what Roland Barthes has termed "writerly" texts.

Key words: Martin Amis, *Time's Arrow*, Garden Path Phenomenon, Cognitive Narratology, Reader Reception, AI Theory, Contemporary British Literature.

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FASHIONING THE SELF FROM THE CHASM: *DE PROFUNDIS* AND THE CHRONOTOPE OF POST-PRISON TIME

David Walton

This paper focuses on Wilde's letter, De Profundis, with relation to various forms of debt (economic and moral-metaphorical), which, it is argued, function within an economy of symbolic exchange and desire. The Bakhtinian concept of the chronotope is merged with semiotics, Lac(k)anian psychoanalysis, and Greenblatt's notion of self-fashioning to explore how Wilde negotiates time and space as a means to narrate the self and the other. Counter to claims that *De Profundis* is a confesión, it is suggested here that it may be seen as a pedagogical tract in epistolary form: one which constructs the letter's addressee as a negative "other" in order to preserve the integrity of the writing itself.

Key words: Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis*, Lacan, lack, the phallus, Bakhtin, the chronotope, Greenblatt, self-fashioning, homomorphic, symbolic exchange.

ABSTRACTS

THE END OF HISTORY. OR, IS IT? CIRCULARITY VERSUS PROGRESS IN CARYL PHILLIPS' *THE NATURE OF BLOOD*

Ángeles de la Concha

In the wake of the revisionist thinking of the Enlightenment and its self-legitimising narratives, history is no longer accepted as linear time projected into a future ever open to gradual progress and freedom. This breakdown of linearity together with the acknowledgement of the discipline's textual fabric and discursive nature are accountable for a new, apocalyptic version of the ultimate stage of historical development termed the end of history, in which circularity and bleak repetition are now rampant.

In this essay I explore one of the ways in which the central grand story of Western civilisation has been questioned through the narratives of novelists belonging to alternative races and, therefore, hitherto excluded from canonical historical versions. For this purpose, I have chosen *The Nature of Blood* (1997) by Caryl Phillips, as a dramatisation of the endless recurrence of subjugations which, according to Foucault, need to replace history's self-complacent narrative of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies.

Key words: Historiography, historical novel, postmodernism, Caryl Phillips.

POST-BAROQUE SUBLIME? THE CASE OF PETER ACKROYD.

Jean-Michel Ganteau

This paper focuses on Peter Ackroyd's *English Music* as a landmark in contemporary manifestations of the baroque tradition in British literature. It is based on contemporary approaches to the baroque as an aesthetic constant or strain —more than on a periodization-theory of the baroque. The demonstration is tripartite in structure. I first concentrate on the ingredients of what may be called a "baroque diction" (flux, hyperbole, overflowing of the frame, etc.). I then move on to the representation of artifice and the artifice of representation, by concentrating on the baroque *topos* of the world as a stage, the examination of metaleptic ploys and their implications in terms of ontological or transcendent potentialities. The last part addresses the question of the baroque as a way to probe at the boundaries of traditional, phenomenal realism, as a force meant to extend the province of traditional *mimesis* by replacing representation with presentation. I conclude with some reflections on the expressionist functions of the baroque as an avatar of romanticism.

Key words : Allegory, baroque, diction, excess, expressionism, postmodernism, presentation, redundancy, romanticism, sublimity

CARIBBEAN WOMEN POETS - DISARMING TRADITION

Christine Harris

This article sets out to explore the way in which women writers of Caribbean origin express various concerns relating to their heritage through poetry which encompasses not only their position as women seen from a feminist perspective but also from historical and contemporary positions in contrasting societies. It argues that an overall need to find an identity linked to the past is paramount for establishing a position for women in the future, and that the poetry achieves this through breaking with the traditional notions of women

and poets. The article focuses particularly on the work by Grace Nichols and Lorna Goodison.

Key words: Caribbean, Postcolonial, Poetry, Women Poets, Tradition, Culture, Creoleness, Feminism, Slavery.

MAY SINCLAIR'S *THE THREE SISTERS* AS AN EARLY EXAMPLE OF MODERNIST FICTION

María Francisca Llantada Díaz

This paper analyses May Sinclair's novel *The Three Sisters* as an early example of the transition from the classic realist text to modernist fiction in English literature. *The Three Sisters* is here characterized as a lyrical and psychological novel, influenced by Imagism and structured around epiphanical moments, images and symbols. In addition, Sinclair's first psychological novel is considered here in the light of some of the formal and thematic principles and of the prototypes of female heroine that she was to use in her later more fully modernist novels. Thus, her later novels *Mary Olivier* and *Harriett Frean* can be understood as variations of *The Three Sisters*, where the representation of the unconscious feelings of the characters points to Sinclair's deep knowledge of psychoanalysis and the relevance of internal reality, a typical modernist trait.

Key words: Sinclair, modernism, Imagism, psychoanalysis, epiphany.

RAVING ABOUT THINGS THAT WON'T SOLVE: MARYLEE HADLEY IN *WRITTEN ON THE WIND*

Vicky Luzón

The contemporary feminist vindication of classical Hollywood melodrama has attempted to identify the conflicting views on gender and the family that constituted the raw material for this genre. The aim of this paper is to identify these clashing discourses on femininity and female sexuality within the framework provided by Douglas Sirk's popular film *Written on the Wind* (1956). I will try to demonstrate how the workings of ideology, which usually culminate in the ideologically correct traditional "happy ending", are subverted through the imposition of an arbitrary and quite implausible resolution. From here, I shall attempt to read the ending of the film against the grain of received "ideological correctness" in order to vindicate the role of the marginal characters in the story, and that of Marylee Hadley in particular.

Key words: Melodrama, Douglas Sirk, *Written on the Wind*, Gender issues, the family.

MEETING THE CIVILISED BARBARIAN: BRAM STOKER'S *DRACULA* AND JOSEPH CONRAD'S *HEART OF DARKNESS.*

Sara Martín

Even though there was no direct relationship between Bram Stoker and Joseph Conrad, there are sufficient grounds for a comparison between their two masterpieces, *Dracula* and *Heart of Darkness*, respectively. Both texts were first published in the same year, 1898, and both voice similar concerns regarding the onset of the crisis of masculinity still making itself felt today and the position of Europe regarding the margins of the colonial world. Both Conrad and Stoker were aliens living in England, which lent an intriguing dimension to their views of the colonial and imperial question. These links have been recently stressed by the filming of *Apocalypse Now* (an adaptation

of *Heart of Darkness*) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* by the American director Francis Ford Coppola. Coppola has re-read the crisis of masculinity and the imperial question, transforming them into a valediction to the death of a form of patriarchal masculinity that he romanticises.

Key words: Stoker, Conrad, Coppola, masculinity, colonialism.

GARDEN PATHING IN MARTIN AMIS'S *TIME'S ARROW* AND *NIGHT TRAIN*

Daniel Oertel

Critics often describe the novels of British writer Martín Amis as prankish artefacts that neglect story and plot for a highly misleading set of postmodern pyrotechnics. In this article I attempt to explore a literary phenomenon that is often paraphrased as "teasing the reader", arguing that one of the chief glories of Amis's prose lies quite paradoxically, in the ambiguous narrative structures and in the ways readers are "led up a garden path" in the course of his fictional worlds. Drawing on a selection of recent criticism from Artificial Intelligence (Minsky), cognitive narratology (Jahn) and general reader reception theory, I will analyse Amis's novels *Time's Arrow* and *Night Trains* and propose that the narrative traps employed are highly functional. Rather than just Hanoi readers, they actually lead "somewhere", producing various aesthetical effects and ultimately turning the novels into what Roland Barthes has termed "writerly" texts.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS/ ÍNDICE

Articles/ Artículos:

ÁNGELES DE LA CONCHA (U.N.E.D.)
The End of History. or, is it? Circularity versus Progress in Caryl Phillips' *The Nature of Blood.* 1

JEAN-MICHAEL GANTEAU (Université de Montpellier)
Post-Baroque Sublime? The Case of Peter Ackroyd. 21

CHRISTINE HARRIS (Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha)
Caribbean Women Poets —Disarming Tradition. 45

Mª FRANCISCA LLANTADA DÍAZ (Universidad de Santiago de Compostela)
May Sinclair's *The Three Sisters* as an early example of Modernist Fiction. 61

VICKY LUZÓN (Universidad de Zaragoza)
Raving about things that won't solve: Marylee Hadley in *Written on the Wind.* 83

SARA MARTÍN (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)
Meeting the Civilised Barbarian: Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.* 101

DANIEL OERTEL (University of Cologne)
Effects of Garden-Pathing in Martin Amis's novels *Time's Arrow* and *Night Train.* 123

ANGEL OTERO BLANCO (Universidad de Santiago de Compostela)
The African Past in America as a Bakhtinian and Levinasian Other: "Rememory" as Solution in Tony Morrison's *Beloved.* 141

DAVID WALTON (Universidad de Murcia)
Fashioning the Self from the Chasm: *De Profundis* and the Chronotrope of Post-Prison Time. 159

VIKRAM CHANDRA
India's Cultural Commissars Worship "Indianness" instead of Art. 175

Interviews/ Entrevistas:

DORA SALES SALVADOR (Universidad Jaume I de Castellón)
Listening to Vikram Chandra: "All Stories have in them the Seed of All Other Stories". 201

Reviews:

John Pier. (ed.).
Recent Trends in Narratological Research: Papers from the Narratology Round Table / ESSE 4 – September 1997 – Debrecen. Hungary / and other contributions
(Rev. by José Ángel García Landa) 215

Ellen Mç Cracken
New Latina Narrative: The Feminine Space of Postmodern Ethnicity
(Rev. by Vicky Gil Carasol) 223

Elisabeth Bronfen
Dorothy Richardson's Art of Memory. Space, Identity, Text
(Rev. by Mª Francisca Llantada Díaz) 227

Abstracts/ Resúmenes 233

Notes for Contributors / Indicaciones a los colaboradores 241

Table of Contents/ Índice 249

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