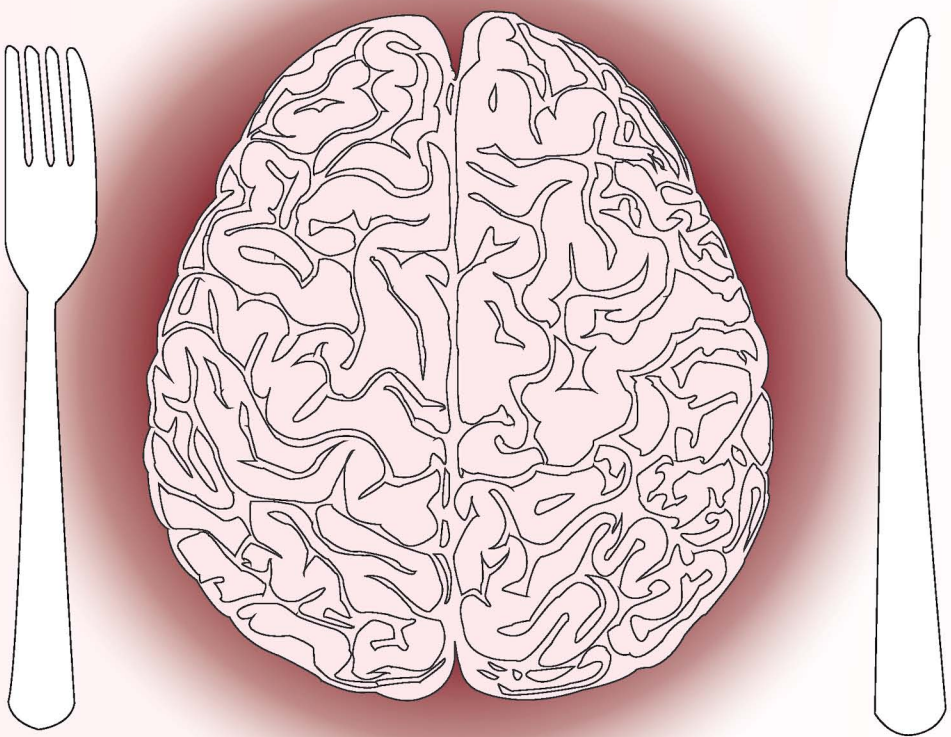
the self industry

therapy and fiction



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The Self Industry
Therapy and Fiction

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Therapy and Fiction

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Introduction

The present book comprises articles based on the papers delivered at *The Self Industry. Therapy and Fiction* symposium held in Ustroń, Poland, 21–24 September 2011, one of the annual conferences organized by the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures of the University of Silesia, Katowice. In the conference call for papers we argued that:

"The last 200 years have produced a staggering wealth of writing on the Self, at first mainly belles-lettres, later also non-fiction. Whether we take into consideration the High Romantics, such as Edgar Allan Poe, E. T. A. Hoffman, and Percy Bysshe Shelley, pursuing the Self through archetypes of the Self, or George Eliot's fiction of apparently social concern (*The Mill on the Floss*, *Middlemarch*), or D. H. Lawrence's and William Faulkner's narratives, we are confronted with dramas of consciousness. The advent of analytical psychology afforded not only insights into the workings of the literary text, but also pointed to its frequent therapeutic meaning for the author, individual reader, and community. The work of Carl Gustav Jung and Stan Gooch, exploring the duality of man and stressing the need to foster a new consciousness by integrating the feminine and the masculine, Viktor Frankl's doctrine of overcoming the 'tragic triad' (suffering, guilt, and transitoriness) and inner void by affirming *Urvertrauen zum Dasein* ('the basic trust in Being') in existential acts of the 'will to meaning', provided two frameworks for therapy. Sigmund Freud's system provided another framework, but what is perhaps as significant, it was admired for two different reasons. Hermann Hesse admired the clarity of Freud's thinking combined with the beauty of language, while Thomas Mann – his literary characteristics: structure and form. This interface of writing and therapy, much as in such famous accounts as Augustine's or Rousseau's *Confessions*, constitutes an intellectual challenge in that its paradigms of exposure and suppression follow both tangled personal and rhetorical agendas."

The conference contributions provided an array of insights into the field suggested above that seemed to us to merit publication. For the purposes of clarity we have decided to divide the texts submitted into four parts.

The first one, headed "Narcissists and Neurotics. Writing of Dissent," begins with Niclas Johansson's article studying the relation between narcissism as a literary concept and its use in early psychoanalysis. Likewise, drawing on Freud's theory, Maria Korusiewicz analyses the Ajase complex formulated by Kosawa Heisaku, a myth of opposite psychic forces leading to positive resolution based on three interconnected ideas: mutual love, forgiveness, and "great compassion." Tadeusz Lewandowski's contribution discusses the communitarian philosophy of Michael Sandel as a response to John Rawls's liberal project in *A Theory of Justice*. Invoking Protestant radicalism and what he terms "the buccaneer tradition," Stephen Dewsbury in his article on Hakim Bey's anarchist thought "The Self in Temporary Autonomous Zones" argues that self-creativity flourishes in places of non-permanence, historical, discursive, and psychological lacunae emerging at the interstices of established structures. Benjamin Betka's "De-Pressed Masses: Affective Dissonance in Melancholy, Disease, and the Screened (American?) World" focuses on the "selving" processes in American culture which emerged in response to Freud's theory. The article posits the self as text while realigning the neuroscientific concepts of "patient," "health," and "therapy." The last article in this section is Tomasz Gnat's "Narcissus's Narcosis: Formation of Self, Disintegration of Self: A Question of Interactive Entertainment and Player-Character Identity Correlation" which discusses the questions of self formation and disintegration in interactive entertainment.

The second part headed "*Her*stories. The Self and Women's Literature" comprises five articles. Karen Ferreira-Meyers in "Doubling or Dividing the Self: Examples from Autofictional Writing as Influenced by Psychoanalysis" investigates the inevitable link between psychoanalysis and autofiction in the work of Nina Bouraoui and Amélie Nothomb, studying the techniques whereby the two authors bring about a doubling or dividing of the Self into numerous conscious and unconscious sub-selves. Similarly, Anna Bugajska's article "*Descent Into Hell*. Pauline Anstruther's Long Way to Her Self" focuses on the idea of doppelgaenger in Charles Williams's novel *Descent Into Hell* understood as the essential aspect of consciousness we learn to give up as part of our socialization, our terror and error, a terrible good, not a menacing shadow but something we sacrifice for the sake of others. Grażyna Zygadło's contribution "'I change myself, I change the world'…" analyses the functions of storytelling in ethnic literature, while Sławomir Kuźnicki's reading of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* stresses the self-therapeutic context of writing in an oppressive society. The last article in the section, "In the Search for Self: Female Identity and Subjectivity in Doris Lessing's 'To Room Nineteen'" inquires into the "othering" processes involved in true self-expression, a discussion relying on Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection.

In "Therapy through Writing?," part three of the volume, Łukasz Giezek discusses Peter Ackroyd's *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, a metafictional novel in which the creation of the past and the self becomes both personal healing and a larger project of conferring meaning on the randomness of existence. Invoking Barthes, Bakhtin, and Jung, Tomasz Markiewka discusses the questions of authorship and self-identity in "*T(h)au* for *Torture*? Writing on Trial in Teodor Parnicki's Novel *The Finger of Threat*." Eliene Mąka-Poulain offers a reading of one of Heaney's most important collections of poetry in the article entitled "'In Violence and Epiphany': Seamus Heaney's *North*." Wojciech Drąg's contribution focuses on the therapeutic function of literature in "Writing Cure? Narrating the Loss in Kazuo Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day*." The article written by Anna Cholewa-Purgał focusses on logotherapy, a school of contemporary philosophy and a therapy based on finding meaning in one's life, and sets it against contemporary culture of neo-nihilism. Małgorzata Nitka's "'So many pages a day'. Writing, Compulsion, and Modernity" discusses George Gissing's "conscious insincerity of workmanship" against the background of George M. Beard's *Nervousness, Its Causes and Consequences*, a study of neurasthenia. In her contribution, "Unnameable Loss: Melancholy and Postmodern Writing," Agata Wilczek follows Paul de Man, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, and Walter Benjamin in pondering the consciousness of loss as one of the primary areas of linguistic expression.

The fourth part is entitled "Searching the Self." In the first article, invoking Judith Butler's category of gender performativity and Michel Foucault's idea of aesthetization of life, Aleksandra Lubczyńska analyses *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* in terms of illness and therapy vis-à-vis gender roles in camp aesthetic. What follows is the article entitled "Therapy or Obsession? Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Problems with His Self" where Maria Perzyńska analyses the autobiographical aspect of Rossetti's poetry and painting, especially the influence of his relationships with Lizzie Siddal and Jane Morris on his work. "Trapped in a Vicious Circle of the Tragic Triad… Miltonian Satan and Conradian Kurtz's Process of Unearthing Authentic Identity" by Jarosław Giza addresses the problem of ensnarement of Milton's and Conrad's protagonists in Frankl's tragic triad perceived paradoxically as a constituent of the process of recovering genuine self. Stephen Harris's article "Questioning the Cultural Industry of the Self: Fiction, Selfhood and Individualism in Patrick White's *The Vivisector*," shows how the author in question explores, in his idiosyncratic way, the possibilities and limits of individual selfhood as imagined against the constraints of Australian society and attitudes. Sławomir Konkol, in turn, conducts a Lacanian analysis in "I Am Not Me. The (Re)construction of the Self in Graham Swift's *Ever After*." The focus of the next contribution, "Romantic Legacy in Non-Romantic Times. Two Different-Similar Approaches to Searching for Self-Identity" by Alicja Bemben and Ewa Mazur-Wyganowska, is how Patrick Kavanagh and Robert

Graves exploit spirituality and mysticism in the process of poetic self-definition. In "Frame of Mind. Self Industry in Performance," Monika Gorzelak uses the Derridean category of supplement to offer her interpretation of *Sketches about Ophelia*, a dramatic performance by Teatr A Part. Last but not least, Wojciech Szymański's contribution "Venice–Iceland: A Journey to Utopia," is a study of non-normative sexual identity focused on W. H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, and Stephen Spender.

We wish to thank all the contributors who made the publication of this volume possible and we hope that the reading of the essays included in this collection will offer new "therapeutic" insights into cultural and literary texts.

The Editors

Part One

Narcissists and Neurotics Writing of Dissent

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Narcissus and Narcissism in Early Psychoanalysis: The Intertextual Dialogue between Theme and Concept

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the relation between Narcissus and narcissism. *Narcissus*, the hero of a Greek myth, was immortalized through his appearance in the third book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and has prospered in the Western literary canon ever since; *narcissism* was forcefully introduced as a central component in psychoanalytic theory by Sigmund Freud in 1914, and has since become a staple in the self-understanding of our society.[1]

The choice of the term "narcissism" to designate the "the libidinal complement to the egotism of the instinct of self-preservation" is of course not arbitrary.[2] But how, more specifically, is the relation between literary theme and psychoanalytic concept to be conceived? How does early psychoanalysis relate to the history of the Narcissus theme in its shaping of the new concept? It is the sketch of an answer to that question which will be presented in this paper, focusing on the psychological conception of narcissism between 1899 and 1914.

An obvious starting point would of course be to compare Narcissus to the other Boeotian hero who plays an important role in psychoanalysis, namely Oedipus.[3] The picture of Oedipus in psychoanalysis, however, is quite different from that of Narcissus. Oedipus is introduced by Freud himself, by means of a pen-

[1] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 3: 339–510.

[2] Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works: Vol. XIV* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), 73–4.

[3] Narcissus, by the way, can arguably be assumed to have been substituted for Oedipus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where according to the Theban circle, Oedipus would have had a more natural position than Narcissus. Cf. Ingo Gildenhard and Andrew Zissos, "Ovid's Narcissus (*Met*. 3: 339–510): Echoes of Oedipus," *American Journal of Philology* 121 (2000): 129–47 and Denis Knoepfler, *La Patrie de Narcisse* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2010), 44.

etrating interpretation of Sophocles's drama in the *Traumdeutung* (1900). The Oedipus theme, moreover, remains quite literally alive throughout Freud's career, and retains its narrativity and its literary allusions. The term narcissism was not coined by Freud, but appropriated by him as an already existing concept. Furthermore, Freud makes very few allusions to the Narcissus theme, and the concept that narcissism turns into is much more abstract and lacks all trace of narrativity.

As opposed to Narcissus, then, Oedipus retains some of his mythic qualities throughout the process of psychoanalytic theorizing. As regards the relation between the Narcissus theme and the concept of narcissism in psychoanalysis, I think it is possible to speak of a demythologizing moment, chronologically culminating in the metapsychological papers of 1915, where the myth is turned into a hard concept of the theory of instincts, and then, especially around *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* in 1920, a remythologizing moment where the theory of instincts itself is exposed to a mythologization. It is for this intuition that I am trying to find the fitting conceptual form, to describe it and to verify its validity. In this paper I will only discuss the first moment, that of demythologization.

To be able to cope with the transitions between so different forms of expression as literature and psychoanalysis, I think it is necessary to apply a perspective which takes a holistic view of culture while also appreciating the discrepancies in the different signifying structures of literary and psychoanalytic discourse. One perspective which fulfills these conditions is, I believe, that of the cultural semiotics of Juri Lotman.

The basic idea of Lotman's cultural semiotics is that every signifying activity necessarily takes place within a semiotic space, or a semiosphere. The semiosphere is a system of languages, or codes, which are organized and correlated in a more or less hierarchical fashion. Two important features of the semiosphere which will be pertinent in this context are that it has a centre and that it has borders.

The centre holds the dominant semiotic systems and is also the place where culture arrives at the level of regulative self-description. At the centre, the semiosphere is highly organized; at the periphery, it is to a large degree irregular.[4] The centre promotes the unity of the system and works as a conservative force in the dynamics of the semiosphere. At the periphery, contacts with the outside and distance from the conservative forces that uphold the hierarchical organization between languages accelerate semiotic processes and break up the organization. The forces from centre and periphery, those of unity and diversity, hierarchy and anarchy, together determine the dynamics of the semiosphere.

The border should be thought of as a membrane which mediates between the semiotic and the extra-semiotic. Lotman writes that

[4] Juri Lotman, "On the Semiosphere," *Sign Systems Studies* 33 (2005): 205–29, trans. Wilma Clark, 214.

> the semiotic border is represented by the sum of bilingual translatable "filters," passing through which the text is translated into another language (or languages), situated *outside* the given semiosphere. … the border points of the semiosphere may be likened to sensory receptors, which transfer external stimuli into the language of our nervous system, or a unit of translation, which adapts the external actor to a given semiotic sphere.[5]

The border is also, and in virtue of being a border, a zone of increased semiotic activity. The amount of translations underway at the border accelerates semiotic processes.[6]

Now, given these theoretical preliminaries, I will argue that the evolution of the concept of narcissism can be understood in terms of a three-part dialogue between psychological observations (clinical and others), psychological theory and literature. The intersection between literature and psychological observation can be conceived as a border, in Lotman's sense, between two semiotic spheres. As psychiatry brings a certain domain of psychological phenomena into the vicinity of the Narcissus theme, border points are constituted, through which semiotic elements from one sphere are translated into the other. This border zone then brings about an accelerated semiotic activity at the periphery and a conflict emerges between centre and periphery, where influences from the border threaten the hierarchical organization of the semiosphere established at the centre. Gradually, then, narcissism is formulated at the core of the subsemiosphere known as psychoanalysis. As a regulating higher-order modeling system, the theory of instincts, where narcissism is subsequently introduced, controls the hierarchical organization of the languages of psychoanalysis. The accelerated semiotic activity at the border with the Narcissus theme, however, is reproduced through the semiotic sphere and forces a revision of the theory of instincts and other central modeling systems, culminating in the metapsychology of the mid-1910s.

To illustrate the process I have been sketching, I will now take a look at four different points in this evolution, in texts by Havelock Ellis, Otto Rank and Freud.

The first point is when the concept is first introduced. The term "narcissism" was first used by Paul Näcke in an article in 1899.[7] This is to be considered, however, as a mere translation of what Ellis the year before had referred to as a "Narcissus-like tendency." I will therefore turn to Ellis's article, in the extended shape it took in the third edition of the first volume of his *Studies in*

[5] Lotman, "On the Semiosphere," 208–9.

[6] Ibid., 212.

[7] Paul Näcke, "Kritisches zum Kapitel der normalen und pathologischen Sexualität," *Archiv für Psychiatrie* 13 (1899): 356–86, 375.

the Psychology of Sex.[8] The expression "Narcissus-like tendency" already gives us the three parties in the dialogue that shapes the concept: Narcissus, the narcissist and narcissism, taken from their respective fields of mythology, psychological observation and psychological theory. It shows the basic mechanism at work in Ellis's formulation of the concept: narcissism is the common characteristic of Narcissus and the narcissist. When Ellis, in the quote given above, compares an observed psychological condition to the mythic figure of Narcissus, he brings two semiotic systems into contact with each other. The key to the approximation is a psychologically realistic interpretation. In the couple of pages that introduce the "Narcissus-like tendency" there is first a paragraph which introduces the general notion, and thereafter follow, in this order, exemplifications taken from the novels *Genio y Figura* (1897) by Juan Valera and *Tagebuch einer Verlorenen* (1905) by Margarete Böhme (the first of which explicitly mentions Narcissus, and the second of which vaguely alludes to him); the description of the case of a young woman who displays the tendency; and observations made by other medical researchers. The ordering of the evidence – literary before medical – prompts us to a conclusion which is confirmed by the author's later retrospective account: the literary evidence is not only just as valid as medical observation; it also structures the interpretation of it. The Narcissus theme provides a framework for the ordering of psychological observations. Later, Ellis states that it was because he had read Valera's novel that he associated the case of the woman with Narcissus.[9]

What, then, does narcissism mean for Ellis? It is included as an "extreme form" and as "curiosity" in the category of auto-erotism. Auto-erotism he defines as "the phenomena of spontaneous sexual emotion generated in the absence of an external stimulus proceeding, directly or indirectly, from another person."[10] The explicit definition of narcissism is that it is "that tendency which is sometimes found, more especially perhaps in women, for the sexual emotions to be absorbed, and often entirely lost, in self-admiration."[11]

When we then compare the conceptual definition to the examples Ellis cites, it becomes clear how blunt the concept is compared to that which it is supposed to explain. Let us focus on the quote from Valera's novel. Ellis quotes the following speech by the heroine:

---

[8] The extended section on narcissism is first included in the J. E. Kötscher's German translation, *Geschlechtstrieb und Schamgefühl* (Würtzburg: Stuber, 1907). I refer, however, to its first appearance in English: Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Vol. I* (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Company, 1913), 206–9.

[9] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Vol. VII* (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Company, 1928), 354–55.

[10] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex. Vol. I*, 161.

[11] Ibid., 206.

> I fall into a puerility which may be innocent or vicious, I cannot decide. I only know that it is a purely contemplative act, a disinterested admiration of beauty. It is not coarse sensuality, but æsthetic platonism. I imitate Narcissus; and I apply my lips to the cold surface of the mirror and kiss my image. [One sentence elided by Ellis.] It is the love of beauty, the expression of tenderness and affection for what God has made manifest, in an ingenuous kiss imprinted on the empty and corporeal reflection.[12]

> incurro en una puerilidad que no sé decidir si es inocente ó viciosa. Sólo sé que es acto meramente contemplativo; que es desinteresada admiración de la belleza; No es grocería sensual, sino platonismo estético lo que hago. Imito á Narciso; y sobre el haz fría del espejo aplico los labios y beso mi imagen. Esto sí que es platonismo, me digo entonces. Esto es el amor de la hermosura por la hermosura: la expresión del cariño y del afecto hacia lo que Dios hizo manifestada en un beso candoroso que en el vano é incorpóreo reflejo se estampa.[13]

It is quite clear already from the quoted passage that the concept only scratches the surface of the meaning produced here. The name Narcissus activates a reference system which multiplies the semantic content of the passage, invoking Romantic aesthetics as well as neo-Platonic metaphysics. Those levels of meaning by far exceed the explanatory capacity of "the tendency for the sexual emotion to be absorbed and often entirely lost in self-admiration."

Furthermore, Ellis begins the quote in the middle of a sentence and leaves out a very relevant context, namely that the self-admiration of Rafaela is preceded by the admiration of her by her maid:

> But I do not think she flatters me when I get out of my bath and she dries me and looks at me with a thrill of pleasure and says: "Ah, my child, every day you grow more beautiful. Lucky the man who may look at you like this!" The fact is that I also look at myself with much complacency in large opposite mirrors and feel in full agreement with Petronila's opinion. I will confess all: when Petronila has left me alone,[14]

> pero no creo que me adula cuando salgo del baño y me enjuga y me mira con agradable pasmo, y suele decirme:
> – ¡Ay, niña, niña!, cada día estás más hermosa. ¡Bien aventurado el que así te vea!

[12] Ibid.
[13] Juan Valera, *Genio y figura* (Madrid: Fernando Fé, 1897), 181.
[14] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex. Vol. VII*, 351.

> Lo que es yo me miro también con complacencia en grandes y opuestos espejos y me siento en perfecta consonancia con el parecer de Petronila.
> Te lo confesaré todo: cuando Petronila me deja sola,[15]

Significantly enough, Ellis cuts the quote precisely to block the presence of people other than Rafaela herself, thereby emphasizing the solipsistic aspect of her self-love. When set in its context a much more complicated structure seems to be involved. Rafaela could be argued to desire the admiration or envy of her maid, who in turn seems to be something of a stand-in for the male gaze. These aspects, central as they are to the subsequent developments of the concept of narcissism, cannot be covered by Ellis's definition of auto-erotism as "the phenomena of spontaneous sexual emotion generated in the absence of an external stimulus proceeding, directly or indirectly, from another person."[16] Apart from being set in a language of stimuli and emotions which can hardly deal with the intricacies of the maid's speech and Rafaela's implicit reception of it, this definition directly contradicts the evidence provided by Valera's novel.

To summarize, Ellis's concept is a weak one, which is highly dependent upon the Narcissus tradition. It brings the Narcissus theme, with its manifold configurations, into contact with the field of psycho-sexual empirical evidence, but it does not control the semiotic activity thereby generated. The intertexts activated by the reference to Narcissus produce a surplus of meaning which is not brought under control by psychological theory.

Secondly, we turn to Freud's first use of the concept in a new text, in *Eine Kindheitserinnerung des Leonardo da Vinci* (1910). It is very limited in scope, but sees narcissism introduced into the theoretical system of psychoanalysis. It inserts it into the genetic language of sexual development. Freud tells a developmental story designed to fit Leonardo's sexual development, but told as a story typical for male homosexuals, emphasizing the deviations from "normal" development. It tells of a boy with a weak or absent father and a strong mother, the erotic attachment to whom is, therefore, especially strong. This love becomes untenable in further conscious development and is repressed. "Der Knabe verdrängt die Liebe zur Mutter, indem er sich selbst an deren Stelle setzt, sich mit der Mutter identifiziert und seine eigene Person zum Vorbild nimmt, in dessen Ähnlichkeit er seine neuen Liebesobjekte auswählt."[17] ("The boy represses the love for the mother: he puts himself in her place, identifies himself with her, and takes his own person as

[15] Valera, *Genio y figura*, 181.

[16] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex. Vol. I*, 161.

[17] Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke: Chronologisch geordnet. Bd VIII* (London: Imago, 1943), 170.

a model in whose likeness he chooses the new objects of his love."[18]) This mechanism is what is now referred to as narcissism:

> Wir sagen, er findet seine Liebesobjekte auf dem Wege des *Narzißmus*, da die griechische Sage einen Jüngling, *Narzissus* nennt, dem nichts so wohl gefiel wie das eigene Spiegelbild, und der in die schöne Blume dieses Namens verwandelt wurde.[19]
>
> He finds the objects of his love along the path of *narcissism*, as we say; for Narcissus, according to the Greek legend, was a youth who preferred his own reflection to everything else and who was changed into the lovely flower of that name.[20]

One of Freud's very few mentions of Narcissus thus takes, as in Ellis, the form of a simile. However, it is a slim simile indeed. In Freud's very vague and general reference to the Narcissus story, the only significant element of the simile is self-love.

Whereas narcissism in Ellis described a rare perversion within the field of autoerotism, it here becomes the name of a dynamic mechanism in the evolution of male homosexuality – which in turn involves a regression to auto-erotism. Compared to Ellis's concept, Freud's use is on a higher level, includes a higher order of systematization and has a higher explanatory value. It includes intersubjective relations such as desire and identification. Yet it remains underdetermined and is still to some degree dependent on the resemblance with Narcissus.

Third, we turn to Rank's article "Ein Beitrag zum Narzissismus" (1911), which contributes to a widening of the clinical usefulness of the concept. Rank hardly provides any significant theoretical changes when compared to Freud and Isidor Sadger (who had instituted narcissism as a developmental stage between autoerotism and object-love), but he widens the pertinence of the concept.[21] Most importantly for us, he reemphasizes and widens the border zone between narcissistic phenomena and the Narcissus theme.

In the interpretation of the dream of a young woman Rank expounds the insights into narcissism thus far attained by psychoanalytic research. In this exposition, every step is backed up by references to the Narcissus tradition. Rank clearly assumes the tradition to have prefigured every part of what is being conceptualized as narcissism. In a quite literal sense he uses the tradition as a storehouse of knowledge about narcissistic phenomena.

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[18] Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works: Vol. XI* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), 100.

[19] Freud, *Gesammelte Werke: Bd VIII*, 170.

[20] Freud, *The Standard Edition: Vol. XI*, 170.

[21] Isidor Sadger, "Ein Fall von multipler Perversion mit hysterischen Absenzen," *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen* 1 (1910): 59–133, 112.

The first step is to assert "die narzissistische Grundlage der homosexuellen Verliebtheit" ("the narcissistic foundation of homosexual love").[22] This is precisely what Rank finds in Ovid's story: in the water mirror Narcissus loves a boy (homosexual love) which is in reality himself (narcissistic love). The connection to homosexuality he finds to be confirmed by what he assumes to be the mythic version (Konon's version), where Ameinias kills himself because of his unrequited love for Narcissus.

In a second step, Rank goes from observing that the woman finds herself beautiful to affirming the narcissistic ground for admiring and creating depictions of oneself. In this context he mentions Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) – where the protagonist more than once is compared to Narcissus. The painter Basil Hallward here says: " … every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter."[23] From the observation that the woman in the dream likes to watch her own image, Rank, through the intermediary of literary and artistic references, arrives at the conclusion that narcissism plays a part in all portraiture.

In a third step, Rank finds that especially the sight of one's own naked body is attractive to the narcissistically loving person. This is confirmed by Ellis's quote from Valera's *Genio y figura* and by a reference to a young man called Narziß in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795–1796).

In the last step, Rank considers the origin – previously stated by Sadger and Freud – of narcissism in the repression of the love for the mother. As a mother loves her baby as a younger version of herself, narcissistic love, following the identification of the mother, has a "Verjüngungstendenz" ("rejuvenating tendency"). This tendency Rank finds confirmed in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, where the protagonist's wish to always remain young and beautiful is granted, but thereafter turns into self-contempt when the portrait, as a mirror of his soul, ages and deteriorates. Wilde is credited with a thorough, but intuitive, knowledge of the phenomena of narcissism:

> Aber nicht nur dieses Abwehrstadium des Narzissismus und der narzissistischen Objektliebe (der Homosexualität) kennt der intuitive Dichter, sondern auch die auf der Grundlage des äußerlich zwar überwundenem, aber doch nicht völlig verdrängten Narzissismus entstehende Neurose.[24]
>
> But not only this defensive stage of narcissism and of the narcissistic object-love (homosexuality) is known to the intuitive author, but also

[22] Otto Rank, "Ein Beitrag zum Narzissismus," *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen* 3 (1911): 401–426, 407. All translations of quotes from Rank's article are mine.

[23] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 9.

[24] Rank, "Ein Beitrag zum Narzissismus," 412.

> the neurosis, which springs from the superficially overcome, but not fully repressed, narcissism.

Rank also notes that Dorian is reported to have a "auffallende Ähnlichkeit" ("striking resemblance") with his mother. From this he concludes that not only can the narcissist turn his love for himself into homosexual object-love, but he can also revive an old love for someone else's body (in this case the mother) through his love for his own body. For this idea he finds confirmation in Pausanias's version of the Narcissus story, where Narcissus loves his dead sister through his own image in the water.

From an intertextual point of view, I think it is reasonable to argue that Rank's text establishes an anagrammatic relation between the general text, or the system reference, of the Narcissus theme and the field of narcissistic phenomena. The Narcissus theme, which is constituted by a system of interrelated texts, contains a certain number of signifying elements. These are now found to be dispersed in the textual sphere describing the field of psychological observations related to narcissism. They are thereby restructured and subjected to the signifying capacity of psychoanalytic discourse, that is their semantic potential is limited to that which can be covered by the language of psychoanalysis. The implication of the text is that significant elements in the Narcissus tradition are, in their psychological aspects, likely to be explained by the theory of narcissism. The border zone between the Narcissus theme and narcissistic phenomena is thereby widened. But by the same token, the irregularity in the system is also increased. The concept that Rank uses cannot be argued to explain the phenomena which he thereby introduces into the system of narcissistic psychology. From the cultural semiotic point of view, there is an increase in semiotic activity at the periphery, which is insufficiently structured by the modeling systems at the centre of the semiosphere.

Finally, Freud's article "Zur Einführung des Narzißmus" (1914) – together with the complementary remarks made in the metapsychological papers of 1915 – represents the conclusive triumph of the concept of narcissism over the Narcissus theme. Narcissism is now systematically integrated at the centre of psychoanalytic theory and the concept completely disposes of its dependency on the theme. Narcissism here becomes a central component in the languages of metapsychology and participates in regulating the relations between the dynamic, economic and topographic points of view, and there is no mention of or allusion to Narcissus. Furthermore, narcissism provides a systematic regulation of the psychological phenomena that have been associated with Narcissus.

With his well-known amoeba simile, Freud here establishes the idea of libido as a plastic energy, which can be transformed between narcissistic libido and object libido:

> Wir bilden so die Vorstellung einer ursprünglichen Libidobesetzung des Ichs, von der später an die Objekte abgegeben wird, die aber, im Grunde genommen, verbleibt und sich zu den Objektbesetzungen verhält wie der Körper eines Protoplasmatierchens zu den von ihm ausgeschickten Pseudopodien.[25]
>
> Thus we form the idea of there being an original libidinal cathexis of the ego, from which some is later given off to objects, but which fundamentally persists and is related to the object-cathexes, much as the body of an amoeba is related to the pseudopodia which it puts out.[26]

The original instinctual dualism between instincts of self-preservation (or ego-drives) and sexual instincts (or libido) is thus complemented by a subdivision of the latter into narcissistic libido (or ego-libido) and object-libido. Furthermore, narcissism is firmly instituted in sexual development as a stage between auto-erotism and object-choice, a stage where, as opposed to auto-erotism, the libido has been integrated, but where, as opposed to object-choice, it has not yet begun to direct itself towards external objects.

The ambition for the new concept to account for the phenomena which through the previous work of theorizing have been associated with narcissism is made clear in two ways. In the first chapter, which aims at justifying the introduction of narcissism, the previous development is summarized and taken as a resource for the extension of the libido theory. It displays an inductive moment, where the observations made are taken to justify the new concept. Freud here lists, first, the perversion observed by Ellis and Näcke, second, the psychoanalytic observations made by Sadger, Rank and himself (in the studies on Leonardo da Vinci and judge Schreber) which led to the assumption of a narcissistic stage of development, and, third, the megalomania of the omnipotence of thoughts in children and "primitive" people which Freud found in *Totem und Tabu* (1912–1913).

In the second chapter, Freud displays the explanatory value of the new concept in three different areas. First, he argues that narcissism can explain psychological mechanisms associated with organic disease and sleep, an area which had not until then been associated with narcissism. Second, he shows the value of narcissism in explaining the cluster of conditions he refers to as hypochondria and paraphrenia, and thereby generalizes the path taken in the Schreber case. Third, he generalizes the explanation of homosexuality by means of narcissism and introduces the notion of two types of object choices, the narcissistic and the anaclitic, and thereby makes narcissism an important component in the sexual development of all humans.

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[25] Freud, *Gesammelte Werke: Bd X*, 140–41.
[26] Freud, *The Standard Edition: Vol. XIV*, 75.

What should be noted is that narcissism is now a concept which does not primarily relate to the human subject, but to the libido. It has become a pure economic concept, which denotes the libidinal cathexis of the ego. As such, it is inscribed in the system of psychic energies, and ultimately subjected to the constancy principle. In a wider perspective, this means that narcissism has left the realm of meaning and has been introduced into the pseudo-physical realm of energetics.[27] As Paul Ricœur and others have emphasized, there remains a gap in Freud's thinking between instinct and representative of instinct.[28] Whereas the latter is phenomenally knowable, the former is its non-phenomenal substratum. The latter can be subjected to hermeneutical interpretation, the former to quantitative explanation. Narcissism thus cannot be primarily known. Primary narcissism can only be deduced from the later occurrences of secondary narcissism, since the subject which would have a memory of experiencing it has at that point not yet been formed. Therewith narcissism has reached its farthest remove from its original definition of a "Narcissus-like tendency." Having in this sense been de-psychologized, narcissism is no longer in any way dependent on the phenomena associated with Narcissus in the border zone between literature and psychological observation.

[27] Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *De l'interprétation: Essai sur Freud* (Paris: Seuil, 1965), 79–94.
[28] Ricoeur, *De l'interprétation*, 138–40.

Niclas Johansson

Narcyz i narcyzm we wczesnej psychoanalizie: intertekstualny dialog między motywem i pojęciem

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł podejmuje próbę odpowiedzi na pytanie, jak geneza psychoanalitycznego pojęcia narcyzmu odnosi się do mitycznej i literackiej historii motywu Narcyza, od którego termin ów wziął swoją nazwę. W przeciwieństwie do opowieści o Edypie, opowieść o Narcyzie w miarę zawłaszczania przez psychoanalizę jest stopniowo pozbawiana własnej narracyjności i aluzji literackich. Podejmując próbę opisu tego procesu demitologizacji, niniejszy artykuł przyjmuje ramy pojęciowe kulturowej semiotyki Jurija Łotmana i próbuje udowodnić, że może być ona rozważana z punktu widzenia dynamiki w i pomiędzy pod-semiosferami literatury i psychoanalizy. Zwracając szczególną uwagę na kolejne momenty w ewolucji pojęcia narcyzmu – od stworzenia go przez Havelocka Ellisa w 1899 do przekształcenia go w normatywne pojęcie w teorii instynktów Freuda w 1914 roku – próbuję pokazać, jak motyw literacki dostarcza struktury dla interpretacji obserwacji psychologicznych, jak te interpretacje – czy „tłumaczenia" w kategoriach Łotmana – tworzą nieregularności w systemie semiotycznym, które to z kolei są kontrolowane poprzez wprowadzenie metapsychologicznej koncepcji narcyzmu w samym sednie psychoanalizy, wprowadzenie, które jednocześnie zakłada, że psychoanaliza pozbawiona jest semiotycznej zależności od tego literackiego motywu.

Niclas Johansson

Narcisse et narcissisme dans la psychanalyse contemporaine : dialogue intertextuel entre le motif et la notion

Résumé

Le présent article essaye de répondre à la question comment la genèse de la notion psychanalytique de narcissisme se réfère à l'histoire mythique et littéraire du motif de Narcisse, du prénom duquel provient d'ailleurs l'appellation de ce terme. Contrairement au conte d'Œdipe, celui de Narcisse – au fur et à mesure qu'il est adopté par la psychanalyse – est successivement privé de son propre caractère narratif et des allusions littéraires qui y sont présentes. En essayant de décrire ce procédé de démythologisation, le présent article adopte les cadres conceptuels de la sémiotique culturelle de Youri Lotman, et essaye de prouver qu'elle peut être analysée du point de vue de la dynamique dans et entre les sous-sémiosphères littéraires et psychanalytiques. En dirigeant une attention particulière sur des moments successifs de l'évolution de la notion de narcissisme – depuis sa création par Havelock Ellis en 1899 jusqu'à sa transformation en concept normatif dans la théorie des instincts de Freud en 1914 –, j'essaye de montrer comment le motif littéraire fournit des structures pour l'interprétation des observations psychologiques, et comment ces interprétations – ou « explications » dans les catégories de Lotman – créent des irrégularités dans le système sémiotique. Quant à ces irrégularités, elles sont contrôlées par l'introduction d'une conception métapsychologique de narcissisme dans le fond même de la psychanalyse ; et cette introduction présume en même temps que la psychanalyse est dépourvue de la dépendance sémiotique de ce motif littéraire.

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The Ajase Complex and Freudian Psychoanalysis: Some Notes on the Cultural Consequences of "Foundational Myths"

Introduction

It is not by pure chance that the foundational myth of the so-called "Western culture"[1] is a tragic one; the myth of a lame king whose quest for Truth brought him into Darkness, a king who committed three major crimes (or sins) – patricide, sacrilege and incest – but avoided the essential task of a hero – killing a Monster in a bloody struggle. The never-ending task of subsequent re-readings of the story starts with Freudian psychoanalysis and leads through multiple aspects – Lacan's version, and feminist influence – *inter alia* Laura Mulvey's and Judith Butler's interpretations being probably the most radical – to the vast field of cultural theory where one faces a whole spectrum of propositions with the "anti-Oedipal" ethics of Deleuze and Guattari at the one end and Girardian scapegoating mechanics of "Oedipus unbound" at the other.[2] This "work in

[1] Like most *writers* I put the words "West" and "East" in quotation marks to indicate instability of their identities; however, they may serve as convenient terms in discussing cross-cultural issues.

[2] "I would say that *Anti-Oedipus* … is a book of ethics, the first book of ethics to be written in France in quite a long time (perhaps it explains why its success was not limited to a particular 'readership': being anti-oedipal has become a life style, a way of thinking and living)." See Michael Foucault, introduction to: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), xiii.

"If Freud's Oedipus is a *desiring Oedipus*, Girard's Oedipus is an *imitating Oedipus*. … 'Psychoanalytic man is forever an Adam driven from Paradise because he devoured or coveted the

progress" indicates the crucial role of the myth in revealing the secret cul-de-sacs of our culture.

However, it is worth mentioning that the idea of the universality of our interpretation of the Oedipus myth that was suggested by Freud's *Totem and Taboo* has been questioned. Oedipal themes and motifs are found in all traditions (as was shown, years ago, by Malinowski and confirmed recently by anthropologists from Stanford[3]), being the direct consequence of generational change and the passing of both authority and the right to the fullness of existential experience from fathers to sons, but the particular processes of maturation and construction of identity are varied, being interwoven into the living body of a given culture.

The myth of Oedipus offers interesting clues if we read it in the context of the legend of the Buddhist prince Ajātaśatru, a contemporary of Buddha, in Japan called Ajase. The legend has been chosen by Japanese psychoanalysis as the representation of the so-called Ajase complex. Since 1932, thanks to the leading Japanese psychoanalyst Kosawa Heisaku, it has been regarded as a basis and frame of reference for analysing Japanese culture, mentality and social relations. It has been claimed to suit the needs of the Japanese society much better than the European version of the Oedipus complex.[4] What is interesting is that the subject is similar: a royal family destroyed by love/hate, by shame and guilt. The inhabitants of this world face limit-situations of suffering and death, and the protagonist, Ajase, reaches – through the processes of self-awakening – toward the inner truth of things.[5] Moreover, both protagonists are foretold that they will become

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forbidden fruit,' writes Girard. But mimetic man covets the fruit because it is forbidden. … Imitating Oedipus. Perhaps this is explanation enough?" See: Mark R. Anspach, introduction to: Rene Girard, *Oedipus Unbound* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), xxxvi; xxxix; liv.

[3] Allen W. Johnson and Douglas Richard Price-Williams, *Oedipus Ubiquitous: The Family Complex in World Folk Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 5.

[4] As Roger Perron states: "The term *Oedipus complex* itself did not appear in Freud's published work until his paper "A Special Type of Object-Choice Made by Men" (1910h, 171). At that time, with some reluctance, he borrowed the word *complex* from Carl Jung. Freud's reference to the myth of Oedipus, however, originates much earlier. In a letter dated October 15, 1897, to his friend Wilhelm Fliess, he wrote: "I have found, in my own case too, falling in love with the mother and jealousy of the father, and I now regard it as a universal event of early childhood . . . If that is so, we can understand the riveting power of *Oedipus Rex*" (1954 [1887–1902]). "Oedipus Complex," *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (2005), www.highbeam.com /doc/1G2-3435301008.html.

[5] Kosawa Heisaku based his theory on the version of the tale preserved in *Kanmuryojukyo*, a collection of Buddhist writings devoted to the theme of salvation in relation to the figure of the mother:

Long ago, in the times of Buddha, there lived a king named Binbashara. As his wife, queen Idaike, is growing old, she dreams of a son, who would ensure her a place in her husband's heart. The prophecy says that in the nearby forest lives a wise old man, who will die a natural death to be born again as her son. Unfortunately, Idaike can't wait that long because her beauty is fading,

father-killers and, as a consequence, in childhood both suffer some injuries which are revealed in their names (Oedipus – the swollen foot; Ajase – the broken finger).

However, there is a crucial difference between the two narratives; the Indian story has never been perceived as tragic, even though it almost perfectly follows the pattern prescribed by Aristotle in chapter XIV of *Poetics:*

> As the tragic poet must aim to produce by its imitation the kind of pleasure which results from fear and pity, he must do so through the plot. … suffering is inflicted upon each other by people whose relationship implies affection, as when a brother kills or *intends to* [emphasis MK] kill his brother, a son his father, a mother her son, a son his mother.[6]

The fact that the story ends well should not be an obstacle, since it coincides with the famous riddle, still unsolved in Western literary criticism, of the "best ending" Aristotle prescribed for a tragic play, choosing *Iphigenia in Tauris*[7] – a play that ends with general happiness – as a superior example of tragedy. Nevertheless, we prefer to link the Ajase myth with the tragic nature of Buddhism commonly claimed in Western thought. Moreover, the intensity of emo-

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along with the king's affection. She decides to kill the hermit, the murder is committed, Idaike becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son.

But the prophecy says that the son conceived this way will one day slay his father. What is worse, the queen fears the curse of the murdered wise man and anxiously awaits the moment when her son finds out how he came into the world. It seems to her that the only way to counteract the evil is another murder: she tries twice to kill her son. The attempts are abandoned and despite her son's being born in such unfavourable circumstances, Idaike becomes a caring and affectionate mother. Years go by and Ajase becomes a young man. One day, when he plunges into one of his mysterious melancholia attacks, Daibadatta, Buddha's foe, discloses the secret of his birth to him. The prince, full of wrath, decides to kill his mother. Ajase raises his sword against his mother but one of the ministers stops him, saying that stories are known of sons who wanted to kill their fathers, but none has ever attempted to kill his own mother. Terrified at what he had tried to do, the prince puts away the sword, and the growing guilt causes in him a skin disease called *ruchu*. The prince's body produces a horrible stench, and the only person to nurse him is the mother. The tale ends with mutual forgiveness, and the relationship of the son with the mother, based on understanding and great compassion, is stronger than ever before.

In Roland's version, close to the Indian original contained in *Nehangyo*, Ajase first turns against his father, who had made his mother unhappy. The king is condemned to starve to death, but the queen, ignoring the harm done to her, feeds the king with honey rubbed into her body. Only then does Ajase's anger turn against her. Cf. Alan Roland, *In Search of Self in India and in Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 79.

[6] Aristotle, *On Poetry and Style,* XIV, 1453b, trans. George Maximilian Anthony Grube (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 27.

[7] "Best of all is the last alternative, the way of Merope in the Cresphontes, where she intends to kill her son, but does not do it when she recognizes him, or as in the *Iphigenia*, where the sister is about to kill the brother …." Aristotle, *On Poetry*, XIV, 1454a, 28.

tion directed toward self-exploration makes the Western reader see the story as an Eastern counterpart of the morality narratives of Medieval Europe.[8]

Should it then be seen as a representation of the unique structure of the Japanese social self, justly regarded as equivalent to the Oedipus complex of the Western world, a variation of the Oedipus theme, or maybe – same story, universal issues, just highlighting different aspects of the plot – opening a hidden postern to the gardens of self-therapy? The answer seems to contain all these elements, since cultural myths have always been meant to support social structures and institutions, guarding the traditional paths of individuation.

Cultural traditions that also influence the possible methods of healing the self may frequently have transcultural import, even though in Asian cultures, as most researchers agree, "the strong emphasis generally [placed] on relationships taking priority over developments of the individual self makes the goal of therapy different."[9] Nonetheless, some of the keys to it seem to be hidden in the (hi)story of prince Ajase in the world of Japanese psychoanalysis.

The Ajase Complex

The story can be traced in Indian, Chinese and Japanese sources, from Mainstream Buddhism to works recently published. Its variations, developed over the centuries, led eventually to "perhaps the most startling transformation of all – the elaboration of the modern psychoanalytic theory of a psychological complex named after Ajātaśatru …, and the attendant reinvention of Ajātaśatru as 'Ajase.'"[10] The international career of the Indian prince, a historical figure, starts simultaneously with the beginnings of psychoanalysis on the Japanese Archipelago. Despite strong resistance on the part of Western scholars, frequently Asianists, who "view psychoanalysis as a fundamentally Western theory that cannot be 'applied' in an Asian context,"[11] the first psychoanalytical works appeared in Japan already in the

[8] This interpretation is justified since the original Indian story was meant to focus on the reincarnation of a Buddhist sage, but in the Japanese version the principal character becomes the young prince Ajase.

[9] Geoffrey H. Blowers, "Crossing Borders: Oedipus in Asia and the Resistance to Psychoanalysis," a paper prepared for the International Symposium for the History of Psychoanalysis, "History and Function of Myth in Psychoanalysis: Relations between Mythology, Tragedy and Clinical Practice." Athens, October 4–8, 2006.

[10] Cf. Michael Radich, *How Ajātaśatru was Reformed: The Domestication of "Ajase" and Stories in Buddhist History*, Studia Philologica Buddhica Monograph Series XXVII (Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2011). ISBN 978-4-906267-65-1. The quotation comes from the abstract, vuw.academia.edu/MichaelRadich.

[11] Andra Alvis, "Psychoanalysis in Japan," www.iias.nl/iiasn/30/IIASNL30_09.pdf.

1910s.[12] Japanese psychoanalysis developed in the 1920s and 1930s together with the establishment of the so-called Tohoku School, and since then has contributed some original insights to the general vision of the human psyche.[13] Japan's founding father of psychoanalysis, Marui Kiyoyasu, was the teacher of Kosawa Heisaku (1897–1968),[14] the originator of the concept of the "Ajase complex."

In 1932 Kosawa travelled to Vienna, where he visited Sigmund Freud at his house at Berggasse 19 to present him his paper (written in German) entitled "Two Types of Guilt Feeling. The Ajase Complex" – a challenge to Western psychoanalytical thought. The paper contained an analysis of the old Buddhist tale, revealing a path of maturation founded not on the tripartite father-son-mother relation, but on the successive stages of the dual, pre-Oedipal mother-son bond. While the Oedipus complex is shaped by the logic of opposition, petrifying the conflict between wish and prohibition, the subconscious and the conscious, the Ajase story shows the dynamic of opposite forces leading to final, positive resolution based on three intertwined motifs: sweet mutual love, forgiveness, and "great compassion."[15] However, they are perceived and experienced in a peculiar way, shaped by Japanese traditions.

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[12] A paper by Kaison Othsuki entitled "The Psychology of Forgetfulness" appeared in 1912. In the same year Kimura Kyuichi published "How to Detect the Secrets of the Mind and to Discover Repression," suggesting methods of exploring the human psyche. See Keigo Okonogi, "Psychoanalysis in Japan," in *Freud and the Far East; Psychoanalytic Perspectives on People and Culture of China, Japan and Korea*, ed. Salman Akhtar (Lanham: Jason Aronson, 2010), 9.

[13] Cf . Geoffrey H. Blowers and Serena Yang Hsueh Chi, "Freud's *Deshi:* The Coming of Psychoanalysis to Japan," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 33, no. 2: 115–26. The article describes conflicts in the small community of Japanese psychoanalysists; some of them based their research on the Freudian legacy, while others suggested solutions conditioned by Eastern thought, mostly rooted in Buddhism, and Japanese cultural traditions. Eventually two institutions, the Japanese Psychoanalytic Society and the Japan Psychoanalytical Association, were founded.

[14] Kosawa Heisaku (1897–1968), a psychoanalyst who laid the foundation of psychoanalysis in Japan. In 1926 he graduated from the School of Medicine of Tohoku University, where he studied under Professor Kiyoyasu Marui. In 1931 he accepted the position of associate professor of psychiatry there. From 1932 to 1933 he studied at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute. Kosawa was the first Japanese to attend the 12th Congress of the International Psychoanalytical Association in Wiesbaden, where he met Heinz Hartmann and Karl Menninger. In 1934 he opened a private clinic in Tokyo, and he remained the only Japanese to practice psychoanalysis before and for a while after World War II. In 1955 he established the Japan Psychoanalytic Society and served as its president until 1957. He translated into Japanese Freud's *Neue Folge der Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse* (*New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*) and published it in 1953. Kosawa trained some of Japan's most well-known psychoanalysts, among others Doi Takeo and Okonogi Keigo, http://www.enotes.com/heisaku-kosawa-reference/heisaku-kosawa (see also Keigo Okonogi, "A History of Psychoanalysis in Japan" in *Psychoanalysis International: A Guide to Psychoanalysis Throughout the World*, ed. Peter Kutter, Vol. 2 (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, Germany: Frommann-Holzboog, 1995).

[15] Kosawa derived his theory from two sources: the *Daihatsu Nehangyó* (Nirvana Sutra) and the *Kanmuryójukyó* (Sutra of the Contemplation of Infinite Life). It is the latter that focuses on the complexity of the mother–son bond.

Interdependent Love

The underlying issue here is the difference in the major figure that defines and symbolizes "Authority," and consequently determines the nature of all social relations. In Indo-European cultures rooted in the old religions of nomadic warrior tribes it is the Father; in shintoistic Japan it would be rather the nurturing, though strict, Mother, the symbol of shelter and safety, trust and obligation. The mother–child relation is in fact a tight bond of emotional interdependence, founded on so-called *amae*, usually translated as "sweet interdependence" (Yamada Haru), "primary love" (in Michael Balint's terminology) or dependent love (Doi Takeo), since the notion itself has no verbal representation in Western languages. The term was introduced by a student of Kosawa, Doi Takeo, who in his book *Anatomy of Dependence* describes *amae* as the major component influencing the formation of the Japanese social self.

"The archetypal relationship involving *amae* is that between mother and child, but this archetype also structures the relationship between husband and wife, teacher and pupil, and doctor and patient," writes Yves Pelicier in the foreword to a French translation of Doi's book.[16] The smooth activation of *amae* should be seen then as a personal skill necessary for social adaptation. Japanese psychiatry starts off with an acceptance of this mother-child dyad, as it reveals the hidden, but crucial, mechanisms of emotional life and their social consequences.

The story of Ajase, bringing a mother figure to the foreground, represents a motivation of human behaviour that differs from Western models. Western psychoanalytical thinking emphasizes the autonomy of the human subject, who, having well-defined boundaries separating him/her from the rest of the universe, tends to objectify the external world. The construction of self becomes simultaneously the construction of the "other," which creates a conflictive relationship with all the non-self, a need for a strong, unified and alienated identity.[17] The consequences are both internal and external. "If this type of selfhood is not attained," writes T. S. Lebra, "(and it rarely is) the strain toward integration is likely to cause the unintegrated loose ends to be repressed into [some unwanted, forgotten space, that we call – MK] the unconscious,"[18] causing stress and disorientation. In the outside world, as Freud wrote in his letter to Einstein, "conflicts of interest

[16] Yves Pelicier quoted in Etienne Barral, "The Ajase Complex, (Japanese Group Dependence)," *Unesco Courier*, March 1, 1993, accessed January 12, 2012, findarticles.com/p/articles/mi... /ai_13886296/.

[17] I discuss the issue of the cultural self in "Lost in Logic; the Strategies of the Cultural Self in Western Culture and Japan" in *Language of Sense, Common-Sense and Nonsense*, ed. Ewa Borkowska, Tomasz Burzyński and Maciej Nowak (Bielsko-Biała: Wyd. WSEH, 2011), 203–215.

[18] Takie Sugiyama Lebra, *The Japanese Self in Cultural Logic* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 4.

between man and man are resolved, in principle, by recourse to violence."[19] The powerful figure of the Other is easily identified with the Father, who adopts "the 'castrating' role breaking into what would otherwise remain a hermetic fusional relationship between mother and child."[20]

If this primordial motherly space in which "a child" can immerse itself like a fish in the sea[21] becomes the model of the human existential situation as based on interdependence, its dynamics simultaneously serve as the basic pattern for developing relations within a particular social group (so-called Mother-Group[22]), society, nature, or the universe itself. This correspondence is reflected by the perception of the social in Japanese traditions, that it reaches beyond the human world toward the totality of things.

Forgiveness and Guilt *versus* Guilt and Forgiveness

The issue of guilt/sin or flaw brings us close to psychoanalytic discourses of the Western version of the Oedipal theme, and simultaneously into the main current of so-called tragic vision of existence locking us within the walls of our separateness. Seth Robert Segall in his book *Western Psychology and the Buddhist Teachings* in this very vision finds the foundation of our psychoanalytical efforts:

> Psychoanalysis is underwritten by a 'tragic' view of the universe ... it recognizes the inescapable mysteries, dilemmas, conflicts, and afflictions pervading human existence. Tragic implies an acknowledgement that time is irreversible and unredeemable; that humans are beings moving toward death, not rebirth; choices entail conflicts and compromise; and suffering and loss are inevitable. Religious consolations are quixotic in the tragic vision. A Buddhist's claims about enlightenment, achieving permanent and irreversible cessation of egoism, vanity, self-deception and suffering would seem illusory in a tragic vision.[23]

[19] Cf. http://www.bachelorandmaster.com/creationofknowledge/letter-to-einstein.html.

[20] Barral, "The Ajase Complex."

[21] Michael Balint calls it "an interpenetrating mix." Michael Balint, *The Basic Fault: Therapeutic Aspects of Regression* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 66. Cf. also Elisabeth Young-Bruehl and Faith Bethelard, *Cherishment: A Psychology of the Heart* (New York: The Free Press, 2000).

[22] S. Scheidlinger, "On Concepts of *amae* and the Mother-Group," *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis* 27 (1999): 91–100.

[23] The accuracy of this reflection on psychoanalysis does not prevent the author from missing the basic elements of the tragic. He offers a vision of sheer despair rather than the greatness of the spirit and shift into the realm of the sublime and powerful sense of beauty present in the

Japanese traditions, stressing the interrelatedness of all things, tend to avoid the traps of individual responsibility, individual sin, or individual guilt. While "the Oedipus complex is a principle that 'reifies' and 'fixes' sin …, the Ajase complex is a story of great compassion to teach that no one is absolutely good or bad, just *becomes* [emphasis MK] good or bad depending on circumstances and one's relationship with others."[24] Where there is no individual "reified" guilt, there is no place for abstract ideas of punishment or forgiveness. Ajase's mother neither punishes him nor officially forgives him the attempt to kill her; she is just a compassionate and loving mother tending to her suffering son. As Morimoto notes, the paradigm of punishment/forgiveness here transcends its Western equivalent. "Forgiveness is not the end-product of a process of realizing objective justice";[25] it dwells in the compassionate, natural, warm love of *amae,* where there are no firm boundaries between the selves, no boundaries between the opposites – just the dynamics of tension of their paradoxical bond.[26]

This paradoxical structure of guilt-and-forgiveness is the core of the Ajase complex. Kosawa distinguishes three basic elements dynamically conditioning one another:

1. A mother's inner love/hate conflict between her wish for a child and an infanticidal wish manifested in multiple ways in different periods of life;
2. Prenatal rancor and matricidal wish in the child.[27]
3. Two kinds of guilt feelings.
   a) A punitive guilt feeling. Guilt as self-punishment for the wrong done. (Ajase is overcome with feelings of guilt after attempting to slay his mother, and develops a painful skin disease.)
   b) A forgiven guilt feeling.[28] A purifying sense of shame for the wrong done and forgiven by the victim. Ajase's mother's forgiveness and nursing heals him spiritually and physically.

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experience of the tragic. We enter the post-Oedipal world where no truth could save Thebes from the plague. See Jeffrey B. Rubin, "Close Encounters of a New Kind," in *Encountering Buddhism. Western Psychology and the Buddhist Teachings*, ed. Seth R. Segall (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), 46.

[24] Anri Morimoto, "Toward a Theology of Reconciliation: Forgiveness from the Perspective of Comparative Religion," in *The Grand Design*, ed. Yōichirō Murakami and Thomas Schoenbaum, 167.

[25] Morimoto, "Toward a Theology of Reconciliation," 168.

[26] Kitaro Nishida and his "logic of the East" as based on the different paradigm; the paradox of *soku hi* (is, and yet is not).

[27] According to the parable of reincarnation, Ajase is the reincarnation of *the* hermit whom his mother had killed. In other words, he hates his mother for having killed him before his birth. Prenatal rancour means hatred for the origin of one's birth. Prenatal rancor led Ajase to try to kill his mother when he learned the origin of his birth.

[28] Cf. Heisaku Kosawa (1931). "Two Kinds of Guilt Feelings. The Ajase complex," *Japanese Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 11 (1954); Heisaku Kosawa (1935, March–April). "Two Types of Guilt Consciousness – Oedipus and Ajase," *Tokyo Journal of Psychoanalysis* 11.

Okonogi Keigo, continuing the work of Kosawa, points out the differences between Oedipus's and Ajase's complexes:

> Kosawa discussed the psychological peculiarity of the Japanese as evidenced by the acceptance of oral dependency toward the mother, the repression of the resentment at the mother and 'guilt feeling over being forgiven' and a need to make restitution for harboring this evil intent. This type of guilt feeling is quite different from the guilt feeling as a fear of punishment which Freud embodied in his theory of the Oedipus complex.[29]

Kosawa's model tells us two things: firstly, we share our imperfections, the pendulum of violence and guilt is always in motion. In the story of Ajase we observe a sinusoidal dance of violence and love, guilt and forgiveness, indifference and compassion – never symmetrical like in tragedy, never based on hierarchy, and never openly conflictual, although two characters *in turn* imitate each other's actions and intentions. Secondly, the ultimate forgiveness appears *before* guilt is sensed; it is forgiveness that triggers the feeling of "forgiven guilt" starting the process of awakening to the grand truth of compassion.[30]

Great Compassion

If we link the concept of all-encompassing compassion with the motherly space of unconditional forgiveness, it seems inevitable that we should look into the long-forgotten realm of feminine Providence. Matricide, not patricide, is at the heart of heroic monomyth, following the oldest (mythical itself) cultural shift from a "maternal" to a "paternal" social order. The endless line of heroes of Indo-European origin, taking the path of royal investiture, kill female deities (e.g. Tiamat) or female monsters (e.g. Medusa, Chimaera, Sphinx, or Grendel's mother), pushing the feminine element into the shadows of formlessness, the depths of

[29] Keigo Okonogi, "Japanese Psychoanalysis and the Ajase Complex (Kosawa)," *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* 31, nos. 1–4 (1979): 350–56.

[30] In the Christian cultures it is manifested in the image of Holy Mary. Jean Lau Chin, Victor de la Cancela, and Yvonne M. Jenkins, *Diversity in Psychotherapy. The Politics of Race, Ethnicity and Gender* (Westport, Connecticut, London: Praeger, 1993), 89. If we consider the exclusion of the father figure in the Japanese story as the indicator, these two presentations of the mother–son relationship can illustrate the difference between the Oedipal and pre-Oedipal rendering of the subject, although the general scheme of both stories fulfills the basic requirements of the Oedipal situation: a son commits patricide and has strong emotional ties with his mother.

chaos, the no-place of the Platonic *khora*. Walls are built – between the light and darkness, reason and emotion, ego and id, man and the monstrous. However, in our dualistic universe of opposite forces we tend to forget that what is underestimated and/or feared, is – if we use the words of Plato – our "monstrous mother," "the matrix," the paradoxical "nurse of all becoming" that has to be faced and accepted.

Western traditions tend to render dominant female motifs as less valid; the remnants of an earlier stage in the development of culture. "The perceived universality of Oedipus complex has resulted *in* the definition of mother-son conflicts as more primitive." Consequently, "it has influenced views of aggressive phenomena as adaptive, and self-sacrifice as aggression turned inward." I would replace the word *in* with *from* in the former quotation. Feminist criticism taught us long ago that the Oedipal transference of eroticism and power in psychological theories has validated the already developed, essential male view of culture.

The major difference between Freud and Kosawa and between the Oedipus myth and the story of Ajase lies in the perspective each takes on the feminine. In the Oedipus myth the feminine force remains locked within the realm of the monstrous, inhabited both by the female Sphinx and the incestuous but passive Jocasta. In the Japanese story it is the energy of the mother-son relation that is always in focus and shapes the plot. Both Ajase and the Queen are able to move into the realm of violence and monstrosity; however, they always emerge from it with some emotional and spiritual gain, which immediately influences social relations. His evil intentions in the face of all-forgiving love become the source of guilt feelings, opening the path to awakening and reconciliation. Her guilt feelings are transformed into compassionate love.

There is no fear involved as is the case of Oedipus; paternal aggression is absent here. The shift in the position and role of a "mother" marks the difference between the disjunctive category of filiation defining the Oedipus-Jocasta relationship and the mutually supportive relationship of alliance – the final resolution of the conflict and emotional closeness – of Ajase and the Queen.[31] Female, pre-Oedipal transferences of Kosawa's interpretation of the Ajase story open a different path for conceptualization of culturally shaped emotions.

Toward the Healing of the Self

The focal point of the narration in Ajase's story becomes a deep insight into the nuances of the matter of interpersonal relations, which in Kosawa's analysis

[31] Cf. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus,* 218.

is perceived as typical for the Japanese and shaped by their cultural traditions rooted in Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism.

Japanese psychotherapies answer to the negative consequences of the difficult task set before an individual by the traditional Japanese vision of society. The need for constant redefining of one's status in a variety of social zones, the strict rules of conduct, easily make people, as Doi Takeo remarks, "turn their faces away from the world of human beings, escape from the pain that is always present there."[32] The complexity of social relations leads to the sense of alienation – of abandoning one's true nature. What is concealed is the true heart, *kokoro*, the hidden flower of Japanese art. "When the difficulty of living in the world grows unbearable … , it is then that poems are born, and pictures."[33] Art, the peaceful presence of nature, the awareness of the harmony of the universe accentuated by religious traditions, participate in the healing processes. Psychotherapies tend to focus on the healing powers of the individual him-/herself when confronted with the natural order of all things.[34]

Western psychoanalysis, following the path of individualism, attempts to provide the patient with proper tools to liberate him-/herself from dependency relations. In Japan, "what the child, and later the adult, seeks is not the independence of the individual, but rather a relationship of ideal dependence…. Individual independence … would run counter to the very principles of the way human relationships work."[35] This aim automatically introduces to psychoanalytic theory and practice the problematics of *amae*, guilt/forgiveness and the awakening of compassion. Lebra, discussing the Japanese self, stresses "a new awareness of indebtedness and empathetic guilt," and consequently, devotion of oneself to society as the final result, following "the renunciation of one's selfish preoccupations." Therapy "induces a rebirth through the insight that no person is what he is by his own strength and ability, but owes everything to others."[36] In a vision of the world which does not differentiate between the human and the non-human, this awakened social sensitivity reveals the potential of embracing both man and the natural and built environments within the expanded sphere of the ethical –

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[32] Takeo Doi, *The Anatomy of Self. The Individual versus Society*, trans. Mark A. Harbison (Tokyo, New York, London: Kodansha International, 2001), 150.

[33] Natsume Sōseki and Grass Pillow, quoted in Takeo Doi, *The Anatomy of Self*, 62.

[34] The most popular types of therapy based on the *amae*-related vision of the social self, called by Takie S. Lebra "ethnotherapies," are "Morita" and "Naikan." Naikan or "looking inward" is aimed at moral rehabilitation; the patient under the therapist's guidance tries to recall the forgotten experiences related to his/her mother and re-live them again emotionally and intellectually (cf. Lebra, *The Japanese Self*, 31). Morita therapy, named after its founder, Morita Shoma, leads the patient toward a full acceptance of his/her psychical problems. In both cases, patients through introspection come to acceptance of the imperfect reality (cf. ibid., 33).

[35] Tōru Takahashi (a psychiatrist at Japan's National Mental Health Research Institute) in Etienne Barral, *The Ajase Complex*.

[36] Lebra, *The Japanese Self*, 31.

the net of social relations that would unite what is still seen as separate in our everyday practice of life.[37]

Despite the cultural conditioning, the message embedded in Japanese strategies of healing the human self seems to be universal. Morimoto sees them as interwoven into the global "grand design for peace and reconciliation" for the contemporary troubled world.[38] In the history of desire, "Oedipus haunts all societies."[39] Our fate is, as always, defined by the interaction of opposite forces, the dance of guilt and forgiveness, compassion and indifference and the ever--present contingency of freedom and necessity manifested both in Oedipus's and Ajase's myths. What we have to learn from them is "how to dance well."[40]

[37] Cf. Midori Kagawa-Fox, "Environmental Ethics from the Japanese Perspective," *Ethics, Place and Environment* 13, no. 1 (2010).

[38] Cf. Yōichirō Murakami and Thomas Schoenbaum, *The Grand Design for Peace and Reconciliation: Achieving Kyosei in East Asia* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., 2008), 166.

[39] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 217.

[40] Xunwu Chen, "Crisis and Possibility: the Ethical Implication of Contingency," *Asian Philosophy* 21, no. 3 (2011): 257–68, accessed February 19, 2014, http://philpapers.org/rec/CHECAP.

Maria Korusiewicz

Kompleks Ajasy i psychoanaliza freudowska: uwagi o kulturowych konsekwencjach tzw. mitów założycielskich

Streszczenie

Autorka artykułu *Kompleks Ajasy i psychoanaliza freudowska: uwagi o kulturowych konsekwencjach tzw. mitów założycielskich* podejmuje próbę zbadania kulturowych konotacji mitu Edypa w tradycji zachodniej w odniesieniu do buddyjskiej opowieści o księciu Ajasie, która została uznana przez psychoanalizę japońską za podstawę "kompleksu Ajasy" – odpowiedzi Kosawy Heisaku na uniwersalistyczne odczytywania kompleksu Edypa. Kompleks Ajasy – mimo podobieństwa motywów i przebiegu wydarzeń samej opowieści – kładzie nacisk na związki między matką i synem, co odzwierciedla cechy tzw. *amae*, jako istotnego czynnika regulującego relacje społeczne w Japonii.

Maria Korusiewicz

Complexe d'Ajase et psychanalyse freudienne : remarques sur les conséquences culturelles des soi-disant mythes fondateurs

Résumé

L'auteure de l'article intitulé *Complexe d'Ajase et psychanalyse freudienne : remarques sur les conséquences culturelles des soi-disant mythes fondateurs* essaye d'étudier les connotations culturelles du mythe d'Œdipe dans la tradition occidentale tout en se référant au conte bouddhique du prince Ajase. La psychanalyse japonaise l'a considéré comme le fondement du « complexe d'Ajase » constituant la réponse de Kosawa Heisaku aux lectures universalistes du complexe d'Œdipe. Le complexe d'Ajase – malgré la ressemblance des motifs et le déroulement des événements du conte – met l'accent sur les relations entre la mère et son fils, ce qui reflète les traits du soi-disant *amae* comme un facteur essentiel régularisant les relations sociales au Japon.

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A Critique of the Discourse of the Self in Michael Sandel's *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*

In *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (1982) (hereinafter *LLJ*), American philosopher Michael Sandel presents a discourse of the self that grapples with the fundamental questions of what constitutes human beings, and how this make-up should be reflected in the ordering of societies. Sandel's book belongs to the canon of communitarian philosophical thought that emerged in response to the liberal project of John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971) (hereinafter *TJ*), which presents a model of society created around strict principles based on the priority of the right to ensure fairness, and, according to Sandel, implicitly rests on a Kant-inspired, disembodied transcendental self that is both epistemologically and morally impoverished. Rawlsian liberalism, he therefore charges, inevitably eschews attachments that could be constitutive, as well as common ends that could make community part of one's identity. In appraising the Rawlsian self, Sandel attempted to challenge individualistic rights-based liberalism by demonstrating the fundamental significance of community, and inaugurate a new political philosophy founded on the common good – offering a conception of the self defined by community, and particularly "those loyalties and convictions whose moral force consists partly in the fact that living by them is inseparable from understanding ourselves as the particular persons we are."[1]

This ambitious venture ultimately sought a victory over deontological Rawlsian liberalism in exposing "the incompleteness of the liberal ideal."[2] However, questions surround Sandel's notion of the communitarian ideal in *LLJ*. Marred

[1] Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 179.

[2] Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, 14.

by its failure to offer a strong, much less concrete, alternative to Rawls's *TJ*, the monograph hints at a scheme of majority rule under the guise of an ideal community grounded in shared conceptions of the good that are left undefined, and a counter-conception of the self that is highly problematic. Thus in the final analysis, Sandel's assault amounts to an ineffectual critique on the micro-level that does little to diminish Rawls's account of justice, and much to expose the feeble nature of the communitarian rejoinder to liberalism.

A Theory of Justice has been described as "one of the most influential works in moral and political philosophy written in the twentieth century," inspiring more commentary and criticism than any other work of its kind,[3] and leading to a dramatic resurgence in the field.[4] Since its publication in 1971, *TJ* has achieved the reputation of a classic, having sold over 400,000 copies in English – remarkable for a contemporary work of philosophy – and having been translated into twenty-eight languages.[5] Rawls wrote the book in the 1960s, when the American civil rights movement drew attention to the importance of equal rights, and when the US Federal Government considerably expanded the welfare state. *TJ* philosophically justified both processes, providing arguments for the inviolability of individual rights and social and economic justice.[6] In doing so, Rawls overthrew widely accepted utilitarian standards of social justice, which held that "morality requires that we maximize the aggregate or average level of happiness," and replaced them with moral principles that respected rights, derived from social contract theory after Locke, Rousseau, and in particular Kant.[7] With these tools, Rawls attempts to delineate what he referred to as "a realistic utopia"[8] by creating a theory that could serve as the best moral basis for a diverse democratic society, and establish a "systematic account of justice" that ensures fairness for all regardless of contingencies such as race, natural assets, or social and economic class.[9]

Rawls begins his work with the contention that "Justice is the first virtue of social institutions."[10] Justice is needed due to the plurality of persons in society, and must be respected over the good or general welfare. However, justice cannot derive from society's inherently relative conceptions of the good or from *a priori*

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[3] Samuel Freeman, ed., *John Rawls: Collected Papers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), ix.

[4] Thomas Pogge, *John Rawls: His Life and His Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

[5] Pogge, *John Rawls: His Life and His Theory of Justice*, 3.

[6] Frank Lovett, *Rawls's A Theory of Justice: A Reader's Guide* (London: Continuum, 2011), 2–3.

[7] Jon Mandle, *Rawls's A Theory of Justice: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3.

[8] Mandle, *Rawls's A Theory of Justice: An Introduction*, 11.

[9] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), viii.

[10] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 3.

assumptions. There must be a rational Archimedean point from which the proper foundations of society can be assessed, and unified moral subjects to assess them. In seeking to achieve justice through political structures, Rawls formulates a thought experiment designed to objectively evaluate historical and philosophical conceptions of justice to produce rational guiding principles acceptable to everyone. He begins by placing a set of theoretical people charged with creating a just social order in what he terms "the original position" (OP).[11] The OP is "a purely hypothetical situation" where the parties must make choices under "the veil of ignorance," which ensures that "no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does anyone know his fortune in the distinction of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, his strength, and the like."[12] They are only aware of "the circumstances of justice," borrowed from Hume, which put them in an environment of "moderate scarcity" where other people are "rational and mutually disinterested" and make competing claims to resources.[13] *TJ* argues that in this position, where no one is prejudiced in the choice of principles, the resultant conception of justice will be fair, as the OP allows its parties to see their place in society from "the perspective of eternity" and to fashion the correct balance between the individual's autonomy to pursue aims and the imperative to meet social obligations.[14] Rawls dubs this concept "justice as fairness," which rests on two principles. The first, also called the "liberty principle," reads:

> Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a system of liberty for all.[15]

The second, or "difference principle," meanwhile, grounds the economic system of "democratic equality." It states:

> Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged … , and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.[16]

The first principle ensures that – after Kant and *contra* to utilitarianism – the right is prior to the good (discouraging teleological schemes that may override individual rights in using subjects as means to achieve greater or final ends), while democratic equality nullifies the detrimental effect of disparities in natural

[11] Ibid., 12.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., 13, 128.
[14] Ibid., 587.
[15] Ibid., 302.
[16] Ibid.

aptitude under the concept of "common assets," which allows people to advance their own individual ends through social institutions and fulfill "legitimate expectations," yet still guarantees that those at the bottom of the social ladder can benefit from economic growth and share in society's wealth.[17] The felicitous result is a "well-ordered society" "designed to advance the good of its members [and] effectively regulated by a public conception of justice," where a plurality of humans are able to freely choose life paths and conceptions of the good.[18]

In *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* Sandel declines to openly assail Rawls's two principles of justice on their fundamental efficacy in organizing society, and opts instead for an internal assessment of the difference principle based on the argument that it cannot be supported by Rawls's theory of the self. Rawls, incidentally, directly mentions the self only a handful of times in *TJ*,[19] primarily as a description of "a moral person [who] is a subject with ends he has chosen, and [whose] fundamental preference is for conditions that enable him to frame a mode of life that expresses his nature as a free and equal rational being as fully as circumstances permit."[20] Nonetheless, Sandel focuses on what he perceives as the flawed conception of the Kant-inspired subject in the OP, contending that Rawls's brand of liberalism inevitably implies a self that stands distant from its circumstances as a transcendental entity prior to its ends, epistemologically limited in introspection, and ultimately antecedent to and independent of conditions. He further argues that under a system in which the right is prior to the good – derived from the individual's external freedom to pursue ends – the good is inevitably and harmfully constrained. It is hence within the Rawlsian self that "the limits of justice can be found."[21]

Beginning his analysis, Sandel examines Rawls's claim that principles rather than aims define our nature, which ultimately means the self is prior to the ends it affirms because we are willing agents and not passive receptacles. Put another way, because there is a "me" standing behind my choices, even dominant ends are chosen, and the self chooses those ends. In one sense, Sandel admits that the priority of the self "is a moral 'must' which reflects the imperative to respect above all the autonomy of the individual, [and] to regard the human person as the bearer of dignity beyond the roles that he inhabits and the ends he may pursue."[22] As well, it provides a principle of unity through which we experience the world and the necessary moral foundation of the deontological ethic. Yet in another sense, the priority of the self implies "a notion of the subject independent of its contingent wants and aims," which is needed to differentiate subject from situation,

[17] Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, 71.
[18] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 453.
[19] Ibid., 604.
[20] Ibid., 561.
[21] Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, 11.
[22] Ibid., 20.

lest the subject be "radically situated."[23] Conceding that Rawls does not offer the above account himself, Sandel deems it a reasonable (however implicit) springboard from which to launch his critique. Rawls, he posits, in his distaste for teleological schemes in which the unity of the self is achieved through experience, from the beginning assumes a moral person that is antecedent in its unity and *never* fully constituted by ends. In light of this pre-guaranteed sovereign agency, Sandel notes that the resulting preference of choice over self-discovery in Rawls's conception of man's nature is connected to both his prioritizing of the right, and his contention that we express our nature when we act out of a sense of justice. While Kant found validation for such conclusions only within the realm of metaphysics, Rawls believes empirical theory can yield the same results within the OP, which consequently comes in for critical scrutiny under Sandel's philosophical microscope.

The question Sandel explores is whether the original position is a satisfactory answer to Kant's transcendentalism. He begins, however, with an objection to the Humean circumstances of justice that undergird Rawls's formulation, declaring that the assumption that individuals are self-interested, mutually disinterested, and not bound by moral ties cannot sustain the priority of right, as it is not shown that such circumstances are ubiquitous in all human societies. While these circumstances might certainly apply to "large-scale associations such as the modern nation state," without "relevant sociological support" this "generalization" clashes with smaller cohesive societies "we can readily imagine" in which the circumstances of justice might not prevail.[24] Sandel cites, *inter alia*, co-operative endeavours such as trade unions, tribes, towns, universities, and ethnic and religious communities that share a common identity and purpose. Why this point serves as a compelling argument so far remains unclear, as Sandel seemingly ignores that such groups inevitably exist within the "large-scale associations of the modern nation state" on which Rawls focuses his attention, where the principles of justice are likely to be needed to sort out competing claims by such groups with cross-purposes. Sandel's own failure to provide any "relevant sociological support" or historical examples for his contention also appears suspect. But to take up Sandel's emerging line of reasoning, if justice is needed in societies marked by discord, it sadly stands as a "remedial virtue" required to repair fallen conditions – meaning conditions that do not require justice are hence the primary virtue for which to strive.[25] Therefore, Rawls's assertion that justice is the primary virtue of social institutions – the value by which to measure all others – wrongly discounts higher moral ideals. To illustrate further, Sandel gives the example of a once harmonious family that falls into conflict. He claims that while follow-

[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., 30–31.
[25] Ibid., 32.

ing the principles of justice might restore familial stability, they cannot restore moral character. Thus when the principles of justice prevail, they do not represent the victory of morality. Indeed, Sandel even claims that justice in circumstances where it is not needed can be destructive, for example when a friend refuses to accept favors without reciprocity, causing confusion about the status of the relationship. Regardless of the logic of these incidental cases, how they are germane to governing a diverse and fragmented society remains uncertain.

Sandel's criticisms continue with an explication of the internal contradictions of the OP in combining Hume's circumstances of justice and Kant's rejection of empiricism as the basis of moral law. As Rawls seems to derive moral force for the priority of the right from a metaphysic of abstract reasoning that clashes with Hume's assumptions, we are presented with principles conflictingly based in both utility and Kant's Kingdom of Ends. Rawls naturally acknowledges this inspiration in his use of the OP, but because Kant's transcendental conception denies that justice can exist in the human situation, and the Humean circumstances cannot satisfy the primacy of justice, Sandel believes he has found an inherent and total negation. While this observation looks initially damaging on the theoretical level, Sandel is forced to admit that Rawls has made it clear that the OP is by nature a hypothetical and heuristic device, and the assumption that potential participants are mutually disinterested does not imply that outside the OP they are not bound by affections. If Rawls also maintains (as he does) that human motivation is not necessarily tied to primary goods, a purely empiricist reading of the OP is arguably wrong. Even so, Sandel's dissection of the original position's potential contradictions leaves him an opening to ask whether its underpinnings within the veil of ignorance and fuzzy motivations are really human enough to yield results or directly apply to reality. The answer, he conjectures, can only be found in the OP's moral subject, which must be searched out. In this endeavor, Sandel insists that we need to deal with the vision of the original position as an accurate description of the human condition, and work backwards by means of "philosophical anthropology" in order to interrogate the nature of the moral subject and find out for whom justice is the highest virtue.[26] In this quest, he discloses, "certain departures" from *TJ* are necessary, and only "hints and traces of evidence" will indicate the way.[27]

Commencing his search, Sandel writes that "before *our reconstruction* of Rawls's conception of the person can be complete," the relation of the self to its ends must be laid bare [emphasis TL]. This process involves an examination of the "subject of possession" Sandel deems "implicit in the design" of the original position.[28] A further description of the resulting Rawlsian self follows as independent

[26] Ibid., 50.
[27] Ibid., 47.
[28] Ibid., 54.

in identity and antecedent in unity, possessing what is "mine," but not "me," and unchanging in the face of contingencies. Moreover, because it is individuated in advance as well as prior to its ends and distinguished from them at a distance, the subject is related to them willingly, seeing them as objects of choice. Individuals are therefore voluntary agents who reveal their nature by the capacity to make choices, and who desire a social system that allows them to frame their own lives. To Sandel, this conception signals that the OP is at root individualistic, precluding ideas of the communitarian common good. The implications of this criticism are questionable in light of Rawls's obvious insistence – and Sandel's admission – that there is no reason communitarianism cannot flourish under the principles of justice in a liberal society. Yet Sandel is adamant that the Rawlsian self, with its untransformable character, inevitably eschews attachments that could be constitutive, as well as common ends that could make community part of one's identity. What it lacks, Sandel argues, is the ability to be "intersubjective" (embracing other humans as family and community) and "intrasubjective" (displaying a plurality of selves in one human, whose personality is mutable over time). Putting forth this criticism leaves Sandel in the uncomfortable position of damning such individualistic fixity only to confess that "Rawls does not reject such notions explicitly."[29] But the larger question is how these observations, despite their theoretical dexterity, invalidate either of Rawls's two principles. The answer, according to Sandel, lies in Rawls's account of distributive justice.

By attacking the concept of democratic equality, Sandel attempts to demonstrate that the implicit Rawlsian self cannot simultaneously support the difference principle and the primacy of justice because the concept of common assets on which it rests eliminates the exclusive moral claim to one's capacities for the benefit of other humans. While the individuals that would agree to this distributive arrangement in the OP appear a great deal like potentially intersubjective selves, Sandel does not pursue this implication. Nor is he interested in the potential merit of democratic equality in the real world, but rather its self-centric theoretical underpinnings. He starts with criticizing Rawls's rejection of individual desert in favor of legitimate expectations within a scheme of cooperation that only bestows personal rewards contingent on contributions to the general welfare. Despite the communitarian thrust of Rawls's argument, Sandel states that his formulation merely implies that no characteristic is essential to persons, who as a whole are dependent on the accidental values of societies, which define what traits are to be rewarded and prized. Sandel also again highlights the apparent inadequacy of *TJ*'s theory of the self, claiming that because Rawls argues that entitlements are derived from social institutions, "*people have no intrinsic worth*" [emphasis in original].[30] Leveling this somewhat hyperbolic accusation, San-

[29] Ibid., 63.
[30] Ibid., 88.

del can assert that ultimately the conception of the person implicit in democratic equality has been so stripped of features and effectively dissolved that only attributes remain, while the inner self languishes, disengaged from the world. Likewise, Rawls's failure to account for why society deserves assets while the humans that possess them do not, and the consequent supposition that a person must, under the difference principle, be the guardian of assets to which the social order has a prior claim, contradicts the inviolability of the individual central to *TJ*. Disregarding the probable justification that in the OP humans agree to this form of distribution in a social contract as a means to advance fairness, Sandel writes that the only way for the difference principle to maintain its theoretical tenability is if Rawls determined that society has a pre-institutional status that individuals lack, and only community has a strong constitutive sense of possession to warrant a desert base. If common assets are to be taken seriously, continues Sandel, it is only possible on the basis of an intersubjective self which feels that people who share "my" assets are not others, but part of "me." The idea, he admits, seems already to have been suggested by Rawls in numerous references to quasi-teleological self-realization – such as "The self is realized in the activities of many selves" and "Only in the social union is the individual complete" – yet Sandel rejects the sincerity of such statements.[31] But having given this critique, Sandel, in his affection for communal economic schemes, stands in the awkward position of apparently enjoying Rawls's distributive cake but disapproving of its ingredients.

LLJ's final chapter sets out to reveal once and for all the diminished status of the Rawlsian self and demonstrate that a liberal theory of justice with no foundational conception of community or the good is bound to fail. Rawls sorely errs, Sandel maintains, in contending that the morality of the right corresponds to the self and its individuality, while the morality of the good speaks to the unity of people and what connects us, as such prioritizing designates what separates us as prior to what binds us, both epistemologically and morally. Hence we are also left with the flawed chronology of first existing as individual beings that afterward choose to form societies. Also, because the difference principle relies on insufficient theories of community and the self from the start, Rawls wishes the good to merely complement justice. However, to Sandel such a broad concept of possession shows that community must be at the base of justice, not the periphery. Although Rawls promotes the view that communitarian sentiments can easily prevail under a well-ordered society based on liberal principles in which humans have shared final ends and regard the scheme of co-operation as good in itself, Sandel disallows this "sentimental conception" of community, which in stressing the "antecedent individuation of the subjects of co-operation" belies its

[31] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 565, 525ff.

individualistic nature.[32] Therefore, the conception cannot acceptably justify the idea of common assets needed for the difference principle on a purely theoretical basis, as Rawls would have to start with a wider subject of possession and a vision of community that would more greatly penetrate the self. It is at this point that Sandel begins to offer something of his own description of the self in community, which ostensibly succeeds where Rawls's fails.

In Sandel's view a proper society's members do not merely advocate communitarian aims, but see community as "a mode of self-understanding partly constitutive of the agent's identity."[33] Thus defined by community, people exist not as what they *have* but what they *are*, directed not by free choice but discovered attachments. Sandel labels this formulation the "constitutive conception" of community, which Rawls resists, but which his theory of justice needs.[34] The fact that Rawls references such a conception towards the end of *TJ* is, to Sandel, immaterial. He discounts Rawls's expressed vision of a community of humans realizing their common nature, claiming that such " 'intersubjective-sounding' passages" are "couched in metaphor" and language that is contradictory in its implications, connotations, and shading.[35] This dismissal is followed by Sandel's ruminations on the reflective demands community places upon us. He writes that the "epistemologically impoverished" Rawlsian self cannot be reflective because its bounds are given in advance, meaning that the self supported by liberalism can only weigh options, rather than strongly evaluate, thus eliminating self-understanding. It is unable to ask "Who am I?" and only "What ends shall I choose?"[36] Thus knowing who we are is impossible for a being that only reflects on what it wants, arriving at a life plan through superficial introspection based on non-constitutive, second-order desires that are not products of independent choice but contingencies. As a result, agency is unwittingly downplayed because conceptions of the good are not actually chosen. That said, it is difficult to grapple with the implications of Sandel's claims. Is he merely indicating that Rawls's conception of the person is shallow, or that a liberal order has a real influence on the inner make-up of individual selves? If it is the second (discounting that Rawls indicates self-knowledge as the basis for choice), taking these theoretical statements to their logical conclusions one would have to ask Sandel if real humans, conforming to his "correct" description of the self (as yet not explicated), are so mutable that a liberal political order would ineluctably impair their innate ability to reflect and understand themselves. If so, the conception of human nature he uses as a basis for his communitarian beliefs is seriously undermined by the implicit notion that the self (apparently radically situated) *has no nature at all* – much less one grounded

[32] Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, 149.
[33] Ibid., 150.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 151.
[36] Ibid., 153.

in a self-understanding intersubjectivity that compels it towards co-operative endeavor.

To put the self momentarily aside, Sandel also argues that under deontological liberalism an "impoverished theory of the good" unavoidably prevails.[37] He states that because in Rawls the principles of right are chosen in the OP while conceptions of good are chosen in the real world, the principles of justice limit conceptions of the good by setting strict boundaries. Also, Rawls's conception of the right does not extend to private morality, and conceptions of the good are only based on existing wants and desires that are irrelevant from a moral standpoint. Consequently, the good has a utilitarian character, but only with respect to the individual's private life. Sandel condemns the resulting suggestion that systems of desire are not subject to hierarchy, stating that, in reference to utilitarianism, it is no more justifiable to conflate desires within a person than among persons. If Rawls could show that the good is arbitrary, however, Sandel concedes that his principles of justice would appear more compelling. But instead, the morally diminished status of the good calls into question the status of justice itself: For how can justice be the highest of all virtues if it merely lets us pursue arbitrary goals? Similarly, recalling Hume's description of justice's status as a remedial virtue, Sandel points out that truly primary virtues such as "the love of mankind" would be unduly inhibited under Rawls's scheme as insufficient moral ideals.[38] To Rawls, then, even love is subordinate to justice, meaning that real intimacy and fraternity are disqualified along with the ability to truly advance the good of others. Sandel writes: "While for Hume we need justice because we do not *love* each other enough, for Rawls we need justice because we cannot *know* each other well enough for even love to serve alone" [emphasis in original].[39] Approaching the climax of his critique, the closing pages of *LLJ* finally give a fleeting glance into the concept of the self in community sought by its author.

Sandel ardently asserts that we should be "constituted in part by our central aspirations and attachments, always open, indeed vulnerable, to growth and transformation in the light of revised self understandings," living in a community not only permeated by compassion, communitarian values, and shared ends, but "a common vocabulary of discourse and a background of implicit practices and understandings" that (in teleological fashion, one supposes) ever enhance the good.[40] In contrast to Rawls's sentimental conception of community, Sandel promotes this "constitutive conception" in which the basic structure of society is an organic whole of institutional arrangements, reflecting a framework of understanding that is prior to the sentiments of the individuals within it, and

[37] Ibid., 165.
[38] Ibid., 171.
[39] Ibid., 172.
[40] Ibid.

a commonality inherent to us all.[41] Sandel concludes *LLJ* by denouncing the world of the deontological ethic as one without inherent meaning or objective moral order. Though seemingly liberating, he states that liberalism offers a flawed account of moral experience in which everything depends on mere choice and nothing is constitutive. By seeing selves as independent beings not composed of their attachments, Sandel concludes, liberalism would populate the world with persons without moral fiber or even friendships. We are, he insists, identified by our communities and "those loyalties and convictions whose moral force consists partly in the fact that living by them is inseparable from understanding ourselves as the particular persons we are – as members of this family or community or nation of people, as bearers of this history, as sons and daughters of that revolution, as citizens of this republic."[42] Liberalism denies these allegiances, ensuring a baleful paucity of character and an inability to know one another enough "to govern by the common good alone."[43] Unfortunately, what exactly constitutes the common good, and how to foster, achieve and maintain it, is left entirely unexplicated.

Establishing no concrete alternative to Rawls's principles of justice other than "All you need is love" and the underdelineated common good, Sandel leaves the most important work undone. Though he has picked apart his reconstruction of the Rawlsian self and found it wanting, the version of the self Sandel offers is at least equally inadequate and disconcerting. As he would have it, the self constituted by community and the history and attachments that attend it is either radically situated or radically encumbered, constantly changing with the community or entirely directed by it. Also problematic is the baseless assumption that community in the constitutive sense is, necessarily, a morally sound basis for the self. Nothing about the fact that a community merely exists gives it an intrinsic moral force or adequate conception of the common good. The contemporary example of the Taliban serves as an extreme illustration. Its members form a very close community, but it is doubtful that Sandel would see them as a good model to prove his thesis – despite their shared ends, vocabulary, and intersubjective and teleological leanings. One also has to assume that in Sandel's scheme community comes first while the individual comes second, or that somehow both come first because they are one and the same. A brief but sobering look at societies where the rights of the individual have been overridden in favor of collective teleological schemes, such as building socialism, alerts one to the potential dangers of such a view. In addition, *LLJ*'s communitarian urge seems to indicate that people should strive toward uniformity, while determinations (by whom?) of the common good yield some justification for imposition – for when love exists there

[41] Ibid., 150.
[42] Ibid., 179.
[43] Ibid., 183.

is no need for the liberty principle. Therefore, however exhaustive his internal critique of the difference principle, or what contradictions have intermittently arisen, Sandel has managed only to destabilize the foundations of Rawls's theory, but has neither destroyed nor replaced them.

In closing, it is significant to note that though *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* principally concerns Rawlsian liberalism's supposedly insufficient conception of the person, in the 1998 second edition Sandel recasts the gist of his book in the preface, greatly de-emphasizing the issue of the self and arguing instead for the expression of personal morality in political life. This clear retreat raises the importunate question of why an account of justice necessarily demands an unassailable theory of the self to be valid. Even more curiously, Sandel essentially rejects the communitarian label, specifically the notion that the majoritarian vein of communitarianism should be applied to his philosophy, and "the idea that rights should rest on the values that predominate in any given community at any given time."[44] Though this statement is obviously a major concession to Rawls's (and Kant's) priority of the right – particularly considering the further admission that "certain individual rights are so important that even the general welfare cannot override them" – Sandel insists that "justice is relative to the good, not independent of it," adding that "rights depend for their justification on the moral importance of the ends they serve."[45] Though the point can naturally be argued, this somewhat contradictory postscript displays Sandel in a palpably less expansive philosophical mood than the first edition of *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*'s amorous call for the supreme good of constitutive community. In acknowledging the failure of community as *summum bonum*, and no longer convinced that the common good can reign alone among an intractable plurality of persons, Sandel appears to indicate that an agreement to disagree, protected by the inviolable priority of individual rights, is the best foundation for society. The good, it now seems, *should* complement justice, while the once-urgent problems surrounding the enigmatic interior composition of individuals no longer warrant such scrupulous exposition. In this battle Rawls, therefore, in spite of his self, appears the victor.

[44] Ibid., x.
[45] Ibid., x–xi.

Tadeusz Lewandowski

Krytyka dyskursu dotyczącego własnej osoby w dziele Michaela Sandela *Liberalizm a granice sprawiedliwości*

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia krytykę dyskursu dotyczącego własnej osoby (ang. *self*) obecną w dziele Michaela Sandela pt. *Liberalizm a granice sprawiedliwości* (1982), stanowiącym odpowiedź na *Teorię sprawiedliwości* (1971) autorstwa Johna Rawlsa, w której przedstawiona została wizja społeczeństwa zbudowanego na podstawie zasad, według których pierwszeństwo mają prawa zmierzające do zapewnienia sprawiedliwości. Sandel poddaje krytyce koncepcję jednostki ludzkiej zaproponowaną przez Rawlsa, gdyż odrzuca ona więzi międzyludzkie i wspólne cele zbiorowości, które mogłyby sprawić, że wspólnota stałaby się częścią tożsamości własnej jednostki. Odpowiedzią Sandela jest koncepcja osoby definiowanej przez wspólnotę. Nie zastępuje on jednak zasad Rawlsa innymi, z wyjątkiem nieprecyzyjnych odniesień do bliżej niezdefiniowanego pojęcia dobra wspólnego.

Tadeusz Lewandowski

La critique du discours concernant la propre personne dans l'ouvrage de Michael Sandel intitulé *Le libéralisme et les limites de la justice*

Résumé

Le présent article analyse la critique du discours qui concerne la propre personne (angl. *self*) et qui se trouve dans l'ouvrage de Michael Sandel intitulé *Le libéralisme et les limites de la justice* (1982) constituant une réponse à *La Théorie de la justice* (1971) écrite par John Rawls. L'auteur y a présenté une vision de la société fondée sur les principes selon lesquels ce sont bel et bien les droits visant à assurer la justice qui ont la plus grande importance. Sandel critique la conception de l'unité humaine proposée par Rawls parce qu'elle rejette les liens existant entre les hommes et les traits communs d'une collectivité qui pourraient contribuer à ce que la communauté devienne une partie de l'identité de son propre individu. La conception de la personne définie par une collectivité constitue la réponse de Sandel. Cependant, il ne remplace pas les principes de Rawls par d'autres, sauf quelques références imprécises à la notion – faiblement définie – du bien commun.

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The Self in Temporary Autonomous Zones

Anarchist schools of thought differ fundamentally from extreme individualism to complete collectivism, and strains of anarchism are divided into social and individualist anarchism. Anarchy purports to be non-violent but is associated with violent direct action. Anarchism has many players with many masks which make the ideology fractious and at the end of the twentieth century anarchism actively evolved into the twenty-first century with a new set of unorthodox ideas which found anarchism wrestling with itself, torn between concepts of collectivism and social anarchism, and individualistic and lifestyle anarchisms.

One of those areas of lifestyle anarchism which caused such friction was the method detailed by anarchist philosopher Hakim Bey (born Peter Lambert Wilson, 1945–). Bey's essay, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone* (1991) claims that self-creativity flourishes in places of non-permanence, that is, in the Temporary Autonomous Zone. Furthermore, self-government can be instituted as long as a state of permanence is not established. Permanence is a deteriorating state to a structured (as opposed to a non-structured, non-hierarchical anarchist) model and inevitably stifles self-creativity. The chance to be self-creative results in real empowerment and autonomy. Yet such liberating ideas were coldly received by other factions within the anarchist movement, notably by Murray Bookchin, who defines this factional struggle as "an unbridgeable chasm," causing far-reaching erosion in the revolutionary and social goals of anarchism.[1] This paper explores the relationship between notions of the self, especially self-creativity and self-government, in the Temporary Autonomous Zone and considers the criticisms leveled against them.

Temporary Autonomous Zones are not a new phenomenon, nor were they when Bey coined the term and published his essay. Temporary Autonomous

[1] Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (Oakland: AK Press, 1995), 3.

Zones (or TAZs) are part and parcel of the anarchist movement and can be defined as the results of "the socio-political tactic of creating temporary spaces that elude formal structures of control."[2] Bey's documentation of TAZs stretches back to the piratical times of the sea-rovers and corsairs of the eighteenth century and earlier. A pirate utopia is an appropriate illustration of a TAZ because pirates created an "information network" spanning the globe. Such networks were primitive and dedicated to grim business but admiration is due to the network itself which consisted of islands, remote hideouts where ships were watered and provisioned, where booty was traded for luxuries and necessities; some of these islands supported "intentional communities" where there were "whole mini-societies living consciously outside the law and determined to keep it up, even if only for a short but merry life."[3] Bey called these settlements "pirate utopias," but he fears that these utopias may remain consigned to history and fictional accounts and therefore resurrects them as models of TAZs. Bey is aware of the line between reality and fiction but occasionally uses fictional examples (such as Bruce Sterling's cyberpunk science fiction writings on near-future decaying political systems which lead to decentralized experiments in living) to stress the possibilities and idealisms of TAZs, and asks: will we not ever

> stand for one moment on a bit of land ruled only by freedom? Are we reduced either to nostalgia for the past or nostalgia for the future? Must we wait until the entire world is freed of political control before even one of us can claim to know freedom? Logic and emotion unite to condemn such a supposition. Reason demands that one cannot struggle for what one does not know; and the heart revolts at a universe so cruel as to visit such injustices on *our* generation alone of humankind.[4]

The search for a land ruled only by freedom which was undertaken by the settlers of the Roanoke Colony – the first English colony in America – is, according to Bey, aligned with the contemporary concept of "dropping out," because the new colony dropped out of the English imperialist and colonialist experiment to join a nearby Indian tribe; they were not massacred but instead assimilated, and thus freed themselves from political control in their search for freedom. The cryptic message "Gone To Croatan" includes the name for a neighbouring tribe of Indians. Later reports of grey-eyed Indians are suggestive that the English settlement moved inland from the coast to the swamp areas, where they truly settled and interbred. The first colonists became "Indians," they "went native."[5]

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[2] Chris Gray, *Cyborg Citizen* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 47.

[3] Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (New York: Autonomedia, 1991), 97.

[4] Bey, *T.A.Z.*, 98.

[5] Ibid., 117.

Whether the Roanoke Colony actually "went native" or not is open to debate but Bey uses it as an example of a TAZ which is just one of numerous cases presented to illustrate their actuality and raison d'être. Bey distances himself from the dogma of how actually to create a TAZ and contends instead that it is more useful to examine TAZs past and present, speculate about future manifestations and even glimpse a potential "archetype." Bey's representations are, however, a "mosaic of glimpses" rather than anything encyclopedic.[6] Once the first English colonists "go native" and as America comes into being, a state of Nature prevails and thrives beyond the frontier, in effect a stateless arena which lurks within the consciousness of every new settler. Bey stresses there was a "temptation to give up on Church, farmwork, literacy, taxes – all the burdens of civilization – and 'go to Croatan' in some way or another."[7] He turns to the waves of Protestant radicals who fled or were transported to the New World and evokes the incidents Hawthorne relates in "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" (1837), where apparently the extremists had decided to renounce Christianity altogether and revert to paganism.

Further sectarianism would thrive better under the freer and more crooked administrations in the Caribbean where as a result of rival European interests many islands were left deserted or unclaimed. Bey claims that islands such as Barbados and Jamaica were settled by extremists and refers notably to the Buccaneers and their "utopia" on Toruga, where they fled from slavery, serfdom, racism and intolerance, the tortures of impressment and having to work on plantations. Hence the Buccaneers

> adopted Indian ways, intermarried with Caribs, accepted blacks and Spaniards as equals, rejected all nationality, elected their captains democratically, and reverted to the "state of Nature." Having declared themselves "at war with all the world," they sailed forth to plunder under mutual contracts called "Articles" which were so egalitarian that every member received a full share and the captain usually only 1 ¼ or 1 ½ shares. Flogging and punishments were forbidden – quarrels were settled by vote or by the code duello.[8]

The buccaneer tradition would eventually reach Madagascar – an island unclaimed by any imperial power and ruled by a hodgepodge of native kings impatient for pirate allies. Here the pirate utopia reached its highest form. The buccaneer tradition survived – despite attempts by imperialists to send to destroy their autonomous zones on beachfronts – in Madagascar, where mixed-blood

[6] Ibid., 116.
[7] Ibid., 117.
[8] Ibid., 118.

children of parents started to carve out kingdoms of their own, and in the Caribbean, where escaped slaves as well as mixed black/white/red groups known as "Maroons" thrived in the mountains and backlands of Jamaica.

In America interracial communities also emerged, albeit in a different fashion. A number of "tri-racial isolate communities" developed in the eighteenth century – the term fashioned by the Eugenics Movement produced the first findings about these "drop-out" communities. The movement's quasi-scientific findings appeared to do more to feed racial hatred of "mongrels" and hatred of the poor. The so-called solution to the problem was usually forced sterilization and as a result new tribal communities were established, such as those of the Maroons of the Great Dismal Swamp, which continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and adopted runaway slaves. Bey claims the zone functioned

> as a way station on the Underground Railway . . . serving as a religious and ideological centre for slave rebellions. The religion was HooDoo, a mixture of African, native, and Christian elements . . . the elders of the faith and the leaders of the Great Dismal Maroons were known as "the Seven Finger High Glister."[9]

Other examples are the Ramapaughs of Northern New Jersey (sometimes known as the Jackson Whites), groups of freed slaves of the Dutch, a number of Delaware and Algonquin clans, and local bands of social bandits such as Claudius Smith's loyalist guerilla group known locally as "the cowboys." African-Islamic origin is claimed for some groups such as the Moors of Delaware and the Ben Ishmaels who migrated from Kentucky to Ohio in the mid-eighteenth century. The practice of polygamy, abstinence, occupations as minstrels, intermarriage with Indians and the adoption of their customs, and a devotion to nomadism – so much so that they built their houses on wheels – are all features of the Ishmaels' practices.

The "isolate communities," especially those retaining their identities, today steadily refuse to be absorbed into mainstream culture or to be politically incorrectly labelled "black." The Moors' and the Ramapaughs' applications for recognition as Indian tribes are rejected by the state, perhaps the fear being that a precedent would be set for drop-outs of all sorts. Therefore the communities and zones presented above, but especially the Moors and Ramapaughs, on principle rejected the "diachronic" or historical explanation of their origins in favour of a "synchronic" self-identity based on a myth of Indian adoption. Or as Bey expresses it, "they named themselves 'Indians'" and he postulates further that "Whenever an American wants to drop out or back into Nature, invariably he 'becomes an

[9] Ibid., 120.

Indian.'"[10] The Massachusetts radical democrats who organized the Boston Tea Party believed that governments could be abolished and disguised themselves as "Mohawks." Bey proclaims that the colonists evoked the occult power of the Indians, the whole of Berkshire County declaring itself in a "state of Nature" and that "the dream of 'becoming an Indian' flows beneath myriad strains of American history, culture and consciousness."[11]

Such visions are shared not only by Americans, as at the start of the new twenty first century the world is witnessing widespread protests and demonstrations against formal structures of control. The uprisings of the Arab Spring are a case in point. One of the key areas in the uprisings in Egypt is Tahrir Square where the Egyptians struggle and fight for a new post-Mubarak identity. Tahrir Square repeatedly becomes an occupied zone, an assembly point and focus of attention for the Egyptians' revolution. In this example there is, however, only limited self-autonomy, as Egypt is in a state of flux (and at the time of writing still partly ruled by the military) but this temporary moment and emerging situation is characteristic of "the socio-political tactic of creating temporary spaces that elude formal structures of control," namely a TAZ.[12] Partly inspired by the Arab Spring, the Occupy movement – akin to Bey's "information network of sea-rovers and corsairs of the eighteenth century"[13] – started harmlessly enough with a July 13 blog post urging people to #OccupyWallStreet.[14] The Occupy movement, decentralised and leaderless, mobilised thousands of people around the world almost exclusively via the Internet.

Since Bey's original essay, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone* (1991), he has reformulated the concept of TAZ into a Permanent Autonomous Zone (PAZ). In this reformulation the difference is that a PAZ is a community autonomous from the generally recognized government or the fixed authority structure and PAZs are not controlled by any government or any religious authority. Bey considers that not all existing autonomous zones are temporary; some are more or less permanent. Certain groups will move into these more permanent zones, which consist of villages, communes, communities, "arcologies" and biospheres or other utopian city forms.[15] Freetown Christiana, a self-governing neighbourhood in Copenhagen, and the Dreamtime Village eco-village project in southwestern Wisconsin are but two examples amongst a myriad of other such PAZs.

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[10] Ibid., 122–23.

[11] Ibid., 123.

[12] Gray, *Cyborg Citizen* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 47.

[13] Bey, *T.A.Z.*, 97.

[14] Andrew Fleming, "Adbusters sparks Wall Street protest," accessed September 28, 2011, www.vancourier.com/Adbusters+sparks+Wall+Street+protest/5466332/story.html.

[15] Bey, "Permanent TAZs," *Talklingmail* 5, Winter 1994, accessed September 18, 2011, www.dreamtimevillage.org.

The basic premise of the relationship between TAZs and the self is that a TAZ can serve to truly free an individual from the constraints of more rigid forms of social hierarchy, and once the individual is in the TAZ with the knowledge of being free, true self-creativity can flourish which in turn aids real empowerment and autonomy. The basic premise of TAZ is a rejection of the concept of social revolution, of which Bey is scornful in his criticism; he asks the question, "Why bother to confront a 'power' which has lost all meaning and become sheer Simulation? Such confrontations will only result in dangerous and ugly spasms of violence."[16] Power is not to be confronted directly by the TAZ and there is no need to wait for the revolution to happen. In Bey's TAZ the classical revolutionary aim of transforming society is rejected. The Revolution is defunct and it is pointless to even want to wish for Revolution because liberation will only occur when the self is truly free, which can be achieved or found in TAZs:

> There is no becoming . . . no revolution, no struggle, no path; [if] already you're the monarch of your own skin – your inviolable freedom awaits to be completed only by the love of other monarchs: a politics of dream, urgent as the blueness of sky.[17]

This egotistical proposal is counterposed to the collective; the self is counterposed to society; the personal, to the communal. The ego in its incarnation in various lifestyles is the idée fixe for many post-1960s anarchists, who are losing contact with the need for an organized collectivistic programmatic opposition to the existing social order.[18] Consequently, lifestyle anarchy – or "lifestylism" as it is sometimes referred to – is not such a welcome principle within the anarchist movement and is often seen as a form of sectarianism. Anarchist librarian and activist Chuck Munson rejects it and denounces it as "one of the most divisive and destructive things inflicted on the anarchist movement in recent years," and urges fellow anarchists to discard their "lifestylism" and move on to a more practical anarchy, one which offers slogans such as "put a little anarchy into your life" and "anarchy is everywhere."[19] But Munson's jibes are mild compared with the harsher criticism which Murray Bookchin brings to the table. Bookchin's rebuttal to Bey's TAZ essay is a stinging indictment entitled *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (1995), a diatribe central to the denunciation of lifestyle anarchism and one that advocates a more cohesive and unified form of social anarchism. Bey's TAZ is one of the "most unsavoury" examples of lifestyle anarchism. The calls for autonomy in the essay are "taken to lengths

[16] Bey, *T.A.Z.*, 128.

[17] Ibid., 4.

[18] Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*, 10.

[19] Chuck Munson, "Alasbarricadas interviews Infoshop founder, Chuck Munson" in *Practical Anarchy*, February 20, 2008, accessed September 18, 2011, www.infoshop.org.

so absurd as to seemingly parody a self-absorbed and self-absorbing ideology."[20] Bookchin determines that there is a clear shift among Euro-American anarchists away from social anarchism. Lifestyle anarchism's main principal expression is in "spray-can graffiti, postmodernist nihilism, antirationalism, neoprimitivism, anti-technologism, neo-Situationist 'cultural terrorism,' mysticism and the staging of Foucauldian 'personal insurrections.'"[21] The "trendy posturings" are more addressed to one's own "self-realization" than to achieving basic social change; there is a sense of "turning inward" that resembles R. D. Laing's "politics of experience."[22] Bookchin compares the black flag that anarchists raised in insurrectionary struggles in Ukraine and Spain to a fashionable sarong for the pleasure of the chic petty bourgeois.[23]

At the heart of Bookchin's denunciation of lifestyle anarchy and especially of Bey's TAZ is their rejection of the classical revolutionary aim of transforming society. Bey pompously derides those who once took risks in the name of revolution: "The democrat, the socialist, the rational ideology . . . are deaf to the music and lack all sense of rhythm."[24] Bey dismisses the rich culture formed by the revolutionaries of past centuries and by ordinary working people in the pre-rock-'n'-roll, pre-Woodstock era, and holds in disregard the social anarchist doctrine and dogma announcing that "Anarchism ultimately implies anarchy – & anarchy is chaos."[25] Bookchin retorts: "So saith the Lord: 'I *Am* That I Am' – and Moses quaked before the pronouncement!"[26] Bey takes the notion of "I," the big "me," the all-possessive self as sovereign: "each of us [is] the ruler of our own flesh, our own creations – and as much of everything else as we can grab and hold."[27] Bookchin points out that, for Bey, Anarchists and Kings are indistinguishable, all are autarchs:

> Our actions are justified by fiat & our relations are shaped by treaties with other autarchs. We make the law for our own domains – & the chains of law have been broken. At present perhaps we survive as mere Pretenders – but even so we may seize a few instants, a few square feet of reality over which to impose our absolute will, our *royaume*. *L'etat, c'est moi*. ... If we are bound by any ethics or morality, it must be one which we ourselves have imagined.[28]

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[20] Bookchin. *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*, 20.
[21] Ibid., 19.
[22] Ibid., 19–20.
[23] Ibid., 20.
[24] Bey, *T.A.Z.*, 66.
[25] Ibid., 64.
[26] Bookchin. *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*, 21.
[27] Bey, *T.A.Z.*, 67.
[28] Ibid.

The only comparisons that Bookchin is led to make are to Hitler and Stalin – two of the greatest despots of the twentieth century who enjoyed such prerogatives.

In conclusion, Bey provides colourful descriptive accounts of TAZs to present his theory that "the self" functions away from the centre of society, in the margins, in the peripheries and in the borderlands beyond the frontier. However, at times TAZs can play a central but emerging role in social movements. Essentially they are examples of other ways of being. They are, for the anarchist, presented as models of autonomous zones which ultimately disappear and could be useful for individualistic anarchist needs as and when necessary. Bey appeals to anarchists who aspire to lifestyle anarchy, who "wish to be Indian" or at least "play Indian" but only for a while. However, Bey's attempts to cajole fellow anarchists flounders around such notions as "being Indian" mainly because there is no coherent discourse leading towards an outcome of the TAZ; there is essentially only a concept but no dogma. The TAZ is too unrealistic, especially for social anarchists; it is too dreamlike and over-egoistic; it is "the self" which is the most valued and most honoured, and what that "self" experiences in the TAZ. Despite the harsh criticisms levelled at Bey's TAZ, his proposal for and illustrations of truly free autonomous zones, albeit non-permanent, show that his utopian poetic emotions value individuality highly and that he treasures his own personal freedom and the personal freedom of others. Bey's essay highlights the possibilities that can be achieved if you want to be yourself and go and "play Indian" albeit for a brief time and exciting experience.

Stephen Dewsbury

Problem własnego „ja" w Tymczasowych Strefach Autonomicznych

Streszczenie

Problem własnego „ja" w Tymczasowych Strefach Autonomicznych (ang. *Temporary Autonomous Zones*) dotyczy relacji pomiędzy różnymi aspektami własnego „ja", a szczególnie pomiędzy kreatywnością i autonomią jednostki. W artykule poddany analizie został esej Hakima Beya pt. *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone* (1991) w kontekście rozbicia frakcyjnego w obrębie ruchu anarchistycznego, którego ekspresję stanowią np. diatryby Murraya Bookchina. Bookchin utrzymuje, że walki w obrębie ruchu anarchistycznego stanowią „przepaść nie do pokonania". Autor niniejszego artykułu zgadza się co prawda z twierdzeniem, że różne koncepcje własnego „ja" funkcjonują w obrębie Tymczasowych Stref Autonomicznych, sytuuje je jednak na ich peryferiach. W artykule zwrócono również uwagę na emanujące z poezji Beya „utopijne emocje", które świadczą o szacunku tego autora dla osobistej wolności. Wskazano również główną wadę koncepcji Tymczasowych Stref Autonomicznych, jaką jest brak dokładnego określenia wspólnego celu.

Stephen Dewsbury

Le problème du « moi » dans les Zones Autonomes Temporaires

Résumé

Le problème du « moi » dans les Zones Autonomes Temporaires (angl. *Temporary Autonomous Zones*) concerne les relations entre différents aspects du « moi », et en particulier entre la créativité et l'autonomie de l'individu. Dans l'article, on a analysé un essai de Hakim Bey intitulé *T.A.Z. : The Temporary Autonomous Zone* (1991) dans le contexte du fractionnement s'opérant à l'intérieur du mouvement anarchiste, dont l'expression constituent p.ex. : les diatribes de Murray Bookchin. Bookchin prétend que les luttes à l'intérieur du mouvement anarchiste constituent « un abîme insurmontable ». En effet, l'auteur du présent article est d'accord avec la thèse disant que différentes conceptions du « moi » fonctionnent à l'intérieur des Zones Autonomes Temporaires ; cependant, il les situe à leurs confins. Dans l'article, on a dirigé également l'attention sur les « émotions utopiques » qui émanent de la poésie de Bey et qui témoignent du respect de cet auteur pour une liberté individuelle. En plus, on a dénoté le principal défaut de la conception des Zones Autonomes Temporaires, c'est-à-dire le manque d'une définition précise de l'objectif commun.

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De-Pressed Masses: Affective Dissonance in Melancholia, Disease, and the Screened (American?) World

The item of clinical depression is a rewarding node at which to enter conceptualizations of selves, industries, and the formation of the individual along the lines of sanity and sanitation in the current and future age of the masses. It is a quite contemporary affliction: an implicit concept of health mingles with entertainment and wellness in vast marketing arenas. Those arenas, those public consumerist spaces, are dominated and shaped by screens and their "talking heads."

Even from a rather scholarly and theoretic vantage point, depression is a phenomenon of mediation and affect. It thus leads into holistic and almost cybernetic considerations. After epochal neuroscientific discoveries such as modern SSRIs,[1] the concept (or perhaps the *meme*?) of depression calls for a new take on notions of media and matter, and challenges traditional fault lines between the humanities and supposedly "hard" sciences.

The following text sketches the complex connections among affective disorder and mass-mediated consumerist society in the case of the USA. It implies that the industries of the self are numerous and that one cannot consider them without moving towards the *self*-ing aspect of those machineries that involve affect and matter. A look at history and theory is followed by telling examples of recent American fiction which negotiate the industry of the selves in a particular manner. Conceptualizing postmodern disaffection or even melancholia is challenging (yes, it *affects*) huge fields from ethics to ontology and epistemology. Western mass society, its use of screens, and both individual and collective fields of affection must be considered together.

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[1] Peter D. Kramer, *Listening to Prozac* (New York: Penguin, 1994).

This rather more constructivist than realist vantage point emphasizes the screen as a vital agent in the "self-making" processes of the USA. I hope that I can illuminate depression and disaffection as powerful systemic states that transcend pragmatic definitions of pathology and mistake or failure. I intend to think about selfhood without supporting traditional anthropocentric views but rather favouring a sum of participating industries, which may shed new light on such notions as media and matter.

*

Clinical depression is a multidimensional phenomenon. Its history reaches back to antiquity, especially under the notion of melancholia: the disproportionate weight of black bile in the system of the humours. Sigmund Freud connects melancholia to lack and a process of misled mourning.[2] Depression can be approached as a phenomenon of a self that is under siege. It is a petrification of an *I*: the fortress of solitude becomes a dungeon. No lofty views are possible; there are only labyrinthine catacombs. Gothic imagery is fitting: tremors shake the thick walls, sunlight is locked out. The slipping thought is called *rumination* and rumination does not only sound like *ruination* but is similar contentwise. It is an affliction of the I/eye: one is gazing at ruins and one is ruining one's gaze. Stupor and exhaustion become steady companions on one's aimless trail and trailing of thoughts. The attempt to frame depression inevitably leads towards presumed industries of the self, towards the fabrication of the calm mind or, rather, towards the failing fabrication of the calm mind.

The term "industry" can be stretched, either towards the conjoined pillars of a society of mass consumption: the production of goods and the necessary production of desire in willing consumers; or towards the fabrication of mind and self among the synapses within the human brain: the spark within our flesh somehow enables an *I* and an *eye* to emerge, an identity that can (and should) then be implemented into the processes of the world out there, of the world that is not-I and not-eye. Ever since the advent of Prozac©, these two materialisms have opposed each other quite openly: on the one side the matter of market flows, of supply and demand, and, on the other, the matter of the mind, the juices around the tissues of nerves and the echoes in the flesh. The postmodern, modern, or simply sane and normal (or: regular) self seems to be a blend of these two sides of matter. How can we (but do not have to) consider mind, movement, and the peculiarity of isolation apart from clinical and medical dictions?

A *cinephilosophy* that is able to include recent ideas of neuroscience and the philosophy of mind has the advantage (but also the flaw) that it overcomes a stultifying focus on the body/mind-problem for a look at (here: imperiled) life via

[2] Andrew Solomon, *Noonday Demon. An Atlas of Depression* (London: Vintage, 2004).

concepts like embodied cognition or the sensorimotor apparatus and not a presupposed self-that-shall-be-OK-again.

Examples of recent American literature can illuminate how cinematics found a way into the genre of the novel. These texts necessarily delve into notions of depression via the even more encompassing notion of affect. These texts are products of a society that is full of screened imageries of selves and worlds. They comment on but also broaden concepts of American health care and its industries *of* and *for* the self.

Prozac challenges any unreflected and presupposed mind–body dualism. Its advent shakes the foundations of traditional humanities, of how we deal with disease and suffering on so many levels – as individuals and collectivities, as political agents, as spiritual beings, etc. Prozac is more than a vehicle for satire and maybe even anti-Americanism.[3] It straddles both industries: mass consumption and the fabrication of a sane (or just calm) mind. The common rules of affection might be altered forever.

To avoid circular arguments, we ought to leave the clinic. The clinic is a place where mind–body dichotomies are truly useful and may even be necessary. We ought to re-fold depression into its larger relations: roaring and dynamic markets on the one side and skull boxes full of electric tendrils on the other. Talking about affective disorder means to put this very term, affect, into the centre. But "affect" can never be a traditionally central term as it rather illuminates flows and processes of mobile assemblages.

Inter-Face: "Selving" Processes

In "Saving the Modern Soul," Eva Illouz considers Freud's impact on the USA and the consequently booming self-help industry. She writes: "No country was as receptive to Freudian ideas as America." Intellectuals especially embraced his ideas as methods for the secularization of the masses, to overcome puritanism for good.[4] The "salvation narrative" became a standard to celebrate and evaluate pictures of selves; some kind of mediatized individual identity politics began.[5] It was entertainment with an educational intent but also had an impact on individual processes of self-shaping, offering a template for failure, suffering, and redemption. The phenomenon of depression and disaffection was connected to larger storylines which could be shared publicly.

[3] Kramer, *Listening to Prozac*.

[4] Eva Illouz, *Saving the Modern Soul. Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 29f.

[5] Illouz, *Saving the Modern Soul*, 40f.

> The [Freudian] themes and styles of reasoning … were avidly seized by American popular culture for two main reasons: they addressed new uncertainties and anxieties pertaining to the self, and they helped establish and consolidate the themes and genres of emerging media industries. Psychology penetrated the real of popular culture through three main areas: advice literature (in books and magazines), film, and advertising.[6]

These three areas are methods of mass consumption: technology and the media became integral aspects of the assemblage of American citizenship. Illouz concludes:

> Psychology commanded an extraordinary amount of institutional resonance that could in turn organize cultural practices around a common cultural core. Culture is most powerful when it provides … a "line of action" that attaches meaning to the self. Culture influences action by shaping the selves, skills, and worldviews out of which people can build life strategies.[7]

Within and throughout this change, the twentieth century saw the rise of the screen – from moving images to an ever-accelerating advertisement industry. A central issue here was the human *face*. Consumers were now confronted with talking heads and faces in motion. Most of these faces did something extraordinary: they tensed up, they contracted muscles and bared their teeth: they smiled. Faces are mass-marketed vehicles of affection, commenting on diverse contents, actions, plots.

In the second century of its existence, the face as the screened affect machine is still going strong. Diedrich Diedrichsen shows this in his contribution to the essay collection "Are you working too much? Post-Fordism, Precarity, and the Labor of Art," Diedrichsen debunks this contemporary network society as an endless marathon of interviews in which even leisure time is filled with communication that serves an economic purpose. Today, the self is an asset: it is constantly *screened* and checked for flaws. Habits and diction are groomed constantly and media products and technologies of mass communication offer orientation and guidance. The ability to smile, a central issue on the screens, is a central issue for the individual consumer. Today there even is a book of faces on the internet which needs tender (and maybe daily) care.

No-one with economic aspirations must send out notes from the underground. Those notes from the underground cannot be commented by clicking

[6] Ibid., 51.
[7] Ibid., 57.

the "like" buttom. Depression, the crumpled self, the flickering node in the network, is especially tragic here. Depression is the perfect postmodern disease as it does not fulfill the ubiquitous call for constant updates in a liquid society with system migration (a grand word indeed). Depression is in fashion and more and more celebrities "come out" about their episodes of burn-out and exhaustion.

Alain Ehrenberg sees depression in close proximity to drug abuse and the entire agenda of Western societies. In "La Fatigue d'être soi | Das erschöpfte Selbst | The Fatigue of Being Oneself" he writes:

> Die Depression ist das Geländer des führungslosen Menschen, sie ist nicht nur sein Elend, sondern das Gegenstück zur Entfaltung seiner Energie. Die Begriffe *Projekt*, Motivation und Kommunikation sind die beherrschenden Werte unserer Kultur... Nun ist die Depression *eine Pathologie der Zeit ... und der Motivation* ... Mit den mangelnden Projekten, der mangelnden Motivation, der mangelnden Kommunikation ist der Depressive das genaue Negativ zu den Normen unserer Sozialisation.[8]
>
> Depression is the banister for the guideless human; it is not only his misery, but also the very opposite to the elaboration of his energy. The notions of project, motivation, and communication are the ruling values of our culture … Now, depression is a pathology of time … and of motivation … With his lacking projects, his lacking motivation, and his lacking communication the depressed is the exact negative image to the norms of our socialization. [translation mine, BB]

These lines shed light on the idea of a society of control rather than one of surveillance. The phenomenon of depression is not centred on one pressuring corporation or actor: it defies the entire territories, the common grounds, of the Western modus operandi. Depression is a vile version of autonomy: the individual is not only independent (which is quite chic in the enlightened consumer) but unconnected, unattached, and unaffectable. The depressed are maybe even *sober*: they are not intoxicated by hope like the sane consumers.

So what is depression *in* and *for* the individual psychic system? Susan Sontag writes about Walter Benjamin, the pioneering scholar of screens and urbanity. In her classic essay "Under the Sign of Saturn" one can read:

> The mark of the Saturnine temperament is the self-conscious and unforgiving relation to the self, which can never be taken for granted. *The self is a text* – it has to be deciphered. (Hence, this is an apt temperament

[8] Alain Ehrenberg, *Das erschöpfte Selbst. Depression und Gesellschaft in der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008 [1998]), 306.

> for intellectuals.) The self is a *project*, something to be built. … And the process of building a self and its works is always too slow. One is always in arrears to oneself.[9]

"Always too slow." Saturnine temperament, melancholia, and depression are issues of time and time-management. It is the spirit that looms above the dark waters; it is the observer of the second kind who is locked into its outsider's perspective. Rumination: the mind wanders and searches just for the sake of searching; doubts pile up and bring the psychic system to cognitive limits.

"Always too slow." Communication between two talking heads cannot unfold if affective responses do not come almost simultaneously. If you have to wait for a smile, issues are more complex than expected. Communicative flows are obstructed.

"Always too slow." The self, the ruminating I, necessarily devalues itself because it fails to use the time given. Smoothness is not possible, everything is jagged and craggy: navigation becomes a full time job and instead of considering the horizon, maps are folded over maps and compasses are doubted and realigned.

It is a process of de-*self*-ing, if we think of the self as something that contracts and travels, that echoes and hums in variant frequencies. Dissonance breaks routines, squealing signals destroy informative value. Now, what if there is a substance to alter time? What if one could make a day into a useful unit? What if one could get rid of the hours lost at the kitchen table after midnight? What if one could find a rhythm again and make use of the automatics of life? Stop changing gears all the time. Just go smoothly around this corner, and then the next. Prozac is a time machine, but instead of pulling heroes and heroines towards exotic places it settles them within the collective time of the masses. Prozac is a re-connector and a pace-maker, calming the serotonin and re-balancing the self's tilted alignment.

"Being in arrears to oneself" can also denote the life under a mountain of debt, the life under a mountain of doubt. This wordplay hints that economic unsustainability disqualifies the self as a member of a group of other selves. Saturn, god of harvest, devours his son and annihilates his economic conatus.[10] Please note how peculiarly time, matter, and life intersect here.

But let us get back to current mythologies: Prozac is dark pop. In narrations, it delivers a thrill; it has noir and gothic qualities because it challenges ethics, morals, and common sense. A collective nightmare about the central goods of time and motivation unfolds. Already a classic of dark pop is Tony Soprano. He

[9] Susan Sontag, *Under the Sign of Saturn* (New York: Picador, 1991 [1972]), 117.

[10] Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky et al., *Saturn und Melancholie: Studien zur Geschichte der Naturphilosophie und Medizin, der Religion und der Kunst* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006).

is almost the cartoony nemesis of Susan Sontag on this topic. But as one of the most famous characters of US television, he sheds light on some more disturbing but valid aspects of depression, of the consumer's self under siege.[11]

How much suffering does Tony Soprano deserve? Does not he engage in some kind of over-*self*-ing? Is not he just too *self*-ish? When we consider affective disorders we easily picture the suffering self and rate it according to our very own incorporated ethical planes and plans. Sympathy and compassion are still virtues among today's televised citizens.

The excellent HBO drama *The Sopranos* lives from questioning the hypocrisies and hysterias around Prozac and the consumerist agenda. It reveals the drug as a powerful technocratic tool that stretches cultural seams – cultural seams that found their origins at the dawn of Enlightenment and civil liberty. Especially Tony, who still talks with a little bit of an accent, challenges ideas of the *American* pursuit of happiness in the most gruesome vein. He is massive, he is an eater and a killer. He grinds down his surroundings like the Western mass culture grinds down this fragile planet in times of inconvenient truths. Tony only thinks of sustainability around his own self and defends his parasitic mobster life with cunning, with guns, but also with Prozac. Tony, the mature consumer and producer, drills and sculpts his surroundings and his brain; he fixes things so he can continue to fix things. Tony builds a house on blood and exploitation, his project of the self is the organization, the industrialization, of what others call crime.

Should not criminals be full with guilt and doubt? Should not criminals be depressed, lose their bad motivations and do time? How much of the Sopranos' harvesting can a community accept? In order to transcend the tales of suffering and clamor of the Sopranos and others we shall zoom out of the marketing of affect-management. Please consider the homophones of the German language on this: *Schuld* means "guilt." *Schulden* means "debt(s)." Depression relates to what one owes to oneself but also to what one supposedly owes to others. The ethical dimension of depression keeps blurring the view. Did we reach a dead end here, with the sad example of Tony Soprano? No.

*

Let us aim for the head now (but not like Mr. Soprano sometimes does) and consider synapses and nerve tissue. Prozac is one of many Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors. It manages the cyclic use of this neurotransmitter on a molecular level deep within our bodies. It coordinates substances and matter on a scale that was unreachable for most of the past. On this micro-level, we can

[11] The pitch of *The Sopranos* might be sketched like this: a violent mobster begins to suffer from panic attacks and depression. He seeks psychological counseling and gets into Prozac while continuing his mafia schemes. The show is a grand subject for American Studies in terms of family, identity, ethnicity, but also of the genre of noir and of cinematic story-telling.

think of depression from another vantage point. This is where we can leave the genre of televised melodrama and the suffering narrative and return to theory for a bit.

Depression is a state of blockage, disaffection, isolation, and constipation. It is the opposite of flows and movement. Nothing is taken, nothing is given. Nothing is a token, nothing is a given. The production of desire is deadened. Depression is more of the same, the inability to be affected – no wonder that one tried to electrocute the bland faces into healthy a(ffe)ctivity.[12] And now we have Prozac, the pace-maker, and it is more than just polemics. In fact, this drug introduces the industry of the self to its constituents: neurons that do not behave as they should.

Please note: this is a step back from screened content towards a screen philosophy. Film is not just another container for a story; it alters the story's and the story-teller's capacities and capabilities. Film is as able to frame the world as literature is – both are attached to the *Geist* in *Geisteswissenschaften* (the roughly equivalent German term for the field of the Humanities). Film, however, can illuminate the phenomenon of depression and affectivity in peculiar detail – although the roaring culture industry, which of course includes screens as economic means, might have contributed to the very shaping of the concept.

One very illuminating is that of William Connolly on what he calls "neuroculture." He writes to the effect that a "self" is not an independent (fixable) machine but rather a particle in a swarm. It is more than representation. Micro and macro collide here: the same applies to the concept of the synapses. Selfhood is made up of these tiny and enormous parts; it is a complex assemblage of the two materialisms mentioned above. Psychic systems rely on matter such as neurons and serotonin (current versions of "humours" and kinds of "bile"). Their plurality forms a social system. Not just any kind of culture arises, but a neuroculture. The consumer industry, the outside, can breach the skull and offer material solutions to material problems – there is a "body/brain/culture network" it uses to do so.[13]

Connolly phrases his approach as follows:

> To escape the curse of reductive biology, many cultural theorists reduce body-politics to studies of how the body is *represented* in cultural politics. They do not appreciate the *compositional* dimension of body-brain-culture relays. By *neuropolitics,* then, I mean the politics through which cultural life mixes into the composition of body/brain processes. And vice versa. The new neuroscience, while needing augmentation from cultural theory, encourages students of culture to attend to the layered

[12] Solomon, *Noonday Demon*, 101.

[13] William E. Connolly, *Neuropolitics. Thinking, Culture, Speed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 1.

> character of thinking; it also alerts us to the critical significance of *technique* in thinking, ethics, and politics.[14]

From this vantage point, the media taken as a whole is much more than *the* or *a* representing device: it alters the entire sociocultural experience and the becoming of selfhood. For Connolly, it has become clear that "attention to *cinema can also inform these explorations*. The words, sounds, images, and rhythms through which films prompt a synthesis of experience by viewers simulate the way multimedia techniques and (what I call) micropolitics work in other venues"[15] [emphasis mine, BB].

This attention to media and image-delivery and image-consumption expands the scope of the analysis Eva Illouz applied to questions of American selfhood. The screen is a crystal mirror: it does not just represent or focus or transmit something "real" or "authentic," but channels the data flow according to its own generic rules, methods and measures. Gilles Deleuze probably formulated it in the most radical way:[16] The brain is the screen – brains and screens are devices for time-management and a site for the orientation of becomings.

Contemporary cinema techniques that heighten our powers of perception alert us to complex relays among *affect*, thinking, technique, and ethics; teach us how to apply pertinent techniques to ourselves; and reveal things about the constitution of time that might otherwise remain hidden.[17]

Our conscious brains are not the (only) seat of our I and/or eye: they are "victims" of neuronal processes and how the world "folds into" the living organism. The wonder of Prozac and other SSRIs is that they do exactly this: they do not shape our I and/or eye directly but manipulate the little cogs and wheels in the industry that builds and maintains our self. In his essay "The Eye, the Brain, the Screen: What Neuroscience Can Teach Film Theory"[18] Paul Elliott continues this perspective and writes that once neuroscience and cinematics are considered,

> a spectator [emerges] who is far more fractured and evanescent than once thought, whose sense of self is not fixed and stable but schizophrenic and centrifugal; whose gaze is not based in simple perspectivalism but in a synaesthetic virtuality that constantly negotiates between all the senses and their respective memories.[19]

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[14] Connolly, *Neuropolitics*, xiii.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Gregory Flaxman, *The Brain is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

[17] Connolly, *Neuropolitics*, 1.

[18] *Excursions*, Vol. 1, Issue 1 (June 2010): 1–16.

[19] Paul Elliott, "The Eye, the Brain, the Screen: What Neuroscience Can Teach Film Theory," *Excursions*, vol. 1, issue 1 (June 2010): 4.

To deal with a multifold systemic state such as depression one must come up with a multifold systemic concept of the I/eye. In order to not get back to the clinic or into the entertaining but closed circuits of TV drama, one should come up with a better response.

Prozac is not the end of the line but asks the humanities to consider the very components of humans. The limits of classic phenomenology, representationalism, and Cartesianism have been reached and science, biology, and system theory have become valid fields for a scholarly examination of the phenomenon of depression. A sophisticated concept of matter's nexus as it is approachable via synaptic processes in time and a deft use of cinematics might be powerful tools here.

Further Reading

Three particular examples of recent American literature deal with these fault lines. Each novel includes a somewhat corporeal, but not individual, melancholia. Each novel comments directly on American dreams and nightmares, but that is not all. Each novel also opposes readings of depression that come from a clinical and medical context. Thus each one tries to escape the suffering narrative and obstructs ethical readings.

Each novel splits selves: author, protagonist, and reader begin to vapor and to vaporize into each other. Each novel works on the current body-brain-culture relays and the media with its screens and frames is not some external theme or enterprise but always-already part of the American experience. Each novel screens the dis-affected, de-pressed masses: not the individual as hero and/or victim, but rather a world that oscillates between the micro-neuronal level on the one side, and the macro-economic level on the other. Thus each novel reframes and complicates the very notion of therapy, too.

Chuck Palahniuk's 1996 novel *Fight Club*[20] deals with the doppelgänger that comes out of the mirror and about a self that is secretly split. Not until the raging finale do we learn that the protagonist actually formed a neuroculture with his evil twin that spawned nationwide terrorism. Tyler Durden is the face under the face that comes at first as an antidote to the protagonist's depressive and affective disorder. But Palahniuk does more than extend depression into schizophrenia. The narrator uses his body in its material and physical sense; gravity and its painful repercussions kick him (his self) back to affection, health, and interest in the world. Physical pain is preferred to the emotional pain of numbness and

[20] Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club* (New York: Vintage, 2003 [1996]).

it even works against it. But *Fight Club* follows the rules of the gothic and the thriller, and thus all efforts lead towards doom: the mind has overcome the body; the hope for truth via physical encounter was in vain. Depression and disaffection could be tackled by martial arts momentarily and the neurons have tricked the de-pressed I. One might accuse the novel of teaching a conservative or rather moral lesson: nothing good can come out of something bad. The de-pressed masses are part of one encompassing system and no spiritual atonement can segregate the sane from the flawed. A ritualized male bonding only complicates the stalled life. There is no body of evidence. We cannot conclude sanity and health just by considering (un-broken) tissue. Pure physics, understood as an opposite to the realm of the mind, does not offer an exit.

Bret Easton Ellis's 2005 *Lunar Park*[21] complicates questions of identity from a less martial but nevertheless equally disturbing vantage point. It follows a protagonist, named like the author of the novel, who is caught in pathetic ruminations and lament about his wealthy life. Disaffected, bored, and desperate characters populate this stale American Dream. Cheesy storylines develop and Ellis the author drags Ellis the protagonist into a clumsy copy of a suffering narrative. By questioning authenticity as a whole Ellis (the author) succeeds in questioning the means of authentication of depression. How can we rank suffering in the first place? Especially at a time when cinematic screens and mass-marketed narratives have infiltrated our most intimate aspects of our private lives, how could we even decide what kind of therapy might be an appropriate healing process? *Lunar Park* also negotiates the weight of matter as stuff that over-saturates and intoxicates the postmodern selves. The cold, cold moon (a *lunatic* space indeed!) does not offer any air and a reduced gravity. It is grey from every perspective. As a monochromatic park it is bored and boring. Ellis writes the opposite of a sentimental novel by concentrating on stupidity, senselessness, and hypochondriacs that live and breathe in a de-pressed mass society. It is a strange form of catharsis, not ending the story but undoing it. A nihilistic lesson comes to the fore – an allegory without gravity debunks civilized assemblages as floating through moral, ontological and epistemological wasteland.

As one of the greatest novels of the 1990s, David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*[22] is composed of a hefty heap of American panoramas. Set in the near future, it sketches the means and methods of various characters in an overtired screen-addicted society of mass consumption and wastage. Two of them are Hal Incandenza and Don Gately: while the former follows the principle of the arcade classic *Pong*, the latter seems to be enclosed in the world of *Pac-Man*. Adolescent Hal is schooled as a tennis ace to amuse the masses in televised tournaments and competitions. Like Orin, his older brother, he will be ruined physically and men-

[21] Bret Easton Ellis, *Lunar Park* (New York: Vintage, 2006 [2005]).

[22] David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1997 [1996]).

tally once he reaches his thirties and escapes the entertainment circuits. Don is a recovering drug addict and haunts a half-way house. The thrills, highs, and lows of his former life are replaced by the mundane routines of the poor – knowing of his economic failure, Don begins to retire mentally. He spends the last passages of the novel in a coma, locked into the de-pressed mass of his body and chased by ghosts through endless hall ways. Both characters of the *Infinite Jest* get crushed in their cognitive and bodily dimension in equal measure. Wallace questions the traditional dichotomy of body and soul, replacing it with a holistic notion of prostration and fatigue. Thus this novel's ethical impetus might be a systemic lesson, alluding to a multiplicity of gravities that lurk among synapses, fibers, and tendrils connecting the industries of the self and the industries of the masses. The ubiquitous screening of affects and the system problem of disaffections plays a crucial role in the *Infinite Jest* as it does in *Fight Club* and *Lunar Park*.

Conclusion

Cinematics and a conjoined cinephilosophy can enable scholars to consider screens as a valid tool to monitor processes in and among social and psychic systems. Film is framing the world and constantly confronting diverse domains of power, of empowering affects. When the self is under siege, its territory is disputed. Influence and governances are questioned and challenged. The melancholic self questions its coherence, its *eye* and its *I* in this world, while film is capable of playing with both. This neurocultural perspective can be visualized via cinematic means without necessarily being exercised in and on film alone: the brief excursion into recent American fiction was supposed to show that film is not a rival to literature but has infiltrated intellectual ventilations concerning mental processes and a mass society's modi operandi as a whole.

Scholars must not leave depression and melancholia to the clinics. They must also not leave the machinery of screens as monitors and emitters of affect to the cinema halls. At an intersection of both fields the self-industries are set. Right here, one could come up with a decent concept of the brain as a material and a mediating entity. Neuroscientist David Eagleman wrote the following phrase, and I think it describes both the processes of synaptic affection and scholarly work in general: "There is always disputed territory. It is the interaction within this substantial administration that determines the random walk of the world: everything interesting happens at the borders between domains of power."[23]

[23] David Eagleman, *Sum* (London: Vintage, 2010), 77.

Benjamin Betka

Przy-gnębione masy: emocjonalny dysonans w melancholii, chorobie i kontrolowanym/wyświetlanym (amerykańskim?) świecie

Streszczenie

Wszechobecność diagnoz takich jak depresja i syndrom wypalenia na Zachodzie może oznaczać rowinięcie się społecznego paradygmatu inwigilacji w paradygmat (samo-)kontroli – czarna żółć melancholii zastąpiona została wizją wadliwego mózgu. Pojęcia takie jak ucieleśnienie poznania oraz teoria afektów pomagają przyjąć punkt widzenia, który przekracza przestarzałe wersje humanizmu i przyjazne konsumentowi narracje na temat cierpienia. Sztuka i literatura stają się równoprawnymi partnerami w tym dialogu, szczególnie gdy przyjmie się kinematograficzną, a zatem nieantropocentryczną rzeczywistość, wiele ukrytych redukcjonizmów i normatywizmów wychodzi na jaw: dzieła tematyzujące ostrożne transgresje, takie jak najnowsze amerykańskie powieści (*Fight Club* Chucka Palahniuka, *Lunar Park* Breta Eastona Ellisa, a także *Infinite Jest* Davida Fostera Wallace'a), pozwalają zobaczyć ów wiek przy-gnębionych mas.

Benjamin Betka

Les masses a-battues : dissonance émotionnelle dans la mélancolie, la maladie et l'univers contrôlé

Résumé

L'omniprésence des diagnostics tels que la dépression et le syndrome d'épuisement professionnel à l'Ouest peut signifier la transformation du paradigme social de surveillance en paradigme de l'(auto)-contrôle – l'imagerie du cerveau défectueux a remplacé la bile noire de la mélancolie. Les concepts tels que l'*embodiment* et la théorie de l'affect aident à adopter le point de vue qui transgresse les versions désuètes de l'humanisme et les narrations sur la souffrance favorables au lecteur. L'art et la littérature deviennent des partenaires égaux dans ce dialogue, particulièrement au moment où l'on adoptera une réalité cinématographique – c'est-à-dire non anthropocentrique – parce que c'est justement dans cette occurrence que beaucoup de réductionnismes cachés et normativismes se font voir : les ouvrages présentant des transgressions prudentes tels que les plus récents romans américains (*Fight Club* de Chuck Palahniuk, *Lunar Park* de Bret Easton Ellis, mais également *L'Infinie Comédie* de David Foster Wallace) permettent de voir ce siècle des masses a-battues.

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Narcissus's Narcosis: Formation of Self, Disintegration of Self: A Question of Interactive Entertainment and Player-Character Identity Correlation

> Man only plays when in the full meaning of the word he is a man,
> and he is only completely a man when he plays.
>
> Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*

Narcissus, *Australopithecus* That Became *Homo Ludens*

There is a painting by Caravaggio, depicting Narcissus transfixed by his own image reflected in the surface of a pond. The background of the work is murky and dim, seemingly depthless. The character's arms and their reflection in the surface form an almost complete circle, with the barely noticeable division of a thin film of water. The boundary between the real and the imaginary is hardly distinguishable, with Narcissus's hands reaching into the ephemeral world of light play on the mirror-like surface. Bearing in mind this particular imaging, it is interesting to now look at two typical representations depicting people partaking in two forms of modern entertainment – watching TV and playing video games. What is so fascinating about these portrayals is the fact that people involved in the former are presented usually with their hands behind their backs, or supporting themselves in various configurations. Images representing the latter form of entertainment depict scenes very much like that of Caravaggio's Narcissus. Characters, by holding various controllers, are reaching towards the image within the image; they are enclosing the space within the representation, forming a link

between the virtual and actual world. These dual representations may serve as an indicator that the two forms of entertainment, although at first glance similar (both are received through a mixture of visual and aural perceptions, both create a simulacrum of reality), differ in many respects.

Marshall McLuhan perceived television as a cool medium – one that forces the participant to become mentally and emotionally involved. According to the philosopher, "the TV will not work as background. It engages you. You have to be with it."[1] In comparison, interactive entertainment becomes cool and, through that, engaging, to the point when without some form of participation it becomes almost completely static – the theoretical point of media absolute zero. The previously mentioned "reaching towards" the image underlines the importance of one factor that differentiates the playing of video games (or any games for that matter) from other forms of entertainment – interactivity. Game pads and joysticks, like no other tools before, allow participants to break the surface tension of a reflective surface and reach towards the character on the other side. The degree of involvement in video games is, therefore, different from that of TV, as it is based on interaction and not mere observation of the show. It is like the difference between being in the audience and taking a playing part in a theatrical performance. Involvement in the medium of TV requires attention but not reaction (at least not on the conscious level), while playing games calls for both. This phenomenon is not an emergent factor, like critical examination of writing or psychological analysis, but rather it is artificially created with the aim that the object is to be acted upon. Interactive entertainment, unlike any other medium or art form, offers the participant a unique opportunity to become incorporated in the creation process of the work itself. While in traditional narratives of novels, dramas, or movies the author remains a chthonic deity, below every perceivable surface of the work, in virtual worlds he or she becomes merely a partaker and a fellow player. Literary or cinematographic work is delivered as a finished product – the participant is asked to perceive, while any interpretations are external. The internal aspect of game interpretation comes from the fact that games require the participants to dynamically act upon the medium in order to further the narrative development. Tom Bissell provides a practical example of such a situation:

> A late *Mass Effect* mission involves an assault on an enemy stronghold. While you are discussing your strategy, an unexpected revelation of what is inside the stronghold causes one of your squad mates to object to the mission's objective, which could place the survival of his race in peril. Your attempt to reason with him along "the good of the many" lines causes him to march off and sulk on the strand of a nearby lake.

[1] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge, 2001), 334.

> When you walk over to talk some sense into your squad mate, the conversation quickly escalates and, suddenly, you find yourself in a Mexican standoff.[2]

With novels and movies the audience's only involvement in furthering the story can be just to bear with the author and wait for the plot to develop. Video games advance the action to a point where without active involvement all that is to be seen is a static choice panel. While 1950s and 1960s science fiction movies ended with that inert screen and left the audience with the question "What would you do?," games begin at that point, forcing players to make their own choices. The buzzword of today's game industry is C&C, choices and consequences, allowing the players to create their own version of events. Interactive entertainment provides an easily accessible venue for creation and involvement, for reaching within the work and shaping the outcome with the very hands that broke the reflective plane. What surfaces from within is then not only the contrived "what the author had in mind" but is just as much a reflection upon the participants/players themselves – a psychoanalysis constructed of a binary code.

In McLuhan's view, media are the extension of our psyche. Just as a hammer may be seen as an extension of the fist, so the video game can be perceived as a projected purpose, a means to a certain end. The hammer drives the nails into the wood, and interactive entertainment, well, entertains, but that is not what was first investigated by McLuhan and now is pondered upon here. The philosopher considered rather the question of the relation between the extension and the "extendee," an issue of how the action of wielding a hammer influences the one that holds it (resulting in "the law of the instrument" or "a golden hammer"). What sort of psyche is then extended by the likes of *World of Warcraft* or *Counter-Strike*? Here, a look back to the previously discussed depictions may prove illuminating. Images of players, though presenting both the actor and the method – a game controller – lack the presence behind the screen, the yang to the players' ying, their game characters. Without them the picture remains incomplete, similar to the action of gazing into the mirror and seeing just the silvery surface. Games are interactive; to act, however, the player must possess a certain in-game alter-ego, a prosthetic identity, granting the entrance and an executive power in the game environment. This identity may be as simple as a flashing dot, indicating "you are here," or as complex and well defined as meticulously developed characters of modern cRPG titles. In video game prehistory these identities took the form of paddles, tanks and other barely defined shapes representing spaceships or airplanes. Their existence was defined by performative function – they were there just to designate the place of action, a virtual limb into the virtual world. If all you had was a yellow circle with a munching mouth, every-

[2] Tom Bissell, *Extra Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010), 61.

thing looked like a potential snack. However, similarly to the biological world, the characters evolved, acquiring identities and personalities. When in previous iterations these characters would happily jump off a cliff if forced to, now they advanced to a point where outright disagreement with a player's actions is not out of question. Characters and game worlds became more and more sophisticated, leading to a situation in which it was possible to allow not only a human guided re-run of the established role, but creation and performance of whatever persona the gamer imagined within the limits of the work. At this moment the player began to explore the strata of the self as much as the game world.

Liquid Crystal Display

Marshal McLuhan once stated that "the Greek myth of Narcissus is directly concerned with a fact of human experience, as the word Narcissus indicates. It is from the Greek word narcosis, or numbness. The youth Narcissus … became the servomechanism of his own extended or repeated image. … He had adapted to his extension of himself and had become a closed system."[3] The games of old, with their ancient paddles and tanks, could not form this mechanical symbiosis with the players due to their simplicity. Gamers looking into the screen did not see anything like their reflection. The prehistory of this medium required quite some imagination to perceive a barely recognizable group of pixels as a character and consequently form any relation with it. The high-quality graphics of modern games not only makes them look good, bringing the audience/participants in through aesthetical allure, but allows more players to identify better with their characters. But the graphical hyper-realities of video games are only one aspect of the digital ego massage. A more intangible development is connected with the greater emphasis on character customization – through the fact that the reflected image has become clearer and sharper. This is where the reasons for growing popularity of video games may lie – the better the reflection, the greater the identification, resulting in the increasing appeal of video games. The servomechanism of interactive entertainment is becoming more and more compatible through the adaptation to the image of the participant; the closed circuit of these systems is formed with the disappearance of differences. However, video games do not provide a perfect image of reflected reality – they are a simulacrum, a construct that hides the lack of any reality. This is where the metaphor of a mirror proves to be inferior to the Caravaggio's visualization. A mirror-like surface forms an impassable barrier, while the watery screen invites change, encourages dabbling in the

[3] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 51.

medium. Modern video games transpire in the liquid crystal environment on more levels than just this particular technological solution.

However, it is important to remember that game participants construct their characters within the limits of an established world; they are not photocopying themselves into the game milieu, but recreating and re-imagining under constrains of that world. Narcissus did not fall in love with himself, but with an image produced, with a construct created by the medium of a reflective surface. The narcotic of interactive entertainment is the ability to become numb to those aspects of self that are considered redundant, and the self-amputation of playing video games is the ability to choose only a particular portion of "me" to become active. For McLuhan the reason behind this self-mutilation is "an immediate relief of strain on the central nervous system [that] applies very readily to the origin of the media of communication from speech to computer."[4] The reasons why such relief is needed become readily visible when we look at two different types of gamers, the so-called casual and hard-core players.

The "I" in the Industry

Ostensibly, the division lies in the time spent playing any game. While casual players tend to spend a few hours on gaming a week, hard-core gamers could be "playing five to six hours a day on weekdays and at least ten hours a day on weekends."[5] The differences, however, do not stop there. The approach and method of how someone is playing the game also differ between these two groups. The former group will approach it as any other type of entertainment, picking it up now and again, playing for the aesthetical value of a given product, or as a form of social interaction. Hard-core gamers will play for the challenge and excitement, approaching the game as a test of skills and ingenuity. This in turn may lead to such negative aspects of gaming as "grinding" the game – perform repetitive actions that allow the advancement of player character level, and "gold farming" – the practice of gathering a large amount of in-game currency (mostly in MMORPGs, that is massively multiplayer online role-playing games), and then selling the currency to other players for real world cash. McLuhan perceived technology as a counter-irritant that aids "the equilibrium of the physical organs which protect the central nervous system."[6] He viewed pleasure as

[4] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 53.

[5] Tyrone Adams and Stephen A. Smith, *Electronic Tribes: The Virtual Worlds of Geeks, Gamers, Shamans, and Scammers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 114.

[6] McLuhan, *Understanding Media,* 53.

a counter-irritant, and comfort simply as the absence of irritants. In that respect even the two gaming styles reflect upon the character of the participants. Hard-core players seek the stimulation of the new and unexpected, while casual gamers look for reassuring customs and comfortable regularity. The identities of players are not only represented by the particular characters they choose, but even by the method in which the game is played. The therapeutic function of interactive entertainment is positioned, therefore, as much within the artifact itself, as in the very way this product is approached and used – its value lies both in producing an anesthetic comfort zone and a ground for an active, participative experience.

Interestingly, the existence of these two different groups of players influences the course of development in the game industry itself. In a way, the gaming public rewrites not only the role of the particular characters it is playing, but also the entire genre. Interactive entertainment is to a large extent (if not completely) a commercially oriented activity, and, therefore, susceptible to pressures of the economic mechanisms of supply and demand. While literary and cinematographic works have established recognition as art forms outside their particular field, a certain acknowledgment of value, given by general public, video games are usually appreciated only within their own community. A good example here may be the national media hype connected with the release of *The Witcher 2*, a 2011 Polish cRPG title. The reaction of the mass media in Poland was to a large extent not connected with appreciation of the game as a high-quality product in its own right, but an expression of an almost jingoistic "Yes, we can!" (with the usual addendum "make a profit"). That aspect, connected with the players' expectations of a high-end product, whose production involves a great amount of effort and capital, results in orienting games toward sales figures and not artistic achievements. With that comes the fact that the success of a given product in this sector is measured mainly in cash turnover. Stating the obvious, games are produced to make money, and they do so if they tap into the larger share of the market. Products previously known for their hard-core game-play appeal become streamlined to make them accessible to the larger portion of the gaming community – not for egalitarian reasons, but for a purely economical rationale. This in turn causes a backlash from hard-core aficionados, leading to the formation of an opposition not unlike that between the apparent division between high and low culture. Elitism and a perceived higher moral ground serve as another identity-forming factor in the player's self-perception.

The self in question is often the product of a natural process, one that comes from the interrelation of a player and a game, but it is often artificially created through presuppositions based on the player's perceived characteristics. The self industry of interactive entertainment may be, therefore, understood as two different phenomena. Firstly, it is the psychological process of a player's involvement in the creation and reenactment of a game character; a course of forming

an identity located on the border between the character and the player. Secondly, it may be interpreted as conscious attempts to manufacture and orient a player's development; the Pavlovian conditioning, based on the supposed target market for a given product, done for the reasons stated above. This, in turn, results in the atrophying of the players' development, forcing them to follow a certain path. Tom Bissell notes that:

> The success of the first *Resident Evil* established the permissibility of a great game that happened to be stupid. This set the tone for half a decade of savagely unintelligent games and helped to create an unnecessary hostility between the greatness of a game and the sophistication of things such as narrative, dialogue, dramatic motivation, and characterization. In accounting for this state of affairs, many game designers have, over the years, claimed that gamers do not much think about such highfaluting matters. This may or may not be largely true. But most gamers do not care because they have been trained by game designers not to care.[7]

The perception of self is more pronounced in interactive entertainment, as it may be directly linked to the commercial success or failure of a given product. Matching the game aspects to the needs of a particular sector results in an improved reception, which in turn leads to creation of many digital "niches" catering for even the most obscure player's needs. With the development of worldwide communication systems, these niches are allowed to flourish without having to compete with industry giants. The village green of the global village allows the big players to take the centre of the field, while preserving the edges for a carnival of sideshows. In these circumstances participants in electronic entertainment are offered a chance to develop in any way they see fit, and create a subjective experience, depending mostly on the position they want to take.

What Does "+3 to Strength" Mean in the Real World?

Despite all these circumstantial means of influencing the player's self-development, there are other, more direct methods of player's inscription into the virtual world. First is the customization of a game character, the demiurgic act of assembling our alter-ego. The very possibility of being able to even superficially create the means of entering the simulation allows players to enhance their involvement. The opportunity to influence in any way the figure wielding your sword, carry-

[7] Bissell, *Extra Lives*, 16–17.

ing your gun, or driving your car confers a possibility to develop personal attachment to this individual. To paraphrase McLuhan's catchphrase, the message of electronic entertainment media is the massage of identity, the possibility of a safe and controlled out-of-body experience. The modern Narcissus is not only gazing into the surface of the pond, but he is able to shape the image to his liking, use the reflection not only as a reality check, but as a method of expression, and of the articulation of conscious and unconscious desires. As a practical example of this trend it may prove worth examining one of the most well known products of the genre. Of all the protagonists of the *Grand Theft Auto* series, the least favourite among the fans[8] is Claude – the main hero of the first iteration. He is also the least customizable and developed, being literally speechless (though other characters in the game are usually fully voiced) and with looks that remain unchanged throughout the whole game (while in other parts of the series the player is able to modify their characters from the clothes they are wearing to hairstyles and physique). Despite the fact that all four main characters possess a certain prescribed personality, the player's choice of how to influence something as basic as their looks remains an important factor in immersion into the game world and character association.

The visual customization of the game avatar is, however, in some cases just the beginning. In most cRPGs, players are able and even required to create a complete entity, or sometimes a whole party of individuals. The low temperature of the game medium is characterised by ultimate inertia, requiring the participant to create the tools to interact with the medium. It is a situation similar to being asked to create the author of a book one is supposed subsequently to read. Writing of self in video games involves in general answering a variation on the question of what strengths and weaknesses the character will have. These factors will influence the whole resulting experience – from the possible solutions of problems encountered, to ways of perceiving the game world. In *Planescape: Torment* (1999) the player is given a choice to modify the main character's statistics, describing both his physical and mental qualities. The effect is that the progress and the outcome of the game will be radically different. Characters with high Charisma, Intelligence and Wisdom will be able to better comprehend the world around them, will gain access to different dialogue options and will frequently avoid fights. Players who prefer more direct ways of solving conflicts will be able to do so, but to the detriment of understanding of their surroundings. Unlike many games, *Planescape: Torment* did not use the character just to push

[8] PS3Trophies Forum, "Who Is the Best GTA Protagonist?," accessed July 2, 2001, http://www.ps3trophies.com/forums/general-ps3-discussion/13444-who-best-gta-protagonist-2.html; Xbox360Achievements Forum, "Best GTA Protagonist Yet?," accessed July 2, 2001, http://www.xbox360achievements.org/forum/showthread.php?t=253234; The Escapist Portal forum, "Poll: Favorite Grand Theft Auto Protagonist," accessed July 2, 2001, http://www.escapistmagazine.com/forums/read/9.122767-Poll-Favorite-Grand-Theft-Auto-Protagonist.

the narrative forward, but allowed for the creation and exploration of the game world at the player's own discretion. According to Chris Avalone, game designer of critically acclaimed cRPGs (among others, *Planescape: Torment*), the very definition of a well-authored game is "honoring the player's choices during character creation and advancement by having all choices given be viable tools to succeed in the game world, a world and its people that react and change based on your actions, and that reaction be meaningful for your characters and others."[9] The chance to experience the development of a character from its very beginning to the successful completion of a story presented in a game, preceded by active involvement in the creation of this entity, allows the players to experience its success as their own. Though it may seem counter-intuitive, if the game is designed appropriately, the imperfections of the character, his or her battles lost, are felt as shortcomings of the player and not the game design – these inadequacies are, however, always possible to overcome. Individualization of the character leads to involvement, which in turn presents the players with a chance to perceive themselves as prevailing over difficulties, and accepting and winning the challenges.

Moreover, unlike reading a book or watching a movie, the individualizing nature of participation in the interactive entertainment allows the players to feel a certain kind of "ownership" of the experience. While writing may seem a daunting task to some, playing a game offers readily available handles that may encourage expression and self-realization. These handles include character archetypes, the chance to change statistics describing the in-game identity, pre-defined, but meaningful C&C, and possible paths of development, the choice of which rests solely on the player. Barrie Gunter notes that "since video games are skill-based and provide scores, they can be compared and provide a basis for future goals."[10] It is considered a cornerstone of cRPGs that characters' statistics describing their skill levels, transcribed into digits, show players a clear reason for their success or failure. Likewise, they present the path of development – increase the skills and achieve the results. In that respect the therapeutic value of video games lies in the empowerment of a player, in showing the possibility of accomplishment. Understanding how the player approaches a given problem may well serve as a ground for psychological analysis – one that is particularly interesting since it is done without the subject being aware of the analyst, while at the same time being subjected to any scenario imaginable, hidden as long as it fits within the game world.

In the vein of classical comedy, the core mechanics of interactive entertainment presents its participants with an undercurrent of subliminal meanings, pro-

[9] Will Ooi, "An Interview with Chris Avellone – Game Designer, Writer, and Former 'Unlucky Schlep'," in *Gamasutra, The Art & Business of Making Games*, accessed July 3, 2001, http://www.gamasutra.com/blogs/WillOoi/20110623/7848/An_Interview_with_Chris_Avellone__game_designer_writer_and_former_unlucky_schlep.php.

[10] Barrie Gunter, *The Effects of Video Games on Children: The Myth Unmasked* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1998), 120.

tean development, overcoming obstacles or even death, the reassurance of continuity and "another try." This palliative function forms a protected space that eases the consequent interactions within the medium. Significant is the fact that experimenting and development is conducted in a safe, controlled environment. McLuhan famously stated that "if the nineteenth century was the age of the editorial chair, ours is the century of the psychiatrist's couch. As extension of man the chair is a specialist ablation of the posterior, a sort of ablative absolute of backside, whereas the couch extends the integral being."[11] The psychoanalytical couch gave the patient a perception of comfort and safety, and prevented interference between doctor and patient. Interactive entertainment's value lies in the invisibility of not only the examiner but also the couch itself, the chance to leave the players to their own devices. This is particularly important now, when some analysts begin to question the value of the piece of furniture that epitomizes psychoanalysis. As David Forrest suggests, "the couch is seen as a way of putting the patient's feet to the fire. It may not be a rack, but it is a position of power for the analyst."[12] With interactive entertainment the power is returned to one who holds the joystick or the gamepad.

Conclusions

Considering the fact that the trend of transition to an informational culture is one of the most significant changes of the modern society, then the rise of interactive entertainment may be considered as its most discernible sign, and certainly the most popular. Video games have opened up to the general public the digital arcana, previously locked in military bases and scientific labs – the masses have been allowed to toy with technology many times more powerful than that which was used to put a man on the moon. Computers, thanks to their applications outside spreadsheet calculation and word processing, started to become built to our image, and instead of HAL 9000 and SkyNet, the world received *World of Warcraft* and *Farm Town* (though some may say that all four are equally malevolent). The relationship formed in that process turned out to be working both ways, shaping in equal measure the man and the machine, no matter whether we call this symbiosis mutualistic or parasitic.

The question of formation and disintegration of self in interactive entertainment is an ambivalent one and it cannot be stated that one is necessary while the

[11] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 7.

[12] David Forrest in Joan Arehart-Treichel, "Analysts Urged to Consider Couch Replacement" *Psychiatric News*, accessed July 27, 2011, http://pn.psychiatryonline.org/content/39/12/34.full.

other without value. Just as medicine values both depressants and stimulants, McLuhan's perspective on the subject allows for the existence of technological sedatives in the form of comforting routine and the invigorating tonics of participative and challenging interaction. In contrast to the name, the self industry of video games is a social process, since though it is contacted on the player's singular identity, it operates within the realm of an artificially constructed environment. This environment has the possibility of seamlessly blending the outside authorship guiding the gamer, and players' own free creative processes.

The most interesting aspect of that amalgamation is the emergence of a new identity. It is a simplification to assume that players create their alter egos just by the transcription of their dreams into virtual worlds. The starting point of creating and modifying this identity emerges on the border between the real world, the player's psychological and emotional factors and expectations towards the progress of the game; and the digital world, the game environment, pre--designated characters' features, even the genre of the game. The consequent alter-ego is an amalgam of these characteristics, bearing features both of the player and the game, but occupying a different plane of existence than either of them. The therapeutic value of this type of formation may lie not only in the ability to express oneself, but also in the chance to put the expression into action, to safely conduct a process of creation and feedback. Learning the game is frequently fraught with disagreements between the player's expectations and the environment. Interactive entertainment at its best teaches that creation of self is not static and inert, but needs to involve adaptability, creativity and perseverance. The "game over" of a virtual world is by no means a conclusion, but rather an invitation to start again.

Tomasz Gnat

Narkoza Narcyza: formacja i deformacja „ja" gracza
Analiza korelacji cech charakteru gracza i postaci przedstawionych w grach komputerowych

Streszczenie

Rozrywka interaktywna, jak żadne inne medium, pozwala widowni na aktywne uczestnictwo w świecie przedstawionym. W przeciwieństwie do klasycznie pojmowanego kina, teatru czy literatury, autor przestaje tutaj być wyłącznym twórcą i konstruktorem całości, stając się w pewnym sensie współuczestnikiem procesu twórczego – gracz zyskuje jednocześnie znacznie większe pole do kształtowania samej materii doświadczenia. By uczestniczyć w grze musimy jednak przyjąć pewne *alter ego*, które pozwoli nam na działanie w „magicznym kręgu". Powstaje dzięki temu zupełnie nowy twór, z jednej strony kształtowany przez psychikę gracza, a z drugiej przez specyficzne środowisko świata wirtualnego. W niniejszej pracy autor analizuje powstały w ten

sposób „amalgamat", próbując odpowiedzieć na pytanie, czy rozrywka interaktywna jest rodzajem autobiograficznego komentarza ze strony samego gracza, czy też pozwala jedynie na eskapistyczne stłumienie własnego „ja". Możliwości odnośnie do eksploracji własnej psychiki, jakie oferowane są przez gry komputerowe, mogą odegrać ogromną rolę w procesie kształtowania osobowości. Dobre zrozumienie tych procesów ważne jest nie tylko z przyczyn czysto akademickich, lecz także może przynieść ważne wnioski w dziedzinie psychologii i psychoterapii, a także ekonomii obecnego, zinformatyzowanego świata.

Tomasz Gnat

La narcose de Narcisse : formation et déformation du « moi » du joueur Analyse des corrélations des traits de caractère du joueur et des personnages présentés dans les jeux vidéo

Résumé

Le divertissement interactif, comme aucun autre médium, permet au public de participer activement à l'univers représenté. Contrairement au théâtre, au cinéma et à la littérature saisis d'une façon classique, l'auteur cesse d'y être le seul créateur et constructeur de l'ensemble tout en devenant en quelque sorte le coparticipant du procédé créatif : le joueur acquiert en même temps un champ considérablement plus vaste pour développer son expérience. Afin de participer au jeu, on est toutefois obligé d'assumer un alter ego qui nous permettra d'agir dans le « cercle magique ». Grâce à cela, une structure tout à fait nouvelle se produit ; elle est formée, d'un côté, par le psychisme du joueur et, de l'autre, par le milieu spécifique du monde virtuel. Dans le présent article, l'auteur analyse l'amalgame qui s'est produit ainsi, tout en essayant de répondre à la question si le divertissement interactif est une sorte d'un commentaire autobiographique du joueur ou permet uniquement un refoulement fugitif de son propre « moi ». Les possibilités d'explorer son propre psychisme, qu'offrent les jeux vidéo, peuvent jouer un immense rôle dans le procédé de formation de la personnalité. Une bonne compréhension de ces procédés est importante non seulement pour des raisons académiques, mais elle peut apporter aussi des conclusions significatives pour la psychologie et psychothérapie, ou encore pour l'économie du monde contemporain informatisé.

Part Two

*Her*stories:
The Self and Women's Literature

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Doubling or Dividing the Self: Examples from Autofictional Writing as Influenced by Psychoanalysis

Introduction

The term "autofiction" was officially coined in 1977 by Serge Doubrovsky to describe his novel *Fils* (*Threads/Son*(*s*)). Doubrovsky imagined a genre between fiction and autobiography in which an author, protagonist and narrator share one identity. He explained the idea on the back cover of *Fils*:

> Autobiographie? Non, c'est un privilège réservé aux importants de ce monde, au soir de leur vie, et dans un beau style. Fiction, d'évènements et de faits strictement réels ; si l'on veut autofiction, d'avoir confié le langage d'une aventure à l'aventure d'un langage en liberté, hors sagesse et hors syntaxe du roman, traditionnel ou nouveau. Rencontres, fils de mots, allitérations, assonances, dissonances, écriture d'avant ou d'après littérature, concrète, comme on dit musique.[1]
>
> Autobiography? No, that is a privilege reserved for the important people of this world, at the end of their lives, in a refined style. Fiction, of strictly real events and facts; autofiction, if you will; to have entrusted the language of an adventure to the adventure of language, outside of the wisdom and the syntax of the novel, traditional or new. Interactions, threads of words, alliterations, assonances, dissonances, writing before or after literature, concrete, as we say, music.

[1] The back cover of Serge Doubrovsky, *Fils* (Paris: Galilée, 1977).

Doubrovsky's description of the differences between autobiography and autofiction has inspired a debate among literary critics, journalists and authors in France over the past three decades. Many have questioned whether autofiction is in fact different from autobiography, criticizing Doubrovsky's assertion that autobiography is "reserved for the important people of this world." Nevertheless, "fiction, of strictly real events and facts" has become the working definition of autofiction, and the "adventure of language" has come to describe its innovative style. However, the definition also encourages further interpretation. It is a paradoxical, complicated explanation of a genre that continues to elude classification. Similarly, other attempts to define autofiction often avoid forming strict boundaries for the genre.

In this paper, I seek to give an overview of the concept of autofiction and link the concept to the notion of psychoanalysis before examining selected autofictional texts written by contemporary Francophone authors, in particular Amélie Nothomb and Nina Bouraoui.

Autofiction: Defining a Concept

Different definitions of "autofiction" exist. Autofiction.org, for instance, defines the genre as:

> Notion subtile à définir, liée au refus qu'un auteur manifeste à l'égard de l'autobiographie, du roman à clés, des contraintes ou des leurres de la transparence, elle s'enrichit de ses extensions multiples tout en résistant solidement aux attaques incessantes dont elle fait l'objet. Elle vient en effet poser des questions troublantes à la littérature, faisant vaciller les notions mêmes de réalité, de vérité, de sincérité, de fiction, creusant de galeries inattendues le champ de la mémoire.[2]
>
> Subtle notion to define, tied to the author's apparent refusal of the autobiography, roman à clés, of the constraints or delusions of transparency, enriched by its many extensions all while solidly resisting the incessant attacks of which it is the object. It comes from posing questions that challenge literature, shaking notions of reality, truth, sincerity, fiction, plowing through the unattended galleries in the field of memory.

Autofiction.org features articles that discuss the genre, specific works of autofiction and contemporary French autofictional authors. The site's editors call attention to the multifaceted nature of autofiction, its indefinable qualities and its task

[2] Source: autofiction.org.

of resisting preconceived notions of how to narrate reality, truth, sincerity and fiction. Gasparini[3] summarizes the criteria that Doubrovsky articulates:

– onomastic identity of the author and hero-narrator;
– subtitle: novel;
– primary importance of the narrative;
– pursuit of an original form;
– writing that aims to "immediately articulate";
– reconfiguration of linear time (through selection, intensification, stratification, fragmentation, disorientation);
– considerable use of the present tense;
– an effort to only tell "strictly real facts and events";
– the urge to "reveal one's Self truly";
– a strategy that aims to require active engagement from the reader.

As a description of similarities in autofictional writing, rather than as a prescriptive definition of the genre, this list is useful. However, considering the approach that Hervé Guibert, Chloé Delaume and even, initially, Serge Doubrovsky have each taken to literary genres and rules, the list seems out of place. Each of these authors disrupts literary tradition rather than subscribing to prescribed methods of writing.

Without going into details of the literary historical concept of autofiction – other, more capable critics have done that very well[4] – it is fitting to relate the concept to the overall context of postmodernity. Autofiction is seen by Doubrovsky[5] and Genon[6] as "the renaissance of postmodern autobiographical writing" in that

[3] Philippe Gasparini, *Autofiction. Une aventure du langage* (Paris: Seuil, 2008).

[4] For example, Philippe Gasparini, *Est-il je ? Roman autobiographique et autofiction* (Paris: Seuil, 2004); *Autofiction. Une aventure du langage* (Paris: Seuil, 2008); Sébastien Hubier, *Littératures intimes. Les expressions du moi, de l'autobiographie à l'autofiction* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2003); Claude Burgelin, Isabelle Grell, and Roger-Yves Roche, eds., *Autofiction(s). Colloque de Cerisy* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, «Autofictions, etc.», 2010); Vincent Colonna, *Autofiction & autres mythomanies littéraires* (Auch: Editions Tristam, 2004); Philippe Forest, propos recueillis par Audrey Cluzel en mars 2001, publiés sur le site http://www.manuscrit.com. "La vie est un roman," in *Genèse et Autofiction*, 2007. "Post-scriptum: 'Il faut continuer, je ne peux pas continuer, je vais continuer'," in Burgelin, Grell, and Roche, ed., *Autofiction(s)*, 127–44; Arnaud Genon, "Note sur l'autofiction et la question du sujet," January 2007, *La Revue des Ressources*, www.larevuedesressources.org/article.php3?id-article=686; Jacques Lecarme and Eliane Lecarme-Tabone, *Autobiographie* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1999), new edition 2004; Philippe Vilain, *Défense de Narcisse* (Paris: Grasset, 2005). "Démon de la définition," in Burgelin, Grell, and Roche, ed., *Autofiction(s)*, 461–82. All enumerated sources, offer interesting definitions of "autofiction."

[5] Serge Doubrovsky, *Parcours Critique II*, ed. Isabelle Grell (Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, ELLUG, 2007).

[6] Arnaud Genon, "Note sur l'autofiction et la question du sujet," January 2007, *La Revue des Ressources*, www.larevuedesressources.org/article.php3?id-article=686.

it problematizes the authorial "I." The subject as exposed by autofiction is, according to Genon (cited by Gasparini[7]), "a fragmented and piecemeal subject, deconstructed even in its construction." For Linda Hutcheon,[8] the postmodern novel is characterized by its challenges to the act of writing, its intertextuality and its delirious style of parody. The tendency "to irrepressible fictionalization" is, in the postmodern era, "consubstantial with writing in general and writing of the Self in particular."[9] Autofiction shares many characteristics with postmodern writing. Jean-François Lyotard[10] speaks of the postmodern condition determined by the development of individualism, the process of personalization[11] related to an aesthetics "of the second degree based on the pastiche, the fragment, the formal game, media communication and exhibitionistic narcissism."[12] Postmodern writing is constantly in search of its own rules and categories and will be anchored in a moment of history as being "of ephemeral validity."[13]

However, autofiction is by no means merely self-centred, egocentric, exhibitionist, narcissistic writing within petty-bourgeois horizons. In its efforts to search for identity, autofiction allows authors, indeed actually requires them, to go to the Other, to find the Other in the Self and so to change the Self. No longer *terra incognita* as it was in Vincent Colonna's 1989 study, today autofiction is seen as a genre defined by an "oxymoronic pact" combining two contradictory narratives: on the one hand, it is a story based, as is autobiography, on the principle of the three identities (the author is also the narrator and main character); on the other hand, claims of fiction in its narrative terms as well as peritextual claims (title, back cover) show that autofiction is present in contemporary reading habits and in metaliterary discourse.

Nevertheless, its meaning is neither stable nor unequivocal. For example, the neologism "autofiction" has no consistent definition in dictionaries: the main French dictionaries, namely Larousse and Robert, provide two contradictory meanings. In addition, synonyms of the concept, given by various critics, are endless.[14] Autofiction, with its strictly autobiographical subject matter, as evidenced

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[7] Gasparini, *Autofiction*, 274.

[8] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism. History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 3–21.

[9] Gasparini, *Autofiction*, 214.

[10] Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne : rapport sur le savoir* (Paris: Minuit, 1979).

[11] Gilles Lipovetsky, *L'ère du vide. Essai sur l'individualisme contemporain* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983).

[12] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Duke University Press, 1991) and *Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern* (Verso, 1998) cited by Gasparini, *Autofiction*, 219.

[13] Gasparini, *Autofiction*, 221.

[14] One can think of automythobiography (Claude Louis-Combet), autobiogre (Hubert Lucot), circonfession (Jacques Derrida), curriculum vitae (Michel Butor), égolittérature (Philippe Forest), new autobiography (Robbe-Grillet), oulipography (Roubaud), "false story" (Jean-Pierre

in theory by the nominal identity between author, narrator and character, has the narrative style and organization of a novel and is, therefore, basically Romantic in nature. Several paratextual, intertextual, narrative, stylistic and thematic indices, making possible the identification of a text as autofictional, have been highlighted by a variety of literary critics.[15] In recent Anglophone literary theory, the word "faction," which was first used to translate autofiction, now seems to have been replaced by "fiction of the Self" or "autofiction."

Autofiction, Autobiography and the Autobiographical Novel

Autofiction is a sub-genre of autobiography. It is distinguished mainly by the fact that autofiction is not written "at the end of someone's life" by a "good or great" and "known or shown" person, but can be written at any time in the life of any random person. It is different also because it does not intend to write life as a whole, in one go, but gives fragments of life, not necessarily in a chronological order.[16]

Autofiction, autobiography and autobiographical novels all have a narrator who shares his or her name with an author, but autofiction is, unlike the other two genres, almost never linear. While autobiography is played out in the realm of truth, autofiction moves in the real world. The facts are real, but the writer builds a thread from these facts which, while maintaining the pact with the reader, tell that what was lived in reality is no longer real. Autofictional authors allow themselves to reverse dates, to "forget" "true" items, to interfere with the truth.

Autofiction and Identity Construction

For Doubrovsky, autofiction "authorizes the construction of the personal myth: many characters exist at several levels in the dream and the reality of any

Boulé about Hervé Guibert), "autography" (Vouilloux about Gracq) biautography (Bellemin-Christmas), "transpersonal narrative" (Annie Ernaux), etc.

[15] My own doctoral research forms part of this: Karen Ferreira-Meyers, "Functional definition of 'autofiction' and comparative analysis of representative European (Amélie Nothomb), North African (Nina Bouraoui) and Central African (Calixthe Beyala) autofictional feminine literary works," 2011.

[16] Recently, Isabelle Grell published a summary about the differences between autofiction and the autobiographical novel on the site autofictions.org. I refer the reader to this site that contains other powerful articles on the subject of "autofiction."

kind."[17] Identity, in reality but also in fiction, cannot be constructed without the Other. In literature, the appearance of the Other is mediated through, among other things, intertextuality, the presence of the Other Text. Jacques Lacan[18] is not only the source of the mythology of the "I," he also provided the basis for intertextuality (which, with autotextuality, are two writing processes largely taken up by this "new version" of the classical autobiography), defending the idea that the text is a weaving of facts and words of the Self and of the Others. The subject is never sovereign. Rather, it emerges from intersubjective discourses with the Others. Each Self is the articulation of a structured entity within and around discourses available at any time. Thus, each text is the articulation of relations between texts, a product of intertextuality, a weaving in a discontinuous form of what has already been produced elsewhere. Jacques and Eliane Lecarme[19] (2004) say that

> The advantage of autofiction: would it not be precisely to question the identity relation (=) or otherness (#) between the author and the narrator, even if their names are the same?

In texts focusing on children (there are many such autofictional texts, as evidenced by examples in my study), while autobiography tends to turn the subject into a "full" and "unified" one by establishing a continuity between the child she or he was and the adult she or he became, autofiction restores the distance between these two protagonists. It lets us consider all that this "I" can have as arbitrary features, while the weight of years and the very experience of writing bring about an "I" which includes the "other."

Autofiction and Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis has not only attracted the attention of writers to favourite themes, such as sexuality, relations with parents, mental illness, and childhood trauma, but it also provided tools for their literary investigation. Certainly, the historical context in which Lacanian psychoanalysis and attention to the relationship between language and symbolism flourished, resulted, at first, in the introduc-

[17] Isabelle Grell, "Pourquoi Serge Doubrovsky n'a pu éviter le terme d'autofiction ?," in *Genèse et Autofiction*, ed. Jean-Louis Jeannelle and Catherine Violet (Academia Bruylant, 2007), 45.

[18] Jacques Lacan, "Le stade du miroir," in *Ecrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966).

[19] Jacques Lecarme and Eliane Lecarme-Tabone, *L'Autobiographie* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1999, new edition 2004).

tion of the expression of what we thought inexpressible, including female sexuality. In Nothomb's autofictions, it is especially child sexuality on which the author is focused, while in Bouraoui's autofictions writing is used to talk about gay sexuality.

At the origin of the distinction between biographical and psychological truth – a distinction based on the concept of screen memory ("souvenir-écran"), psychoanalysis also marked the reflection on memory. Writers like Nothomb and Bouraoui are very aware of "fanciful" memory. Since the development and specialization of processes such as free association and interior monologues, or self-talk, which coincided with the success of psychoanalysis, psychoanalytic writing has emerged. Jean-Pierre Boulé[20] concludes that autofiction as a genre raises questions relevant to psychoanalysis in terms of self-representation because, for him, "the boundary between autobiography and fiction is blurred when authors fictionalize what Doubrovsky defines as a narration of strictly true events and acts." Boulé, in this passage, refers to the fact that Doubrovsky included the description of a psychoanalytic session in his autofiction *Fils* as if it were real, while it had not been experienced in reality.

The identity of the Self is unthinkable without a series of mechanisms that mediate the relationship with the world. For the child in the state of primary narcissism, the Self exists only to merge with the mother, with the world as an extension of the womb. It is only when devices such as the mirror[21] create a schism with the world that individual identity will be constructed. These devices establish an original relation to the other, in this imaginary *alter ego* that the child sees in the reflection of the mirror.

The texts of Nothomb and Bouraoui illustrate in detail the influence of psychoanalysis on the content and form of this literature. Similarly, the ambiguity of the "pact" proposed by the two writers is to be linked to work on the novels of origins and family myth. According to Olga Wrońska, "psychoanalysis has catalyzed the transformation of autobiography into autofiction."[22]

The importance Nothomb gives to the first three years of life in *Métaphyque des tubes*[23] shows the influence of Freudian psychoanalytical theory. For Amanieux,[24] the psychoanalytic perspective also helps bring Marthe Robert's theory of "family myth/romance" to light in Nothomb's oeuvre. This "biographical fable designed expressly to explain the inexplicable shame of being born

[20] Jean-Pierre Boulé, "Conjugaisons de l'autofiction: Doubrakeret," in Burgelin, Grell, and Roche, *Autofiction(s)*, 330.

[21] The importance of the "mirror" in Nothomb's fictional work has been pointed by Amanieux (2009) amongst others.

[22] Olga Wrońska, "L'écriture de soi et psychanalyse," in *Synergies Pologne* 4 (2007): 125.

[23] Amélie Nothomb, *Métaphysique des tubes* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000).

[24] Laureline Amanieux, *Récits siamois, identité et personnage dans l'œuvre d'Amélie Nothomb* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2009), 275–90.

bad, worse off, unloved"[25] is the source of invention in this particular autofictional novel written by Nothomb. Usually in such tales the author invents a past and a source higher on the social ladder, more important, than the reality she or he lives in. Nothomb reverses this strategy by inventing herself as the daughter of a servant girl who worships her.[26] The fractured identity, identified so far, the broken self continues on a "geographical" level, in the sense that, when leaving Japan, both Nothomb and her autofictional avatars feel a loss of identity. Nothomb does not recognize herself in her Belgian identity, her identity at birth.

According to Paul Ricoeur, personal identity is divided into two: "identity as sameness" and "identity as selfhood."[27] On the one side is the sameness, that is to say, "all the hallmarks that can re-identify an individual human being as the same."[28] Its main feature is the fixed. On the other side, Ricoeur identifies selfhood, a term based on the Latin *ipse*, denoting a Self which is based on maintaining the word over time.

Amélie Nothomb's Relation to the Self and the Other

In Nothomb's story entitled *Sans nom*[29] (Without Name), the narrator is aware of splitting herself in writing her story: "I find that 'I' is a multitude of others who use my pen to narrate."[30] Nothomb loves to play hide and seek (date and place of birth, real name, etc.). In her work, too, the liar – one who knows he is lying and about what he lies – is a character valued in terms of morality but also for its narrative function. In her autofictions, examples of such liars abound: in *Métaphysique des tubes*, the girl declines to admit that she spoke French until she almost drowns in the sea (a real scene of confession is then presented to the reader); in *Biographie de la faim,* the narrator hides her enjoyment of sweet foods from her mother; in *Sabotage amoureux* it is love that the narrator hides for most of the story. Amanieux is correct in concluding that the revelation of the secret brings about a loss of power for the character who finds himself or herself at the mercy

[25] *Le Robert Méthodique, Dictionnaire méthodique du français actuel* (Paris: Le Robert, 1982).

[26] Amanieux, *Récits siamois*, 276.

[27] Paul Ricoeur, *Soi-même comme un autre* (Paris: Seuil, Coll. "L'ordre philosophique", 1990), 168.

[28] Ricoeur, *Soi-même comme un autre*, 144

[29] Amélie Nothomb, *Sans nom* (Paris: HFA, 2001, nouvelle publiée par *Elle* (édition France) (July 2001)).

[30] Nothomb, *Sans nom*, 4.

of Others. In Nothomb's oeuvre any disclosure of secrets is followed by a "punishment scene," a scene of "malice or rejection":[31] "only the retention of a secret keeps the identity intact," a claim that seems to govern Nothomb's personality in real life too because she keeps secret what happened to her as a teenager.[32] What brings Nothomb closer to her characters, to the Others, is that all of them "are willing to lie to keep secret their real lives, but they continue to weave tales about it."[33]

Nina Bouraoui and the Others

In 2001, Nina Bouraoui underwent some psychoanalytic treatment which has influenced her literary work. In most of Bouraoui's texts, narratives are a reaction to pain and misunderstanding. Equally frequently, the narrators choose a world of masochistic, incestuous hallucinations and imagination to escape the absurdity of the reality they experience. Often used by the generation of *enfants terribles* of North African literature, the technique of giving a voice to the "crazy person" to protest is found in Bouraoui's autofictions. Indeed, by giving the floor to a mad person, or someone who has uncontrollable hallucinations, images of the unconscious, the author is protected against retaliation. The creation of a fictional world, inaccessible to and impenetrable by Others, can be seen as a form of protection, but it also transforms the characters into marginalized, excluded tightrope walkers. The hallucinatory scenes are indicative of the mental state and mind of the narrator and the symbolic desires that are devastating it. Beginning her narrative journey, the narrator starts with a united "I," but, after the confrontation with the disunity of her world and the Others that inhabit it, her Self breaks out and breaks into pieces. Built on the basis of a conflict between the ego of the narrator and the superego of society, between her Self and the symbolism of her parents' desertion throughout the text, *La voyeuse interdite* (Bouraoui's first published text) is the psychoanalytic beginning of an autofictional series that offers psychoanalytic treatment to both the author and her characters-narrators.

One of the great quests found in *La voyeuse interdite* is to understand how writing, specifically the writing of melancholy, can represent psychoanalytic

[31] Amanieux, *Récits siamois*, 143.

[32] Probably rape, definitely some form of sexual assault by four Indians, as described in Nothomb's *Biographie de la faim*, this is a first traumatic episode; Amanieux contends there was a second trauma of an incestuous nature, but too little evidence in Nothomb's literary work or in her paratext allows me to accept this assumption.

[33] Amanieux, *Récits siamois*, 145.

treatment. Bouraoui has probably added, as Marina van Zuylen[34] states, a crucial dimension to what theorists such as Freud, Starobinski, Kristeva and Agamben have considered the fundamental relationship between loss and the work of art. Hervé Guibert, whom Bouraoui regards as her main literary model, and his controversial novel *La mort propagande* are the inspiration for Bouraoui's theory of writing as "bleeding." The author says that her books pass through her body, "the writing is flesh";[35] in her writing there are many traces of blood, the heart, and bodily fluids. Bouraoui's writing is physical performance, endurance, and control. In a long interview she granted the literary critic Damien Aubel, she said:

> The only balm, the only sweetness and the only remedy is writing. That's why it is so important. Duras said the only issue in my books is writing. This I understand very well.[36]

Jaccomard,[37] in turn, refers to the Oedipus complex and repetitive children's games that reassure the child who is afraid of being abandoned. She discusses the iterative or inchoate writing style Bouraoui uses, especially in *Garçon manqué*, calling it the "real return of the repressed." Within this particular text, but also within other Bouraoui's autofictions, the same story is told several times. A few examples of this repetition suffice: the visit to the doctor's office, the bathing scenes, the night terrors of children, the need to write. Just like Nothomb, this author uses the "pleasure of recognition" technique by which she makes her readers loyal to her literary oeuvre. In *Garçon manqué*, the lack of definition and the search for identity correspond to an ambiguous position about gender: "I do not know who I am ... A girl? A boy? The great grand-daughter of Mary? The great grand-daughter of Rabbi? Méré's child? Rashid's son? Who?"[38] A multitude of questions flood the readers and allow them to understand and feel Bouraoui's existential malaise which dates back to her childhood.

According to Lassoued, the search for identity ("I seek my identity"[39]) leads to defensive reactions which can be classified into three broad categories of conduct: (1) a distancing in which the narrator-character raises a wall between herself and Others, (2) while narrating, the narrator opts for the attack, an intensified phase of immobilization, and finally, (3) a phase of reconciliation in which

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[34] Marina Van Zuylen, "Maghreb and Melancholy: A Reading of Nina," in *Research in African Literatures* 34, no. 3 (Fall 2003), 84–99.

[35] Nina Bouraoui, *Poupée Bella* (Paris: Stock, 2004), 68.

[36] Damien Aubel, "Entretien avec Nina Bouraoui, L'écriture au corps," *Transfuge*, no. 39, April 2010, accessed May 9, 2010, http://www.transfuge.fr/entretien,anonyme, 233.php.

[37] Hélène Jaccomard, "Cours, cours, Nina! : *Garçon manqué* de Nina Bouraoui," *Essays in French Literature* 41 (November 2004): 47.

[38] Nina Bouraoui, *Garçon manqué* (Paris: Stock, 2000), 141.

[39] Bouraoui, *Garçon manqué*, 32.

the narrator complies with society's codification and standards to neutralize its accusing eyes. The proliferation of defensive reactions is accompanied by a proliferation of identities: the reader encounters Nina (Yasmina) who becomes Brio in Algiers and Marion in Rennes, three instances of the same person, which transforms the concept of a single identity into one of multiple identities. This metamorphosis of a unique identity into a complex one is only one step. Initially, the identity of the subjective narrator results in the denial of the Self (the reader several times encounters the phrase "I am nothing" in *Garçon manqué*), before becoming a strong identity. The main transformation of Nina into Yasmina happens upon her arrival in France: "my Arabic name. Such a pretty name. The one I will give to others later when they're asking. … The name that will make me a stranger in Paris."[40] From the declaration "here, there is no name with the name Yasmina" on page 137, we come to "no name Yasmina in Saint-Malo. It is a voluntary self-effacement. It is I who is ahead, always. Who introduced me with this little fire: Nina."[41]

The story is not told in a linear manner; the reader does not start from childhood and reach adulthood. The main female homodiegetic character is called Yasmina, the real name of Nina Bouraoui, the author of the story. She talks about her psychological and social development. Key events and thoughts are reported in cycles, repetitively. Some ingredients that are normally found in an autobiography, such as emotions, first love, and positive and negative experiences, are part of this story. But, according to Benaouda Lebdaï,[42] it is too early for Bouraoui in her literary career to publish an autobiography. This is an autofiction, the work of fracture, because it holds important implicit meaning, not only for the writer but also for the person behind the writer. Fictional elements here express implied injuries, reflecting the period of Algeria's "transitional" history. Yasmina's sexuality is symbolic of hybridity, since her identity is fractured. The quest for sexual identity strongly symbolizes the quest for more peaceful relations between her country and France; she does not want to wander for eternity.[43] Despite her position of in-betweenness, "Yasmina" is a portrait of hope for more peaceful relations, since the author was able to build, slowly, an authentic personality from her own traumatic experiences.

From 2000 onwards, Bouraoui's writing has been transformed. From the theme of the wretched at the beginning of her literary career, to the themes of childhood and national identity in the middle, her interests have shifted to desire and sexual fluidity. *La vie heureuse* marks the turning point when she begins to

[40] Ibid., 137–38.

[41] Ibid., 174.

[42] Benaouda Lebdaï, "Yasmina, an Autodiegetic Character," in *Arab Women's Lives Retold: Exploring Identity through Writing,* ed. Nawar Al-Hassan Goll (Syracuse University Press, 2007), 35–48.

[43] Bouraoui, *Garçon manqué*, 35.

explore lesbian sexuality in her autofictional texts. In this fictionalized autobiography, Bouraoui abandons her native Algeria to tell the love story lived out in Switzerland between herself and Diane. The irresistible attraction of the female body here is sometimes seen as an immense happiness immediately broken, similar to what happens to the tortured heroine of *Poing mort*. Expressions of lesbian desire are also developed in the diary-style novel called *Poupée Bella. Mes mauvaises pensées* is an interior monologue in which the author confesses her repressed and unconscious thoughts and desires. The narrator is a young woman who looks at her life along with her psychiatrist. She quickly realizes that the time of childhood is when everything changed. *Avant les hommes*[44] considers youth, identification and sexuality. In her most recent autofictions, *Appelez-moi par mon prénom* and *Nos baisers sont des adieux*, Bouraoui offers other meditations on subjectivity, desire, writing and reality. The tone of the initial words of Bouraoui's 2008 autofiction *Nos baisers sont des adieux* is explicit: "Desire is not isolated. It is multiple and secret. It is by others and for others." It is in this series of short chapters, abruptly, where the writer talks about her love affairs, or the sexual charge of various episodes of her life, with, interspersed here and there, descriptions of works of art, that she shows admirable hospitality towards her Self and the Others that surround her.

Appelez-moi par mon prénom is strongly influenced by the writings of Marguerite Duras. It is clear that the question of the nature of identity, as a writer and as a woman, is a major theme in Bouraoui's writing. She lives her double French-Algerian ethnicity not just as creative wealth, but also as violence, and expresses her subjectivity through her autofictions. Bouraoui establishes her autofictions as a binary opposition between the two poles of her identity, a sort of literary double in which the Self and the Others are interwoven in a maze of hospitality.

Conclusion

In this article I have analysed the postmodern relationships between the Self and the Others in a particular genre of contemporary autobiographical writing, autofiction. In the examples used, namely that of Amélie Nothomb and of Nina Bouraoui, it is a sense of hospitality to the Self and to Others that appears most important. Psychoanalysis and literary techniques related to psychoanalysis underscore the writing style of both autofictionary authors. It is through psychoanalysis that Bouraoui found her voice, by pinpointing issues with identity in

[44] Nina Bouraoui, *Avant les hommes* (Paris: Stock, 2007).

her childhood, while Nothomb also explored her own infancy and adolescence to understand her Self and, thus, to write her Self.

Karen Ferreira-Meyers

Podwajanie czy podział osobowości: przykłady wpływu psychoanalizy na pisarstwo autofikcyjne

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł jest próbą wykazania nieuniknionego związku pomiędzy psychoanalizą i autofikcją. Autofikcja, postmodernistyczna forma pisarstwa autobiograficznego, wiele zawdzięcza teoriom powiązanym z psychoanalizą. W istocie zarówno Nina Bouraoui, pisarka o pochodzeniu francusko-algierskim, jak i Amélie Nothomb, autorka belgijska, albo poddały się psychoanalizie, albo zapożyczyły pewne pojęcia z psychoanalizy, aby użyć własnego „ja" w swoim pisarstwie. Skutkiem tego w obu wypadkach jest podwojenie lub podzielenie owego „ja" w liczne świadome i nieświadome „pod-ja". Amanieux w *Le récit siamois* (2008), a także Lee (2010) rozpoczęły badanie twórczości Nothomb, w której podwajanie struktur zawiera także podwajanie głosów, postaci, i prowadzi do dwuznacznej tożsamości narracyjnej. Technika Bouraoui wplatania własnego „ja" w autofikcyjne pisarstwo wymaga dalszych badań, chociaż w pewnym stopniu zostały one już wykonane przez Bivona, Clarinval, Benmahamed i innych. W niniejszym artykule omówione zostało to szczególne zastosowanie psychoanalizy, którego celem jest odkrycie i sportretowanie własnego „ja" w autofikcji w XX i XXI wieku.

Karen Ferreira-Meyers

Dédoublement ou division du Soi: exemples de l'écriture autofictionnelle telle qu'influencée par la psychanalyse

Résumé

Dans cet article, je cherche a souligner le lien inévitable entre la psychanalyse et l'autofiction. L'autofiction, une forme postmoderne de l'écriture autobiographique, emprunte beaucoup aux théories liées a la psychanalyse. En effet, a la fois Nina Bouraoui, écrivaine franco-algérienne, et Amélie Nothomb, auteure belge, ont soit passé par la psychanalyse ou emprunté des concepts de la psychanalyse afin de les investor dans leur écriture. Le résultat, dans les deux cas, entraîne un doublement ou une séparation du Soi en de nombreux sous-memes conscients et inconscients. *Le Récit siamois* (2009) d'Amanieux et les travaux de Lee (2010) ont fixé le rythme de la recherche a l'égard de l'ouvre de Nothomb, dans lequel le doublement des structures englobe un doublement des voix, des personnages et conduit a une identité narrative ambiguë. Les techniques de Bouraoui entrelaçant son Soi dans son écriture autofictionnelle nécessitent de plus amples recherches, meme si le travail de base a été fait par plusieurs chercheurs, y compris Bivona, Clarinval, Benmahamed et d'autres. L'utilisation particuliere de la psychanalyse pour découvrir et dépeindre le Soi dans le domaine de l'autofiction des 20e et 21e siecles est discutée dans cet article.

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Descent into Hell
Pauline Anstruther's Long Way To Her Self

"Think of yourself. Be careful of yourself," chants murmuringly Mrs. Lily Sammile, a debonnaire old lady, addressing twenty-four-year-old Pauline Anstruther. "I could make you perfectly safe and perfectly happy at the same time. … I can cure everyone," the lady goes on in a well-meaning manner of a small-town busybody.[1] And, indeed, such a suggestion could appear tempting to the young heroine of Charles Williams's novel *Descent into Hell* (1937), who has spent enough of her short life thinking about herself. Her self-centredness is understandable, since from her childhood she has been haunted by the fear of the Double – a second Pauline, who breaches the heroine's isolation time and again, provoking a powerful neurosis. Then, although perfectly healthy in the physical sense of the word, Pauline finds herself in need of a deep-reaching healing process, which will enable her to integrate all the pieces of her fragmented identity.

Pauline's relations with her other self dominate the novel of Charles Williams (1886–1945), an Oxford University Press editor, loosely associated with the Inklings group, or – as they are sometimes referred to nowadays – the Anglo-Oxford circle.[2] This lesser known friend of such literary and scholarly giants as C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien exercised an immense influence on their works.[3] Most often it is in relation to them that Williams is discussed: his life, rather than his works, are subject to discussion. As a supposed member of

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[1] Charles Williams, *Descent into Hell, a Novel* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937), 50.

[2] Roger Sale, "England's Parnassus: C. S. Lewis, Charles Williams and J. R. R. Tolkien." *The Hudson Review* 17, no. 2 (summer 1964): 203.

[3] Richard Sturch, *Four Christian Fantasists: Writings of George MacDonald, Charles Williams, C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien* (Walking Tree Publishers, 2001), 8, 59.

the Golden Dawn[4] and a charismatic man,[5] he is seen as the one who added to the thinking of the Christian fantasists[6] a darker strain.

He published several books of criticism (e.g., *The Figure of Beatrice,* 1944), poetry (*Taliessin through Logres,* 1938) and novels (e.g., *Many Dimensions*, 1931, *The Place of the Lion,* 1933, *All Hallow's Eve*, 1945). It is his fiction that won him acclaim of such people as Lewis, Eliot and Auden.[7] Representing an uncommon genre of mystical or supernatural thrillers[8] rich in obscure occultist references and portraying complex theological and psychological problems, they make a compelling reading even today.[9]

For the purposes of this paper I have chosen from among his novels *Descent into Hell*, one of better known of Williams's writings. Typically for the author, it features permeation of the ordinary with the spiritual, highly erudite allusions and obscure mystical symbolism. It has been studied in reference to Williams's life and his views on religion, the presentations of Christ and Satan, as well as his style (see the essays in Home's and Huttar and Schakel's books, listed in the footnotes). The research in other aspects of the novel, among them psychological ones, so prominent to the narrative, is lacking. Major inspiration for the present paper is the article of Catherine Madsen (2003), referring to the phenomenon of split personality. It is hoped that the discussion below will add to the argument made by Madsen, thereby enriching the debate on Williams's fiction.

Charles Williams differs from other "Christian fantasists" in that he does not transport his characters to a fantasy realm, but – in a sense – makes the hell

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[4] Roma A. King Jr., "The Occult as Rhetoric in the Poetry of Charles Williams," in *The Rhetoric of Vision: Essays on Charles Williams*, ed. Charles Adolph Huttar and Peter J. Schakel (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1996), 165.

[5] In the words of Redfield: he "excited the strongest feelings of love and respect in his friends; in his presence many of the great and near great have felt something rather like a humility" (James Redfield, "Charles Williams," *Chicago Review* 9, no. 2 (Summer, 1955): 62). Auden reminisced: "For the first time in my life, [I] felt myself in the presence of personal sanctity. … I had met many good people before who made me feel ashamed of my own shortcomings but in the presence of this man… I did not feel ashamed. I felt transformed into a person who was incapable of doing or thinking anything base or unloving (I later discovered that he had had a similar effect on many other people.)" (Alan Jacobs, *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis* (HarperCollins, 2005), 196–98)

[6] Richard Sturch's phrase (*Four Christian Fantasists*, 2001).

[7] Adolph Charles Huttar and Peter J. Schakel, eds., *The Rhetoric of Vision: Essays on Charles Williams* (Bucknell University Press, 1996), 8.

[8] Huttar and Schakel, *The Rhetoric of Vision*, 7.

[9] His novels are still found obscure by an ordinary reader, because of Willams's unorthodox views and his erudition. *Descent into Hell*, which is considered to be his best (Douglas V. Steere, "The Theology of Romantic Love: A Study in the Writings of Charles Williams. By Mary Shideler." Review. *Journal of Religion and Health* 1, no. 4 (July 1962): 405) and which provides the subject matter for this paper, was reviewed on Amazon as even less comprehensible than *Finnegans Wake* (Amazon.com: Customer Reviews. *Descent into Hell, a Novel*, September 6, 2011).

"descend" on the familiar English landscape. The arena of apocalyptic events that unfold in the course of the plot is Battle Hill, a Londonian suburb, and the intellectual and artistic nexus of the neighbourhood is the house of Peter Stanhope, whom we may call a domestic Shakespeare. At the beginning of the novel the playwright reads out to the local people his new play, *The Pastoral*, and it is decided that it will be staged by the residents of the town. While the rehearsals are under way, the residents are supernaturally transformed, not to mention that some of the characters are supernatural themselves: a spectre of a suicide victim is roaming the streets, historian Wentworth is visited by a succubus and the seemingly benevolent Lily Sammile changes into demonic Lilith.

Pauline Anstruther, like the others, is subject to a personal remaking of the world: the bits and pieces of her disordered self unite to create an independent young woman. Pauline's predicament is bordering on psychosis: she is in constant fear of meeting her dopplegaenger,[10] whose incidences became more and more frequent since she moved to Battle Hill to help her dying grandmother. She is unable to face her self and spends her time either running away from it or trying to prevent the apparition from materializing.

When the readers first encounter Pauline, the story is already running its own course, and the characters like Myrtle Fox or Adela Hunt, who are much less important to the story, have been introduced. Although Myrtle and Adela have principal parts in the play (being respectively the manager and the main heroine), it is the quiet girl lending her voice in defence of the Dryad Chorus, which is just about to be cut out of the play, that is eventually more interesting. She slowly worms her way into the narrative, persistently appearing in toned down comments that betray her sensitivity to poetry. She seems to be the only person who understands Stanhope's play, and is subsequently given the part of the chorus leader.

Her being attuned to the pastoral Dryads, opens her as well to the terrors of the spiritual and the imaginary worlds. What follows the nomination to a chorus leader is an episode with the dopplegaenger, confirming her supernatural sensitivity.

> Her heart sprang; there, a good way off – thanks to a merciful God – it was, materialized from nowhere in a moment. She knew it at once, however far, her own young figure, her own walk, her own dress and hat – had not her first sight of it been attracted so? changing, growing.… It was coming up at her pace – doppelgaenger, doppelgaenger – her control began to give … two … she didn't run, lest it should, nor did it. She reached her gate, slipped through, went up the path. If it should be running very fast up the road behind her now? She was biting back the

[10] Spelling after Williams.

> scream and fumbling for her key. Quiet, quiet! "A terrible good." She got the key into the keyhole; she would not look back; would it click the gate or not? The door opened; and she was in, and the door banged behind her. She all but leant against it, only the doppelgaenger might be leaning similarly on the other side. She went forward, her hand at her throat, up the stairs to her room, desiring (and every atom of energy left denying that her desire could be vain) that there should be left to her still this one refuge in which she might find shelter.[11]

Her accumulating anxiety makes the reader sympathize with Pauline, apparently victimized by a demonic Double. However, as Williams slowly introduces more and more elements of Pauline's personality, it becomes apparent that the "ghostly twin" is the better part of her self. Even comparing their looks, it is the dreaded "shadow walker" that comes off as more appealing. Whereas Pauline is "lank and blank,"[12] rather ghostly herself, the Double presents

> the ruffled brown hair, the long nose, the firm compressed mouth, the taunt body, the long arms, her dress, her gesture. It wore no supernatural splendour of aureole, but its rich nature burned and glowed before her, bright as if mortal flesh had indeed become what all lovers know it to be. Its colour bewildered by its beauty; its voice was Pauline's, as she had wished it to be for pronouncing the imagination of the grand art.[13]

As Williams fleshes out his main character, Pauline becomes less and less likable. She is not so much preoccupied with the depersonalized "thing that was she"[14] as with herself. Not in the centre of the local events, she makes herself the centre of her own world, hardly letting anyone in. Her overblown ego distances her from the rest of the people, elevating her at the same time above the commoners.

Even at her first appearance in the novel this attitude is visible. Once she spoke, Pauline keeps making asides and comments, as proper for a chorus leader. Her mutual understanding with Peter Stanhope gratifies her elitist needs: "She thought, with an anger generous in its origin but proud and narrow in its conclusion, that not many of the audience really cared for poetry or for Stanhope's poetry – perhaps none but she."[15] What is more, she associates herself with Christ,[16] on the grounds of the pangs of loneliness and misunderstanding she

[11] Williams, *Descent into Hell*, 8.
[12] Ibid., 20.
[13] Ibid., 78.
[14] Ibid., 8.
[15] Ibid., 7.
[16] Ibid.

suffers. At the same time, she addresses others with "lying malice," judges harshly her ancestor as a "demented fanatic," and with "subdued fury" she is waiting for her grandmother to die.[17] As if to spite her,

> her grandmother, ignoring the possible needs of the young, went on living, keeping her room in the morning, coming down to lunch, and after a light early dinner retiring again to her room. She made no great demands on her granddaughter, towards whom indeed she showed a delicate social courtesy; and Pauline in turn, though in a harsher manner, maintained towards her a steady deference and patience. The girl was in fact so patient with the old lady that she had not yet noticed that she was never given an opportunity to be patient. She endured her own nature and supposed it to be the burden of another's.[18]

As can be seen, Pauline has the tendency to project her faults onto the others and reject "negative emotions." Her sensitivity does not allow her, however, to be full of herself, completely dissociated from her vices. She is painfully conscious of some of her shortcomings, which leads her to indulge in the luxury of self-hatred.

> No range of invective – and she had a pretty, if secret, range – sufficed her for herself. She struck her hand against the wall as she ran, and wished that it was her head, or that someone – Stanhope for preference, but it didn't much matter; anyone would do – would pick her up and throw her violently over the banisters to the floor below, knocking the breath out of her body, and leaving her bruised and gasping, looking like the fool she was. She put all herself into despising herself, and her scorn rode triumphant through her: a good thing under direction, but dangerous to the lonely soul.[19]

Unsuccessfully seeking help in the science of dopplegaengers, Pauline is fully conscious what sparked the apparition of the terrifying double. "I wasn't being very good," she says. "There wasn't much money in the house, and once there was a shilling my mother lost, and then there were sweets. It was just after I'd bought the sweets that I saw it coming once."[20] This petty crime got associated with the punishment she was given beforehand at school for some other, unspecified but equally insignificant offence. She was made to learn by heart a fragment of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, beginning with the words:

[17] Ibid., 7, 49, 22.
[18] Ibid., 22.
[19] Ibid., 56.
[20] Ibid., 48.

> The Magus Zoroaster, my dead child,
> Met his own image walking in the garden.[21]

"She had never done the imposition, for she had had nightmares that night, after reading the lines, and had to go sick for days."[22] The image of a haughty, passive-aggressive girl mingles again with the pitiable image of an oversensitive child, brought up in the atmosphere of quarrels and resentment.[23] On the one hand, Pauline's faults are laid out very clearly, on the other – the reader cannot help sympathizing with her efforts to get out of her shell and confront her double.

Still, Pauline seems unable to return affection: she can only "sit and stare,"[24] while her grandmother is dying. She either denies that she has problems, or else her owning up is very indirect ("I knew a girl who thought she did"[25]), for fear of ridicule. She fails to connect to her mother, who refuses to talk about her problems, calling her silly and naughty.[26] Scholar Wentworth brushes her off.[27] In this light, her meeting with Stanhope is a groundbreaking event in her life.

The poet becomes for her a figure of authority, patiently hearing out her improbable tale of the dopplegaenger. Making use of the fact that Pauline trusts him unreservedly, he claims to take over her disturbed emotion, so that he would "feel fear instead of her."[28] Thanks to her participation in the play she receives a new name (Periel) and a new identity, which she readily embraces.

> She knew with all her soul's consent that Peter Stanhope had taken over her fear; was, now, one with it; and it was not, for he was in power over it. Among the leaves of his eternal forest he set it, and turned it also to everlasting verse. Evading or not evading, repining or not repining, raging or not raging, she was Periel; she was the least of the things he had created new; ecce, omnia nova facio. She was a line of his verse, and beyond that – for the thought of him took that high romantic self-annihilation and annihilated it in turn – she was herself in all freedom and courage.[29]

It enables her to face her supernatural double, which in the end proves to be her heroic self, taking over the fear of her martyred ancestor.[30] More importantly, how-

[21] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound: A lyrical drama in four acts with other poems* (Oxford University Press: Ollier, C. and J., 1820). Free Google e-book (digitalized: July 3, 2008), 28.

[22] Williams, *Descent into Hell*, 7.

[23] Ibid., 8, 22.

[24] Ibid., 24.

[25] Ibid., 20.

[26] Ibid., 7.

[27] Ibid., 19–20.

[28] Ibid., 44.

[29] Ibid., 56.

[30] Ibid., 78–79.

ever, Stanhope's unorthodox therapy heals her relations with others, getting her out of the confinement of the disordered, closed self and opening her to transcendence.

> A kitten on a wall caught her eye; it put its head down; she stretched her arm and stood on tiptoe to stroke it, and so doing for a while she forgot Stanhope and the universe and Pauline.[31]

Such a gesture from the reserved and withdrawn Pauline signifies her complete change and the reunification of self. It brings her freedom to eventually leave Battle Hill and head for London, beginning her independent life.

However, the "way of Stanhope," the doctrine of substituted love and sacrifice of self is not the only option Pauline is offered. Williams shows another way: Lily Sammile, mentioned at the beginning of this paper, is an aspiring spiritual leader, trying to draw Pauline under her influence. Claiming that she only "wants to be of use," the lady displays vivid interest in Pauline's suffering. Rather than empathy, though, it is vampirical preying on negative emotions and reinforcing the unhealthy relations with others. Instead of facing the double, Mrs. Sammile suggests an escape into the dreamworld, in which we "make our own weather" and "tell ourselves comforting tales."[32] Although a tempting perspective, Pauline has too much experience with closing herself in her room not to know how little comfort it really offers. She reflects critically:

> "I could live in a nutshell and count myself king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams." Was the counting of oneself king of space when one lived in a nutshell one of the bad dreams? Unheard melodies – the rigid figures on the Grecian vase? To enjoy nutshell as nutshell, vase as vase![33]

The way of Lily Sammile, that of focusing on oneself, equals moral death. Pauline does not allow herself to be coaxed into apparent peace, stemming from a skewed, saintly image of oneself. She owns up to negative emotions, allowing for the possibility of "healthy hate" and fear, and eventually sharing with others. The vision she has at her grandmother's funeral presents very clearly the sources and results of separation.

> In the dream she had played hide-and-seek with herself in a maze made up of the roads of Battle Hill, and the roads were filled with many figures who hated – neither her nor any other definite person, but hated. They could not find anything they could spend their hate on, for they slipped

[31] Ibid., 47.
[32] Ibid., 25, 26.
[33] Ibid., 95.

> and slithered and slid from and through each other, since it was their hate which separated them. It was no half-self-mocking hate, nor even an immoral but half-justified hate, certainly not the terrible, enjoyable, and angry hate of ordinary men and women. It was the hate of those men and women who had lost humanity in their extreme love of themselves amongst humanity.[34]

What at the beginning Pauline perceives as an enfeeblement of her identity, threatening with the dissolution of self, is – according to Williams – precisely the opposite. "I want to know my name," the girl states firmly to Stanhope, signalling the necessity to affirm her presence in the play. She proceeds, though, to adopt a "quite insignificant" name of Periel:[35] she does have an assigned place in the production, but is not putting herself in the centre of attention, fitting herself into the larger pattern of *The Pastoral*.

> A violent convulsion of the laws of the universe took place in her mind; if this was one of the laws, the universe might be better or worse, but it was certainly quite different from anything she had ever supposed it to be. It was a place whose very fundamentals she had suddenly discovered to be changed. She hadn't any clear idea of what Stanhope was doing, and that didn't matter, except that she ought, as soon as possible, to find out and try to understand. That was merely her duty, and might – the thought crossed her mind and was gone – be her very great happiness. Meanwhile, she would go on walking. And if, she came to her self, well she came to her self.[36]

Concluding, the dissociated personality of the Pauline gives an opportunity to the author to expound his views on the self, identity, origins of fear and mental disturbance. The complexities of the internal world of the main character are replayed in the subplots of Adela Hunt, Wenworth and the ghost of the suicide victim, making the self a major theme in the novel. The dopplegaenger is presented not as a threatening shadow-double, but an essential part of ourselves. It is our "terror and error,"[37] a "terrible good."[38] Williams seems to suggest as well that we often reject the better part of ourselves, the one prompting us to what is noble and heroic. Thus, he offers a view of the "shadow walker" that is rather uncommon, pointing to a perhaps graver paradox: losing a part of oneself, which seems so horrible to Pauline, allows her finally to utter: "Thank you for heaven."[39] Her

[34] Ibid., 87.
[35] Ibid., 27.
[36] Ibid., 47.
[37] Ibid., 74.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., 98.

journey to attain her new identity leads through the acceptance of fear and negative feelings and the sacrifice of a part of self. Her psychosis is healed through the contact with other people. When she departs Battle Hill, she is fully prepared to embrace the independent life, leaving her personal Gomorrah[40] behind.

[40] Ibid., 97.

Anna Bugajska

Descent into Hell
Długa droga Pauliny Anstruther do siebie samej

Streszczenie

Artykuł omawia powieść Charlesa Willamsa (1886–1945) *Descent into Hell* (1937). Poprzez wprowadzenie sobowtóra głównej bohaterki, Pauline Anstruther, autor książki ukazuje jej labilne relacje z samą sobą, wyalienowanie pewnych cech osobowości (np. poświęcenie), jak również jej próby scalenia różnych aspektów swojej osobowości. Williams prezentuje etiologę zaburzeń osobowości (tu: osobowości mnogiej) i sygnalizuje społeczne, jak i mistyczne, konsekwencje takich problemów. Proponuje zarazem drogę wyjścia z owej izolacji („the way of Stanhope") i akceptacji swojego skomplikowanego „ja", odrzucając drogę pozornej samowystarczalności („the way of Lily Sammile"). *Descent into Hell* wielopoziomowo odnosi się do zaburzeń osobowości (np. w wątkach Henry'ego Wentwortha czy Adeli Hunt). Promując „doktrynę substytucji miłości" („the doctrine of substituted love"), Williams wpisuje się w poszukiwanie bezpieczeństwa i drugiego człowieka, które to dążenia jako rezultat I wojny światowej odnajdujemy w literaturze omawianego okresu.

Anna Bugajska

Descent into Hell
Un long chemin de Pauline Anstruther chez elle-même

Résumé

L'auteure de l'article analyse le roman de Charles Williams (1886-1945) *Descent into Hell* (1937). En insérant le sosie de l'héroïne principale, Pauline Anstruther, l'écrivain présente ses relations labiles avec elle-même, l'aliénation de certains traits de caractère (p.ex. : le sacrifice), ainsi que ses tentatives d'unifier différents aspects de sa personnalité. Williams présente l'étiologie des troubles de la personnalité (ici il s'agit de la personnalité multiple) et signale les conséquences aussi bien sociales que mystiques de tels problèmes. Il propose à la fois le moyen de sortir de cet isolement (« the way of Stanhope ») et d'accepter son « moi » compliqué tout en rejetant une autosuffisance apparente (« the way of Lily Sammile »). *Descent into Hell* se réfère d'une façon multiniveaux aux troubles de personnalité (p.ex. : dans le cas de Henry Wentworth ou bien Adel Hunt). En promouvant la doctrine d'un amour substitué (« the doctrine of substituted love »), Williams s'inscrit dans la quête de sécurité et celle de l'Autre, et l'on peut trouver ces tendances – en tant que résultat de la Première Guerre mondiale – dans la littérature de cette époque-là.

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"I change myself, I change the world" Storytelling in Women's Art

Stories have a community-building power since they provide people with shared reality and customs, thus preserving local rituals. At the same time, the primal energy of storytelling lies in its potential to unmask and challenge dominant discourse. (De)constructing personal and collective identity, stories become important sites of the peoples' resistance against cultural dominance. In most cultures, women are the transmitters of oral stories. First, they tell legends and fairytales to their children and grandchildren, later they often share ancient recipes, customs and traditions with younger women, which has a community binding ability as it happens in Laura Esquivel's novel *Like Water for Chocolate. A Novel in Monthly Installments with Recipes, Romances and Home Remedies* (1992). Generally, in female literature, storytelling plays a significant role. It often becomes a therapy which transforms both the listener and the teller. In an essay "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation"[1] Toni Morrison defines this phenomenon in literature as "the presence of an ancestor." She further describes grandmothers, who often perform the role of the ancestor in ethnic female writing, as healers, and as "a sort of timeless people whose relationships to the characters are benevolent, instructive, and protective, and they provide a certain kind of wisdom."[2] Similarly, Alice Walker, in her collection of essays *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*,[3] reflects on the role that her mother's stories have played in the formation of her cultural

[1] Toni Morrison, "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation" (1984) in *The Woman that I Am. The Literature and Culture of Contemporary Women of Color*, ed. D. Soyini Madison (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1994), 492–97.

[2] D. Soyini Madison, ed., *The Woman that I Am. The Literature and Culture of Contemporary Women of Color* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1994), 496.

[3] Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens. Womanist Prose* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc.), 1983.

identity as an African-American woman. Also Gloria Anzaldúa once wrote "I am the dialogue between my Self and *el espiritu del mundo*. I change myself, I change the world."[4] Therefore, giving voice to the stories of their ancestors allows female authors to better comprehend complexities of their ethnicity, gender, and class. At the same time writing/creating helps them to construct their identity. Subsequently, this paper will be mostly devoted to women telling stories in order to transgress the Western patriarchal patterns of presenting *his*tories as universal truths.

Storytelling and Ethnic Identity

Subordinated ethnic groups have always told stories that depicted the history of their oppression and contested the official colonial discourse. If we look at American literature we can see multiple examples of that phenomenon. Native Americans communicated their traditions through the oral stories passed on from generation to generation. Black slaves described the violence experienced under slavery and their longing for the lost African tradition and heritage in personal narratives, or blues songs. Mexican-Americans in the Southwest composed *corridos*, describing the instances of abuses from the Texas Rangers, *gringo* justice and Anglo settlers determined to "cheat them out of their lands." The community-building power of storytelling has often been an essential instrument of the people's survival and liberation, challenging the dominant discourse.

For that reason, in her essay Toni Morrison draws our attention to the significance of the Black autobiography for the entire African-American minority. She writes, "My single solitary and individual life is like the lives of the tribe; it differs in these specific ways, but it is a balanced life because it is both solitary and representative."[5] Furthermore, she observes the causative aspect of creation; "It is the affective and participatory relationship between the artist or the speaker and the audience that is of primary importance."[6] Finally, Morrison defines what she calls a "conscious historical connection" with one's tribe as follows "if we don't keep in touch with the ancestor … we are, in fact, lost. When you kill the ancestor you kill yourself."[7]

Likewise, Alice Walker talks about looking "high and low"[8] for the artistic antecedents of Black women. She specifically speaks about her mother and her

[4] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands. La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999), 92.
[5] Madison, *The Woman that I Am*, 493.
[6] Ibid., 494.
[7] Ibid., 497.
[8] Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, 239.

garden that for her was a place of artistic expression thus becoming a background for Walker's own creation along with her mother's storytelling.

> Yet, so many of the stories that I write, that we all write, are my mother's stories. Only recently did I fully realize this: that through years of listening to my mother's stories of her life, I have absorbed not only the stories themselves, but something of the manner in which she spoke, something of the urgency that involves the knowledge that her stories – like her life – must be recorded.[9]

In another essay in the same collection, Walker presents the best example of the inspirational role of her mother's stories.

> Many of the elements of this story I had gathered from a story my mother several times told me… about my 'crazy' aunt.… Then I thought, where are the *black* collectors of folklore? Where is the *black* anthropologist? Where is the *black* person who took the time to travel the back roads of the South and collect the information I need …. And that is when I first saw, in a *footnote* to the white voices of authority, the name Zora Neale Hurston.[10]

As we all know, Walker was the one who rediscovered Hurston for American literature. Subsequently, Walker, as Toni Morrison, indicates that "our mothers and grandmothers have not perished in the wilderness"[11] but live on thanks to the creativity of their spiritual daughters – the artists – which is important not only for the ancestors but for the artists themselves who "in search of [their] mother's garden found [their] own."[12]

If we analyse Chicana authors, which is the ongoing project in my research, we can also undoubtedly observe the significance of the ancestors there. The Aztecs, from whom Mexicans descend, valued the potential of language and eloquence so they paid a lot of attention to the verbal production that achieved very elaborate forms, often accompanied by special rituals. Since Náhuatl, the language of the Aztecs, was an exclusively oral tongue, everything was memorized. History, prayers, court ceremonies, social norms and values were all learnt by heart and transmitted from one generation to the next in order to assure the continuum of the community. As Tzvetan Todorov notices, in their culture the verbal discourse symbolized the "speech of the ancients,"[13] and as such it was sacred. Also,

[9] Ibid., 240.
[10] Ibid., 9–11.
[11] Ibid., 235.
[12] Ibid., 243.
[13] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America. The Question of the Other*, trans. Richard Howard (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 81.

the distribution of social roles was clear "words are for women, arms for men."[14] With the assumption that the warrior's life was glorified and women could never aspire to this ideal, the warrior/woman opposition visibly defined female primal function: to remember and report the deeds of men. After the Conquest, when most of the Aztec men died in battle, or were murdered afterwards, this female role gained even more significance. Memorizing and telling the nation's history was the most vital female contribution to preservation of the Aztec legend. Still nowadays, after many migrations and mixings among the people in Mexico, this legend is still present in the stories that Mexican women tell their children. The surviving myth of Aztlán or the story of La Llorona may be the best examples of the living Aztec mythology.

Therefore, since it is mostly women who are the gatherers and transmitters of stories, in addition to its ethnic facet, storytelling also has its gendered side. Moreover, most of the stories are told at home at the kitchen table – then home becomes a gendered space as well. bell hooks describes this matter in her essay "Homeplace – a Site of Resistance"[15] the following way:

> In our young minds houses belonged to women, were their special domain, not as property, but as places where all that truly mattered in life took place… . There we learned dignity, integrity of being; there we learnt to have faith. The folks who made this life possible, who were our primary guides and teachers, were black women. … Historically, African-American people believed that the construction of a homeplace … had a radical political dimension. Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one's homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist. Black women resisted by making homes where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects, where we could be affirmed in our minds and hearts despite poverty, hardship and depravation, where we could restore to ourselves the dignity denied us on the outside in the public world… . The act of remembrance is a conscious gesture honoring their struggle, their effort to keep something for their own.[16]

Hence, giving voice to the stories of their ancestors contributes to the ethnic women's understanding of the complexities and intersections of ethnicity, gender, and class, and helps them to construct their ethnic and gender awareness.

[14] Bernal Diaz del Castillo, *The Conquest of New Spain* (London: Penguin, 1963), 154.
[15] bell hooks, "Homeplace – a Site of Resistance" in *The Woman that I Am*.
[16] Madison, *The Woman that I Am*, 448–49.

Storytelling and Gender in Chicana Literature

Sandra Cisneros begins her second novel *Caramelo*[17] with the following sentence: "Tell me a story, even if it's a lie," and the whole novel is a combination of stories and "healthy lies" that often reveal the greatest truths. The main character of the book Celaya Reyes, called Lala, is the youngest and only girl among the seven children in the Reyes' family. The novel follows her from infancy to adolescence at the same time showing the Mexican-American extended family who struggle to be successful in the United States while preserving their cultural heritage. Celaya is the one member of the family who gathers and retells the stories that define her family's, and subsequently her own identity. The unfinished *rebozo*, traditional Mexican shawl woven by women that Lala inherits from her grandmother, along with the stories she used to tell her, symbolizes the female generational interconnectedness and the link between different individual stories with the history of one family and the whole Mexican-American diaspora in the US. While Lala manages to weave all those stories into a chronicle of her family, she also discovers that storytelling reveals that past, which – according to the Aztec legends – repeats itself, is intrinsically linked to her present and future.

Moreover, storytelling in *Caramelo,* as in the case of other female writers, plays the role of preserving local cults and rituals. In Mexican culture passing on ancient tribal knowledge, tradition and faith through the matrifocal network of extended family relations takes the form of *curanderismo.* Magic, *espiritismo* (link with the spirits) and the assumption that the supernatural is part of our reality based on the natural forces of the universe are at the core of *curanderismo*. *Curanderas* are women who solicit their spiritual guidance not from a paternal white god, but from a symbolic brown or black mother Earth. Their traditional practices such as herbal medicine, meditations, sweat lodge, spiritual cleansing, and primarily the ability to communicate with the world of the spirits are discredited by the Western culture and considered signs of primitivism. On the contrary, in the Mexican community *curanderas* are highly respected. In *Women Singing in the Snow*, Diana Tey Rebolledo describes *curandera* the following way:

> She has a special relationship and understanding of earth and nature – she understands the cycles of creation, development, and destruction, thus unifying the past, present, and future. She incorporates intuition and rationality; she studies power… ; she takes an active role in her environment… . She listens carefully, thus understanding human as well as animal behavior. She uses her knowledge of group as well as individual

[17] Sandra Cisneros, *Caramelo, or Puro Cuento* (New York: Random House, 2002).

> psychology, a psychology embedded in ethnic beliefs and practices.… And she understands community… . The curandera has the capacity for intervention between earth and spirit. She has the capacity to heal – but like the Náhuatl deities, she also has the capacity for death and destruction.[18]

Hence, the *curandera* sometimes changes into a *bruja* (a witch), who destroys and enacts evil, but usually only when her community is endangered. Rebolledo claims that "one of the most important powers the *curandera/bruja* has is her ability to transform."[19] It is not surprising then that Chicana writers identify with this symbol and often use it in their writing.

In Ana Castillo's novel *So Far from God*[20] it is Caridad who practices *curanderismo,* which she has learned from old Doña Felicia. Both women operate within and outside the Catholic Church, combining traditional religious symbols with massage and folk remedies to restore spiritual and physical unity and harmony. The integration of miraculous elements within the realistic discourse of mundane female activities allows Castillo to uncover the multiple perspectives of the Chicanas' reality and point to the syncretism of both cultures as a way for contemporary *mestiza*.

In Cisneros's *Caramelo,* Lala becomes a *curandera* the moment she starts to communicate with the spirit of her dead Grandmother, Soledad, in order to help her with "settling her business on Earth." When Lala's father is at the hospital dying, the ghost of Soledad appears to her and agrees to restore him to life in exchange for Lala's promise to pass on the story of her Grandmother's life:

> You're the only one who can see me. Oh, it's terrible being a woman. The world doesn't pay attention to you until you grow tetas, and then once they dry up, you turn invisible again. You're the only one who can help me, Celaya … You'll tell my story, won't you? So that I'll be understood? So that I'll be forgiven?[21]

In such a way, Lala discovers the bond with this despotic matriarch, whom she feared and hated for many years, the bond which lies in the female universal experience of invisibility in the patriarchal culture that denies women the right to their own voice. The symbol of this bond becomes the unfinished *caramelo rebozo*. When Lala starts to wear it, she is reminded of where her family comes from since the shawl becomes "the universe a cloth, and all humanity interwo-

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[18] Tey Diana Rebolledo, *Women Singing in the Snow: a Cultural Analysis of Chicana Literature* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1995), 88–89.

[19] Rebolledo, *Women Singing in the Snow*, 92.

[20] Ana Castillo, *So Far from God* (New York: Penguin, 1994).

[21] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 412.

ven… . Pull one string and the whole thing comes undone."[22] This way storytelling that commonly assists female mundane activities such as weaving or cooking becomes part of their *curanderismo,* a female secret weapon to gain voice and become visible.

We can observe a similar link between the art of storytelling and female craft in a 1995 movie *How to Make an American Quilt* directed by Jocelyn Moorhouse. In the movie we have a group of elderly women meeting together to make a quilt which will be a wedding gift for a granddaughter of one of them. While working, they start to tell stories from their youth that later weave into one tale about love, which is also the leading motif of the quilt. While in Cisneros's novel *Caramelo* handicraft and storytelling bind up women in one family, in the case of the movie stories become not only a therapy for each individual woman, but a universal tale about female experience that crosses the boundaries of ethnicity, class and age becoming a kind of a roadmap for the young Finn (played by Winona Ryder).

Gloria Anzaldúa's Philosophy of Writing

In the final part of this paper I would like to concentrate on Gloria Anzaldúa and her views on writing to demonstrate how her theory combines all of the above-mentioned features of female storytelling.

The anthology *This Bridge Called My Back. Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981, 1983), which Anzaldúa co-edited with Cherrie Moraga, is a book about relations between women of colour in which storytelling in female literature (letters, stories, poems, memoirs) plays various roles. First of all, the most visible is the *political aspect of female writing*. Anzaldúa writes: "In our common struggle and in our writing we reclaim our tongues. We wield a pen as a tool, a weapon, a means of survival, a magic wand that will attract power, that will draw self-love into our bodies."[23] Therefore, as a way of acquiring voice in a culture that traditionally silences women, writing is political and words are used as weapons to regain strength and influence. The pen, described as a tool, guarantees not a literal survival, but a mental space where a woman author can fully develop her potential, namely in the words of Virginia Woolf, it offers a woman "a room of her own." Moreover, this *transforming power of writing* can already be seen in the introduction to the book in which Gloria says to Cherrie: "This book

[22] Cisneros, *Caramelo*, 393.

[23] Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back. Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983), 163.

will change your life. It will change both our lives."[24] In fact, it did change not only their lives but also the whole feminist movement contributing to the formation of the Women of Color Feminism and then the Third Wave to which Anzaldúa is a godmother.

The Third Wave of feminism, which has been mostly centred on individualism and personal narrative, also concentrates on one more aspect of storytelling – namely, the concept that female *writing can be dangerous*, an idea already mentioned by Anzaldúa. "Writing is dangerous because we are afraid of what the writing reveals: the fears, the angers, the strengths of a woman under a triple or quadruple oppression. Yet in that very act lies our survival because a woman who writes has power."[25] Chicanas, although coming from the culture that suppresses women and values oral tradition, know very well that those who write books have power in society. When women not only discover the source of their oppression but start to articulate it freely they manage to trespass into the terrain that had been closed to them by tradition, patriarchy and colonialism. Their anger at their oppressors allows them to conquer the fears that overshadowed their existence for centuries and this articulation empowers them.

This *empowering aspect of artistic expression* becomes "the act of making soul"[26] the concept later developed by Anzaldúa in another anthology of women of colour also edited by her entitled *Making Face, Making Soul. Haciendo Caras. Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color* published in 1990. Here writing becomes the major factor constructing one's identity through which women of color attempt to decolonize themselves. In the introduction to the anthology Anzaldúa writes:

> A woman of color who writes poetry or paints or dances or makes movies knows there is no escape from race or gender when she is writing or painting. She can't take off her color and sex and leave them at the door of her study or studio. Nor can she leave behind her history. Art is about identity, among other things, and her creativity is political…. Art is a struggle between the personal voice and language, with its apparatuses of culture and ideologies, and art mediums with their genre laws…. Our survival depends on being creative. By sending our voices, visuals and visions outward into the world, we alter the walls and make them a framework for new windows and doors. … Only then can we make a home out of the cracks.[27]

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[24] Anzaldúa and Moraga, *This Bridge Called My Back*, xv.

[25] Ibid., 171.

[26] Ibid., 169.

[27] Gloria Anzaldúa, ed., *Haciendo Caras. Making Face, Making Soul* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1990), xxiv–xxv.

Decolonization is a major theme of the book, which gave the floor to American women of color who were denied the voice on the grounds of being women in patriarchal society, but most of all on the grounds of being colored in the society that had built its power on colonization and exploitation of different minorities. Now struggling to be heard, they fight for the recognition of their art that at best times was called folk art and at worst denied any artistic value and as such excluded from the mainstream canon. Moreover, the act of writing places the author in a position of the speaking subject, which is a sign of one's control and enables the establishment of one's own discourse. bell hooks observes:

> Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of "talking back," that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject – the liberated voice.[28]

And Gloria Anzaldúa adds: "When she transforms silence into language, a woman transgresses"[29] thus announcing the *transgressive and liberating role of writing*.

As the presence of the ancestor in her creation is concerned, Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands. La Frontera. The New Mestiza* (1987, 1999), her seminal work, writes: "I was familiar with *cuentos* – since my grandmother told stories"[30] and as a result of listening to these stories "I write the myths in me, the myths I am, the myths I want to become."[31] In this book she also clearly formulates the idea of *a writer as a shaman* since through writing one can attain contact with the Divine: "The ability of story (prose and poetry) to transform the storyteller and the listener into something or someone else is shamanistic."[32] The author then becomes a *curandera* and *writing becomes therapy* – "Reconstructing the traumas behind the images, I make 'sense' of them and once they have 'meaning' they are changed, transformed. It is then that writing heals me."[33]

In *La Frontera* Anzaldúa also makes a very personal confession when she admits that "Writing is my whole life, it is my obsession"[34] and then she explains:

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[28] "Talking Back" in Gloria Anzaldúa, ed., *Haciendo Caras. Making Face, Making Soul* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1990), 211.

[29] Anzaldúa, *Haciendo Caras*, xxii.

[30] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands. La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999), 87.

[31] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, 93.

[32] Ibid., 88.

[33] Ibid., 92.

[34] Ibid., 97.

> To write, to be a writer, I have to trust and believe in myself as a speaker, as a voice for the images. I have to believe that I can communicate with images and words and that I can do it well…. I cannot separate my writing from any part of my life. It is all one.[35]

In her final anthology *This Bridge We Call Home. Radical Visions for Transformation* co-edited with Analouise Keating (2002), Anzaldúa again develops *the communal and decolonizing aspects of storytelling*. However, this time the ethnic writer challenges not only the Western discourse but also modern global capitalism with its exploitation of the Third World, racism and sexism. She writes:

> When creating a personal narrative you also co-create the group/cultural story.… You doubt that traditional western science is the best knowledge system, the only true, impartial arbiter of reality. You question its definitions of progress, whose manifest destiny imperializes other peoples' energies and snuffs out their realities and hopes of a better life. You now see the western story as one of patriarchal, hierarchical control; fear and hatred of women; dominion over nature; science/technology's promise of expanding power; seduction of commerce, and, to be fair, a celebration of individual rights – freedom, creativity, and ingenuity. You turn the established narrative on its head, seeing through, resisting, and subverting its assumptions. Again, it's not to denounce the culture's old account – you must provide new narratives embodying alternative potentials. You're sure of one thing: the consciousness that's created our social ills (dualistic and misogynist) cannot solve them – we need a more expansive conocimiento. The new stories must partially come from outside the system of ruling powers.[36]

Only when we rephrase old stories and create the new ones from the outside of the existing system of power we can reach the state of, what Anzaldúa calls, a "new tribalism" which bridges the gaps of race, gender, ethnicity, class and culture, and allows for building new coalitions and communities based on equality and the idea of sustainable development. "Through the act of writing you call, like the ancient chamana, the scattered pieces of your soul back to your body. You commence the arduous task of rebuilding yourself, composing a story that more accurately expresses your new identity. You seek out allies and, together, begin building spiritual/political communities that struggle for personal growth and social justice."[37] Moreover, stories undergo a process of constant re-creation and

[35] Ibid., 95.

[36] Gloria Anzaldúa and Analouise Keating, ed., *This Bridge We Call Home. Radical Visions for Transformation* (Routledge: New York, 2002), 560.

[37] Anzaldúa and Keating, *This Bridge We Call Home*, 574.

advancement which not only heals the old wounds but primarily contributes to the formation of the new Self:

> When the latest story/self/body ceases to be credited or is not developing the way you want, you reinterpret the story you imagine yourself to be living. *Tu autohistoria* is not craved in stone but drawn on sand and subject to shifting winds… you realize it's the process that's valuable and not the end product, not the new you, as that will change often throughout your life.[38]

Hence, the modification in the story contributes to the transformation of one's Self, which then brings about the political and spiritual change of the community thus "forging bonds across race, gender, and other lines, and creating a new tribalism…. And when that happens, you change the world."[39]

[38] Ibid., 562.
[39] Ibid., 574.

Grażyna Zygadło

"Zmieniając siebie, zmieniam świat" Opowiadanie historii jako motyw w sztuce kobiet

Streszczenie

Snucie opowieści ma moc konsolidowania społeczności: przekazując wspólne zwyczaje i rytuały, formułuje tożsamość kulturową. Dlatego też „grupy podporządkowane" od wieków opowiadały swoje historie, w ten sposób sprzeciwiając się kolonialnej dominacji i opresji. W większości kultur to kobiety są nośnikami ustnych opowieści – najpierw opowiadając bajki i legendy dzieciom bądź wnukom, a później przekazując tradycyjne obrzędy i przepisy młodym kobietom. Takie międzypokoleniowe opowiadanie odgrywa też ogromną rolę w literaturze kobiecej. Niniejszy artykuł poświęcony jest pisarkom z mniejszości etnicznych, zwłaszcza autorkom Chicano, opowiadającym swoje historie tak, aby przekroczyć obecny w kulturze zachodniej patriarchalny model uniwersalistyczny. Szczegółowo omówiona została również twórczość Glorii E. Anzaldúa w kontekście jej filozofii pisarstwa.

Grażyna Zygadło

« En changeant moi-même, je change le monde » La narration de l'histoire en tant que motif dans l'art féminin

Résumé

L'action de conter un récit a le pouvoir de consolider une population : en véhiculant des coutumes et rituels communs, elle forme l'identité culturelle. C'est pour cette raison que « des groupes soumis » racontaient leurs histoires depuis des siècles en s'opposant ainsi à la domination coloniale et à l'oppression. Dans la majorité des cultures, ce sont les femmes qui véhiculent des contes oraux en racontant tout d'abord des fables et des légendes à leurs enfants ou bien à leurs petits-enfants, et puis, en transmettant des rites et des recettes traditionnels aux jeunes femmes. Une telle narration s'opérant entre les générations joue aussi un immense rôle dans la littérature féminine. Le présent article est consacré aux écrivaines provenant des minorités ethniques, surtout aux auteures chicanas qui racontent leurs histoires de manière à transgresser le modèle patriarcal universaliste présent dans la culture occidentale. De surcroît, on a analysé en détail l'œuvre de Gloria Evangelia Anzaldúa dans le contexte de sa philosophie littéraire.

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Writing to Preserve the Self: A Woman's Resistant Position in the Patriarchal Dystopia of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

In *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986), one of her most critically acclaimed novels, Margaret Atwood proposes a speculative vision of the quasi-future world, where the state is governed by the strict rules of fundamentalist Christianity. Atwood's description of the Orwellian-like country is detailed and credible enough, with all generic features that the utopia/dystopia genre should possess. What interests the author most, however, is the position of women in such totalitarian, both orthodox and misogynistic, circumstances; circumstances which reduce all female citizens to the most basic and stereotypical gender roles, with giving birth at their peak. That is why Atwood endows Offred, both the heroine and the narrator of the book, with the unwavering will to preserve her self, which manifests itself in the very process of writing, or telling her story. In other words, it is through writing/storytelling that Offred tries not only to resist the oppressive contemporariness, but also to fight for her real position in the world. Writing/telling, then, becomes for her a therapeutic method to regain and mark the self.

In a nutshell, *The Handmaid's Tale* is a story of Offred, a handmaid who lives in the world of the near-future, namely in the state of Gilead which is situated approximately in the north-eastern part of the United States of America. Gilead, whose name derives from the Bible, is, a highly patriarchal and misogynistic state that bases its very existence strictly on some carefully selected sections from the same canonical text, that is, the Bible. As all police states, Gilead limits and controls freedom of its citizens, particularly women, dividing society into easily distinguishable, and thus controllable, classes whose social functions are also clearly established. Thirty-three-year-old Offred belongs to the class of handmaids, sur-

rogate mothers whose aim is to give birth to children, as Gilead, due to numerous environmental catastrophes, suffers from underpopulation; paraphrasing the old Latin saying "*Tota mulier in utero*" ("Women is nothing but a womb"), the heroine describes the situation of handmaids in the following way: "We are for breeding purposes: we aren't concubines, geisha girls, courtesans. On the contrary.… We are two-legged wombs; that's all: sacred vessels, ambulatory chalices."[1] As such, she lives in the house of the Commander with whom she is obliged to mate during a monthly ceremony literarily inspired by the Old Testament story of Jacob's wives Rachel and Leah, and their two handmaids. Cast on the margins of the society, Offred's main weapon against her humiliating situation becomes "telling the story," and it is only from the documentary epilogue of the novel – a transcript of an academic seminar from the year 2195 devoted to studying the already nonexistent state of Gilead – that the readers learn about both the end of the theocratic regime, and the nature of the heroine's discourse. However, these are also the scholars of the multicultural, openly tolerant and environment-friendly future who (mis)read Offred's storytelling adding another tragic dimension to the novel's multiple interpretative layers.

To begin analysing the issue of preserving a woman's self in *The Handmaid's Tale*, it would be highly inappropriate not to mention the dystopia context, or rather *ustopia*, as this is the term that the writer currently suggests for her speculative fiction: "*Ustopia* is a word I made up by combining utopia and dystopia – the imagined perfect society and its opposite – because, in my view, each contains a latent version of the other."[2] Although Atwood wrote her book well aware of all its generic implications, she also endeavoured to enrich her dystopia/utopia with features alien to the genre, with the female voice as the most important one. However, employing the "obvious feminist focus"[3] does not make *The Handmaid's Tale* a direct feminist variation on a dystopia, quite a frequent academic idea definitely opposed by Atwood herself:

> The majority of dystopias – Orwell's included – have been written by men, and the point of view has been male. When women have appeared in them, they have been either sexless automatons or rebels who've defied the sex rules of the regime. They've acted as the temptresses of the male protagonists, however welcome this temptation may be to the men themselves. Thus Julia, thus the cami-knicker-wearing, orgy-porgy seducer of the Savage in *Brave New World*, thus the subversive femme

[1] Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (London: Vintage, 1996), 146.

[2] Margaret Atwood, "Dire Cartographies: The Roads to Ustopia," in *Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination* (New York: Random House Inc., 2001), 66.

[3] Amin Malak, "Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and the Dystopian Tradition," in Modern Critical Interpretations: *Margaret Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale'*, ed. Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2001), 6.

> fatale of Yvgeny Zamyatin's 1924 seminal classic *We*. I wanted to try a dystopia from the female point of view – the world of Julia, as it were. However, this does not make *The Handmaid's Tale* a "feminist dystopia," except insofar as giving a woman a voice and an inner life will always be considered "feminist" by those who think women ought not to have these things.[4]

Additionally, Chris Ferns points at a yet different quality making *The Handmaid's Tale* quite a unique representative of the genre: "Far more exclusively than any other dystopian author, Atwood chooses to focus on the private consciousness of her protagonist – on the one realm that the State cannot successfully invade … . For all the elaboration of the State's surveillance mechanisms, it cannot prevent her from committing treason in her own mind, from thoughtcrime, to use Orwell's terminology … ."[5]

Moreover, contradicting somehow Atwood's opinions that *The Handmaid's Tale* is not a feminist dystopia, the gender factor has to be emphasized. Coral Ann Howells also seems to agree with a point of view where generic features of utopia are juxtaposed with Offred's obvious female voice: "[Offred's] treasonable act of speaking out in a society where women are forbidden to read or write or to speak freely effects a significant shift from 'history' to 'herstory.' Offred's tale claims a space, a large autobiographical space, within the novel and so relegates the grand narratives to the margins as a mere framework for her story, which is the main focus of interests."[6] Indeed, the novel's point of view appears for Atwood as important as the implications of the plot. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, the writer gives Offred the voice in the fullest possible way, making her the narrator that is the reverse of omnipresent, and yet the one becomes the sole source of information not only about Offred's inner thoughts and feelings, but also about the external world of the regime that surrounds her. Telling her story, Offred is not interested in the factual data, as she focuses on her role in the events that happen (not only to her) around her, frequently switching from her present dystopian situation to the times before the patriarchal takeover. Consequently, she constitutes a type of narrator that at first the reader may find difficult to rely on, which yet, in a course of time, proves a powerful one, as her discourse fulfills the novel both physically and symbolically emphasizing the fact that she actually has a voice. It is then a conscious, inner and female voice – Offred's storytelling/writing – that becomes the basic and genuine feature of the novel, its axis.

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[4] Margaret Atwood, "George Orwell: Some Personal Connections," in *Writing with Intent: Essays, Reviews, Personal Prose 1983–2005* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2005), 291.

[5] Chris Ferns, *Narrating Utopia: Ideology, Form, Gender in Utopian Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 131–32.

[6] Coral Ann Howells, *Margaret Atwood* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 93.

As hinted above, a technical problem can occur there, whether Offred's discourse is actually writing or telling. "I would like to believe this is story I'm telling. I need to believe it. I must believe it. Those who can believe that such stories are only stories have a better chance … . Tell, rather than write, because I have nothing to write with and writing is in any case forbidden" states the heroine making it obvious that her activity is what can be called telling.[7] Additionally, the reader learns from the documentary epilogue of the novel that Offred's story was found recorded on a number of tapes. Nevertheless, the very nature of Offred's discourse makes it more appropriate to accept Glenn Deer's analysis of *The Handmaid's Tale*, who states:

> Actually, we don't know many details about the reading and writing habits of Offred before Gilead: we do know that she was university educated, that she loved books, and that she worked transferring books to computer disks. We should keep in mind that we are not meant to read Offred's story as one composed retrospectively – and an extreme retrospective it is. Offred demonstrates immense skill in constructing her rhetoric; this "unskilled" storyteller pays expert attention to narrative point of view, to physical detail, and to remembered conversations. Indeed, Offred's discourse reflects a practiced devotion to *written* rhetoric. And of course, one of the great compositional problems of the novel is that the *oral* qualities of Offred's taped discourse are always *imaginary* oral qualities: as we read the printed discourse, we attend to a complex syntactical and rhetorical play that is the product of the economy of writing, not speech.[8]

It would be justified then to treat Offred's discourse as both "a substitute for dialogue,"[9] and a text of culture; a discourse combining in itself both the oral and written qualities.

The complex resistant nature of Offred's discourse, as well as the complicated patriarchal power structures she finds herself in, become visible when one considers her very name. As the heroine confesses:

> My name isn't Offred. I have another name, which nobody uses now because it's forbidden. I tell myself it doesn't matter, your name is like your telephone number, useful only to others; but what I tell myself is wrong, it does matter. I keep the knowledge of this name like something hidden, some treasure I'll come back to dig up, one day. I think of this name as

[7] Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 49.

[8] Glenn Deer, "*The Handmaid's Tale*: Dystopia and the Paradoxes of Power," in Modern Critical Interpretations: *'The Handmaid's Tale'*, 95.

[9] Howells, *Margaret Atwood*, 101.

> buried. This name has an aura around it, like an amulet, some charm that's survived from an unimaginably distant past. I lie in my single bed at night, with my eyes closed, and the name floats there behind my eyes, not quite within reach, shining in the dark.[10]

It may suggest some survival instinct hidden deep inside Offred, because keeping in mind her real name and, at the same time, refusing both to utter and forget it, she rebels against the regime that requires from all its citizens, and especially women, complete obedience. The name "Offred" obviously derives from the Commander who, physically and symbolically, possesses and "commands" the heroine ("of Fred"), but it can be explained in different ways as well: "Offred's name also suggests 'Off-red' as a secret rebel, the 'Offered' in a blood sacrifice, and, especially, the 'red' figure who goes 'off' the path … ."[11] Offred is then a secret rebel who struggles for her private freedom, but also, symbolically, for freedom of other handmaids and women in general. However, her name collocates some passivity: "She, herself, is 'afraid' (to play on a word that sounds like 'Offred') – afraid to rally against the Revolution, to reveal herself to Ofglen, to spy on behalf of the Mayday group, to attempt escape, to commit suicide."[12] Sometimes this passivity manifests itself in the projected denial of her real name and acceptance of her present situation: "… that's where I am, there's no escaping it. Time's a trap, I'm caught in it. I must forget about my secret name and all ways back. My name is Offred now, and here is where I live. Live in the present, make the most of it, it's all you've got."[13] However, such breakdowns of resistance and doubts in the sense of fighting for freedom seem to be inscribed in Offred's personality making her a more reliable character. In the end, the desire to express herself freely and preserve her self fully prevails, because "she guards her lost name as the secret sign of her own identity and as guarantee of her hopes for a different future."[14] Consequently, as a desire for freedom in such circumstances may mean a desire for survival, her discourse becomes what Coral Ann Howells calls "a woman's survival narrative."[15]

Of course, Atwood not only makes Offred a highly interesting narrator (the issue that will be discussed later on), but also a truly round character, even when the protagonist herself does not seem to be fully convinced of it: "That is how I feel: white, flat, thin. I feel transparent. Surely they will be able to see through me … . I feel as if there's not much left of me; they will slip through my arms, as if

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[10] Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 94.

[11] Sharon Rose Wilson, "Off the Path to Grandma's House in *The Handmaid's Tale*," in Modern Critical Interpretations: *'The Handmaid's Tale'*, 68.

[12] Nathalie Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 125.

[13] Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 153.

[14] Howells, *Margaret Atwood*, 99.

[15] Ibid., 93.

I'm made of smoke, as if I'm a mirage, fading before their eyes."[16] Therefore, she has her moments of doubt as well: "I don't want to be telling this story," she says on one occasion. "I don't have to tell it. I don't have to tell anything, to myself or to anyone else. I could just sit here, peacefully. I could withdraw. It's possible to go so far in, so far down and back, they could never get you out … . Why fight?"[17] Such projected moments of withdrawal made Chris Ferns call Offred "the most passive of all the rebels against dystopia,"[18] and, consequently, the accusations against Offred on account of her passivity are one of the most frequent feminist reproaches. "I'm too tired to go on with this story. I'm too tired to think about where I am," as says the protagonist at one instant.[19] However, such accusations are just partly true, as hesitation and withdrawal mark the natural fears of a person put in such extreme circumstances as living in the totalizing, theocratic state of Gilead can offer. No wonder Offred turns towards her inside, as probably most people in her situation would: "Steel yourself, my mother used to say … . I never thought much at the time about what the phrase meant, but it had something to do with metal, with armour, and that's what I would do, I would steel myself. I would pretend not to be present, not in the flesh."[20] Interestingly enough, such fears and anxieties are an obvious sign of Offred's intelligence, as she fully realizes her unjustly inferior position stating: "I resign my body freely, to the uses of others. They can do what they like to me. I am abject. I feel, for the first time, their true power."[21] This utterance of Offred's clearly corresponds with Julia Kristeva's definition of abject and abjection: "A 'something' that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of non-existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me"[22]; and: "It is … not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite."[23] Consequently, the main two options for Offred are either to yield to this annihilating force that embodies itself in the patriarchal totalitarianism of Gilead or, recognizing and realizing her active elements, to struggle for her coherence; she chooses the latter one, stating ironically: "I would like to be ignorant. Then I would not know how ignorant I was."[24]

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[16] Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 95.

[17] Ibid., 237.

[18] Ferns, *Narrating Utopia*, 131.

[19] Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 138.

[20] Ibid., 169.

[21] Ibid., 298.

[22] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press 1982), 2.

[23] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 4.

[24] Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 275.

Offred's main weapon against the regime, which threatens her both physically and symbolically, appears to be language: "Because Offred recognizes the connections between the male control of language and male power, her dialogic resistance to the official, monologic discourse of Gilead is a conscious form of political disobedience."[25] What is more, she seems to be absolutely conscious of the possibilities of language and highly precise in its use: "Through her dialogic wordplay and focus on words, Offred not only registers her resistance to the official speech and totalizing discourse of the state, she also signals her desperate desire to retain some sense of control … . Words, to Offred, are more than precious commodities. They are also signposts to the reality she is determined to hold on to. While the world can be read as if it were a text, it is not equivalent to a text."[26] This mastery in wordplays, combined with a sense of desperation, is easily noticeable in the following passage: "I sit in the chair and think about the word *chair*. It can also mean a mode of execution. It is the first syllable in *charity*. It is the French word for flesh. None of these facts has any connection with the others. These are the litanies I use, to compose myself."[27] Of course, these facts have both internal and external connections and Offred actually seems fully aware of it, which can be detected in the act of her compositions. Consequently, the skill of composing herself enables her to realize the power of language in her difficult political context:

> Offred is depicted as fascinated with the paradoxes of power. Offred's ethical assumptions would suggest that she is opposed to irrational modes of argument and persuasion; she is opposed to the tyranny of propaganda. Yet this ethical consciousness demonstrates its attraction to the rhetorical efficiency of violence, power, and the grotesque: Offred has, in her discursive practice, started to play the game of power politics like a true Gileadan.[28]

Far from passivity then, Offred is fully aware of the fact that it is only through language and its quality of bitter irony that her self can survive; as she notices drawing the analogy between the red tulips in her Commander's wife's garden and blood of the executed man – two seemingly unconnected pictures: "Each thing is valid and really there. It is through a field of such valid objects that I must pick my way, every day and in every way. I put a lot of effort into making such distinctions. I need to be very clear, in my own mind."[29]

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[25] J. Brooks Bouson, "The Misogyny of Patriarchal Culture in *The Handmaid's Tale*," in Modern Critical Interpretations: *Margaret Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale'*, 53.

[26] Bouson, "The Misogyny of Patriarchal Culture," 54.

[27] Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 120.

[28] Deer, "*The Handmaid's Tale*: Dystopia and the Paradoxes of Power," 100.

[29] Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 43.

Another notion connected with the language and its skillful use is Offred's voice. As she states critically: "They used to have dolls, for little girls, that would talk if you pulled a string at the back; I thought I was sounding like that, voice of a monotone, voice of a doll."[30] However, she seems to be too harsh on herself, because, as Amin Malak notices:

> What makes Atwood's book such a moving tale is its clever technique in presenting the heroine initially as a voice, almost like a sleepwalker conceiving disjointed perceptions of its surroundings, as well as flashing reminiscences about a bygone life. As the scenes gather more details, the heroine's voice is steadily and imperceptively, yet convincingly, transfigured into a full-roundness that parallels her maturing comprehension of what is happening around her. Thus the victim, manipulated and coerced, is metamorphosed into a determined conniver who daringly violates the perverted canons of Gilead.[31]

It becomes obvious then, that her growing self-awareness is reflected in her speaking voice, and this, consequently, with her courageous will to disobey: "Offred refuses to be silenced, as she speaks out with the voice of late twentieth-century feminist individualism, resisting the cultural identity imposed on her."[32] All the mentioned characteristics of Offred's underline her strong desire to struggle for her self.

Language-consciousness and the maturity of the voice provoke the questions about Offred's narration and its role in the heroine's survival. Definitely, Offred makes a highly interesting narrator that Chris Ferns likens to D-503 from Zamyatin's canonical dystopia *We*:

> The narrators in Zamyatin's *We*, or indeed Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* are more active, by contrast, yet at the same time less confident. D-503 and Offred are hesitant, reluctant to pass judgment, sometimes even confused, and their narratives reveal, not mind already made up, but rather minds in the process of being made up. D-503 reveals himself as engaged in an internal struggle over what to think, over whether to accept or reject the values of the One State, while Offred, although clearly opposed to the fundamentalist values of Gilead, is occupied throughout the book with the question as to what she can or should do about her situation.[33]

[30] Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 26.
[31] Malak, "Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*," 8.
[32] Howells, *Margaret Atwood*, 99.
[33] Ferns, *Narrating Utopia*, 111.

This hesitation, this passive-active tension, is also another factor that makes Offred a round character: "If it's a story I'm telling, then I have control over the ending. Then there will be an ending, to the story, and real life will come after it. I can pick up where I left off. It isn't a story I'm telling. It's also a story I'm telling, in my head, as I go along."[34] At the same time, Offred can be characterized as a manipulative sort of narrator, as she deliberately slows down or even stops her discourse, jumps from one episode or flashback to the other, leaves some scenes unfinished, etc. Glenn Deer points at Offred's narrative self-consciousness as well:

> Atwood's narrator is an authoritative and authoritarian storyteller, one who manipulates the reader as she tells her story but one who is also caught in the web of Gileadan power politics. Offred's powerful narrative skill conflicts with the powerlessness, the innocence, and the descriptive phenomenological cast of mind that also characterizes her. It is as if Atwood's skill as storyteller continually intrudes, possessing her narrative creation. Narrative self-consciousness, in fact, does explicitly and strategically emerge.[35]

This paradox of inner powerfulness as in narrative skills juxtaposed with the external powerlessness is clearly visible in the following extract where she even seems to play with the reader:

> I wish this story were different. I wish it were more civilized. I wish it showed me in a better light, if not happier, then at least more active, less hesitant, less distracted by trivia. I wish it had more shape. I wish it were about love, or about sudden realizations important to one's life, or even about sunsets, birds, rainstorms, or snow … . I'm sorry there is so much pain in this story. I'm sorry it's in fragments, like a body caught in crossfire or pulled apart by force. But there is nothing I can do to change it … . I keep on going with this sad and hungry and sordid, this limping and mutilated story, because after all I want you to hear it … . By telling you anything at all I'm at least believing in you, I believe you into being. Because I'm telling you this story I will your existence. I tell, therefore you are.[36]

In other words, it seems that the act, or even the process, of believing in some sort of an audience means for Offred also believing in herself. The perspective of

[34] Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 49.
[35] Deer, "*The Handmaid's Tale*: Dystopia and the Paradoxes of Power," 95.
[36] Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 279.

an audience, however difficult to envision, gives her power and strengthens her will to go on. It is emphasized by the image of God-like creation which, by adding to her discourse a dose of quasi-religious heresy, marks the power of her narrative even more. It also proves that the story holds a kind of power over Offred, that she is enchanted by what she is telling and there is no escaping it: she has to go on to preserve herself, to endure.

One of the most crucial elements of Offred's integrity is the sense of the past, or, to be more precise, of the passing of time. On the one hand, the memories of an ordinary previous life have therapeutic and comforting properties for her present situation: "Our happiness is part memory,"[37] says the protagonist. Consequently, as "a creature of her own past,"[38] she refuses to erase her own memories, which all directly defies the rules of the new regime. Most frequently, remembrance of the past has a stimulating effect on Offred: "Offred's memories allow her to envision the other, and so provide a form of rebellion against the totalitarian system."[39] Sometimes, however, by reminding her of the good old days, those memories can be painful, too; as she confesses: "I have them, these attacks of the past, like faintness, a wave sweeping over my head. Sometimes it can hardly be borne. What is to be done, what is to be done, I thought. There is nothing to be done."[40] On the other hand, thanks to the sense of the passing time, she fully realizes the fact that her unbearable present time will become the past one day, that, in other words, Gilead will eventually cease to exist. As she summarizes her difficult situation in a surprisingly reasonable manner: "This is a reconstruction. All of it is a reconstruction, in my head, as I lie flat on my single bed rehearsing what I should or shouldn't have said, what I should or shouldn't have done, how I should have played it"[41]; and closer to the end of the book: "All I can hope for is a reconstruction … ."[42] As Nathalie Cooke notices: "After all, as Offred knows, the one who can control the story can also control the story's ending."[43] Indeed, Offred is capable of such skills, which is visible in the epilogue of the novel where her fragmented and reconstructed account becomes then a subject of an academic analysis for the scholars of the far future.

The world of the far future, as the epilogue entitled "Historical Notes" suggests, seems to be a place ecologically clean, with people from multiple cultures, religions and points of view coexisting in peace and harmony, which all contradicts of course with the picture of Gilead. However, all these values seem to be

[37] Ibid., 136.
[38] Ferns, *Narrating Utopia*, 132.
[39] Fiona Tolan, *Margaret Atwood: Feminism and Fiction* (New York: Rodopi, 2007), 166.
[40] Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 62.
[41] Ibid., 144.
[42] Ibid., 275.
[43] Cooke, *Margaret Atwood: A Critical Companion*, 130.

only superficial, and these are the scholars of this very future world that misread Offred's discourse in the most unacceptable way: "… these 'Historical Notes' are a further reinforcing of the *authority* of Offred's narrative: the academics are satirized as trivializers of history. They have turned Gilead into a matter of textual authentication and an occasion for levity and entertainment. The scholars are pompous cultural relativists… ."[44] First of all, the reader learns that these are they, represented by a male historian, Professor Piexioto, who discovered and edited Offred's oral diary into what was entitled *The Handmaid's Tale*. The very pun on Chaucer's masterpiece of literature, that is a work of fiction, clearly suggests that for Piexioto, Offred's account has little, if any, historical value; that is why the professor calls Offred's narrative "an item" – "I hesitate to use the word *document*," as he states[45] – and by repeating this unjust term several times, he deprived Offred's story of its most important quality, that is the truth value. What is more, it appears that Offred's obsession with naming her storytelling a reconstruction (a word that she uses a number of times) has an ironically reversed ending: it is a man who appears to reconstruct a woman's discourse about the abuses of the male world in its extreme. Consequently, such an activity results in "a radical shift from 'herstory' to 'history' as he attempts to discredit Offred's narrative by accusing her of not paying attention to significant events."[46] Being more interested in dry historical fact, that is mainly the identity of Offred's commander, Piexioto does not appear to perceive Offred as an individual human being. In other words, he does what Offred feared the most: that "From the point of view of future, [the handmaids] will be invisible."[47] Simultaneously, Piexioto's misogynistic interpretation also deprives Offred of her self, making her an unimportant, if at all existing, part of the great realm of history, where objective analysis means more than any sign of emotional subjectivity. Addressing a group of scholars, who subsequently applaud his words, the historian comments on Gilead's totalitarianism in the following way:

> If I may be permitted an editorial aside, allow me to say that in my opinion we must be cautious about passing moral judgment upon the Gileadeans. Surely we have learned by now that such judgments are of necessity culture-specific. Also, Gileadean society was under a good deal of pressure, demographic and otherwise, and was subject to factors from which we ourselves are happily more free. Our job is not to censure but to understand.[48]

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[44] Deer, "*The Handmaid's Tale*: Dystopia and the Paradoxes of Power," 108.
[45] Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 313.
[46] Howells, *Margaret Atwood*, 107.
[47] Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 240.
[48] Ibid., 315.

Paradoxically then, even though "the voice of the repressed woman we know only as Offred survives longer than the regime that tries to silence it,"[49] it is hard to say that she triumphs over Gilead as the tendencies that were dominating that totalitarian state are still present, only this time they are more carefully hidden.

"I wait. I compose myself. My self is a thing I must now compose, as one composes a speech. What I must present is a made thing, not something born," says Offred[50] commenting on her social function as a handmaid, and this urge to preserve her self becomes the basis of her creed. Another feature is the desire to have if not a partner in a dialogue, then at least someone to receive her story, so that her self could not only endure, but also find its full ontological and highly individualized realization:

> A story is like a letter. *Dear You*, I'll say. Just *you*, without a name. Attaching a name attaches *you* to the world of fact, which is riskier, more hazardous: who knows what the chances are out there, of survival, yours? I will say *you*, *you*, like an old love song. *You* can mean more than one. *You* can mean thousands… . I'll pretend you can hear me. But it's no good, because I know you can't.[51]

Unfortunately, both the wishes do not seem to be fulfilled on the pages of Atwood's novel, as Offred is misread both by her openly chauvinistic and patriarchal civilization that, according to Atwood, is only a slight exaggeration of the intolerant world we live nowadays, and by the future culture that only pretends to appreciate and value all sorts of diversities, including the gender ones, but is actually equally deeply rooted in the adverse contemporariness. Although she manages to preserve her self, and her storytelling is definitely a powerful one, both the cases of misreading her and her discourse are rather pessimistic, making her a truly tragic character and her project only partly successful.

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[49] Wilson, "Off the Path to Grandma's House," 77.

[50] Atwood, *Handmaid's Tale*, 76.

[51] Ibid., 50.

Sławomir Kuźnicki

Pisanie jako sposób na ocalenie własnego „ja" – kobiecy opór wobec patriarchatu w *Opowieść podręcznej* Margaret Atwood

Streszczenie

Artykuł koncentruje się na Fredzie, bohaterce powieści *Opowieść podręcznej* (1986) Margaret Atwood, która żyje w antyutopii chrześcijańskiego totalitaryzmu, gdzie nie ma miejsca na równość między płciami, a kobiety zmuszone są do porzucenia swojej podmiotowości. W tej przerażająco współczesnej wizji świata, w której męska władza sprawowana jest na podstawie surowych reguł religijnego fundamentalizmu, pozycja kobiety ograniczona zostaje do najbardziej elementarnych i stereotypowych funkcji społecznych, takich jak gotowanie, zajmowanie się domem czy płodzenie potomstwa.

Jednakże w postaci Fredy, zarówno bohaterki, jak i narratorki książki, zaobserwować można nieugiętą wolę przeciwstawienia się owej męskiej dominacji, a tym samym ocalenia swojej jaźni. Na pierwszy rzut oka bierna i uległa, Freda udowadnia ostatecznie swoją przewagę nad mizoginicznym społeczeństwem i niesprzyjającymi okolicznościami. Sposobem na osiągnięcie tego celu okazuje się pisanie, będące podstawową formą jej ekspresji. Tym samym staje się ono nie tylko próbą przeciwstawienia się opresyjnej współczesności, ale również walką o rzeczywistą pozycję w świecie. Innymi słowy, pisanie okazuje się dla Fredy terapeutycznym sposobem na odzyskanie i wyrażenie jej własnego kobiecego ja. Niestety, niezależnie od siły jej dyskursu, Freda – jako archetyp wszystkich kobiet w patriarchalnych i mizoginicznych cywilizacjach – pozostaje niezrozumiała w świecie zdominowanym przez mężczyzn, a tekst, który pisze, nie znajduje w takiej kulturze drogi do właściwej interpretacji.

Sławomir Kuźnicki

Écriture en tant que moyen de sauver son propre « moi » – résistance féminine contre le patriarcat dans *La Servante écarlate* de Margaret Atwood

Résumé

L'article se concentre sur Defred, héroïne du roman *La Servante écarlate* (1986) de Margaret Atwood, qui vit dans une dystopie du totalitarisme chrétien où il n'y a pas de place pour l'égalité entre les sexes, et les femmes sont forcées d'abandonner leur subjectivité. Dans cette vision du monde – gravement contemporaine – où le pouvoir masculin est exercé par l'application des règles sévères du fondamentalisme religieux, la position de femme est limitée aux fonctions sociales les plus élémentaires et stéréotypées telles que la cuisine, les travaux ménagers et l'enfantement.

Cependant chez Defred, étant à la fois héroïne et narratrice du roman, on peut observer une volonté intransigeante de s'opposer à cette domination masculine et, par conséquent, de sauver son Soi. Passive et obéissante au premier abord, Defred prouve finalement son avantage sur une société misogyne et sur les circonstances défavorables. L'écriture, constituant une forme essentielle de son expression, s'avère être le moyen qui lui permet d'atteindre son objectif. Ainsi, elle

devient non seulement une tentative de s'opposer à la modernité oppressive, mais aussi une lutte pour une position réelle dans le monde. En d'autres termes, l'écriture paraît comme un moyen thérapeutique grâce auquel Defred peut retrouver et exprimer son propre « moi » féminin. Malheureusement, indépendamment de la force de son discours, Defred – comme archétype de toutes les femmes vivant dans les civilisations patriarcales et misogynes – est toujours incomprise dans le monde dominé par les hommes, et le texte qu'elle écrit n'a pas de chance d'être interprété correctement dans une telle culture.

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In the Search of Self: Female Identity and Subjectivity in Doris Lessing's "To Room Nineteen"

> We are all just vessels through which identities pass: we are lent features, gestures, habits, then we hand them on. Nothing is our own. We began in the world as anagrams of our antecedents.[1]

The concept of identity is an essential factor which conditions the awareness of existence of an individual and simultaneously defines their social affiliation, ways of behaving and patterns of perception, in a particular social and cultural space. Identity as a conceptualized issue is, however, a complex and problematic sociocultural phenomenon, the observation of which echoes in a wide spectrum of approaches and various definitions of the same idea.

This paper aims to discuss the concept of female identity as both a sociocultural construction and as an individual structure. Simultaneously, with reference to Doris Lessing's "To Room Nineteen,"[2] an attempt is made to answer the question of the existence of the self of an individual as private and social. On the analogy to particular theoretical aspects such as the marginalization of an individual, dichotomy of the language and abjection, for instance, motifs such as the dualism of the female psyche, the quest for origins, the formation of private identity and suicide, and their connection with the process of self-formation, will be taken into consideration.

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[1] Maggie O'Farrell, *The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox* (London: Headline Review, 2006), 118.

[2] Doris Lessing, "To Room Nineteen," in *A Man and Two Women* (Frogmore: Panther Books, 1977).

> Identity is … maintained through social and material conditions. The social and the symbolic refer to two different processes but each is necessary for the marking and maintaining for identities.[3]

According to Kathryn Woodward, identity is a socio-cultural project based on the idea of binary oppositions. The statement that social norms and cultural stereotypes shape the perception of a female identity and her self-definition is accurate. Furthermore, socio-cultural regulations prevent us from perceiving or manifesting any potential traces of individualism and creativity. In such circumstances the notion of "I" can be only defined through the prism of the social status one possesses and through the hierarchy of cultural values dominant in the society within which they exist. Nevertheless, the obligation to have a schematic self-definition and to function within the frames of the imposed order of things may be challenged or consciously rejected, as in the case of Doris Lessing's female protagonist of the story "To Room Nineteen."[4]

Susan Rawlings disavows all the limitations imposed on an individual by the majority and makes a solitary quest to discover her true self. The female character rebels against the regulations, and specified ways of perceiving the self, and initiates her own personal struggle to retain her uniqueness and release her desires. She rejects patterns of behaviour accepted by the society and the role of the Feminine Mystique,[5] a stereotypical vision of an ideal woman, mother and housewife who is obedient and sacrifices all her passion, ambitions and dreams for the sphere of the domestic. Susan's view of life and conscious abandonment of social values and the norms of conduct that precisely define both female identity and her obligations can be regarded as a reflection of Simone de Beauvoir's point of view on female destiny.[6]

> She is opposed to the essential. He is Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other. Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being, … . She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her, she is incidental, inessential her.[7]

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[3] Kathryn Woodward, ed., "Conceptions of Identity and Difference," in *Identity and Difference* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 12.

[4] Lessing, "To Room Nineteen."

[5] Rosemary Agoenito, ed., "The Feminine Mystique," in *History of Ideas of Woman. A Source Book* (London: Perigee Trade, 1978), 377.

[6] Dan Dervin, "Matricentric Narratives During Sixties," in *Matricentric Narratives. Recent British Women's Fiction in Postmodern Mode*, Women's Studies, Vol. 16 (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997).

[7] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (London: Vintage, 1997), 717.

Beauvoir presents female identity as a project precisely designed and defined by the dominant social group. She indicates that woman is perceived in the patriarchal society not as an individual but as the Other. Furthermore, her socio-culturally shaped identity not only imposes on her a position subordinate to that of the male, but also suggests that the identity of a woman cannot be discussed in other contexts such as procreation, submission and otherness.

Consequently, there emerges the notion of social identity as one constructed by the social order, in conformity with patriarchal tradition, and imposing on its members the ritual of imitation of exemplary modes of female ideals. The social self symbolizes, thus, woman's fulfillment as an icon of both a perfect mother and wife. However, such embodiments of social and cultural orders may function as oppressive mechanisms directed against femininity as well. In the words of Simone de Beauvoir, "… woman's procreative destiny must imprison her in repetition and immanence."[8]

As a matter of fact, Susan Rawlings does not consider motherhood to be an extension of female identity and the essential goal of a woman, but as a particular impediment to the achievement of inner harmony. Moreover, she undermines the value of the institution of marriage and emphasizes the impossibility of maintaining a dialogue between an individual and a society. This perspective points to the fact that socially-constructed identity is an artificial product designed to suppress woman's creativity and, what is more, it becomes a meaningful obstacle to the process of self-formation of an individual. "It is urgent to understand how the very condition of being a housewife can create a sense of emptiness, non-existence, nothingness in woman. There are aspects of the housewife role that make it almost impossible for a woman of adult intelligence to retain a sense of human identity, the firm core of self or 'I' without which a human being, a man or a woman, is not truly alive."[9]

The protagonist searches for private space, an anonymous place where she would be capable of expressing her true self, of liberating suppressed desires, and where by means of being herself, she could achieve the inner harmony. Room Nineteen, rented in a casual hotel secretly, becomes for Susan the Room of One's Own,[10] the refuge where all the boundaries limiting the capacities of an individual vanish. In Room Nineteen she lives in a separate ideal world; she transforms herself into an artist creating her new identity. In Room Nineteen she just "Is." A place which is both anonymous and free from public influence, in contrast with the sphere of domestic, gives one the opportunity to discover the essence of self and to obtain moments of liberty and forgetfulness. The refuge found by Susan enables her to discover unknown senses of female identity.

[8] Dervin, "Matricentic Narratives," 38.

[9] Agoenito, "The Feminine Mystique," 380.

[10] Virginia Woolf, "A Room of One's Own," in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. 2*, gen. ed. M. H. Abrams (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 2153–2214.

> What did she do in the room? Why, nothing at all. … She was no longer Susan Rawlings, mother of four, wife of Matthew. She no longer was mistress of the big white house and garden, …. She was Mrs Jones, and she was alone, and she had no past and no future.[11]

Continuous existence in the new hermetic but private reality where her true identity can be manifested becomes the main aim in the life of Susan and due to invariable social regulations, her craving for seclusion gradually turns into an addiction. "She was determined to arrange her life, no matter what it cost, so that she could have that solitude more often. An absolute solitude, where no one knew her or cared about her."[12] Room Nineteen is the only place where she has the opportunity to liberate her true self and to manifest her subjectivity, where it is not still dependent on social conventions. As Woodward states:

> Subjectivity includes our sense of self. It involves the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions which constitute our sense of "who we are" and the feelings, …. Subjectivity involves our most personal feelings and thoughts.[13]

Susan's subjectivity is not yet entirely in accordance with the concept suggested by Woodward. Lessing's protagonist does not create her subjectivity within the framework of social conventions. The sense of true self is, thus, adopted and experienced not through culture and language, which produce a particular code by means of which self-definition is formulated, but beyond them, secretly and in seclusion. Particular points of view and beliefs that she identifies with constitute her second identity within the confines of Room Nineteen. Susan's desire for individualism is satisfied, however, at the cost of being excluded from the social order. The protagonist is perceived by society not as an individual but as the Other to whom, as to any opposition, negative cultural value is attached. "Difference can be construed negatively as the exclusion and marginalization of these who are defined as 'other' or as outsiders."[14]

By making a conscious attempt to define herself in agreement with her inner convictions, Susan transgresses the boundaries enforced on an individual by the social sphere, stresses the existence of "the problem that has no name"[15] and deconstructs the myth of the Feminine Mystique. However, to question culturally accepted practices and meanings established by the social order is tantamount to rejection of the universally accepted social code. But this is unavoidable while

[11] Lessing, "To Room Nineteen," 278.
[12] Ibid., 271.
[13] Woodward, *Identity and Difference*, 39.
[14] Ibid., 35.
[15] Agoenito, "The Feminine Mystique," 377.

revealing the identity of an individual. The need to reject the dominant systems of representation related to both culture and meaning becomes the prerequisite for creation of a desired representation. Moving beyond limitations produced by the social order and neglecting its artificial code, created for a specific purpose and directed against the individual, cannot, however, go unpunished.

The act of transgressing boundaries established by both culture and society, in order to achieve the final liberation of an individual's identity has serious consequences as well. There is no escaping the fact that exclusion from the social sphere is an unavoidable consequence of Susan's rebellion against the imposed order of things. Furthermore, it is an indisputable proof of the hostility of the social order and of the dominant conventions towards the presence of any potential traces of difference or individualism.

> Social order is maintained through binary oppositions in the creations of "insiders" and "outsiders" as well as through the construction of different categories within the social structure where it is symbolic systems and culture which mediate this classification…. The identity of the "outsider" is produced in relation to the "insider."[16]

Simultaneously, another aspect of the problem arises. Susan's inner conflict between the desired, the true self, and the social self projected upon her by the society, finds reflection in the textual structure of the story. The private identity of the female character is constantly repressed and imprisoned within brackets. By contrast, the social self symbolizing the perspective from which she should be seen and defined, both by the society and by herself, does not encounter any limitations and can be perpetually present in the textual reality. By analogy, the parallel between the division of the female psyche into the private and the social sphere and Julia Kristeva's theory of the symbolic and the semiotic order in the language[17] may be drawn.

In the light of Kristeva's methodology the symbolic order is connected with reference; it is based on the rules and is inscribed into the sphere of the social, whereas the semiotic order partly possesses the characteristics and desires of its user, of the individual.

> The semiotic is the "raw material" of signification, the corporeal, libidinal matter that must be harnessed and appropriately channeled for social cohesion and regulation. Kristeva describes the semiotic as "feminine," a phase dominated by the space of mother's body…. By contrast, the

[16] Woodward, *Identity and Difference*, 33.

[17] From Julia Kristeva: "The Semiotic and the Symbolic," Part 1, in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, gen. ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 2169–2178.

> symbolic is regulated by secondary processes and the Law of the Father. The symbolic is the domain of positions or propositions. The symbolic is an order superimposed on the semiotic.[18]

In this perspective, on the analogy of the dichotomy of language introduced by Kristeva in "Revolution in Poetic Language,"[19] the specific structure of Lessing's story and double identity of her protagonist can be discussed. Lessing begins her short story with an introduction characteristic of stories for children which aims to point at the omnipresence and repetition of the same socially-constructed patterns of conduct and perception. The previously mentioned practices establish social norms and accurately determine the actions and responsibilities of the collective subject. Further development of the narration and analysis of structure of the text indicate another layer of signification and the proper, yet bracketed, story of the individual. "In Lessing, …, the narrative voice switches from an impersonal tone, …, to a first-person, present-voice."[20] The bracketed textual reality becomes a symbol of the semiotic order and of an independent but rejected female subject, imprisoned within the framework of social norms and cultural stereotypes. In the words of Kristeva: "Poetic language, … but perhaps better termed '*the text*' – becomes an instrument of productive violence because it involves 'the sum of unconscious, subjective and social relations'. … the text is in this sense a practice; that is, it becomes a means of transforming 'natural and social resistances, limitations, and stagnation', once these enter any of the various codes of signification."[21]

Similarly to the analysis of structure of the text presented above, Kristeva's two modalities of the semiotic and the symbolic orders of the language may thus be perceived as two inseparable components symbolizing the duality of the human psyche. But language not only determines our communication, yet is also involved in the process of molding our identity. Each of the orders introduced by Kristeva participates in a different process of the self-formation of the individual, and simultaneously exposes a meaningful split in the human psyche. The double textual structure of Lessing's story is, therefore, reflected in the dichotomy of the psyche of the female protagonist. In the words of Kristeva both modes are equally important and dynamic, and present two distinct aspects of the identity formation of a subject.[22] However, for Lessing's female character

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[18] Julia Kristeva: "The Semiotic and the Symbolic," *Kristeva Extracts*, accessed January 5, 2007, www.ualberta.ca/~dmiall/Ghotic/Kristeva.htm.

[19] Michael Payne, "Revolution in Poetic Language," in *Reading Theory. An Introduction to Lacan, Derrida and Kristeva* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publications, 1993), 162–204.

[20] Dervin, "Matricentric Motifs," in *Matricentric Narratives. Recent British Women's Fiction in a Postmodern Mode*, 66.

[21] Payne, "Revolution in Poetic Language," 165.

[22] Ibid., 167.

such a split of identity becomes a burden and a source of inward conflicts originating in the impossibility to retain a private self and to manifest one's identity as an individual. The components of the inner dichotomy of the human mind are deprived both of the initially established hierarchy and of dialogic interaction. Susan's state of mind in the light of prevailing norms established by the majority not only indicates madness or schizophrenia, but also becomes for her a serious obstacle to the manifestation of desired self. Under the circumstances, the dialogic relation between the symbolic and the semiotic modality cannot be maintained.

The symbolic order is initially inscribed in the social and cultural existence of Susan alongside the semiotic order. Nevertheless, the symbolic order, represented by the sphere of language which is imposed on the female protagonist as a system of socially accepted values, is unquestionably the dominant mode. Furthermore, the same system of signs, functioning as an artificial code that adjusts meaning, patterns of perception and rules of conduct, may be considered an equivalent of Bourdieu's concept of habitus.[23]

In the words of Bourdieu, habitus may be defined as a particular matrix of ways of behaving, of modes of thinking and of norms of naming the surroundings.[24] The diffused schemes of perception have a meaningful impact on the process of self-formation and on understanding of the reality. Those deliberately established social conventions not only suggest the acceptable social practices but also create a specific example of collective identity which is in conformity with the ideas of the majority and serves as a model for members of a particular community. Such an identity is deprived of any characteristics of an individual self and is created in order to support and validate a certain social order. Both the symbolic modality and the habitus have an impact on the process of shaping and defining the identity of a subject and are incontrovertibly connected with the issue of domination of the social order and with the symbolic hierarchy of values introduced by it.

"All signifying practices that produce meaning involve relations of power, including the power to define who is included and who is excluded."[25] The symbolic order dominates over the semiotic one, as the superimposed and invariable component of identity and symbol of laws of language and cultural conventions, yet in the case of Susan Rawlings a gradual passage from the symbolic to the semiotic may be observed. Despite the fact that she is forced to exist within the framework of the symbolic order and to accept the diffusion and artificial definition of the self, the case of Susan demonstrates that the semiotic order may transgress limitations established by culture and society. "The symbolic control of the

[23] Pierre Bourdieu, *Męska dominacja*, trans. Lucyna Kopciewicz (Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 2004), 45.

[24] Bourdieu, *Męska dominacja*, 46.

[25] Woodward, *Identity and Difference*, 15.

various semiotic processes is, however, tenuous and liable to break down or lapse at certain … psychically significant moments."[26]

Therefore, the semiotic order is capable of becoming the dominant as well. The dichotomy of Susan's mind constantly exists, yet with the passage of time a consistent denial of the social self and a conscious manifestation of newly-acquired identity becomes evident. Moreover, the increasing power of the semiotic order over the symbolic one indicates the fact that the existence of a dialectic relation between the two modalities, introduced by Kristeva, can be undermined. Lessing's female protagonist not only privileges the semiotic order and her private identity but also articulates her libidinous drives. She consciously accepts the private self as the dominant identity and the only one she desires to possess. Susan unquestionably rejects the rules of language, social norms and cultural conventions that construct the socio-cultural and collective self, and gradually makes her way towards the seductive sphere of the semiotic, described as "feminine" and correlated with notions such as water, fluidity, rebirth and the space of the maternal body.

Susan is constantly tempted by the semiotic order and often encounters on her journey of self-discovery as an individual various symbols of the sphere of the semiotic. The river that plays a crucial role in Susan's life becomes a powerful metaphor of nature, suppressed drives and the private self. Moreover, the river has associations with repressed dreams and increases further the most secret yearning for solitude, subjectivity and forgetfulness. In contrast with the symbolic order, represented by collective identity, social position, the constant monotony of everyday life, her role as a mother and wife and the civilized space of the domestic, symbolized by the garden, the river becomes the embodiment of private identity, privileged by the protagonist herself but rejected by the social order.

> … she went to the very end of the garden, by herself, and looked at the slow-moving brown river; she looked at the river and closed her eyes and breathed slow and deep, taking it into her being, into her veins.[27]

The part of Susan's double identity which she desires and which is simultaneously shaped by her individual beliefs and judgments, in contrast to the collective self, becomes for her the only one which offers her space unlimited by any regulations. She can be an individual and exist in accordance with her own convictions. The garden, which reminds her of a domestic prison, and society, which defines her as insane, are the other elements creating a mosaic of the symbolic order, which she consciously neglects. Only the depth of the river

[26] Kristeva, "The Semiotic and The Symbolic," in *Kristeva Extracts*.
[27] Lessing, "To Room Nineteen," 265.

is capable of offering her a space which is not governed by any boundaries, the condition necessary for her to manifest and decipher the dominant part of her psyche. Furthermore, the river becomes a symbol of the gradual passage from collective to individual self and has an influence on the creation of the identity of an independent person who is completely aware of her own uniqueness. Susan avails herself of the opportunity to reveal the domination of the private self and profoundly believes in the rightness of establishing the private self's supremacy. However, this neglect of the social order and undermining of trust in collective identity it constructs cannot be regarded as a process which is uncomplicated or which does not demand sacrifice.

Consequently, the question arises of the possibility of a complete denial of the symbolic modality in order to emphasize the domination of the semiotic one, and the need for an individual to die as a consequence of this act. For Susan Rawlings, to make the decision to reject the symbolic order is tantamount to death. This irreversible act of escape from both the social order and the social identity symbolizes a conscious and determined rebellion against the oppressive symbolic order. It indicates the consistent defiance by Susan of its regulations. The choice of death made by Susan was motivated by her attempt to retain the semiotic order, the embodiment of her precious and enigmatic identity, individual capacities and hidden desires. The suicide committed by the protagonist becomes, thus, the only way for her both to liberate her private self from the influence of the sphere of the social, and to free herself from the scope of the symbolic order.

In this state of affairs, the issue of abjection,[28] its connections with the female body and with self, and its relation to Susan's act of committing suicide becomes significant and is worth further examination. The issue of abjection introduced by Kristeva in "Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection,"[29] is unquestionably one of the essential notions associated with recent approaches to the female body and to the self. Kristeva's concept of abjection not only functions as a meaningful category in numerous theories of the female body within the feminist discourse, for instance, but also may be regarded as the crucial factor in the examination of such phenomena as maternal function, subjectivity, formation of identity and the act of suicide and its implications. Lessing's story may be perceived both as a parallel of rejection of the body as the source of social oppression and as a repudiation of a socio-culturally shaped identity.

Kristeva's methodology may be applied while discussing the act of suicide committed by Lessing's protagonist. Susan consciously decides to take her own life, and this is considered by her to be the only way to deny the symbolic order and the social identity which is its artificial construction. "… I expel myself,

[28] Julia Kristeva, "Powers of Horror: Approaching Abjection," in *The Portable Kristeva*, ed. Kelly Oliver (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

[29] Oliver, *The Portable Kristeva*, 229–47.

I split myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish myself."[30] Death is considered by Susan as a passage to a new secret individual identity which threatens the social order. Susan deeply believes in the rightness and necessity of her deed and is determined to sacrifice her body, considered both as a symbol of the social self and as the mediator of the symbolic order, so as to attain inner harmony and to manifest the incontrovertible supremacy of the private self.

> She had about four hours. She spent them delightfully, darkly, sweetly, letting herself slide gently, gently, to the edge of the river. Then, with hardly a break in her consciousness, she got up, pushed the thin rug against the door, made sure the windows were tight shut, put two shillings in the meter, and turned on the gas. … She was quite content lying there, listening to the faint soft hiss of the gas that poured into the room, into her lungs, into her brain, as she drifted off into the dark river.[31]

The act of death is, thus, a particular stage in giving birth to her new self, a quest for origins, a step towards the semiotic order which is the only one that offers Susan the possibility of shaping her desired identity as an individual. She commits suicide motivated by a desire to exist in a private reality, not be governed by any repression or habitus whose imitation and constant obedient repetition become the destiny of each member of society. For her, then, the struggle to retain the supreme identity, the opportunity to be unrestrained as an individual, becomes her destiny. Under the circumstances, the conclusion that Susan's deliberate death, her abjection of the body and of the social self, is the only possible way for her to fulfill her desire to be herself and to shape her private identity, seems to be inescapable. Consequently, the assumption that rejection of both the social order and of socio-cultural identity is impossible is hard to avoid. In this state of affairs, the act of committing suicide, as equivalent to abjection, is necessary in the process of the self-formation of an individual and in her further search for the essence of self.

In the conclusion of this paper, it can be said that the possibility of rejection of a socio-culturally shaped identity of an individual does not exist. Being an individual is, thus, to be considered as being the Other who has no voice and no right to exist within both a community and a culture. On the basis of the issues discussed herein it can be assumed that possession and manifestation of the supreme and the desired private self is tantamount to the act of deliberate social death. The concept of identity as a socio-cultural structure may thus be regarded not only as oppressive and static but also as inscribed into the destiny

[30] Oliver, *The Portable Kristeva,* 231.
[31] Lessing, "To Room Nineteen," 288.

of each female member of society. Manifesting the true self becomes thus synonymous to becoming the Other, an individual marginalized and rejected by the society and its conventional framework of thought.

Karolina Błeszyńska

W poszukiwaniu siebie: kobieca tożsamość i subiektywność w opowiadaniu Doris Lessing *To Room Nineteen*

Streszczenie

Niniejszy esej porusza tematykę tożsamości jednostki, a także, nawiązując do rozmaitych teorii literackich i krytycznych, podejmuje dyskusję dotyczącą różnych definicji i spojrzeń na to zagadnienie, zarówno w kontekście psychologicznym, jak i społeczno-kulturowym. Powtarzając za Kathryn Woodward, można powiedzieć, że tożsamość jest swego rodzaju konstruktem społeczno-kulturowym narzuconym jednostce przez dominująca prawa i regulacje oraz, częstokroć patriarchalny, system wartości (krytykowany chociażby przez Simone de Beauvoir, a reprezentowany przez metodologię Pierre'a Bourdieau), który z założenia nie pozostawia przestrzeni na jakiekolwiek odstępstwa od obowiązujących i ściśle określonych zasad. W nawiązaniu do historii bohaterki opowiadania Doris Lessing – *To Room Nineteen* – niniejszy tekst ma na celu zmodyfikowanie dotychczas istniejącego patriarchalnego pojęcia tożsamości jednostki poprzez przedstawienie wizerunku kobiety, która podejmuje wyzwanie walki o swoją niezależność, wolność wyboru i chęć pozostania sobą. Susan Rawlings staje się bowiem synonimem walki o zachowanie swej prywatnej tożsamości wolnej i niezależnej kobiety. Odrzucając uniwersalne wzorce, definicje i role – w szczególności matki i żony – narzucone jej przez społeczeństwo i kulturę, Susan podejmuje samotną walkę o zachowanie swej indywidualności oraz prywatnej przestrzeni, gdzie nie jest zmuszona odgrywać żadnych ról w Goffmanowskim teatrze codzienności, ani też zakładać teatralnych masek, które zacierają wszelkie ślady kobiecych uczuć, emocji i indywidualizmu. Kwestionując instytucję małżeństwa i predyspozycje kobiety do bycia matką, Susan stopniowo odkrywa inną, prywatną rzeczywistość, która nie uprzedmiotawia ani nie ogranicza kobiety, lecz przeciwnie – daje jej możliwość ekspresji swych pragnień i posiadania tożsamości zgodnej z jej własnym „ja". Przekraczając granice wyznaczone przez kulturę i społeczeństwo, bohaterka odnajduje sens własnego istnienia. Mimo że tytułowy pokój numer 19 staje się swoistą oazą szczęścia i samotności, która oferuje Susan możliwość ujawniania swej prawdziwej i pożądanej tożsamości oraz gwarantuje jej bezcenną anonimowość, społeczeństwo i kultura narzucają jej także swój model tożsamości, który z upływem czasu staje się jej brzemieniem i doprowadza ją stopniowo do (auto)destrukcji. W świetle metodologii Julii Kristevej, znacząca staje się zatem koncepcja abiektu, a także pojęcie sfery semiotycznej oraz symbolicznej, która umożliwia przedstawienie jeszcze jednej dychotomii – relacji między umysłem a ciałem kobiety, a w konsekwencji między prywatną (prawdziwą) a społeczną (narzuconą i dlatego też teatralną) tożsamością. Czy możliwe jest zatem funkcjonowanie w dwóch światach naraz? Czy owa dychotomia tożsamości może doprowadzić do sytuacji, w której, pozostając prywatnie sobą, w sensie społecznym będziemy jednocześnie kimś zupełne innym?

Karolina Błeszyńka

À la recherche de soi-même : identité et subjectivité féminines dans le récit *To Room Nineteen* de Doris Lessing

Résumé

Le présent essai aborde la question de l'identité d'un individu, mais aussi – tout en se référant à de nombreuses théories littéraires et critiques –, entreprend une discussion concernant les définitions et interprétations différentes de ce problème, aussi bien dans le contexte psychologique que socioculturel. En suivant les propos de Kathryn Woodward, on peut dire que l'identité est une sorte de structure socioculturelle imposée à un individu par les lois et réglementations prédominantes, et souvent par un système patriarcal de valeurs (critiqué par Simone de Beauvoir, et représenté par la méthodologie de Pierre Bourdieu) qui par principe interdit toutes dérogations aux principes strictement définis et étant en vigueur. En se référant à la héroïne du récit de Doris Lessing – *To Room Nineteen* –, le présent texte a pour objectif de modifier la notion patriarcale (existant jusqu'à présent) de l'identité d'un individu tout en présentant l'image d'une femme qui accepte le défi de lutter pour son indépendance, sa liberté de choix et la volonté de rester elle-même. Susan Rawlings devient le synonyme d'une lutte ayant pour objectif de conserver son identité privée d'une femme libre et indépendante. En rejetant des modèles universels, définitions et rôles – en particulier ceux de la mère et de la femme – qui lui sont imposés par la société et la culture, Susan entreprend un combat solitaire pour garder son individualité et son espace privé, où elle n'est pas forcée de jouer de rôles dans la mise en scène goffmanienne de la vie quotidienne ni de mettre de masques théâtraux qui effacent tous les signes des sentiments et des émotions féminins, et ceux de l'individualisme. En questionnant l'institution du mariage et les prédispositions de la femme à être mère, Susan découvre petit à petit une autre réalité, la privée, qui ne chosifie ni ne limite la femme, mais bien au contraire, elle lui donne la possibilité d'exprimer ses désirs et d'avoir une identité qui soit conforme à son propre « moi ». En transgressant les frontières déterminées par la culture et par la société, l'héroïne retrouve le sens de sa vie. Bien que la chambre éponyme numéro 19 devienne une oasis particulière de bonheur et de solitude qui offre à Susan la possibilité de manifester sa véritable identité fort désirée et lui garantie l'anonymat inestimable, la société et la culture lui imposent leur propre modèle d'identité qui, avec le passage du temps, devient son fardeau et la conduit petit à petit à l'(auto)destruction. À la lumière de la méthodologie de Julia Kristeva, la conception de l'objet devient alors significative. Il en est de même avec la notion de la sphère sémiotique et symbolique qui permet de présenter encore une autre dichotomie, c'est-à-dire une relation entre l'esprit et le corps de la femme, et par conséquent entre l'identité privée (véritable) et sociale (imposée, donc théâtrale). Est-il donc possible de fonctionner dans deux mondes en même temps ? Cette dichotomie de l'identité peut-elle conduire à une situation où, en restant nous-mêmes dans le privé, nous serons – au sens social – des personnes tout à fait différentes.

Part Three

Therapy through Writing?

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A Therapeutic Journal: Peter Ackroyd's *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*

Peter Ackroyd's *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* (1993) is a novel in the form of a fictional journal of the eponymous historical personage. The narrator gives the intended reader access into the consciousness of the reminiscing subject – his *now* of writing – and into the content of the memories that reach as far back as Wilde's earliest childhood. Hence, the novel explores the autobiographical reflection: the process of the examination of one's life and of the narrative procedures that accompany the inward gaze. In other words, we witness not just the reminiscences but also the very act of self-examination, of turning one's life into a story and the accompanying question of the accuracy and truthfulness of thus reconstructed past.

Ackroyd's work then has the metafictional impulse to examine the process of writing, of (re)creating oneself through language and narrative procedures; therefore, like other metafictions, it "lays bare its condition of artifice, and… explores the problematic relationship between life and fiction."[1] Accordingly, the fictional Wilde, exiled in Paris after the trial and the stay in prison, finds that the only way to avoid the fragmentation of his personality and to ward off the impending descent into madness is to collect "the thread of [his] life,"[2] to "master the past,"[3] and to do so he must turn the expired history into a story. As a result, he will be endowing the chaotic bygone events with form and assigning new meanings to events which might not have had any clear sense or purpose at the time when they were occurring. Wilde will find that he cannot avoid the influence of the Library of Babel as he models himself into a tragic protagonist and a martyr

[1] Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 4.

[2] Peter Ackroyd, *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 154.

[3] Ackroyd, *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, 75.

suffering for the sins of the entire English society, and neither will the meaning of his existence be complete without elucidating on it through parables, similes, and extended metaphors. The subject examining his past but also exploring the process of this inward reflection will illustrate that the end product – the self at the end of the journey – determines the direction and significance of the past through selection and organization of events that must inevitably and logically lead to the self at the moment of writing. Thus, the novel explores the conventions of autobiographical forms of writing, and, by focusing on the real historical personage, it also investigates the relationship between history and literature as it examines the process of turning the inaccessible empirical past into a story.

As a narrator conscious of the convention in which he is working, Wilde articulates the purpose of his enterprise: the journal is a form of a therapy that deflects the fall into insanity. As he reminisces on his stay in prison he states:

> … solitude frightens me because it seems to me to be the simplest thing to slip back into a dementia from which I would never be able to free myself. It is the fear of solitude which makes me write now: if I closed this book and put down my pen, I would become a prey again to all those horrors which, since they spring from myself, cannot be turned aside.[4]

We notice here that Wilde perceives himself as the source of his torment and the book as a means to alleviate it by endowing his existence with meaning. Importantly, placing all blame on himself plays a large part in the resulting narrative, as the torment becomes the horror of an outcast who, through his uncompromising stance, suffers for the community and takes their sins on his shoulders. Therefore, the "horrors" and the blame acquire a noble aspect as they are akin to the suffering of saints with whom Wilde draws frequent parallels. Hence, the healing of a solitary exile living in poverty in a dingy Parisian hotel is enacted through the transformative power of language and literary tradition that help to shape the life along the motif of a journey from wanton sin to recognition of the wrongful ways, to taking on an uncompromising stance, suffering due to it, and to the final redemption.

Through the clear formulation of the purpose of the journal, *The Last Testament* thematizes therapeutic functions of autobiographical forms of writing which, as Alfred Hornung describes, use autobiography's "structural features as a narrative framework to relate a fictional character's case history for therapeutic purposes."[5] Giving the examples of Nabokov's *Lolita* and Barth's *The End of*

[4] Ibid., 152.

[5] Alfred Hornung, "Autobiography," in *International Postmodernism: Theory and Literary Practice*, ed. Hans Bertens and Douwe Fokkema (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1997), 223.

the Road, the critic maintains that troubled protagonists embark on retrospective narration to "overcome their sexual or existential disorder."[6] Perhaps one way in which the therapy is enacted through autobiographical impulse is that, as Mandel asserts in the article "Full of Life Now," "writing autobiography is one of the strategies human beings have developed to make life matter."[7] Mandel maintains that the present moment, the "moment of creativity,"[8] holds reign over the past which has an illusory nature, and that autobiographical reflection "ratifies the form one has given to one's life"[9]; therefore, the past is made intelligible and purposeful, and one's place in it is not accidental.

The fight against the randomness of existence and the attempt to take control of one's life and destiny are indeed clearly portrayed within Ackroyd's novel where Wilde frequently refers to fate as the agent that charts the tragic end of his life from the very beginning. Ironically, the narrator emphasizes the role of this external agency in the course of his life while making self-conscious comments on the process of framing his life in the journal. Accordingly, while being in full control over the shape his existence attains in the book he is writing, Wilde relegates the responsibility for the course of his life onto the device known from the genre of tragedy. Specifically, he mentions the visit at a fortune teller's and her prophecy of his fate being "both magnificent and terrible,"[10] which from the narrator's present perspective is appended with the reflection on his youthful lessons in Portora that taught him that "the point of all tragedy is the heedlessness, that is hubris, of the tragic hero: even when he has seen the curse, he runs towards it willingly."[11] It is important to note here that Wilde as a protagonist of a metafictional novel is aware of his creating the illusion of the purposefulness of his life through reference to literary models: he does not fall prey to obliviousness to discourse within which he operates. This illustrates the presence of the gap in all forms of autobiographical enterprise which Georges Gusdorf defines as the "gap between the avowed plan of autobiography, which is simply to retrace the history of a life, and its deepest intentions, which are directed toward a kind of apologetics or theodicy of the individual being."[12]

In fact, the novel realizes many of Gusdorf's theoretical assumptions regarding the purpose of autobiography, which is the writing subject's "personal justifi-

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[6] Hornung, "Autobiography," 223.

[7] Barrett J. Mandel, "Full of Life Now," in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1980), 64.

[8] Mandel, "Full of Life Now," 65.

[9] Ibid., 64.

[10] Ackroyd, *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, 29.

[11] Ibid., 29.

[12] Georges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1980), 39.

cation" or even "salvation."[13] Thus, Ackroyd's exiled narrator deplores his previous existence ("I gilded each day with precious words and perfumed the hours with wine"), and he craves to "connect [the past and future] with simple words: I owe that to myself"[14] in the book that he calls "a journal"[15] and an "apologia."[16] Moreover, Wilde's thematizing the impulse to reminisce corresponds to Gusdorf's vision of "the mature man … who projects his life into narrative [and who] would thus provide witness that he has not existed in vain."[17] Additionally, *The Last Testament*'s narration illustrates the illusion of presenting the exact portrait of one's life as it was due to the impossibility of avoiding the projection of the present into the past. Specifically, Wilde constantly draws the reader's attention to the process of substitution of "the completely formed for that which is in the process of being formed."[18] He often stresses the present perspective of the past by reference to the moment of writing, as in "I know *now*, also, why I longed for praise and for recognition"[19] or when he remembers the meeting with Whitman where he concludes, "I realize only now the truth of what he said to me then."[20] Wilde also professes to have a clear view of the intentions behind his past actions, as in a typically metafictional way he criticizes his past self for the posturing he would indulge in: "so afraid was I of the formlessness of life – it bore the marks of the chaos from which it sprang … – that I took it with both hands and fashioned it into stories and epigrams."[21] Ironically, the narrator disparages himself for wanting to give his life form while doing precisely that – transforming chaos into ordered existence – in the present moment of critical reflection.

As the narrator wants to achieve salvation and ward off the fall into dementia resulting from the solitude of the exile, he needs to testify that he has not existed in vain. To achieve this end he needs to connect the past with the present moment of recollection within the pattern that his present situation imposes. The novel realizes this process through the narrator's juxtaposition of his present condition at the now of writing and the past of his memories.

The journal's first entry dates from August 9, 1900, when Wilde portrays his existence of a solitary exile, living in a cheap Paris hotel, abandoned by most of his old friends, in fear of scornful attacks, having "fallen so low that reality rises above [him]."[22] Snubbed by the English, he is accepted among "gamins who are

[13] Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," 39.
[14] Ackroyd, *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, 3.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., 5.
[17] Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," 39.
[18] Ibid., 41.
[19] Ackroyd, *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, 30, italics mine.
[20] Ibid., 56.
[21] Ibid., 49.
[22] Ibid., 14.

entirely the creation of Victor Hugo,"[23] and he recognizes his position of a madman ignored by passersby, suffering the "agony and bitterness that force him to speak in bewildered words."[24] Most frequently he describes his situation through recourse to extended similes in which he likens different aspects of his existence to the fate of various personages. Wanting to magnify the scorn he is met with when the English encounter him and the righteousness of his stance, he perceives himself as Lazarus "come from the dead to mock those who buried me."[25] Expressing the complexity of his life, he refers to Solomon and Job, "both the most fortunate and the least fortunate of men,"[26] and he assumes the name of Sebastian Melmoth to illustrate his status of the outcast crushed by others for understanding and wanting to demonstrate the illusory nature of ideals: "he [Melmoth] understood the makeshift, painted pageant of the world – and it was because of that knowledge that the world could never forgive him or let him rest."[27] We may observe here the elucidation of one of postmodernism's tenets according to which language and discourses "determine the way we experience our world,"[28] and we observe the process in which Wilde uses language to create an image of himself as a visionary, as someone who has come to understand the emptiness of reality and is being punished for demonstrating its vacuity and the made-up aspect of discourses taken to be a truthful and natural explanation of the world.

What is more, to validate and expound on his solitude and the immensity of his martyrdom the narrator draws an analogy between himself and the character from Yeats' "The Crucifixion of an Outcast" whose accusers "despised him for showing to them the beauty and the mystery of the world" and against whom both beggars and outcast have turned.[29] Additionally, from the beginning of his journal Wilde self-consciously comments on following in the footsteps of St. Augustine's apologia,[30] and doing so he not only strengthens his stance of a reformed sinner but also hints at the structure of his life writing where the enormity of sins will serve to highlight the transformation he undergoes in prison and logically lead to the current unselfish martyr and outcast among outcasts.

Importantly, Wilde starts and ends his journal with making analogies to the figures of saints. First, he chooses St. Julien – reviled for performing miraculous cures and prophesies and revered for choosing to become a beggar[31] – to draw

[23] Ibid., 13.
[24] Ibid., 3.
[25] Ibid., 14.
[26] Ibid., 2.
[27] Ibid., 17.
[28] Lois Tyson: *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 257.
[29] Ackroyd, *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, 99.
[30] Ibid., 5.
[31] Ibid., 1.

parallels to his position of the humiliated artist forced to live in obscurity. Wilde highlights the irony of his situation in which he might not be praised for his uncompromising art but for silent submission. The penultimate analogy is to St. Procopius whose suffering was magnified by "each succeeding legend until the time came when his relics healed the sick."[32] The narrator underscores here the power of language to shape reality as he asserts that "of course it was the legends that worked the miracles, not the bones."[33] Nevertheless, he repeatedly projects the attributes of the state of sainthood with its selfless submission and the embracing of suffering onto his present situation of the exiled subject writing the journal. This seems to be the ratification of his journey from the past to the present and the vindication of his current endurance of solitude, poverty, and physical pain. The present situation of the outcast is imbued with meaning, and his life matters, which, as has been argued earlier, constitutes Wilde's defense mechanism against the sinking into dementia.

An important factor which marks the narrator's present position of a reformed sinner living a meaningful life and which distances him from the previous, deplorable existence is the embracing of emotions that bring him closer to living his life instead of keeping it at bay. Wilde speaks of his cowardice and complacency in not wanting "to be moved by any single emotion" as he has been afraid what "real passion might reveal of him,"[34] and he speaks of the transformative experience of "the passion of sorrow" in Reading prison.[35] Shortly afterwards, Wilde finds salvation in "sympathy with the pain of others,"[36] which is far removed from his old self-indulgent ways, and he comments on the prison period from the present perspective by highlighting the change he has undergone: "in my grief, I had once looked to find death, and now I was learning to see life. … Sorrow taught me how to sit and look. Pity taught me to understand. Love taught me to forgive."[37]

This embracing of passion is underscored by Wilde's recognition of the miraculous nature of life in its utmost simplicity. His new self, the one that he creates having undergone a metaphorical death as an artist, marvels at the "inexhaustible fullness of things which before I tried to master and control."[38] This indicates a humbled position, reminiscent of the figures of saints Wilde draws parallels with. The protagonist's "heart now dwell[s]" in mundane occurrences of everyday existence, such as a boy patting his dog or men helping an old woman,[39] and these entries in the journal are to represent the condition of the self at the time of

[32] Ibid., 180.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., 154.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., 156.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 165.
[39] Ibid., 166.

writing. This ratifies Wilde's life despite his banishment from society, his fall from the position of a revered artist, and the abandonment he experiences in Paris.

As already indicated, the narrator charges his life with meaning by shaping it into the narrative of transformation in which the sinner must become the saint, but it is further complicated by applying the convention of the tragic protagonist, whose selfishness also indicates an uncompromising position and faithfulness to his ideals despite the society's opposition. Like Augustine whose confession of faults magnify the transformation and, as Stephen Spender argues, "become a witnessing of the power of God to save him"[40] so Wilde's admission of sins underscores the depth of his transformation into the writing subject. He deplores his previous existence where he desired "the life of a great personality,"[41] praise, pleasure, admiration, and where he betrayed closest friends,[42] but he also claims that he has become "a symbol of modern society, both in its rise and its fall."[43] Furthermore, later, while recounting the trial, Wilde compares himself to "a martyr who takes on the responsibilities of an entire Church,"[44] and like Melmoth he impersonates for the society its faults, illustrates that "their understanding [is] all vanity."[45] Due to his unbending stance he suffers disproportionately to his guilt, and, like most tragic heroes, he dies in prison, even though that demise constitutes a metaphorical death "as an artist."[46] Whereas, in the case of Augustine, the enormity of the confessed sins are to highlight God's saving power, in the case of Wilde, the reported faults woven into the pattern of the tragic hero's mistakes are to stand for the power of narratives to endow reality with meaning and transform the self in order to affirm one's existence.

Indeed, narratives are used by Wilde most extensively as not only does he apply the conventions of tragedy and transformation into a better self but also resorts to frequent metaphors and direct comparisons to other personages, uses fables, parables, newspaper clippings, and his own letters all in order to amplify the meaning of his actions and situations in which he finds himself, and also to remind the reader that Wilde is inescapably mediated by words. Perhaps most revealing is the moment when the narrator begins to doubt whether he can truly represent himself in his journal, and he admits that "I feel like Timanthes who, despairing of his ability to represent Agammemnon's head, threw a drapery over it."[47] The protagonist thus compares his attempts to put himself into words and

[40] Stephen Spender, "Confessions and Autobiography," in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1980), 121.

[41] Ackroyd, *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, 66.

[42] Ibid., 92.

[43] Ibid., 97.

[44] Ibid., 135.

[45] Ibid., 17.

[46] Ibid., 163.

[47] Ibid., 171.

the resulting awareness that every attempt at explaining reality obscures it as words are stand-ins for the world (and all we have are metaphors for experiential world) to another artist's realization that conveying the immensity of grief is only possible by obscuring the face of the grieving. Importantly, this is not just a clever application of a metaphor to illustrate that every description of reality is a metaphor, but also a celebration of the power of language, as one could argue that by veiling Agammemnon's face Timanthes activates the viewer's imagination and expresses infinitely more meanings than if he gave a direct representation of grief. Similarly, by presenting himself through parables and metaphors Wilde veils the "real" self and, at the same time, reaches to the available literary encyclopedia to convey a multiplicity of messages resulting from interpretations of these texts. Thus, once again, the protagonist stresses the power of narratives to heal a broken man through ratifying his existence by endowing his life with meaning. Any possible despair at the inability to get to the truly real is superseded by the joyous celebration of language and literary models with which Wilde is able to connect, and through which he is able to express himself. In fact, while the narrator recounts his incarceration, the literal prison becomes nonexistent thanks to language:

> I read Dante and walked with him in the Purgatory … the prison shades fell away and I was standing in the clear, bright air. The texture of language itself, like the veil of Tannith in Flaubert's delicate novel, clung about me and protected me.[48]

Thus, *The Last Testament* thematizes the therapeutic function of the autobiographical impulse. A broken character attempts to endow his present existence with meaning by (re)creating his past life along the structure of a narrative of transformation from a vain and self-righteous artist into a selfless, saint-like figure who recognizes that "the current of life … is greater than [himself]."[49] The protagonist further validates his suffering and vindicates his past ways, despite the fact that he recognizes their base aspect, by likening himself to a martyr who must take on an uncompromising stance in order to show the society its own sins (he claims he constitutes a reflection of the society). Hence, his sinful past with his posturing and excess constitute "a thread of life," become ratified as a means to educate those around him and to see a way towards the final submission to life and the recognition of his role in it ("it is greater than myself and yet, without me, it would be incomplete: that is the real miracle"[50]). What is more, as a metafictional text, the novel stresses the role of the narrator's imagination in

[48] Ibid., 157.
[49] Ibid., 165.
[50] Ibid.

devising the system of meaning by which he explains reality and self. Therefore, the protagonist is also a self-conscious narrator, aware of his use of literary conventions, and emphasizing his reliance on language and on metaphors for the elucidation of his ways. Wilde directly admits that "perhaps in this journal I am not portraying myself as indeed I am"[51] shortly after he recognizes how the choice of style impacts the creation of himself in the book ("even now I am tempted to make *roulades* of phrases"[52]). Then, however, the despair at being locked in the prison house of language gives way to the celebration of the power of discourses to transform reality and render it meaningful at the same time as "the real" is veiled within language, and Wilde illustrates this by reference to the previously-discussed shrouding of grief in Timanthes's painting. The rejection of despair in the face of apparent inauthenticity of a life expressed in the form of a narrative is aptly summed up by Mark Freeman in his discussion of Augustine's *Confessions*: "Can we not say, in fact, that the reality of living in time requires narrative reflection and that narrative reflection, in turn, opens the way towards a more comprehensive and expansive conception of truth itself?"[53] Perhaps paradoxically, the narrativization of one's past seems to constitute a way of preserving the stability of one's self, and a means of arriving at some kind of truth about who one is, namely, that the apparent unified whole is a result of narrative procedures.[54]

[51] Ibid., 171.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Mark P. Freeman, *Rewriting the Self: History, Memory, Narrative* (London: Routledge, 1993), 32.

[54] In "'A Knack for Yarns': The Narrativization of History and the End of History" Susana Onega comes to a similar conclusion about the role of historiographic metafictions' overt fictionalization of history: "once literature refuses to hide its fictionality… the literary text 'lies' less than history — or philosophy or any kind of discourse — precisely in that it explicitly lays bare its own rhetorical status" (in *Telling Histories: Narrativising History, Historicizing Literature*, ed. Susana Onega (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), 16).

Łukasz Giezek

Terapeutyczny dziennik *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* Petera Ackroyda

Streszczenie

W *Testamencie Oscara Wilde'a* Petera Ackroyda tytułowy bohater, który jest również pierwszoosobowym narratorem, przyznaje, że pisanie dziennika chroni go przed popadnięciem w rozpacz. Pisarstwo staje się formą terapii, dzięki której bohater zachowuje spójną osobowość: Wilde kreuje siebie na podobieństwo bohatera tragicznego, czyli bezkompromisowego i wiernego swoim ideałom, co decyduje o jego nieuchronnym upadku. Jego życie to również przemiana z grzesznika

i zadufanego w sobie estety w świętego, pełnego pokory wobec prostoty codziennego życia. Jako tekst metafikcyjny *Testament* to również komentarz na temat roli narracji w procesie tworzenia wersji przeszłości i spójnej tożsamości: przeszłość, empirycznie niedostępna, musi zostać wykreowana, czyli opowiedziana. Proces leczenia bohatera to jednocześnie tworzenie opowieści, która nadaje znaczenie i formę jego życiu.

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Le Testament d'Oscar Wilde de Peter Ackroyd

Résumé

Dans *Le Testament d'Oscar Wilde* de Peter Ackroyd, le personnage éponyme – qui est aussi le narrateur à la première personne – avoue qu'il écrit son journal pour ne pas tomber dans le désespoir. L'écriture devient une forme de thérapie grâce à laquelle le héros garde une personnalité homogène : Wilde crée sa propre personne à l'image d'un héros romantique, c'est-à-dire un homme intransigeant et fidèle à ses idéaux, ce qui décide de sa chute inévitable. Sa vie est aussi une métamorphose d'un pécheur et d'un esthète imbu de soi-même en un saint plein d'humilité envers la simplicité de la vie quotidienne. *Le Testament*, en tant que texte métafictif, est également un commentaire sur le rôle de la narration dans le procédé de créer une version du passé et une identité homogène : le passé – empiriquement inaccessible – doit être créé, c'est-à-dire raconté. Le traitement du héros est à la fois la création d'un récit qui donne le sens et la forme à sa vie.

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T(h)au for *Torture?* Writing on Trial in Teodor Parnicki's Novel *The Finger of Threat*

> A book is a home. And at home is where people keep a plethora of possessions; occasionally they don't even remember what.
>
> *The Finger of Threat. The New Fable, Vol. VI*, chapter 7, 529.

The twentieth-century understanding of the novel as a literary genre was transformed by – among other things – two theoretical propositions. The first one, put forward by Mikhail Bakhtin in his essays on Fyodor Dostoyevsky, identified some of the key features that make a novel a vehicle designed to express and exemplify the ultimate polyphony (or *heteroglossia*) of human experience. The polyphonic discourse of a novel was, in Bakhtin's view, the best way to articulate the plurality of voices and ideologies, and to limit all sorts of monophonic usurpations.[1] The other theoretical claim, made by Roland Barthes in 1968, was the provocative announcement of "the death of the author," which brought forth the birth of the reader/interpreter who was freed from any external, authorial constraints, and which heralded the advent of a limitless play of intertextuality.[2] These two concepts seem to form a good vantage point which may permit an analysis and interpretation of the transformations of Teodor Parnicki's (1908–1988) historical prose of the 1960s. The polyphony of his novels from that period could be perceived as a methodical analysis of the problem of authorship. It starts the ongoing process of questioning the metaphysical role, and emphasizing the limitations,

[1] Mikhail Bakhtin's (1895–1975) understanding of dialogism and *heteroglossia* was presented in his works on Dostoyevsky (1929) and on François Rabelais.

[2] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" (1968) in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch et al. (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001), 1466–1469.

of the writer – the creative subject, the *scriptor* or simply the director of a literary performance. Even though traces of any direct or indirect influence of the theoretical propositions mentioned above on Parnicki are hard to find, it is tempting to analyse the novel *Palec zagrożenia* [*The Finger of Threat*][3] (published 1970) as a comment on concerns regarding the weakening position of the author and his inability to exercise effective control over his textual world.

Literary Framework

The novel in question is the final part of a six-volume series entitled *The New Fable* (*Nowa baśń*), which, being Parnicki's most ambitious literary project, still holds a central position in the writer's body of work. Published between 1962 and 1970, the series covers over eight hundred years of European, American and Asian history and is a sophisticated intellectual journey in which complex political plots, theological controversies and the biographies of various half-castes, bastards,[4] clerks,[5] bishops, Jesuits and conquerors interweave and multiply. Each volume of the cycle is centred around a particular set of historical events. The first part starts on the night of St. Jacob (July 25) in 1059 in the Cathedral of Sandomierz, Poland, where Aron, the Archbishop of Cracow, is dying. The first volume presents the politics of a number of eastern, western and northern European countries as well as those of pre-Columbian America. The subsequent volumes of *The New Fable* present fifteenth-century Spain and England, post-Columbian

[3] The title of the novel (from its second epigraph) is a quote from Juliusz Słowacki's unfinished, mystical drama *Samuel Zborowski* (1844/1845). The dialogue between The Voice and The Advocate goes as follows: "[The Voice]: So be new, but do not be the early rock of offence. [The Advocate]: Be it so then, let those things be under *the finger of threat*." (Act V, lines 392–94). The idiomatic expression *the rock of offence* (*kamień zgorszenia*) is a reference to the New Testament (1 Peter, 2,8). The novel's first epigraph is taken from William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (1602) (Act II, Scene 2, lines 32–33), quoted only in English: "Alas, Our Frailty is the cause, not we; for such as we are made of such we be." Both epigraphs underline the novelty and the subversive nature of the book, as well as the weakness (*frailty*) of the ontological status of the literary characters/figures and/or the author.

[4] The term *mieszaniec* (*half-caste*) is used in its both (racial and social class) meanings. The same applies to the term *bękart* (*bastard,* here: *illegitimate child*). Both of the terms, which were originally derogatory, were reclaimed by Parnicki in order to describe and positively valorise the phenomenon of subjects' *hybrid identities*.

[5] The term "klerk" is used by Parnicki in the late medieval sense: *clericus* (Lat.: a priest, clergyman, generally a learned man). The characters referred to as *clerks* represent the learned (usually lay) men, intellectuals travelling from university to university. The Polish word "klerk" also indicates a politically neutral intellectual. See: *Słownik języka polskiego*, vol. 1, (Warszawa: PWN, 1992), 930.

America, and central and northern Europe of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, while the 5th volume portrays a seventeenth-century theological dystopia directly inspired by *The New Atlantis* of Sir Francis Bacon.[6]

The development of style which can be observed throughout the series mirrors the author's reflection on the purely literary nature of his novels. The third-person narrator, present in the 1st volume, disappears from the later parts, giving way to a textual mosaic of real and imaginary dialogues, stream-of-consciousness first-person narratives and various documents – letters, memoirs, protocols, quasi-real or fake family chronicles and religious apocrypha. The perceivable disappearance of the organising subject, the *master narrator*,[7] turns the series into an ever-growing collection of linguistically difficult textual documentation, where each new volume receives the previous collections as an inheritance that requires constant reinterpretation, and results in a seemingly never-ending process of *reading/writing*. Yet the multiplicity of voices, the deeply embedded polyphony, is subject to a peculiar stylistic unification: complex and extremely precise syntax, the reduction of descriptive elements and a highly intellectual tone determine the rationalistic, discursive and purely rhetorical nature of the texts. The characters seem to be reduced to the dialogic and interpretative function, and the reader is totally immersed in the discursive reality which seems to offer only a rhetorical surrogate of the search for truth. In a way, the textual universe of *The New Fable* seems to gradually lose its structure and ceases to have the organising principle traditionally associated with the concept of "authorship." Hence the closing, 6th volume, *The Finger of Threat*, poses considerable difficulties since it has to put an end to this literary *perpetual motion*.

Coda/Final Gathering

As for the content, which is subject to the textual curbing described above, the opening set of dialogues in *The Finger of Threat* offers some insights into theological and ecclesiastical issues and provides a fragmentary analysis of the political situation in Europe. Some vague allusions suggest that the dialogues take place in the year of Napoleon's victory at the Battle of Austerlitz – 1805. In *The Finger of Threat* Parnicki decided to adapt and develop the literary concept first

[6] The literary series consists of 6 volumes, entitled 1. *Robotnicy wezwani o jedenastej* [*Workers Called at Eleven*], 1962; 2. *Czas siania i czas zbierania* [*The Time of Sowing and the Time of Reaping*], 1963; 3. *Labirynt* [*Labirynth*], 1964; 4. *Gliniane dzbany* [*Clay Pitchers*], 1966, 5. *Wylęgarnie dziwów* [*Hotbeds of Wonders*], 1968; 6. *Palec zagrożenia* [*The Finger of Threat*], 1970.

[7] The concept of a "master narrator" was proposed by Małgorzata Czermińska (*Czas w powieściach Parnickiego* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1972)).

introduced in the 3rd volume of his novel, *The Face of the Moon* (1967) – a concept that seems to be a combination of Bakhtinian polyphonic novelistic discourse and Barthesian questioning of the authorial role in the novel.[8] *The Finger of Threat* is in fact a series of quasi-legal protocols which record the proceedings of thirty members of a jury, each tagged with one letter of the ancient Greek alphabet. The meetings of the court take place in Sandomierz,[9] on the night of St. Jacob, and therefore in the very place and on the same day of the year as the scene of the death of Archbishop Aron which opens the first volume of *The New Fable*; the time span is 746 years. Initially, the discussions focus on what is presumably the main issue: the division of the estate of the late Alexandra Parnicki (a character from the previous volume), whose incredible fortune has for more than 150 years been kept as a deposit by a legal company from the Hague (in the Netherlands) called *Jacob Homodei, Abraham Cuffeler, sons and further successors* (p. 56). The quasi-juridical proceedings, as it turns out, quite quickly shift into lengthy discussions during which the characters' real identities are being gradually problematised.

It is the very problem of the characters' actual identities that the literary play Parnicki initiates focuses on. Hidden behind the masks of the letters of the Greek alphabet, the characters are in fact either transferred from the future (here: 1870 and 1920) or (in the majority of cases) from the preceding volumes of *The New Fable*. Thus *Alpha* stands for Aron (eleventh century), *Beta* for the sixteenth-century Spaniard Villafana, *Gamma* for the eleventh-century Gnup from Iceland, etc. The collective representation of the selected characters of the series constitutes a kind of a quasi-political organization, a *political* system which balances between a democratic republic, an absolute monarchy and a theocracy. Yet Parnicki's literary play is in fact radically subversive. Step by step Parnicki departs from all standard literary norms – and, in a way, applies the basic deconstructive procedures to reverse the hierarchical, binary oppositions that have always constituted the historical novel. The members of the "court" are simultaneously and interchangeably historical and fictitious, quasi-real and imaginary, pretending to be authentically historical characters, yet constantly aware of their only literary/textual ontological status. What is more, Parnicki introduces, alongside the figures imported from the previous volumes of *The New Fable,* literary characters borrowed – as purely literary *motifs* – from other writers (Henryk Sienkiewicz,

[8] The trilogy *The Face of the Moon* presents the history of the Roman Empire and its eastern neighbouring states from the third to the eighth century. The final part presents a meeting of all the descendants of the key figure from the first part: Mitroania. The final meeting is actually a series of debates (also procedural) and the disputants have their faces masked most of the time.

[9] Rather a literary motive than literary illusionism. No descriptive elements that would suggest any real place are given. The changing of the chambers in fact reflects a move from one subchapter to another.

Stefan Żeromski). Frequent references are also made to some satellite-novels of *The New Fable*: *I u możnych dziwny* [*Odd Among the Mighty*], *"Zabij Kleopatrę!"* [*"Kill Cleopatra!"*], *Inne życie Kleopatry* [*Another Life of Cleopatra*]), and the prologues, epilogues and widely scattered allusions found in those novels are treated philologically as quasi-historical source texts which are supposed to verify or falsify the validity and worth of micro-narratives and motifs produced in *The Finger of Threat*. As Wacław Sadkowski puts it, "a specific process of self-discipline or rather artistic self-verification is, beyond doubt, deeply etched into Parnicki's novelistic series."[10] Such an approach allows Parnicki to re-visit numerous figures and literary motifs from the proceeding volumes – Aron the abbot and St. Stanisław, the patron saint of Poland, in particular – and to start the process of exploring the potentialities and possible interpretations of their historical/fictional existence.

The "clan" (p. 380) or the "nation" (p. 407) of *The New Fable*, the cosmopolitan community of half-castes and bastards, is in fact a "hybridopolis" (p. 594), where ages, identities and stories constantly meet and clash. The community consists of:

> The Czech queen, the princess of Moldova, the princess of Kiev, a pseudo-shepherdess from France,[11] Mexican Indians, Indonesians, the Irish, the Welsh, four Spaniards, even the death itself, Jews … no, not the Jews, but instead (and many of them indeed!): ex-Jews, and half-Jews, and quarter-Jews, and even a miracle, a new-Jew, in the shape of a Khazar. (p. 500)[12]

Some figures, however, are purely literary motifs: in one case, for example, the presiding judge is a personification of Aron's dream from the 8th chapter of Parnicki's novel *The Silver Eagles* from 1944. This literary strategy leads to a total reshaping the discourse when the figure says:

> Since I was appointed as a judge, the present meeting has replaced the reality – even if we consider it only to be the reality of a novel or even a fable – with the world of dreams, and, consequently, it has replaced the logic of the real world with the logic of dreams. (p. 275)

The dream-like sphere of compulsive discursiveness, numerous micro-narratives interwoven with meta-textual, inter-textual, self-referential and rhetor-

[10] Wacław Sadkowski, *Parnicki*, trans. Jacek Dobrowolski (Warszawa: "Czytelnik", 1978), 38.

[11] Joan of Arc from the 2nd part of *The New Fable*.

[12] Unless indicated otherwise, all quotations are in my translation. Page numbers refer to the following edition: Teodor Parnicki, *Nowa baśń*. Część VI, *Palec zagrożenia* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1970).

ical argumentation, create tension which defines the framework for a purely literary play whose rules and conventions are being defined *in statu nascendi*. The last two chapters of the novel introduce the most abstract, purely "literary" figures – the quasi-personified subjects which represent four key spheres of Parnicki's novels: SILVER (history), MERCURY (fantasy/alternative history), PLATINUM (metaphysics) and BRASS (autobiography). The group, called in Spanish METALES CASADOS (Eng. *married metals*) takes an active part in the last, 7th chapter of the novel and, along with the other figures/letters, analyses potentialities hidden behind the novelistic motifs as well as elements of the author's biography. In fact, Parnicki sets a plethora of literary categories in motion. Sketchy historical micro-narratives from the nineteenth century are combined with the novelistic meta-discourse, fragmentary and problematized narrative borrowings and the quasi-legal proceedings of the jury. The referential field evoked in the dialogues is always cross-referential; texts refer exclusively to other texts. The novel gives the impression of an unlimited process of *bricolage*:[13] gathering bits and pieces scattered around in all the volumes of the series, (re)interpreting them, setting them in motion, and subjecting them all to immediate analytical and interpretative procedures.

Language/History/Self

The Finger of Threat is a novel in which Parnicki problematises three fundamental issues: 1) language, 2) history and 3) self-identity. As far as the first problem – language – is concerned, a striking feature that can be noticed is the peculiar "foreignness" of the text. The novel makes frequent use of foreign words taken from the languages Parnicki spoke or knew (mainly Russian, but also English, Spanish, Chinese, Latin, Greek and German).[14] The dominant language of borrowing – Russian – leads to a far-reaching exoticisation of the text. This impression is reinforced by frequent quotations from Russian poems, literary and liturgical texts and citations of teachers' utterances that make the text an ultimately polyphonic collage which activates the author's linguistic and cultural referential fields. Pedantic comparative analyses of grammatical and phonetic systems of

[13] In the Derridian sense of unmethodical combination of elements, as opposed to the systematic development of a well-defined structure. Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences*.

[14] The use of these languages reflects the biographical experiences of the author. Teodor Parnicki's first languages were German and Russian (he learned Polish quite late, at the age of 12, in China); later in his life he became fluent in English and Spanish (while living in Mexico, 1944–1967).

languages in use (mainly Russian and Polish) generate lengthy dialogues, which are designed to define the mechanisms of linguistic representation.

The linguistic aspect seems to always underlie the novelistic discourse. The last chapter of the novel defines the quasi-legal proceedings in terms of the internal procedures of an "anonymous society" called "The New Fable," where the negotiation and voting rights are granted not only to the quasi-real "shareholders," but to purely linguistic, grammatical entities. They gain rights to evaluate the authorial use of language which defies the rules of "routine" style (p. 453), yet is always engaged in the highly precise, textual weaving. Although the linguistic entities are yet further sets of "masks and costumes" (p. 452), they take an active part in the novel:

> The trade union of participles will assign its representative, as well as the union of parenthetical sentences; together with the punctuation marks, paragraphs, and the society established to fight the plague of the passive voice. (p. 452)

The invocation and the prayer from the adapted Litany to All Saints even reads:

> … and also crush the indisputable Germanness of long, compound words, as well as the appallingly complicated sentences of *The New Fable*, and of all the writings of [the author]…. (p. 466)

The visible linguistic consciousness which permeates the novel and is expressed on numerous occasions determines the creative and/or destructive role of the language, *by* which and *in* which the characters of the novel *словом разрушали города* (Rus: "destroyed towns with the word"[15]) (p. 515) – which metaphorically describes the process of deconstruction/destruction of the novelistic form. Yet the language used by the author is the life-giving force which establishes the dialogic sphere of the novel.

Despite the linguistic consciousness, *The Finger of Threat* can be perceived as a complex literary vehicle designed to close the cycle of *The New Fable* by discussing (as stated before) the problem of history and the nature and value of the historical novel. The tribunal of the literary figures is, in fact, gathered in order to accuse or justify the creator or the literary re-creator of the historical characters and their representations in language. The discourse sometimes becomes almost rebellious:

[15] This frequently repeated quotation is a line from Nikolai Gumilev's poem "The Word" (from the collection *The Pillar of Fire*, 1921).

> The masses and only the masses would have the power to transform the accusation of the author of *The New Fable* from dream into reality. The masses only, I say, comprising unfounded commas, paragraphs or long sentences which are hard to digest. (p. 227)

Nevertheless, when the historical figures declare the awareness of their purely literary/linguistic ontological status – the literary existence determined exclusively by the will of the writer – they naturally start posing questions which are ethical in nature:

> Is it possible and right to summon someone – whoever – from the past to take part in the historical novel, if that was a role that would be for that person – again, whoever he was – morally disgraceful, and what is even worse, contrary to the truth, or without taking the trouble to analyse, what the truth either was, or could have been, had to be or should have been? (p. 202)

On the other hand, however, despite the asking of such ethical questions, the disputants clearly realise the limits of their status, which, in fact, questions their ethical reasoning:

> The personality of whichever participant of the meeting – … has become only a shadow of the letter-symbol. And when the object disappears, the shadow of it disappears as well, doesn't it? (p. 275)

The historical figures, in turn, when "resurrected" by the power of word and given voice, are invited to an impossible dialogue with one another and with the problematised, barely present author, and eventually put the author and his writing on trial. The author, however, is never totally free in his decisions since the figures he brings back to life have already existed as a textual sign, a trace or a word in existing historical documents and, sometimes, in other literary incarnations. Thus the process of *writing* equals the process of intellectual reconstruction, which is always an ethical act between the artist and his protagonists, a process that leads to a unique interdependence expressed in one of the dialogues:

> We cannot do anything, which had not been earlier imposed on us by him. Yet he himself would not have any authority over us, if we did not exist. If we had not existed even before he wrote anything about us. (p. 127)

As the text unfolds, the literary/historical *personae* of *The Finger of Threat* grow stronger and move a step further: realizing that they are just purely literary figures of *The New Fable*, they gain the right (or are given the right by the author) to

enter into a dialogue which is supposed to evaluate both the literary cycle and the author himself. The board of judges, tagged with the letters of the Greek alphabet, discusses the literary value, artistic and intellectual faults and complexity of the series of novels, and starts a discourse which is self-referential, metaphysical and ultimately inconclusive. The paradoxical nature of this interdependence, in which the author, the key *persona* (not so much *present* as *problematised*), is never outside the literary work but resides, masked and questioned, at its very centre, is the basis of the discursive logic of the novel. Obviously, it can lead to the rebellion of the characters against the author, and eventually to the premature end of the cycle, which is symbolized by the character labelled with the letter *Ro*.[16]

Yet the interpretation of *The Finger of Threat* should also take into account not only literary/linguistic and historical aspects, but also the above-mentioned third, purely autobiographical, sphere of the novel. If there is a court of justice (the literary figures gathered in Sandomierz on the night St. Jacob in 1805), there must also be the figure of a defendant. In the dialogues and interrogations, that figure is tagged with the Greek letter *Tau* (*T*), which stands for the author's first name *Teodor*. *Tau* gradually becomes the main figure of the novel, first perceived as a "witness and expert" called by the court (p. 108), or a spokesperson of the author/scriptor from a parallel universe,[17] who later becomes the authorial alter-ego, or simply the author himself. The unique tension between the author and the characters which permeates the novel marks the fundamental problem of Parnicki's prose. As Wacław Sadkowski suggests,

> … the direction of identification is reversed; it is not the author who wishes to assume the identity of "the meek" from all ages and historical circumstances, but it is the characters who inhabit his body, manipulate his pen, and speak with his voice. He is being tried and judged not only by the countless ways of understanding, feeling and experiencing life; he is also being tried by the different tongues and ways in which thoughts, experiences and sensations are formulated.[18]

One of the consequences of this reversal is that occasionally the novel presents sophisticated theoretical constructs, in which *Tau* is contrasted with *Lie-Tau* [*Łże-Tau*] and *Super-Tau* (*Nad-Tau*). This leads to quasi-Trinitarian

[16] The letter "R" symbolizes the "risk" (hence "r") of finishing the novel at any time.

[17] The division between two "earths" (*Alfa*'s Earth and *Ro*'s Earth) identifies two temporal orders: *Alfa*'s (Aron's) Earth represents more or less the historical, chronological order; *Ro*'s Earth represents the "future," which resembles the author's time (the twentieth century) in which the events of for example the First World War and the Russian Revolution are already known, although the temporal perspective suggests that the "future" can extend thousands of years ahead. In that respect, the concept of *Ro*'s Earth enables Parnicki to include some elements of the science fiction poetics in the novel.

[18] Sadkowski, *Parnicki*, 53.

and Gnostic theological digressions suggesting the differences between God-Father (creator *ex nihilo*) and God-Son (the domain of resurrection of the dead). Such theological comparisons mirror the freedom and limitations of historical novels and historical fantasies; but they also suggest some Freudian parallels with the concepts of the ego and the super-ego and their different levels of authority, control and power. Nevertheless, it is the Gnostic religious discourse that frequently recurs in the novel and which suggests that the doctrine of Eternal Light and the gap between the Deity and the contingency of temporality (in all senses: historic, literary and linguistic) can be one of the novel's key interpretative tools.

In fact, the figure of *Tau* seems to be the ultimate justification of the complex textual play of *The Finger of Threat*. Although the identity of *Tau* is not clearly defined, the dialogues, interrogations and staged "school exams" reveal some key features of this character. The defendant *Tau* is not only, as might be expected, the 60-year old author, but also (and more often) a 12-year-old boy. Owing to this transformation, through the figure of *Tau* Parnicki introduces detailed autobiographical micro-narratives and scatters them all over the novel; he also engages in a self-conscious psychoanalytical discourse marked with clear references to Freudian dream-work methodology: condensation (pp. 74, 127), slips of the tongue (p. 280), and a free association method (p. 489). Parnicki focuses mainly on one, extremely traumatic and dream-like episode from *Tau*'s (i.e. his own) youth: his escape as a 12-year-old half-orphan from the military camp of the Russian White Army in Vladivostok to the capital of the Chinese province of Manchuria, Harbin. This real event in Parnicki's life took place in August, 1920, and the dialogues and interrogations of the novel, as in the psychoanalytical process of secondary revision, enable a careful reconstruction and interpretation of every single element of the boy's traumatic journey. When *Tau* describes some details from the officer's uniform, which he saw on the Chinese border, the interrogator says:

> No, I'm not interested, yet I carefully observe every single little stone. After all, we are reconstructing a Byzantine mosaic. (p. 214)

The purpose of the pseudo-psychoanalytical process (metaphorised as the reconstruction of the Byzantine mosaic) is to study the chain of events which started on the Chinese border in August, 1920 (and all earlier events that had led to them) and which transformed a young Russian/German boy from a cosmopolitan family (whom Parnicki was until the age of 12) into a member of the Polish community in China, and eventually enabled him to become a Polish writer, and finally the creator of the textual universe of *The New Fable*. Thus, the purpose of the novel is in fact to establish and define the psychological link between the traumatic childhood experiences and the later intellectual and artistic develop-

ment of the author. From such a perspective, *The Finger of Threat* could be perceived not only as a subversive textual play questioning all literary categories, but also as a complex psychoanalytical vehicle designed to narrativise the *traumatic* and *formative* experiences of the author's youth. *Tau*, being at the same time the young boy and the old writer, remains the very centre of that literary play, as the dialogue confirms:

> – Parnishka, aren't you scared yet?
> – What could I possibly be scared of? The possibility of you talking with me about the times which are future for you – simply as a result of the execution – with the pen – of my will as the [future] author … of *The New Fable?* (p. 204)

The psychoanalytical stratum of the novel explores both the problems of identity of the subject and the artistic and intellectual value of the literary texts written by Parnicki. Constantly metamorphosing, the figure of *Tau* gives way to other versions of the author's symbolised identity. When referring to the descriptions of his experiences in the Far East and Russia and in the reference to the question of nationality, Parnicki, as indicated above, is represented by the symbols *Tau*, *Lie-Tau* and *Super-Tau*, yet when the German identity of the writer's forefathers is taken into account, *Tau* (from *Teodor*) becomes *Thau* (from the German spelling of the name: *Theodor*). As a consequence, the form *Kindthau* (*child Tau*) and even *Freund Kindthau* (*a friend, child Tau*) are coined and used in the dialogues.

Obviously, the author's identity quest described in the novel serves the autobiographical purposes (represented by BRASS, one of the four types of literary rationales found in Parnicki's novels). The aim is to define the actual identity composed of hybrid identities inherited by Parnicki from the German and Russian past; his Polishness is a matter of (un)conscious choice made on the Chinese border in August 1920, and all the consequences this yielded both in his life and his literary work. What is of utmost importance is the question of whether the author is really "a Pole" and, consequently, whether *The New Fable* can justifiably – despite its utmost *foreignness* – be said to belong to the domain of Polish literature. In fact, Parnicki poses one fundamental question: Who am I? The measures taken by the complex novelistic machinery include the mock psychoanalytical session in which the *patient* – partly a historical symbolisation of the author's self (cf. pp. 600–605) – St. Stanisław (transformed into a young boy, who represses and rejects the fact that his mother was raped by the Polish King Bolesław Chrobry during the siege of Kiev in the summer of 1018)[19] answers the therapist's questions in the following way:

[19] A literary motif developed in the first part of *The New Fable*.

'Young boy, what is brought to your mind by an image of a woman's parted lips?'
'Teeth'
'Hmm, hmm… You are to get a toy. Just one. Would you desire it to be a serpent densely and colourfully feathered?'
'No, I want it to be a gangplank on a pirate ship.'
'Extraordinary possibilities are being opened up. Bow wow!'
'A dog, doctor.'
'Tau, tau.'
'Escape.'
'Of a carpenter to Egypt?'
'Of a bastard to Russia.'
'A fable?'
'I am not there. I have never been there.'
'An old fable?'[20]
'A German has reached the Kujawy region.'
'A new fable?'
'It is not *With Fire and Sword*.'[21]
'Nice auntie?'
'The nicest. Antonina.
'A barefoot woman?'
'On a gangplank. She's just about to fall into the sea.'[22]
'Where did she come to the gangplank from?'
'From a cave.'
'Who was she there with?'
'With a raw-head.'
'So with a human skull, right? Why was she there with a skull?'
'So that Thau would get scared.'
'I'm not asking: *what* was she with the skull *for*? I'm asking: *why*?'
'So that Thau would get scared.'
'A school for future priests?'
'It can be good, it can be bad.'
'What school for priests do you call good?'
'The one in Saratov on the Volga. It teaches one how to discover the truth.'
'Have you been to that school?'
'Not me! Thau's father.'
'Did he discover the truth there?'

[20] A reference to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski's novel *An Ancient Tale* [*Stara baśń*] (1876).
[21] The first part of Henryk Sienkiewicz's trilogy (1884).
[22] A reference to Theodosia Burr (1783–1813), whose mysterious death on a ship which disappeared is one of the motifs of the novel.

> 'Two truths. One was for himself. The other one was for his son.'
> 'What truths were they?' (p. 498)

The psychoanalytical format of the "talking cure" reveals the intertextual relations as well as autobiographical facts that link the literary motifs with Parnicki's early childhood experiences. The explanation of at least some of the elements will show the degree of multilayered complexity of literary and autobiographical references interwoven in the text. The "feathered serpent" is a reference to Quetzalqoatl, a Toltec deity into which the Polish bishop Stanisław was transformed in pre-Columbian America in the eleventh century (*The New Fable*, vol. 1), the pirate ship refers to the disappearance and the mysterious death of Theodosia Burr (a motif from vol. 6), and the picture of a woman with a skull refers to the painting depicting Mary Magdalene in a cave, which the five-year-old Parnicki saw in a hotel in Berlin in 1913, and which triggered the author's life-long fetishistic obsession with bare feet; Kujawy refers both to the plot of J. I. Kraszewski's novel and to the author's German grandfather, who once travelled through this area on his way from Prussia to Russia (and where the author's father was born); Saratov's German theological seminary was the school in which Parnicki's father studied to become a Catholic priest; the escape to Russia refers to Parnicki being sent from Omsk to Vladivostok after his mother's death in 1919. These and other facts are discussed by the characters, and the reader is presented with a fragmentary mosaic of scenes, dialogues and gestures which permit the reconstruction of the Russian and German episodes of the writer's early life.

What makes the novel challenging (or "threatening"), is the fact that biographical elements, though obviously important, are embedded in the literary structure of a "work in progress," which "all at once" evokes and interweaves non-contiguous planes of history, fantasy, metaphysics and autobiography, as well as meta-textual, meta-linguistic and meta-historical dialogues. The *heteroglossia* of the novel seems to be dangerously teetering on the verge of literary paranoia. As the critic suggests:

> Parnicki set loose a whole gamut of brilliant tones and undertones, of synonyms and antonyms which lay germinating in his earlier works.[23]

The literary outcome seems to exceed all the limits of literary conventions and starts a free, rhetorical (inter)textual play. However, in contrast to Roland Barthes's – equally provocative and unfounded – declaration of the "death of the author," in *The Finger of Threat* it is precisely *the author* who emerges in the very centre of the polyphonic literary play and obsessively weaves the web of textuality, slowly turning this historical novel into a monstrous, psychotherapeutical

[23] Sadkowski, *Parnicki*, 53.

coda of *The New Fable* series. The grand finale leaves an irremovable authorial signature on the whole collection of the new-fable texts from the previous volumes. However, the literary and psychological discourse of the novel seems to be designed as both a therapy and a torture, for the author and his readers alike. All the accusations of the figures from *The New Fable* gathered on the night of St. Jacob 1805 become a part of the immense, self-referential textual universe created *by* and *for* the psyche of T(h)au, who once, as a 12-year-old boy, crossed the border into China and eventually became a Polish writer and the author of *The Finger of Threat*. The literary world created in *The New Fable* series, the immense hybrid republic of half-castes and bastards, has only one, non-literary, source:

> '[…] I will be counting to ten now, but […] I will start from the end. SHI!'
> 'Why are you counting in Chinese now?'
> 'Where are we all – the clan of *The New Fable* – from? Are we not from the ASHICHE[24] railway station?
> TIU!' (380)

Conclusions and Perspectives

The publication of the novel *The Finger of Threat* in 1970 marked the turning point beyond which the writings of Teodor Parnicki became almost – as critics and readers alike felt – totally incomprehensible. As Stefan Szymutko claimed, the writer's late novels put an end to "the mutual understanding" between the writer and his audiences,[25] separating the readers from the multilayered literary works and making the comprehension and readers' response almost impossible. Wacław Sadkowski suggested that the novel crossed the borderline between highly sophisticated historical prose and the literature of (historical) absurd.[26] The novels immediately following *The Finger of Threat* (*Tożsamość* [*Identity*]

[24] The name of the railway station where Teodor Parnicki crossed the Chinese border in the summer of 1920.

[25] Stefan Szymutko, "'Koniec porozumienia z odbiorcą' (O odmianie powieści historycznej stworzonej przez T. Parnickiego)," in *Studia o przemianach gatunkowych w powieści polskiej XX wieku* (Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski, 1982), 116–38.

[26] The term was popularized mainly by Wacław Sadkowski; Parnicki made occasional references to this term in the subsequent novels, entering into a peculiar dialogue with readers and critics. Cf. Teodor Parnicki, *Dzienniki z lat osiemdziesiątych* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2008), 35.

1970 and *Przeobrażenie* [*Metamorphosis*] 1973) even inspired one critic to coin the term *paranoickoidal literature*, which was supposed to describe the unique type of literary paranoia created by Parnicki.[27] The final scene of *The Finger of Threat* – the author's retirement to the solitude of the island of Bensalem from Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* – serves as a convincing metaphorical image of the author's ultimate isolation. The more theoretically-oriented and the more recent criticism,[28] however, perceives the novel as a very early example of Polish literary deconstructive post-modernism. The reversal of the organizing principles of the novel and binary oppositions of history and fiction, past and future, literary and real, dream and reality, as well as the setting of those categories in constant motion, could also suggest the early, intuitive use of the polyphonic and intertextual mechanisms that were later theoretically described by deconstruction. From such a perspective *The Finger of Threat* could be identified as an example of a kind of proto-post-modernism. Tadeusz Komendant even suggests:

> The work of Teodor Parnicki is an independently developing and unconscious literary equivalent of the reflection of one of the founding-fathers of post-modernism, Jacques Derrida.[29]

As suggested at the outset, both Barthesian and Bakhtinian interpretations of the death (and paradoxical return) of the author and the polyphonic, dialogic nature of the novel could also prove helpful in the analysis of Parnicki's textual plays. Yet taking all this into consideration, one has to admit that the driving principle of the novel is a purely psychoanalytical attempt to reconstruct and understand both the writer's real identity (with all biographical threads) and the complexity of his literary world, which is – it turns out – entirely a product of his own self. Freudian secondary revision, in which the literary figures symbolise the aspects of the writer's biography and act both as therapists and judges, seems to be the basic psychological framework of the literary design of the novel.

However, if the literary *form* of the text is taken into account, one cannot help noticing that the closing volume of *The New Fable* presents the author, who, after having created a complex and extremely sophisticated literary universe, seems to have lost control over it, and in the self-referential gesture endlessly talks to the figures of his own imagination or simply, exhausted and weak, observes those figures talking to themselves. Hence, despite the natural Freudian interpretations, one is tempted to suggest that the criticism could also refer to the Jungian psychoanalytical tradition. Carl Gustav Jung's distinction between the "introverted"

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[27] The term was first used by Bohdan Zadura in his review of the novel *Przeobrażenie* (*Metamorphosis*); "Koło za kołem, koło za kołem," *Twórczość* 8 (1974).

[28] Andrzej Juszczyk, *Retoryka a poznanie. Powieściopisarstwo Teodora Parnickiego* (Kraków: Universitas, 2004), 280.

[29] Tadeusz Komendant, "Parnicki, jak pismem sięgnąć," *Polityka*, no. 22 (1994).

(in Friedrich Schiller's terms: "sentimental") and the "extraverted" ("naïve") attitudes identifies the following features of the "modes of creation":

> The introverted attitude is characterised by the subject's assertion of his conscious intentions and aims against the demands of the object, whereas the extraverted attitude is characterised by the subject's subordination to the demands which the object makes upon him.[30]

The extraverted mode of creation leaves the writer in a weaker, rather "receptive" position, in which he becomes a medium for inner voices (be they voices of either individual or collective unconsciousness) and is unable to control the literary world being subdued to the forces of his own literary creation. Thus, like a sorcerer's apprentice, Parnicki re-embodies the Romantic tradition of writing, which, as in the mystical texts of Juliusz Słowacki, transcends all real and imaginary limitations of time, space and logic.[31] From such a perspective Teodor Parnicki would be a perfect example of an "extraverted" artist, who set out on the quest for self-identity – the journey of compulsive, endless *writing* – and eventually lost control over the figures of his imagination and their textual representations.

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[30] Carl Gustav Jung, "On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry," in *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 995–96.

[31] The direct references link *The New Fable* to the unfinished mystical poem *Król-Duch* [*King-Spirit*] (1845–1849) which makes use of the idea of metempsychosis. *The Finger of Threat* identifies *King-Spirit* as the only "king" of the new-fable world. The links between Słowacki's text and *The New Fable* were analised by Małgorzata Czermińska. Cf. *Czas w powieściach Parnickiego*, 95–97.

Tomasz Markiewka

Tau jako tortura?
Sąd nad pisarstwem w powieści Teodora Parnickiego
Palec zagrożenia

Streszczenie

Artykuł stanowi próbę skonfrontowania dwudziestowiecznych teorii powieści (Bachtinowskiej dialogiczności i wielogłosowości oraz „śmierci autora" Rolanda Barthesa) z prozą Teodora Parnickiego – tu reprezentowaną przez ostatnie, szóste ogniwo cyklu *Nowa baśń* – powieść *Palec zagrożenia*. Powieść zamykająca rozległą narrację historyczną obejmującą prawie 1 000 lat historii oraz trzy kontynenty, mimo pozorów radykalnej dialogiczności oraz wycofania narratora/autora, jest w istocie rodzajem kompulsywnego solilokwium autorskiego. *Tau* (grecka litera symbolizująca inicjał imienia autora – Teodor) oznaczać może również swoistą „torturę" autorskiego

dialogu z bohaterami wszystkich wcześniejszych tomów cyklu powieściowego będącego próbą psychoanalitycznej rozprawy z biograficznymi źródłami swej twórczości. Dialogujący bohaterowie stają się w powieści oskarżycielami i sędziami, zaś autorskie „ja", ukrywane pod maskami hybrydowych tożsamości, staje się rzeczywistym przedmiotem wnikliwej analizy. W ten sposób powieść zamykająca cykl przekształca powieść historyczną w skomplikowaną, wielogłosową autoanalizę autora, który nie znika ukryty pod warstwami wielopoziomowych dialogów, ale jest obecny (w sposób niezwykle konkretny) w samym centrum powieści.

Tomasz Markiewka

Tau en tant que torture ?
Le jugement sur l'écriture dans le roman de Teodor Parnicki
Palec zagrożenia (*Le doigt de menace*)

Résumé

L'article constitue une tentative de confronter les théories romanesques du XX^e^ siècle (dialogisme et polyphonie de Bakhtine, et « la mort de l'auteur » de Roland Barthes) avec la prose de Teodor Parnicki – représentée ici par le roman intitulé *Palec zagrożenia* (*Le doigt de menace*) étant la dernière partie, la sixième, du cycle *Nowa Baśń* (*Le Nouveau Conte*). Malgré les apparences de dialogisme radical et de reculement du narrateur/auteur, le roman qui ferme une vaste narration historique – englobant presque mille ans de l'histoire et trois continents – est en effet une sorte de soliloquie compulsive de l'auteur lui-même. *Tau* (lettre grecque symbolisant l'initiale du prénom de l'auteur – Teodor) peut signifier aussi une « torture » spécifique du dialogue de l'auteur avec les personnages de tous les volumes précédents du cycle romanesque essayant de faire un débat psychanalytique avec les sources biographiques de son œuvre. Les héros menant un dialogue deviennent dans le roman accusateurs et juges, par contre le « moi » de l'auteur – caché sous les masques des identités hybrides – devient le véritable objet d'une analyse pénétrante. Ainsi, le roman fermant le cycle transforme le roman historique en une autoanalyse compliquée et polyphonique de l'auteur qui ne disparaît pas sous les couches des dialogues multiniveaux, mais il est présent (d'une façon extraordinairement concrète) au centre même du roman.

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"In Violence and Epiphany": Seamus Heaney's *North*

In his 1975 collection of poems, *North*, Seamus Heaney addressed the problem of conflicts in Northern Ireland by looking at the traumatic events through the lens of myth and history. The poems draw numerous parallels between the past and the present, and the power of such parallels often consists in conjuring up images that – though often ambiguous or blurred – speak the language of epiphany or catharsis. While the collection's title, *North*, is a direct reference to Northern Ireland, and the difficult political situation in the region along with the impact of the conflict on the Irish people are recurring motifs in the majority of poems in *North*, this short, concise title is also an allusion to Ireland's violent past, especially to the Viking invasion of the Celtic Ireland that took place between the eighth and the tenth centuries.

My main concern here is to focus on three of Seamus Heaney's poems, "North," "Funeral Rites" and "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces," and analyse the way in which Heaney's Norse or Norse-inspired "fearful presences" help find a dynamic and effectual way of dealing with the trauma of the recent past ("Funeral Rites") or make it possible for an individual to discover and accept one's inner strength and creativity (as in "North" and "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces"). Also, I would like to look at the way in which the masculine spirit of the North evoked in the poems has an effect on their development and diction: the poems contain numerous allusions to Norse mythology, culture and history, and two of them, "North" and "Funeral Rites," end with potent epiphanic images. These final insights are inspired by what may be seen as Heaney's version of the sublime: this "Norse" sublime is inspired by austere landscapes of whole histories. Conflicts, fears, oppression and violence so often associated with Viking conquests are here – at times ironically, but always effectively – juxtaposed with other elements of the northern ethos, such as honour, courage, composure and self-

control. Heaney's Viking heroes might be legitimately seen as ghosts, the awe-inspiring *draugar* of the Norse mythology – yet, at the same time, those seemingly dreadful forms are transcended by the sound of "their own" voices, "lifted in violence and epiphany"[1] and contributing to a better understanding of the here and now.

The connection between the painful experience of the Troubles and the violence present in the ancient rituals and communal practices of Germanic tribes is explored in the majority of the poems in *North*. Writing about his well-known "bog poems," Seamus Heaney notices how the photographs of bodies found in the bogs of Jutland became imprinted on his memory: "The unforgettable photographs of these victims blended in my mind with photographs of atrocities, past and present, in the long rites of Irish political and religious struggles."[2] However, while in the "bog poems" the primary focus is the innocence of the victims as shown against the violence of the community, and the prevailing emotion is the compassion or astonishment of a usually passive observer, the poems inspired by the Norse invasion of Ireland offer a more dynamic, "masculine" strategy of dealing with the wounds of the past. The drama of "coming to consciousness" through becoming aware of one's difficult past is explored here by evoking images portraying Ireland's very distant past – especially the upheavals of the Viking Age. The recurring motif in the "Viking poems" is a winding line that is usually evoked in the context of the Norse conquest, becoming a tiny archaeological artefact – a "trial piece" crafted in Dublin, an outline of a longship, or a "hammered shod" of a bay that once witnessed the arrival of the Viking drakkars. However, and tellingly, this symbol of the Viking Age is appropriated in the poems by speakers struggling with their present situations: in "North" the serpentine line is evocative of the complex process of artistic growth, and in "Funeral Rites" it is the winding funeral cortege that symbolically points to the necessity of a cathartic experience that could finally bring healing to the long-suffering community.

Paradoxically, the fierce Norse invaders of the myth and the fear-provoking images they conjure up in the vision-like moments in the poems are capable of bringing hope to all those afflicted by the conflict in Northern Ireland, to both individuals and communities – the communal aspect of healing is often stressed. In her book *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, Judith Lewis Herman argues that

> clinicians know the privileged moment of insight when repressed ideas, feelings, and memories surface into consciousness. These moments oc-

[1] Seamus Heaney, "North," in Seamus Heaney, *Poems 1965–1975* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988), 174.

[2] Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations. Selected Prose 1968–1978* (London: Faber, 1980), 57–58.

> cur *in the history of societies* as well as in the history of individuals[3] [emphasis added].

In "Funeral Rites," where evoking the past helps one to get over bereavement, mourning unites the whole Irish nation, as Heaney envisages the serpent-shaped cortege moving in both time and space: a funeral procession which "drags its tail / out of the Gap of the North / as its head already enters / the megalithic doorway."[4] In contrast, "North" features a persona who is an individual, possibly a poet pondering the brutality and violence of the Viking Age and granted an insight concerning his own art at the end of the poem. Nevertheless, "North" is an exception here, as both in "Funeral Rites" and "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces" the collective aspect of experience is highlighted by a constant switching between first person singular and first person plural. For example, the first part of "Funeral Rites" features one speaker "stepping in to lift the coffins / of dead relations," while the second part focuses on the emotion expressed by the whole Irish community affected by the difficult experience of the Troubles: "we pine for ceremony, / customary rhythms." Heaney then switches to first person singular once again when an individual speaker voices his intention to unite the Irish people in one, all-encompassing act of mourning: "I would restore / the great chambers of Boyne / prepare a sepulchre / under the cupmarked stones." The last part of the poem is again spoken as if by the whole nation, people urging one another to "drive north again / past Strang and Carling fjords." A similar switching occurs in "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces" where the speaker does not hesitate to summon the Norsemen by saying "Old fathers, be with us. / Old cunning assessors / of feuds and of sites / for ambush or town,"[5] yet, at the same time, a speaker-individual is introduced, possibly a Catholic resident of twentieth century Ireland, one clearly fascinated by the Norse heritage, but still deeply afflicted by the conflict:

> I am Hamlet the Dane,
> skull-handler, parablist,
> smeller of rot
>
> in the state, infused
> with its poisons,
> pinioned by ghosts
> and affections,

[3] Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 2.

[4] Heaney, "Funeral Rites," in *Poems 1965–1975* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988), 172.

[5] Heaney, "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces," in *Poems 1965–1975*, 179.

> murders and pieties,
> coming to consciousness
> by jumping in graves,
> dithering, blathering.[6]

Heaney's "Hamlet, the Dane" is then one of many – collective and individual – voices in *North* that hope to discover their identity or understand the confusion and hurt of the Troubles and be finally healed. Such "coming to consciousness" may become possible through summoning the "ghosts" of the distant past (even though the speaker sees himself as one "pinioned" by the "ghosts" of current events), and also by becoming an artist instructed by voices of the past ("dithering, blathering"). In "North" and in many passages of "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces" both the process of growing up as an artist and the individual aspect of the process of healing are stressed, while the communal aspect of the healing process is the main theme in "Funeral Rites" and loudly echoes throughout the majority of *North* poems. "Coming to consciousness / by jumping in graves" may sound horrifying, and the possibility of healing is unquestionably made ambiguous and uncertain by the ironic presence of Hamlet (and also by the self-mocking attitude of the speaker himself), but the trying is nevertheless shown to be necessary; otherwise the afflicted individual may be trapped in a vicious circle of repression and suffering. To quote Judith Herman again,

> the knowledge of horrible events periodically intrudes into public awareness but is rarely retained for long. Denial, repression and dissociation operate on a social as well as an individual level. Like traumatized people, we have been cut off from the knowledge of our past. Like traumatized people, we need to understand the past in order to reclaim the present and the future. Therefore, an understanding of psychological trauma begins with rediscovering history.[7]

The speakers in the poems struggle with their complicated sense of identity in many different ways. They not infrequently find the spirit of the North terrifying and alien, but sometimes they wilfully appropriate it for the purpose of being healed or growing stronger. In "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces" the exploration of this ambivalent mind-set has a powerful impact on the reader, as the speaker acknowledges the cruelty of the Vikings yet, at the same time, – paradoxically – convinces the listener to join him and to "sniff the wind / with the expertise of the Vikings":

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[6] Ibid., 178.

[7] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 2.

Come fly with me,
come sniff the wind
with the expertise
of the Vikings –

neighbourly, scoretaking
killers, haggers
and hagglers, gombeen-men,
hoarders of grudges and gain.

With a butcher's aplomb
they spread out your lungs
and made you warm wings
for your shoulders.

Old fathers, be with us.
Old cunning assessors
of feuds and of sites
for ambush or town.[8]

The "warm wings" that make the flight possible are a reference to the cruel practice of *blood-eagle*, a torture attributed to the Norsemen. This attribution is possibly the result of a mistranslation of a verse written by the skaldic poet Sighvatr;[9] nevertheless, the allusion is a fitting metaphor for the cruelty of the Viking invaders as perceived in popular culture. Those mythic Norsemen of "Viking Dublin," who according to Neil Corcoran amount to "the most *terrifying and most scandalous* exemplary community in Heaney's work,"[10] portrayed here as "haggers and hagglers, gombeen-men, / hoarders of grudges and gain" evoke fear, but simultaneously they attract with their animalistic strength. The animal "nostril" of a Viking ship "sniffing the Liffey"[11] may be a portent of an immediate attack, but the ship is cunningly "dissembling itself / in antler combs, bone pins, / coins, weights, scale-pans."[12] Heaney's Norsemen seem to live in an alluring world of senses and sensations, all of them driven by their animal instincts. The curves and ornamentations of the "trial pieces" found centuries later in one of the sunken ships in Dublin become emblems of the Viking empire. The lines

[8] Heaney, "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces," 178–79.

[9] Roberta Frank, "Viking Atrocity and Skaldic Verse: The Rite of the Blood-Eagle," *English Historical Review* 99, no. 391 (1984): 334. ["It is solely on the strength of this half-stanza, twelve words in all . . . that the blood-eagle sacrifice of the sagas has kept our credence."]

[10] Neil Corcoran, "Seamus Heaney and the Art of the Exemplary," *The Yearbook of English Studies* Vol. 17, British Poetry since 1945, Special Number (1987): 121.

[11] Heaney, "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces," 177.

[12] Ibid.

represent "the netted routes / of ancestry and trade,"[13] but they also embody the undying spirit of the Norse. The curved edge of a mysterious artefact becomes the backbone of a serpent-like animal that transforms itself, becoming successively "an eel swallowed / in a basket of eels," a line that "amazes itself / eluding the hand / that fed it," "a bill in flight," and a "zoomorphic wake, / a worm of thought,"[14] and finally reveals itself as the "swimming nostril"[15] of the longship approaching the Irish coast. The "swimming tongue" of the longship reappears in "North," where it instructs the speaker to "compose in darkness." The "tongue" of the Viking vessel is here "buoyant with hindsight"[16] and the adjective "buoyant" is also used in "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces," where the curve of the ship is alluded to as "a buoyant, migrant line."[17] While "migrant" connotes the vitality of animals that often change their home range and therefore produce healthy offspring, "buoyant" implies floating, ships and water and suggests images of resilience and joy. The flourishes of Norse ornamentation and the snapshots of everyday life in Dublin during the Norse invasion are laden with an ambiguity that reflects the ambivalent attitude of the speaker, who seems at times frightened, at time seduced and fascinated, by the turbulence and uproar of the Viking Age. This ambivalence seems also a consequence of the speaker's shifting sense of identity: "Old fathers, be with us" never becomes "Our fathers, be with us," but the speaker's suggestion of a distant yet possible kinship between him and the Viking invaders is sometimes prominent. The invocation to "old fathers" and the persona's call to join the Vikings in their restless enterprise of "sniffing the wind" are among the most unsettling passages in *North*. Neil Corcoran observes that "the prayer recalls Stephen's prayer to Daedalus at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist*, 'Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead'" and, commenting on this allusion, concludes that "Heaney's location of the Irish paternity theme in this Viking source is exhausted and despairing."[18] Still, what is striking is not solely the despair (there is certainly despair, but also hope), but the bitter irony noticeable in the juxtaposition of the mythical torture of carving wings out of the human body (a "gift" of the Viking "fathers" for the victim) with Daedalus's gift of wings for his beloved son, a gift of freedom. Nevertheless, this irony of calling the cruel invaders "fathers" is immediately followed by another ironic realisation: Icarus, attracted to the warmth of the Mediterranean sun, perishes, while the internalized, altered voice of the North, now "buoyant with hindsight"[19] and conscious of the futility of bloodshed, brings the hope of

[13] Ibid., 177.
[14] Ibid., 177–78.
[15] Ibid., 176.
[16] Heaney, "North," 178–79.
[17] Heaney, "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces," 178.
[18] Neil Corcoran, *Seamus Heaney* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), 111.
[19] Heaney, "North," 175.

healing to the speakers, who recognize there will never be – and cannot be – a history other than one's own experience, on both the individual and the collective level. Thus the apparent fatalism associated with the impossibility of discarding one's heritage that is detectable in so many passages in *North* is finally transcended by the subsequent cathartic (though painful) act of "coming to consciousness" through accepting and, to a certain extent, reliving the past.

On another level, the fierce strangers from the North become "fathers" – teachers or instructors – because they represent an attractive, though illusory, idea of an ever-triumphant self which is never subjugated to another. One of the tactics used by speakers struggling with the feeling of victimisation in the Viking poems is the appropriation of certain features that characterise Norse – or Danish – heroes and antiheroes. The "manly" virtues and vices of the fear-provoking raiders become desirable because they promise liberation (as in "Funeral Rites"). Even the idea of a revenge is not entirely absent from the poems inspired by the Viking conquests; in fact, the speakers are aware that they might become as capable of violence as the aggressors the moment they realise they are no longer victims and are fully capable of acting for themselves. The impersonation of Hamlet in "Viking Dublin" ("Hamlet, the Dane") might also be an example of such a subversive tactic employed by the persona: here is a Celt wishing to triumph over the invaders by adopting their own tactics, or, even assuming their (Danish) identity. Similarly, the procession in "Funeral Rites" is envisaged as a giant serpent that frightens bystanders and may initially suggest a pitiless retribution. The cortege resembles the terrible destroyer Jörmungandr, the sea snake of Norse mythology: it is "Quiet as a serpent / in its grassy boulevard."[20] The procession's "slow triumph towards the mounds"[21] creates a sense of fear, yet "the megalithic doorway"[22] of Newgrange, built during the Neolithic period and the destination of the cortege, is to become a place where the cycle of violence is to be broken, not the site of a revenge assembly.

Still, such "acts of impersonation" are to a certain degree legitimate and historically justified, and repeatedly point to another significant aspect of the therapeutic endeavour, namely, the difficult process of coming to terms with the speakers' unsettled sense of identity. Although the Vikings were alien invaders to the mainly Celtic inhabitants of Ireland in the late eighth century, and to this day the majority of Irish natives would consider themselves descendants of the Celts, the persona reveals himself as an inhabitant of Ireland (in "North" and "Funeral Rites" possibly also a Northerner) who has been inevitably shaped by the ascetic spirit of the North and who realizes the enormous significance of Germanic heritage for his country. In "Funeral Rites," on its way back from the

[20] Heaney, "Funeral Rites," 172.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.

mound of Newgrange, the cortege moves confidently "past Strang and Carling fjords," places named by the invaders, as if acknowledging the nation's complex legacy and yet recognizing the places as Irish. To a certain extent, then, rather than appropriation of the Viking identity for the sake of revenge or frightening one's enemies, this is an act of legitimate recognition of this distant kinship and of acceptance of the complex, rich heritage (genetic, cultural, and linguistic). The Dublin of "Trial Pieces" is not a random choice: it is a place on Irish soil particularly marked by the presence of the "Viking gene." Celtic Dublin was one of the settlements invaded by the Vikings in the middle of the ninth century, at the time when the invaders established their kingdoms along the Irish coast. Later the Norsemen and the Celts intermarried and a new population of Norse-Gaels emerged. The Viking aggressors brought violence and terror, but they also brought their culture: in "North" the "buoyant tongue" of the longship confirms there are two different aspects of the Norse invasion, positive and negative:

> It said Thor's hammer swung
> To geography and trade,
> Thick-witted couplings and revenges[23]

Thor, who becomes the figurative prime mover behind the Norse expansion in "North," similarly represents contradiction and ambiguity: he is the god of thunder and destruction, one to be feared, but is also associated with healing, fertility and the protection of mankind. The "netted routes / of ancestry and trade"[24] imagined by the speaker who scrutinizes a carving in bone in "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces" also accentuate the stimulative aspect of the Norse invasion. The serpentine line is an emblem of the Vikings, but it symbolizes this invigorating, changing force as well. The tiny "trial piece" is an item of Scandinavian origin, one "incised by a child,"[25] yet this alien artefact becomes a part of the vast cultural legacy that, to a certain extent, will shape the Irish identity. Paradoxically, although the invaders plundered and destroyed Irish monasteries and churches, they also contributed to the creation of a new style in Irish art. The perfect incarnation of the process of gradual blending of the Scandinavian ornamentation with the Celtic essence is the famous Cross of Cong, the early twelfth-century Irish relic in which the Urnes-style decoration of Scandinavian origin combines with the features of the older, Celtic Insular, style.

In "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces" the persona's rediscovery and acceptance of this heterogeneous self is facilitated by the study of linguistic heritage. Once again the Norse severity and harshness are evoked, this time by the careful choice

[23] Heaney, "North," 175.
[24] Heaney, "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces," 177.
[25] Ibid., 178.

of words that seem to mimic the terrifying deeds of the raiders with their terseness and abruptness:

> Like a long sword
> sheathed in its moisting
> burial clays,
> the keel stuck fast
>
> in the slip of the bank,
> its clinker-built hull
> spined and plosive
> as *Dublin*.[26]

The short, one-syllable words in the phrase "the keel stuck fast" are all of Old Norse or Old English origin, all of them representing the family of Germanic languages. The imagery in the passage suggests aggressive male sexuality or even rape, yet simultaneously it is the treasure-carrying ship that appears to be held hostage for years to come.

To emphasise the impact of old Germanic languages both on literature and language, Heaney does not hesitate to allude to alliterative poetry and Old Norse kennings. Alliteration is frequently used in "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces," for instance, when the Norse incomers are tersely characterised as "killers, haggers / and hagglers, gombeen-men, / hoarders of grudges and gain."[27] The harsh-sounding consonants in the passage add to the overall appeal of the description, mimicking the content, rendering the Vikings antiheroes even more fear-provoking. Moreover, to illustrate the legacy of the Viking Age more precisely, words of Old Norse origin such as *scale*, *haggle, keel*, *skull* and *wing* are used throughout the poem. While *haggle, skull* and *wing* are in their contexts evocative of the mythic Viking vices, the archaeological finds of *keel, scale-pans* and possibly also *skull* suggest figuratively, though not without a touch of irony, the survival of certain elements of Scandinavian culture on the British Isles, including literary and linguistic legacy. In "North" the wealth of linguistic heritage is described by the prophetic voice of the Viking longship as "the word-hoard," a kenning for language:

> It said, "Lie down in the word-hoard, burrow
> the coil and gleam
> of your furrowed brain.[28]

[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Heaney, "North," 175.

As the instruction is given to a speaker who is presumably an Irish poet writing in English, the "word-hoard" may not refer to Old Norse exclusively, but rather to the literary and linguistic legacy of old Germanic languages and, ultimately, to the modern-day English language.

In "North" the "fabulous raiders" of Norse mythology and "their long swords rusting"[29] become a sign of change, yet there is a great deal of ambiguity connected with the speaker's attitude to the past. The raiders and their swords, "hacked and glinting / in the gravel of thawed streams" or buried, with their owners, "in the solid / belly of stone ships" suddenly become "voices / warning me, lifted again / in violence and epiphany."[30] Nevertheless, in the initial stanzas the past seems forgotten: the landscape is not evocative of its turbulent history. The words confirm that the past cannot influence the present time because it is sealed and inaccessible. The "streams" where the "rusting swords" are buried also evoke a sense of passing of time. Moreover, as burials of Viking warriors and sailors often took place in ship-shaped tombs, "the solid belly" suggests death and decay. Nonetheless, the grip of the past on the present will soon be felt, as the previously "ocean-deafened voices" are revived and begin to speak the language of "violence and epiphany." The stone ship once again becomes a Viking drakkar, a "longship buoyant with hindsight." The dead Vikings once again become instructors, but their promises are – as always – very cautious:

> Compose in darkness.
> Expect aurora borealis
> in the long foray
> but no cascade of light.[31]

The relationship between the present and the past in the context of writing poetry is also explored in the last part of "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces." Here, as in "North" and "Funeral Rites" the final disclosure is accompanied by silence:

> My words lick around
> cobbled quays, go hunting
> lightly as pampooties
> over the skull-capped ground.[32]

The last silent epiphany in the Viking poems comes at the end of "Funeral Rites." In the concluding lines the dynamic progression through space and time gives way to the stillness and timelessness of the final vision. To accentuate the

[29] Ibid., 174.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., 175.
[32] Heaney, "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces," 179.

possibility of healing and ultimately of lasting peace, Heaney envisages the innocent victims of violence in Ireland "disposed like Gunnar" in the ancient tomb of Newgrange. The message of the vision is ambiguous, as Gunnar is yet another symbolic, ominous presence in *North*. One of the heroes of Scandinavian myth, he is not just a brave warrior; according to the sagas after his death he becomes one of the *draugar* – ghost-like creatures, zombies that guard their graves and may harm the living. Although he does not leave his tomb, both in the myth and in the poem he is chanting "verses about honour" and is looking at the moon. He becomes yet another mystifying "appropriation" in *North*, and perhaps the difficult struggle of the speaker in the poem may be best understood through the ambiguities of this mysterious, heroic figure. While the last image strongly suggests the end of the conflict, as Gunnar is described as one who "lay beautiful / inside his burial mound, / though dead by violence / and unavenged,"[33] it is often pointed out that the Gunnar of the sagas was, in fact, avenged. There are, however, other lines that suggest a peaceful closure: the stone is blocking the entrance to the grave and Gunnar's face is "joyful." Such a closure, however, may symbolise only temporary liberation from the ghosts of the past as "the cud of memory" is only "allayed for once," and "arbitration of the feud" merely "placated."[34] Nonetheless, the tranquillity of the last image strongly suggests that Gunnar's message *is* about forgiveness and honour. The myth may finally be changed, the cycle of violence may finally be broken – and healing does not have to be interrupted by further traumatic events.

[33] Heaney, "Funeral Rites," 172.
[34] Ibid.

Eliene Mąka-Poulain

„W przemocy i epifanii"
Północ Seamusa Heaneya

Streszczenie

W opublikowanym w roku 1975 tomiku *North* (*Północ*) irlandzki poeta Seamus Heaney odnosi się do konfliktu w Irlandii Północnej, przywołując wydarzenia z odległej przeszłości i odwołując się do mitu. Tematem wierszy jest nie tylko cierpienie niewinnych ofiar przemocy, lecz także próba odpowiedzi na pytanie, czy możliwe jest zakończenie konfliktu i uzdrowienie społeczności, które w tym konflikcie uczestniczą – tak na poziomie indywidualnym, jak i na poziomie zbiorowości.

Judith Lewis Herman w monografii *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1997) twierdzi, że powszechnie znane doświadczenie wglądu, umożliwiające radzenie sobie z traumą i w wyniku tego uzdrowienie, polega na uświadomieniu sobie własnej historii, w tym wypartych uczuć i wspomnień. Takie doświadczenie jest dostępne

nie tylko jednostkom, ale całym społecznościom, twierdzi Herman. W tomiku *North* jednym z ważniejszych wydarzeń, które umożliwiają poecie zmierzenie się z przeszłością, jest obecność wikingów na terenie Irlandii w VIII i IX wieku. Ten temat ze szczególną siłą powraca w trzech wierszach analizowanych w artykule: *Funeral Rites*, *North* i *Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces*. Obrazy przywołujące Irlandię ery wikingów są tutaj dwuznaczne, często szokujące. „Ja" liryczne oscyluje między głosem jednostki i głosem zbiorowości. Symbole odnoszące się do skandynawskich najeźdźców są przejmowane przez irlandzkich Celtów, a częścią procesu umożliwiającego zrozumienie bliższej przeszłości staje się uświadomienie sobie, jak bardzo złożona jest tożsamość każdej społeczności. Heaney ostatecznie sugeruje, że uzdrowienie jest możliwe, ale proces, który może do niego doprowadzić, jest niezwykle trudny i długotrwały. W wierszu *North* głosy przeszłości są nie tylko źródłem wiedzy określającej własną tożsamość, ale również instruują, że zrozumienie własnej przeszłości staje się możliwe również poprzez akt uzewnętrznienia historii w czynności pisania.

Eliene Mąka-Poulain

« Violence et épiphanie » *Nord* de Seamus Heaney

Résumé

Dans son recueil de poèmes *Nord* (*North*) publié en 1975, le poète irlandais Seamus Heaney se réfère au conflit en Irlande du Nord tout en évoquant des événements du passé lointain et en recourant au mythe. Parmi les thèmes de ces poèmes se trouve non seulement la souffrance des victimes innocentes, mais aussi une tentative de répondre à la question s'il est possible de finir ce conflit et de guérir les sociétés qui y participent – aussi bien au niveau individuel que collectif.

Dans sa monographie intitulée *Trauma and Recovery : The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1997), Judith Lewis Herman prétend que l'expérience de l'introspection communément connue et permettant de se débrouiller avec un traumatisme, et par conséquent de recouvrer la santé, consiste à s'apercevoir de sa propre histoire, y compris des sentiments et souvenirs refoulés. Une telle expérience – selon Herman – est accessible non seulement aux individus, mais aussi à des communautés tout entières. Dans le recueil *Nord*, l'un des événements les plus importants qui permettent au poète d'affronter le passé est bel et bien la présence des Vikings en Irlande aux VIIIe et IXe siècles. Ce thème revient avec une force particulière dans les trois poèmes analysés dans l'article : *Funeral Rites*, *North* et *Viking Dublin : Trial Pieces*. Les images évoquant l'Irlande de l'époque des Vikings y sont ambiguës et souvent choquantes. Le « je » lyrique oscille entre la voix de l'individu et celle de la collectivité. Les symboles se référant aux envahisseurs scandinaves sont adoptés par les Celtes irlandais, et le fait de s'apercevoir combien l'identité de chaque société est compliquée devient une partie du procédé facilitant la compréhension d'un futur plus proche. Finalement, Heaney suggère que la guérison est possible, mais le procédé qui peut contribuer à sa réalisation est extrêmement difficile et exige du temps. Dans le poème *North*, les voix du passé sont non seulement la source du savoir définissant notre propre identité, mais elles expliquent aussi que la compréhension de notre propre passé devient possible également à travers l'acte d'extérioriser le passé dans l'écriture.

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Writing Cure? Narrating Loss in Kazuo Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day*

The relationship between therapy and fiction lies at the heart of most of Kazuo Ishiguro's literary output. Ever since his 1982 debut novel *A Pale View of Hills*, Ishiguro has been interested in exploring the cathartic potential of narrating – and inevitably fictionalising – the experiences of loss. All of his novels to date have employed first-person narrators who revisit the crucial events and decisions that brought about their present distress and isolation. What Masuji Ono and Stevens, the narrators of *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day*, have in common is the need to reassess their past in the light of the radically changed reality of the postwar order. They undertake to articulate their version of events, which evolves into an intricate life narrative. The aim of the present article is threefold: firstly, to outline the nature and extent of the loss which haunts Ono's and Stevens's present; secondly, to examine the narratives which they produce; and, thirdly, to assess the effects of their confrontation with the past – to determine to what degree they have succeeded in working through their loss. The conclusions reached will be briefly analysed as a contribution to the discussion of the therapeutic efficacy of narrating one's anguished past.

An Artist and *The Remains* are both narrated in the years following the end of the Second World War: 1948–1949 and 1956, respectively. Ono, a painter who used his art as an instrument to promote Japanese nationalism in the decade leading up to the war, and Stevens, a butler who spent most of his life in service to Lord Darlington – one of Britain's most devoted apologists of Nazi Germany – are both confronted with the uneasy implications of their past involvements. They find themselves in a paradoxical position: they regard the past, which is the

locus of their disgrace and the resulting loss of status and reputation, with a curious mixture of embarrassment and nostalgic longing. Their conflicted attitude towards the past finds its expression in the ambiguous, often contradictory, narratives which they weave.

Persistence of Loss

Both novels are permeated by an acute sense of lack. The present, as narrated by Ono and Stevens, emerges as a mere shadow of their former glory – a sorry anticlimax to a successful past. The sterility and emptiness of the present is contrasted with the plenitude of meaning embodied in the past. Both narrators draw a very clear dichotomy between the disappointing now and the idealised then, the borderline between them coinciding with the end of the war. The very titles of the novels – through the use of the words "remains" and "floating" – conjure up the sense of transience and change. Ono's and Stevens's reassessments of their lives are concerned with establishing what "remains" and what has irrevocably been lost, hence their narratives' constant oscillation between the past and the present.

Hollow Present and Idealised Past in *An Artist of the Floating World*

Masuji Ono, the eponymous "artist of the floating world," addresses the reader as a retired painter who has reached the point where he feels compelled to tackle his present isolation and his perplexing past. In the narrative present, Ono leads a quiet, uneventful and rather secluded existence. Among his very few links to the outside world are his two daughters: the older Setsuko, married with a child, and the younger Noriko, who is currently involved in marriage negotiations. Out of fear that his pre-war political involvement may prove an obstacle to the success of Noriko's negotiations, he resolves to visit his former acquaintances to ensure that they would give a favourable account of him in case they are contacted by the prospective husband's family. During a period of over one-and-a-half years, he keeps a personal memoir to which he commits, in four instalments, his meditations inspired by the confrontation with the legacy of his past.

What emerges in the course of Ono's narration is a picture of a hollow present sustained by the memory of a wholeness located in the past. The present is, in

fact, portrayed as the lack of what constitutes the meaningful past. Ono's insignificance as a retired painter with a reputation undermined by an embarrassing political commitment is contrasted in his narrative with the status that he enjoyed before the war – as a leading local artist surrounded by a group of devoted students and as an adviser to the national Committee of Unpatriotic Activities. It is in that capacity, as a guardian of patriotism and morality in the art world, that Ono committed the gravest error of his life – denouncing Kuroda, his most gifted student, to the authorities. As a consequence of Ono's intervention, Kuroda was imprisoned and mistreated as a traitor to the nation. Kuroda's denunciation has haunted Ono for many years, although he never acknowledges the extent of his remorse or even blames himself for that act. It nevertheless remains the most tangible token of his misguided involvement in the nationalistic apparatus of pre-war Japan, which underlies his deep sense of anxiety and confusion about his own past.

For the greater part of his narrative, however, Ono appears to be in denial about his thwarted career. Much of the text is occupied by his fond recollections of the high reputation and recognition that he enjoyed in the local community. When the painter reminisces about his bygone professional achievements, an unmistakeable tone of nostalgia can be detected. Among the passages most suffused with nostalgia are the descriptions of the old pleasure district, where the painter, along with his colleagues and students, used to spend joyful evenings, exploring the allure of the "floating world" of drink and sensual delight and engaging in idealistic discussions about the future of Japan. Although Ono does not draw that parallel, it is easy to read the pleasure district – with its upbeat air of youthful optimism and patriotism – as a metonym for the old Japan. Sensing that the current political atmosphere would disqualify any nostalgic longing for the discredited old order, Ono refrains from idealising the pre-war reality and takes part of that reality, the old pleasure district, as a permissible object of his nostalgic longing.

Absence of the Present and Presence of the Past in *The Remains of the Day*

A conflicted attitude towards the past, despite its partial idealisation, as well as an acute sense of lack experienced in the present, are also prevalent in *The Remains of the Day*. The novel takes the form of a diary, or travelogue, kept by Stevens, an elderly butler at the once great Darlington Hall, who reports on his automobile journey to the west of England. The excursion, announced in the first sentence of the novel as the outcome of a long period of anticipation and planning, unfolds

in the course of the narrative as a journey of introspection and re-evaluation of the past – a reassessment of the decisions made and the choices surrendered. The hours of driving through the West Country inspire Stevens to revisit memories which involuntarily prompt other recollections, most of which centre around his late master Lord Darlington and the former housekeeper Miss Kenton – the two crucial figures in the butler's past. Darlington's role as a noble and influential peer, whose reputation enables Stevens to feel proud of having spent most of his life in his service, is undermined by his ardent support of the Nazi regime towards the end of his life. Miss Kenton, in turn, occupies a prominent place in Stevens's recollections insofar as she represents his sole romantic attachment, although unacknowledged at the time and still largely hidden under the guise of a purely professional relationship.

Over the course of his six-day journey, Stevens keeps a diary, to which he confides his intimate meditations, prompted by his adventures on the road. The descriptions of these, however, become greatly outweighed by his memories of the Darlington Hall of old. The persistence of the past is – as in *An Artist* – a symptom of the virtual absence of the present, a keen sense of emptiness at the heart of it. In both novels the always implicit but never articulated questions about "what is lost" and "what remains" prompt very bleak answers. The losses invariably outbalance the remains, which themselves serve as a grim reminder of the wholeness located in the past. What constitutes a poignant illustration of that interrelation between loss and remains is Stevens's admission in the opening pages of his diary of the inexorably dwindling number of servants employed on Lord Darlington's estate: "Recalling a time when I had had a staff of seventeen under me, and knowing how not so long ago a staff of twenty-eight had been employed here at Darlington Hall, the idea of devising a staff plan by which the same house would be run on a staff of four seemed, to say the least, daunting."[1] The curtailment of the number of staff from twenty-eight to four reflects the enormous gulf evident in his perception of the erstwhile and the current prestige and reputation of Darlington Hall, and – on that account – of his own professional status.

Centrality of Loss and Narrative Motivation

Loss is an experience which determines the shape of Ono's and Stevens's present and remains central to their narratives. The desire to work through that experience constitutes the main motivation for both narrators to embark upon their

[1] Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), 7.

inner journeys back to the troubled past, which warrants the interpretation of *An Artist* and *The Remains* as narratives of mourning. The objects of mourning are plural and diverse: they range from deceased or abandoned persons (such as Lord Darlington and Miss Kenton) to more abstract categories, like social status and national identity. Both novels accentuate the strength of their narrators' attachment to status, reputation and respectability. It is the loss of these notions that Ono and Stevens find the most difficult to accept. They both appear to be more preoccupied with losses of a professional and social – rather than personal – kind. The deaths of the closest members of their families (Ono's wife and son and Stevens's father) are rendered unemphatically.

A hint at the personal dimension of loss is conveyed through Stevens's persistence in referring to the housekeeper as "Miss Kenton" rather than "Mrs Benn," even though she has been married for two decades. The butler excuses himself at one point for this "impropriety," and explains that he refers to her "as [he] knew her."[2] His admission that in his "mind" she has always remained "Miss Kenton" is a subtle indication of his refusal to acknowledge the change in the former housekeeper's status. By the same token, Stevens reveals his inability to accept the loss of Miss Kenton as a romantic figure in his life.

Melancholic Attachment?

The inability or refusal to recognise the occurrence of loss is, in Freudian theory, regarded as a symptom of a melancholic attachment. Stevens's insistence on the possibility of Miss Kenton's return to service at Darlington Hall, despite the lack of any unequivocal expression of her desire to do so in her letters, is another mark of his incapacity to confine the loss to the realm of the past. The butler's ignorance, or denial, of the romantic aspect of his attachment to Miss Kenton can be interpreted as yet another indication of his melancholic condition. In "Mourning and Melancholia," Freud describes the latter state as characterised by confusion as to the true nature of the lost object: the patient may be "aware of the loss which has given rise to his melancholia, but only in the sense that he knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him" [emphasis in original].[3] This mechanism may account for Stevens's earlier-noted continued effort to stress the fact that he regards Miss Kenton's departure in terms of a "professional" loss.

[2] Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*, 50.

[3] Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *The Penguin Freud Reader*, ed. Adam Phillips (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 312.

In *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, David L. Eng and David Kazanjian pinpoint the contrast between Freud's conceptions of mourning and melancholia, by defining the former as an attitude towards the past seen as "resolved, finished, dead," and the latter as viewing the past as "steadfastly alive in the present." They characterise melancholia as a "continuous engagement with loss and its remains."[4] A closer analysis of Ono's and Stevens's immersion in the past (frequently at the expense of neglecting or alienating themselves from the present) suggests that their condition can be regarded as melancholic. The past which they invariably return to in their memory is neither "resolved" nor closed; on the contrary, it haunts them with the possibilities of alternative choices and roads not taken. They are drawn back to relive the events and situations which, with hindsight, emerge as the turning points of their lives. Although they are rarely prepared to admit it, some of the actions they took (or failed to take) fill them with regret or induce a sense of guilt.

Narrating Loss

The question why the narrators of *An Artist* and *The Remains of the Day* have the urge to express their experiences and enclose them in the form of a narrative does not yield a straightforward answer. Their motivations are varied but, for the purpose of this article, the most important of them is the desire to work through the pain of loss, as depicted in an earlier section. Ono's and Stevens's narrations evince a very significant therapeutic purpose and could therefore be viewed in terms of the psychoanalytic notion of the talking cure. Their ongoing narrative efforts fit Peter Gay's description of the concept as consisting in "awaken[ing] important memories" in order to discharge the "powerful emotions" attached to them.[5] When they are at their most sincere, Ono and Stevens could be said to be engaged in "talking away" their painful experiences, in pursuit of the therapeutic capacity of expression. What complicates this search for healing is the narrators' disingenuousness about certain aspects of their past. Psychoanalyst Donald P. Spence describes the Freudian concept of the narrative as "an aptly chosen reconstruction [which] can fill the gap between two apparently unrelated events, and in the process, make sense out of nonsense."[6] The notions of a suitable "reconstruction" and "making sense" suggest that certain misrepresentations, as well as

[4] David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 4.

[5] Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (London: Papermac, 1989), 65–66.

[6] Donald P. Spence, *Narrative Truth and Historical Truth* (New York: Norton: 1984), 21.

a degree of misapprehension, are inevitable – and even welcome – in the process of retrospectively structuring one's self-narrative. The stories of past plenitude, loss and present absence that are woven by both Ono and Stevens could be seen as engaging in "the work of narrative," which Ricoeur sees as a necessary step towards "the acceptance of the irreparable."[7]

Narrative Construction

Ono and Stevens are compelled to re-evaluate their past commitments and set out on an apprehensive quest for continuity and coherence bridging their past and present. They evince the need for what Ricoeur would term a new emplotment of their life narrative, which can be defined as "a retrospective process of attributing meaning" to past events.[8] Introduced in Ricoeur's seminal *Time and Narrative*, the concept of emplotment (inseparably connected with the notion of mimesis) represents an operation which, instead of merely cataloguing events, arranges them into a coherent whole and endows with a particular meaning and a clear order of cause and effect.[9] Donald Polkinghorne distinguishes three essential elements of narrative construction, by means of which random successions of events become reconfigured and transformed into orderly and purposeful life-narratives. Among those components are: "(a) memory as reconstruction of past events, (b) the smoothing processes of Gestalt-type configuration, and (c) the use of culturally available plots."[10] The first element hinges on memory's intrinsically reconstructive character, as a result of which the significance of past events is invariably reinterpreted from the vantage point of the present. By "narrative smoothing," Polkinghorne understands a mechanism which ensures the lucidity of the self-story by foregrounding the main strand of the plot and omitting inessential subplots and details. Smoothed out narratives are more focused on the meaning that they wish to communicate and are oriented towards closure and the sense of coherence and completeness.[11] The third element of narrative construction emphasises its reliance on the plots which circulate in a given cultural

[7] Paul Ricoeur, "On Stories and Mourning," in *Traversing the Imaginary: Richard Kearney and the Postmodern Challenge*, ed. Peter Gratton and John Panteleimon Manoussakis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 8.

[8] Donald Polkinghorne, "Ricoeur, Narrative and Personal Identity," in *Changing Conceptions of Psychological Life*, ed. Cynthia Lightfoot et al. (Mahwah: Erlbaum, 2004), 42.

[9] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 65.

[10] Donald Polkinghorne, "Ricoeur, Narrative and Personal Identity," 42.

[11] Ibid., 43–44.

context. In the following section, I wish to investigate the extent to which Ono's and Stevens's emerging narratives have been indebted to the plots of recognised autobiographical genres.

Ono's Confessional Narrative

In order to construct an identity – Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson point out – the authors of autobiographical narratives "rework and improvise upon established forms."[12] One of the forms creatively employed by the narrator of *An Artist* is that of the confession. In *Reading Autobiography*, Smith and Watson classify the confession as one of the basic genres of life narrative. Originally an act of admission of sin addressed to a priest (and God), confession is a narrative directed at a listener who is endowed with a capacity to grant a certain kind of absolution.[13] However, the truthfulness of confessional narratives has been regarded as a highly problematic issue by a number of critics, most notably Michel Foucault. Chloë Taylor argues that their combined contribution to the current understanding of confession consists in demonstrating that it is "structurally inclined towards untruth."[14] Susan Gallagher notes that modern confessions (which she deems "pseudo-confessions") lack the traditional penitential dimension and often take the form of "self-aggrandising displays" meant mainly to "elevate the self."[15] Paul de Man points out another important feature of modern confessions, namely their shift of emphasis from self-accusation to self-justification. "But it does not suffice to tell all," notes de Man. "It is not enough to *confess*, one also has to *excuse*" [emphasis in original].[16] He argues that the compulsion to excuse oneself is dangerous since the desire for self-exculpation aims at invalidating the will to confess and, as a result, rendering the confession redundant.

A significant number of the defining characteristics of the genre mentioned above are applicable to the narrative woven by the narrator of *An Artist*. Ono's story, however, could only be classified as an example of confession in its modern

[12] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, "The Trouble with Autobiography: Cautionary Notes for Narrative Theorists," in *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, ed. James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 357.

[13] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 192.

[14] Chloë Taylor, *The Culture of Confession from Augustine to Foucault: A Genealogy of the "Confessing Animal"* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 10.

[15] Susan VanZanten Gallagher, *Truth and Reconciliation: The Confessional Mode in South African Literature* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002), xiv.

[16] Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 280.

sense – informed by the critical contribution of Foucault and de Man, regarded as a self-interested social ritual aimed at self-exculpation under the guise of a sympathy-inducing sincerity and remorse. A general summary of Ono's narrative promises a confession *par excellence*: a culpable I-speaker distrusted by his community on account of the sins committed in the past tells the story of the circumstances of his misdeeds, in the hope of receiving forgiveness and being reintegrated with the society. On closer examination, nonetheless, the reader becomes aware that the motivations which govern the narrator of Ishiguro's novel are far removed from a straightforward admission of guilt and an expression of heartfelt repentance. The confessional mode which he occasionally adopts appears to be a conscious strategy calculated to achieve specific goals. Rather than forgiveness and absolution, Ono is after peace of mind, a complacent sense of achievement and securing a positive outcome in his daughter's marriage negotiations.

The sincerity of Ono's sense of guilt is undermined by his frequent lapses into a boastful, self-congratulatory tone. The painter's desire to project an image of past success and achievement is a manifestation of what Gallagher considers one of the major motivations of modern confessions – a need for "self-aggrandisement." It could be argued that Ono's sustained effort to assure the reader of the significance of the status that he occupied in the artistic milieu and of the extent of the severe political consequences of his alliance with the nationalistic movement bespeaks a desire to elevate his self-esteem. Brian W. Shaffer notes that "Ono will admit to being wrong as long as he can maintain the illusion of having been influential" and suggests that he may be "both wrong *and* insignificant" [emphasis in original].[17] By adopting the identity of the confessant, Ono distances himself from his political engagement and wishes to redeem himself in the eyes of the society. His voice, however, fails to convince the reader as it lacks consistency in condemning his contentious actions. In order for his confession to sound sincere and trustworthy, the narrator would need to shed his self-satisfied tone when referring to any of the stages of his artistic career. Its misguided outcome calls for humility, which Ono is incapable of demonstrating. The occasional mask of genuine penitence conceals the painter's actual attitude towards his past: a combination of pride and the sense of being a victim of a historical reversal which brought about a shift in values. Ono does not understand the new order but realises that it requires of him a gesture of repentance, which is why he steers his narrative towards confession.

In accordance with de Man's adage encapsulating a major pitfall of confession – "*qui s'accuse s'excuse*"[18] (to accuse oneself is to excuse oneself) – Ono frequently lapses into self-justification and self-exculpation, which undermines the credibil-

[17] Brian W. Shaffer, *Understanding Kazuo Ishiguro* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), 60–61.

[18] De Man, *Allegories of Reading*, 280.

ity of his declarations of guilt. It could be concluded that the narrator of *An Artist* engages in what Gallagher labels as a "pseudo-confession," a modern variation on the traditional confession, yet devoid of its penitential character and motivated by self-interest and the attainment of specific individual goals. Although, in the traditional sense, the insincerity of confession precludes the possibility of absolution, Ono appears to have achieved what he wished his declaration to achieve. He remains blind to the contradictions and inconsistencies in the confessions that he has made. By the end of the novel, he appears less plagued by remorse and insecurity, which can be attributed to the therapeutic effect of his engagement with the confessional narrative. Ono seems to have granted himself a secular absolution and endowed his life narrative with a degree of coherence, however deceptive.

Stevens's Apologia

Whereas the narrator of *An Artist* draws on the genre of confession to lend structure to his narrative, the dominant autobiographical form for Stevens is that of the apology. Although both narrators employ elements of the confession and the apology alike, I wish to demonstrate that the latter prevails throughout *The Remains of the Day*. Smith and Watson define the apology as a "genre as well as a stance of self-presentation in personal narratives," whose prime purpose is to defend oneself (or, in rare cases, another person) against any form of attack by justifying one's beliefs and actions.[19] This act of self-defence, however, usually aims to achieve more than merely to persuade the accuser of the apologist's innocence; it is intent on exerting a certain social impact.[20] In "Notes for an Anatomy of Modern Autobiography," Francis R. Hart argues that the apology endeavours to assert the "integrity" of the self, which frequently takes the form of demonstrating the integrity of one's professional career. Originally a secular genre, it situates the self in the context of social and ethical considerations (compared to the confession's ontological nature).[21] The immediate motivation behind most apologies, Harp notes, is a certain kind of controversy, which the author addresses by responding to accusations. For that reason, the genre often makes use of legal rhetoric and legal language.[22]

[19] Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, 183–84.

[20] Jerry Harp, "Apologias," in *Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms*, ed. Margaretta Jolly, 2 vol. (London: Routledge, 2001), 44.

[21] Francis R. Hart, "Notes for an Anatomy of Modern Autobiography," *New Literary History* 1 (1970): 491, 507.

[22] Harp, "Apologias," 44.

The diary which Stevens keeps during his automobile journey meets the generic requirements of the apology insofar as, for the most part, it constitutes a robust defence of his life, with a view to convincing the reader of the sustained professionalism and "dignity" which he has maintained during his career as a butler at Darlington Hall. Stevens undertakes to justify his past actions in light of the bitter controversy surrounding the reputation and political role of his late master. In a study of various mechanisms of misremembering highlighted in the novel, Lilian R. Furst notes that the content of his recounted memories forms a consistent narrative of "biased self-justification," which – seen in its entirety – amounts to a kind of "*apologia pro vita sua*."[23] The critic makes reference to the title of Cardinal John Henry Newman's famous apology from 1864, in which he accounted for his controversial act of abandoning the Church of England and converting to Catholicism. Although the parallels between Newman and Stevens are few, a solid common denominator can be delineated: they both put forward a narrative whose aim is to provide a rationale for their ethically debatable choices, respond to charges and persuade the reader (the public) that their actions have been tenable and add up to a meaningful existence.

Since Stevens's identity and sense of self-worth have largely been based on the figure of Lord Darlington, most of his narrative of self-justification takes, in fact, the form of a justification of his former master. Until the "Day Three – Evening" entry of his diary, Stevens continues to hold on to the notion of his master's nobility and essential good will despite the mounting evidence to the contrary. The extent of his determination to uphold a worthy image of his former employer manifests itself in the vocabulary that he uses. Marc Porée points out the "strong judiciary bent of his testimony," which is marked by "the presence of verbs like to vouch, to warrant, to advocate, combined with Stevens's self-presentation of himself as a witness in the witness box, swearing to tell the truth, and nothing but the truth."[24] The butler's frequent recourse to legal rhetoric, which constitutes a distinguishing feature of the apology, demonstrates the earnestness of his commitment to the cause of salvaging his master's reputation.

Stevens's struggle with the recurrent memory of the shameful episode of Darlington's dismissal of two maids solely on the grounds of their Jewishness marks a significant development in Stevens's narrative – a beginning of the process of de-identification from Lord Darlington. It is here that the narrator for the first time distances himself from his master's actions and strives to portray himself as morally superior. The shift appears to be the result of Stevens's realisation that the evidence of Darlington's grave mistakes is too substantial to defend against and hence represents a tipping point of sorts. This incident also, arguably, pinpoints

[23] Lilian R. Furst, "Memory's Fragile Power in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Remains of the Day* and W. G. Sebald's 'Max Ferber'," *Contemporary Literature* 48 (2007): 549.

[24] Marc Porée, *Kazuo Ishiguro: The Remains of the Day* (Paris: Didier Érudition, 1999), 83.

the transition which Marc Porec identifies as the moment when "eventually, Stevens lays the blame on his master and turns vindication upside down."[25] The episode marks the end of Stevens's uncritical admiration of Darlington, and is followed by other, more overt, admissions of his crucial misjudgements. He concludes the same diary entry with a personal declaration of innocence, in which he asserts his conviction that a butler must unconditionally believe in their master's noble intentions. Stevens's professional code exonerates him from blame for the dire consequences of Darlington's involvement with Nazism. Having asserted his disengagement, Stevens is less determined to defend his lordship's moral integrity. He refers to Darlington's pursuits as a "sad waste" and concedes that the future may prove them to have been "misguided, even foolish."[26]

Until the last section, Stevens continues his apologetic narrative, striving to distance himself from Darlington's odium and ward off unpalatable conclusions about his ethical apathy. The last entry of his diary contains a description of a scene in which he comes closest to an *anagnorisis*. Having realised the futility of his hopes for Mrs. Benn's return to service at Darlington Hall, he converses with a stranger on Weymouth pier. In a moment of unprecedented frankness, he confesses to his pernicious over-reliance on Darlington, and declares, "All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really – one has to ask oneself – what dignity is there in that?"[27] The scene marks the only situation in the novel where Stevens completely sheds the boastful tone of self-deception. This confession, however, does not mark the rejection of the apologetic narrative but only its momentary suspension. Stevens's closing remarks expose his regression into complacency. He acquits himself of inaction by arguing that a butler must "leave [their] fate, ultimately, in the hands of those great gentlemen at the hub of this world who employ [their] services."[28]

The framework of the apology serves the narrator as an instrument that lends structure to his story of self-interested defence, whose primary motivation is to ward off distressing conclusions about his life and persist in a deluded conviction of his respectability. It proves useful to Stevens insofar as it enables him to present his overlooked perspective, to defend against certain allegations and explain some of his motives. What it eventually fails to do, however, is to encompass all of Stevens's actions and endow them with a narrative coherence. Despite the occasional evasions, subtle insincerities and an inclination towards self-delusion, the narrator, in the end, is unable to convince himself (or the reader) of the value and significance of his life – of having lived a life worthy of the apology.

[25] Porée, *Kazuo Ishiguro*, 83.
[26] Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*, 211.
[27] Ibid., 255–56.
[28] Ibid., 257.

Conclusions: Effects of Narrating Loss

Characteristically, both Ono's and Stevens's last thoughts look forward to the future, which, on the face of it, may suggest a symbolic gesture of having relieved oneself of the burden of past losses. Ono's closing remarks about the successful efforts of reconstruction, Japan's having "another chance to make a better go of things" and the young people whom "one can only wish … well" may indeed be interpreted as an indication of his reconciliation with the new course that the nation has taken after the defeat of the Second World War.[29] Ono views the new Japan without the bitterness which he exhibited at the start: he appears to have forgiven it for building its identity in opposition to the values that were cherished before the war. The "nostalgia for the past and the district as it used to be," which he acknowledges in the last paragraph, appears free of "the pain of absence" or avoidance of the present, which John S. Rickard considers as the constitutive features of nostalgic longing.[30] Instead, together with the ensuing hopeful remarks about the future of his nation, Ono demonstrates a readiness to regard the past, present and future with a sense of continuity, and to acknowledge the change.

Stevens's closing declaration that, upon his return to Darlington Hall, he "will begin practising [bantering] with renewed effort" in order to "pleasantly surprise" Mr. Farraday reads more like a feeble attempt at suppressing the bleak implications of the confession on the pier than an expression of genuine anticipation.[31] Stevens demonstrates here a "balance between feeling defeated but nevertheless trying to find reason to feel some kind of qualified optimism," which Ishiguro describes as an attitude which most of his protagonists exhibit at the close of their narratives.[32] Despite their tone of forced hopefulness, Stevens's last words are revealing in one important aspect: the renewed ambition to resume his thus far unsuccessful practice of bantering (conceived entirely out of the wish to please Farraday) may be interpreted as a symptom of his desire to invest Farraday with a significance and authority at least partially matching that of Darlington, and establish him as a figure that will guarantee the meaning of his service in the way that his former master did. This remark may be read as a confirmation of the shift in Stevens's attitude towards Farraday – from characterising him as the antithesis of Darlington, to calling him "a most excellent employer."[33] The desire

[29] Kazuo Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), 206.

[30] Kazuo Ishiguro, Interview by Brian W. Shaffer, in *Conversations with Kazuo Ishiguro*, ed. Brian W. Shaffer, and Cynthia F. Wong (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), 165.

[31] Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*, 258.

[32] Kazuo Ishiguro, "Kazuo Ishiguro's Interior Worlds," Interview by Nermeen Shaikh, Asia Society, accessed January 9, 2012, http://asiasociety.org/arts/literature/kazuo-ishiguros-interior-worlds, *non pag.*

[33] Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*, 14, 147.

to acknowledge Farraday as his new "master" could be interpreted in Freudian terms as a step towards the completion of mourning, marked by the subject's readiness to confine the lost object (Darlington) to the past and transfer one's affection and identification onto a new object.

In the earlier part of this article, the narrators' attachment to the past was determined to be of a melancholic nature. Their longing for past selves, idealisation of their earlier lives, refusal to accept subsequent changes and immersion in bygone choices and dilemmas were all subsumed under Eng and Kazanjian's definition of melancholia as a "continuous engagement with loss and its remains." However, as their narratives approach their ends, their attachment to their lost objects becomes distinct from the pathological melancholic condition. Having revisited and narrated the pivotal events of their past, Ono's and (particularly) Stevens's perception of it has shifted away from unreflective nostalgia and idealisation, which has resulted in a partial levelling of the rift between then and now. The act of narration enables them to embrace the totality of their experience and leads them towards an attitude of resigned acceptance of and reconciliation with their personal and professional defeats, even if they persist in denying the misguidedness of their actions. This acceptance is therapeutic insofar as it alleviates the unhealthy immersion in the past but does not necessarily entail consolation. Whereas Ono – largely thanks to the positive illusions that the circumstances allow him to retain – does radiate calmness and self-satisfaction, Stevens's response is fraught with anxiety and suppressed panic.

In contrast to Stevens's frustration caused by the failure of his apologetic narrative, Ono, by the end, appears content with the past that he has conveniently smoothed out in the act of retelling. This greater sense of coherence, however, comes as a corollary to a lesser degree of sincerity. The consolations of narrative, as *An Artist* illustrates, may run counter to critical introspection and self knowledge. The truthfulness of the life narrative is not an essential condition for a therapeutic effect. The need for narrative unity supersedes that for accuracy. It is the enhanced narrative unity, or what Spence refers to as "narrative truth," that makes the narrators of *An Artist of the Floating World* and *The Remains of the Day* better suited to acknowledging their irreparable losses and shifting their attention, however minimally, towards the present.

Wojciech Drąg

Pisanie jako terapia? Narracje straty w *Malarzu świata ułudy* i *Okruchach dnia* Kazuo Ishiguro

Streszczenie

Artykuł jest próbą analizy pragnienia opowiedzenia bolesnych doświadczeń przez narratorów dwóch wczesnych powieści brytyjskiego pisarza Kazuo Ishiguro. W *Malarzu świata ułudy* Ono, podstarzały artysta niegdyś uwikłany we wsparcie japońskiego nacjonalizmu, mierzy się z utratą prestiżu społecznego, której doświadczył w wyniku zmiany klimatu politycznego po klęsce Japonii w drugiej wojnie światowej. Z kolei Stevens, lokaj w *Okruchach dnia*, musi stawić czoła konsekwencjom własnej naiwności, którą wykazał się w latach 30. ubiegłego stulecia, służąc Lordowi Darlingtonowi, dziś skompromitowanemu politykowi, który za cel postawił sobie uwiarygodnienie Adolfa Hitlera i wsparcie idei nazistowskich. Obaj narratorzy opowiadają historię swego nieudanego życia z perspektywy starszego człowieka. W ich narracji dostrzec można subtelne próby zakłamania przeszłości i przemilczenia niewygodnych faktów. Celem artykułu jest analiza ich narracji na podstawie koncepcji tożsamości narracyjnej Paula Ricoeura oraz wybranych pojęć z zakresu narratologii oraz autobiografizmu. Opowieści Ono i Stevensa przedstawione są jako wzorujące się na strukturze gatunków wyznania i apologii. We wnioskach końcowych artykułu rozważany jest terapeutyczny wymiar ich narracji.

Wojciech Drąg

Écriture est une forme de thérapie ? Les narrations de la perte dans *Un artiste du monde flottant* et *Les Vestiges du jour* de Kazuo Ishiguro

Résumé

L'article est une tentative d'analyser le désir de raconter des expériences douloureuses par les narrateurs des deux romans précoces de l'écrivain britannique Kazuo Ishiguro. Dans *Un artiste du monde flottant*, Ono – un artiste âgé, impliqué auparavant dans le soutien du nationalisme japonais – se débat contre la perte du prestige social qu'il a éprouvée à la suite du changement du climat politique après la défaite du Japon à la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Par contre Stevens, laquais dans *Les Vestiges du jour*, doit faire face aux conséquences de sa propre naïveté qu'il a montrée dans les années 30 du XX^{e} siècle en servant le Lord Darlington, aujourd'hui politicien discrédité, qui a visé le but de légaliser Adolf Hitler et de soutenir les idées nazies. Les deux narrateurs racontent l'histoire de leurs vies ratées du point de vue des hommes âgés. Dans leurs narrations, on peut apercevoir des tentatives subtiles visant à fausser le passé et à taire des faits encombrants. L'analyse de leurs narrations faite sur la base de la conception de l'identité narrative de Paul Ricœur et des notions choisies de la narratologie et de l'autobiographisme constitue l'objectif de l'article. Les récits de Ono et Stevens sont présentés comme ceux s'inspirant de la structure des genres de confession et d'apologie. Dans les conclusions finales de l'article, on examine la dimension thérapeutique de leurs narrations.

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Neo-Nihilism and the Self Industry of Logotherapy

> Why is there something rather than nothing?[1]
>
> There is a subject nowadays which is taboo in the way that sexuality was once taboo; which is to talk about life as if it had any meaning.[2]
>
> Challenging the meaning of life is the truest expression of the state of being human.[3]

Postmodernity, which continues to provide a "highly contested theory of the contemporary," is, as Frederick Jameson notes, an "internally conflicted and contradictory" theory, hopelessly incoherent, open for miscellaneous interpretations, based on no secure definition, and notoriously vague.[4] Proclaimed by Lyotard, Baudrillard, and Jameson, to quote but a few names, as a new distinct period in the history of culture and society, it is considered as yet another phase of modernity by Giddens, Bauman, Castells, and many other thinkers, who speak instead of "high" or "late" modernity, "liquid" modernity, and "network" modernity, respectively.[5] Zygmunt Bauman, for instance, proposes that "postmodernity may be interpreted as fully developed modernity taking a full measure of the anticipated consequences of its historical work; as modernity that

[1] A famous, radically metaphysical question, discussed for instance by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in his essay "On the Ultimate Origination of Things" (1697).

[2] Nicholas Mosley, *Natalie Natalia* (London: Delkey Archive Press, 1996), 125.

[3] Victor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Pocket Books, 1985), 65.

[4] Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), xxii.

[5] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991); Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity: Living in an Age of Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000); Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

acknowledged the effects it was producing throughout its history, yet producing inadvertently, rarely conscious of its own responsibility, by default rather than design, as by-products often perceived as waste."[6] In short, Bauman suggests, "postmodernity may be conceived of as modernity conscious of its true nature — modernity for itself."[7]

Reflecting upon the nature of what has come to be called postmodernity, Bauman observes that "postmodernity means many different things to many different people," and, generally, "it means licence to do whatever one may fancy and advice not to take anything you or the others do too seriously. It means the speed with which things change and the pace with which moods succeed each other so that they have no time to ossify into things."[8] But above all, Bauman argues, postmodernity is

> a state of mind marked … by its all-deriding, all-eroding, all-dissolving destructiveness. It seems sometimes that postmodern mind is a critique caught at the moment of its ultimate triumph: a critique that finds it ever more difficult to go on being critical just because it has destroyed everything it used to be critical about; with it, off went the very urgency of being critical. There is nothing left to be opposed to. The world and the life in the world have become themselves nothing but an unstoppable and obsessive self-criticism – or so it seems.[9]

Postmodern theory and criticism have virtually invalidated themselves, as there seems to be nothing left any more that might still beg criticism, everything having already been debunked. This mind-boggling ubiquitous destructiveness and negation of the very essence of negation appear as landmarks of the late (post)modern era. "The critical theory confronts an object that seems to offer no more resistance; an object that has softened, melted and liquidized to the point that the sharp edge of critique goes through with nothing to stop it," Bauman observes.[10] Nothingness under the name of neo-nihilism, that is, nihilism of the post-Nietzschean era, may thus brand the mainstream culture and thought of postmodernity, otherwise perhaps too paradoxical, self-contradictory, discontinuous, fuzzy and nebulous to be viewed as a kind of entity. Impossibility of opposition and of resistance, as well as futility, relativeness, meaninglessness and melancholia are some of the distinctive characteristics of postmodernity identified by its critics. Jean Baudrillard observes that today's "melancholia is the inherent quality of the mode of the disappearance of

[6] Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London: Routledge 1992), 187.
[7] Bauman, *Intimations*, 187.
[8] Ibid., vii.
[9] Ibid., vii–vi.
[10] Ibid., ix.

meaning," and this disappearance is only possible in a system that is "nihilistic, in the sense that it has the power to pour everything, including what denies it, into indifference."[11]

What distinguishes postmodernity from modernity, (modernity understood as the period which had started with the Enlightenment), is, according to Bauman, the "universal dismantling of power-supported structures," for "no new and improved order has emerged … from beneath the debris of the old and unwanted one," and no new order is ever meant to arise.[12] Bauman acknowledges one difference between the culture of modernity and that of postmodernity, the latter being "a rightful issue and a legatee of the former"; unlike modernity, postmodernity "does not seek to substitute one truth for another," as it "splits the truth, the standards and the ideal into already deconstructed and about to be deconstructed."[13] The vacated spaces remain empty and are not to be filled. "The postmodern mind seems to condemn everything, propose nothing," continues Bauman.[14] "Demolition is the only job the postmodern mind seems to be good at. Destruction is the only construction it recognizes. Demolition of coercive constraints and mental blocks is for it the ultimate purpose and the end of emancipatory effort."[15]

The postmodern deconstruction work, according to Ashley Woodward, continues in various areas, whose overarching concerns involve: the critique of reason (rejection of the foundational character of reason); the critique of the subject (refutation of the knowing subject as a self-conscious being of a stable identity); anti-humanism (opposition to philosophical humanism, whose standard for knowledge is human being; Jean-François Lyotard, for instance, in the place vacated by God, and by man, puts the Great Zero, the dead God, "an empty centre" and an absence of meaning); the end of history (denial of a unilinear, logically progressing, teleological philosophy of history, which had defined the thought of modernity and the ideas of various prominent thinkers, for instance Hegel and Marx); the collapse of Western master narratives and metanarratives (totalizing and universally acknowledged narrative paradigms such as historiographical narratives, the idea of progress, and national histories), and their segmentation into myriads of "localised stories told from different perspectives and by different cultures," (to Lyotard, the negation of grand metanarratives makes the essence of postmodernity: "Simplifying to the extreme," he says, "I define the postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives"); and, last but not last, the principle of difference (enhancement of difference, which is not to be subordi-

[11] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations. XVIII: On Nihilism*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 162–63.

[12] Bauman, *Intimations*, ix.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

nated to a prior identity that in modernity used to draw on a unity of assimilated differences).[16]

Demolition, deconstruction, dismantling and fragmentation originate from and lead again to the ideology of meaninglessness and nothingness. Distinguished in the nineteenth century by Nietzsche as an increasingly important trend, nihilism, which over the twentieth century evolved into what might be termed as neo-nihilism, can perhaps be recognized as a leitmotif of postmodernity, a uniting thread running through its patches, debris, dump sites and not-to-be-filled vacancies, and as the underlying philosophy of the era. Nihilism as a leading theory of postmodernity is what Woodward suggests in his study *Nihilism in Postmodernity*. "The vision of postmodernity that emerges from the works of Lyotard, Baudrillard, and Gianni Vattimo," the three important theorists of the era, "is one of a world in which nihilism persists as a problem to be critically confronted, despite an abandonment of the hope for its definitive overcoming," Woodward claims.[17] Nihilism is apparently not to be criticized or opposed, for there is nothing left to be criticized or resisted any more; yet, according to Woodward, its pervasive nature requires attention and recognition, as the current crisis of meaning and erosion of all values that used to give orientation and sense to human life seem to have scored their final triumph.[18]

Drawing on the ideas of the French post-structuralists, especially Lyotard and Baudrillard, and on Vattimo's works, Woodward attempts to view the self-destructive discourse of postmodernity in terms of the discourse of nihilism, which, however "contentious and problematic," provides, as he argues, "a philosophical framework for thinking through the problem of meaning in the contemporary world that otherwise stands in danger of remaining too amorphous to analyse."[19] The discourse of the postmodern, Woodward continues, needs to be considered "in relation to that of nihilism," for nihilism can serve as a guiding thread through the miscellaneous streaks of Continental philosophy, including the thought of the grandfathers of postmodernism: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Spengler, and other German thinkers, as well as the tenets of existentialism, structuralism, post-structuralism, contemporary Italian philosophy (Vattimo's weak thought, *il pensiero debole*, in particular), and to some extent also Marxism, Hegelian dialectics, psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, and Critical Theory.[20] Wood-

[16] Ashley Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity* (Aurora: The Davies Group Publishers, 2009), 16–19. Lyotard's concept of the Great Zero comes from his *Libidinal Economy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 1–13; and Lyotard's idea of the collapse of metanarratives is presented, for instance, in his study *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 20.

[17] Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity*, 167.

[18] Ibid., 1.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., 3.

ward speculates that "the often hazy concept of the postmodern may be given sharper focus by examining it through the lens of nihilism."[21]

Postmodernity is nihilistic, maintains Woodward, for it "undermines the normative framework of modernity," and "leaves us without the resources for constructing a new formative framework"; thus, nihilism abolishes the power of reason and is the product of postmodernity, which questions the foundations of modernity.[22] There are some contradictory theories, though, locating the sources of nihilism not in the postmodern denunciation of reason, but precisely in the hegemony of reason introduced by the philosophy of the Enlightenment, which denied a constructive role of un-rational sources of knowledge, and which, taken to extreme, has apparently devalued itself in the aura of a deep-seated distrust of reason.[23] "As a result of the crisis of rationalism what has appeared finally is nihilism," says John Paul II, who endorses a contemporary anti-nihilistic philosophy, be it Christian or not, promoting a necessary balance between the rational and the un-rational, and the importance of human spiritual dimension.[24] "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth," he writes, for "there is a profound and indissoluble unity between the knowledge of reason and the knowledge of faith"; faith understood in its broadest philosophical sense as a belief or trust in another person or thing.[25] This echoes Thomas Aquinas's thought that "faith has no fear of reason, but seeks it out and has trust in it."[26] Focusing on the significance of faith, John Paul II notes that

> there are in the life of a human being many more truths which are simply believed than truths which are acquired by way of personal verification. Who, for instance, could assess critically the countless scientific findings upon which modern life is based? Who could personally examine the flow of information which comes day after day from all parts of the world and which is generally accepted as true? Who in the end could forge anew the paths of experience and thought which have yielded the treasures of human wisdom and religion? This means that the human being – the one who seeks the truth – is also the one who lives by belief.[27]

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[21] Ibid., 6.

[22] Ibid., 12.

[23] Cf. Ibid.

[24] John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* [*Faith and Reason*], Encyclical Letter, chapter 4, 1998, accessed August 20, 2011, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_15101998_fides-et-ratio_en.html.

[25] John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, introduction and chapter 3.

[26] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* [*Theological Compendium*], I, 1, 8 ad. 2.

[27] John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, chapter 3.

John Paul II lays emphasis on the essential connection between reason and faith, remarking that "the parrhesia of faith must be matched by the boldness of reason," and quoting St. Augustine: "to believe is nothing other than to think with assent. … Believers are also thinkers: in believing, they think and in thinking, they believe. … If faith does not think, it is nothing."[28] Thus, "a philosophy which no longer asks the question of the meaning of life would be in grave danger of reducing reason to merely accessory functions, with no real passion for the search for truth,"[29] remarks John Paul II.

Among the "foundational" and anti-nihilistic philosophers of modernity one can also mention John Henry Newman, Vladimir S. Soloviev, Petr Chaadaev, Antonio Rosmini, Pavel A. Florensky, Edith Stein, Vladimir N. Lossky and, in the postmodern era, Jacques Maritain, Étienne Gilson, or Victor Frankl, whose philosophical enquiry was enriched by (not necessarily religious) faith. Referring to that stream in philosophy, which radically opposes nihilism and seeks foundations, Woodward labels it as sentimentalism driven by a "nostalgic desire to hold fast to foundations," which, in the present post-Nietzschean era, "is untenable."[30]

What, therefore, is nihilism, the leading philosophy of late modernity opposed by some thinkers, and how can its transformation into neo-nihilism be understood as a landmark of postmodernity? Woodward defines nihilism as "a concept that suggests that certain philosophical positions or beliefs about the world negate so much that is of value in life that the desirability of living is called into question"; a concept that "indicates a (dis)connection between abstract philosophical ideas and the practical desire and necessity of living a meaningful life."[31] In its broadest sense, nihilism refers to a "negative attitude to life" (*nihil* meaning "nothing,") or to "any doctrine that denies the existence of something," and can be traced back at least to the philosophy of ancient Greece.[32] The modern roots of nihilism dwell, however, in Nietzsche's theory, which sprang from the waning of Hegelian philosophy, and ran through Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, Stirner, and Schopenhauer, followed by its twentieth-century reworkings and reverberations, such as the thought of Heidegger, existentialists (mostly Marcel, Jaspers, Sartre, Camus), and the German thinkers: Jünger and Löwith.[33] Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) and many subsequent philosophers used the term to mark the decline of Western civilization and a difficulty

[28] John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, chapter 4. Saint Augustine, *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum* [*On the Predestination of the Saints*], 429, 2, 5: PL 44, 963.

[29] John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, chapter 4.

[30] Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity*, 115.

[31] Ibid., 8.

[32] Ibid., 7.

[33] Keiji Nishitani, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, trans. Graham Parkes with Setsuko Aihara (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), xx.

or impossibility of living a meaningful life in the aftermath of that decline.[34] "What I relate is the history of the next two centuries," said Nietzsche in 1887; "I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: the advent of nihilism."[35]

Indeed, Nietzsche's prediction seems to have proved correct. The pervasive feeling of devaluation and meaninglessness of life was heightened by the atrocities of the past century's world wars, especially by the Holocaust, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Stalin's genocides, and many other crimes against humanity. If modernity has mutated into postmodernity, what, then, is the altered status of today's nihilism, whose arrival had been augured by Nietzsche, and whose reign seems to permeate every dimension of the postmodern world? According to Baudrillard, the contemporary nihilism,

> no longer wears the dark, Wagnerian, Spenglerian, fuliginous colours of the end of the century. It no longer comes from a Weltanschauung of decadence nor from a metaphysical radicality born out of death of God and of all the consequences that must be taken from this death. Today's nihilism is one of transparency, and it is in some sense more radical, more crucial than in its prior and historical forms, because this transparency, this irresolution is indissolubly that of the system, and that of all the theory that still pretends to analyse it.[36]

Lyotard develops a term "neo-nihilism," employed subsequently in this paper, referring to a form of Nietzschean theory transformed through the theoretical frames of Freudian psychoanalysis, post-Marxian politics, semiotics and structuralism.[37] Thus, one might say, neo-nihilism appears to be the ostentatious (dis)ease of postmodernity – its dissolution and, at the same time, its leaven; its debunker but also its denominator, its artisan and its annihilator, in charge of both constituting and demolishing postmodernity.

Among various typologies of nihilism, such as, for instance, epistemological, moral, political and existential, it is the existential nihilism, that is, the negation of the value of life, which seems to define the postmodern standing of nihilism. Woodward distinguishes two dimensions of existential nihilism, or two "poles to which nihilism tends" and through which existential meaning is negated: the

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[34] Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity*, 1. The first philosophical use of the term "nihilism" is attributed to Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, who in his "Open Letter to Fichte" of 1799 accused Fichte of nihilism in his idealist philosophy. Cf. Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity*, 7.

[35] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and Reginald John Hollingdale, ed. Walter Kaufamann (New York: Vintage, 1968), *Preface*, par. 2–3.

[36] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, 159.

[37] Jean-François Lyotard, "Notes on the Return and Kapital," trans. Roger McKeon, *Semiotexte* 3.1. (1978): 48.

reductive and the abyssal. "Reductive nihilism," he explains, involves a negation of meaning by means of some kind of reduction, which is frequently connected with "philosophical reductionism, whereby phenomena are construed as "nothing but."[38] Many theorists derive nihilism from reductionism, because, as Woodward notes, "what gets left out of the reduction is precisely what makes life existentially valuable."[39] "Abyssal nihilism", in turn, refers to the "inability to choose existential values," as there is "no coherent ground of normative framework for assessing knowledge claims, deciding moral values, or taking politically efficacious action"; just like Kierkegaard's and Nietzsche's experience of reaching the abyss, or "plunging into a bottomless pit."[40] This type of nihilism, Woodward notes, declares the "non-existence of anything that could ground meaning in a secure foundation", all the traditional values having been delegitimized, whereby "abyssal nihilism" negates the value of existence.[41]

Studying the theories of Lyotard, Baudrillard and Vattimo, Woodward attempts to view neo-nihilism holistically and critically, or so it seems, as he admits that the problem can neither be actively overcome nor effectively tackled; none the less, it appears transparently as the mainstream of the current philosophy and culture, and hence compels a response.[42] Simon Critchley distinguishes five ways of responding to the problem of today's nihilism, which are:

1. overcoming the problem through a return to religion or (pre-modern) metaphysics;
2. rejecting it as a pseudo-problem resulting from an apparently fallacious view of history;
3. accepting meaninglessness as *status quo* by means of passive nihilism;
4. overcoming nihilism by promoting the self-destructiveness of nihilism till it overcomes itself – a form of active nihilism;
5. overcoming the desire to overcome nihilism.[43]

Each response is sketched briefly below, but I focus on the first approach to nihilism, as it provides the ground for logotherapy, Victor Frankl's philosophical concept and his school of psychotherapy, which is the subject of this paper.

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[38] Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity*, 11.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid. An analysis of the metaphor of the abyss can be found in David K. Coe's *Angst and the Abyss: The Hermeneutics of Nothingness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[41] Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity*, 12.

[42] Ibid., 8.

[43] Simon Critchley, *Very Little… Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature* (London: Routledge, 1997), "Preamble"; cf. Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity*, 169.

Following the tradition of Nietzsche and his successors, both Critchley and Woodward consider the first stance as unsustainable, as exemplified by John Paul II's "nostalgic" call for the contemporary philosophy to abandon nihilism and reach back into "some premodern form of metaphysical philosophy."[44] To all the philosophers inspired by Nietzsche's thought, this approach to nihilism evades a critical encounter with the intellectual legacy of modernity and denies its validity; and, moreover, preserves and reinstitutes "religious nihilism, with its faith in transcendent categories of valuation, and consequent devaluation of life."[45] It is interesting that a (foundational) philosophy that promotes an unconditional meaningfulness and value of life, as well as dignity of a human being, according to Vattimo and other neo-Nietzschean thinkers, devalues life and is strongly "reductive, violent," and nihilistic.[46] Foundational thought, which is, by necessity, metaphysical, "devalues a range of interpretations," and "delegitimizes these aspects of life that bring along change, growth, mortality and variety," Vattimo claims.[47] Metaphysics, as Heidegger says, draws on a conception of a strong Being that serves as a foundation for all beings and as an ontological framework, (not to be confused with the notion of eternal truths, which Heidegger rejects); therefore, as Vattimo explains, a foundational thought entails a return to metaphysics.[48] This metaphysical "foundationalism," Vattimo argues, "imposes authority in the form of a foundation," whereby it "limits the free play of dialogue and interpretation, and silences the voices questioning the foundation"; hence its violence and restrictiveness.[49] The "grand thing" about nihilism, as it seems, is that it propounds nothing and criticizes nothing, everything having already been debunked. Consequently, Vattimo positively reassesses nihilism, and "what other critics name 'nihilism' (devaluation of the richness of existence), he, [paradoxically] calls 'metaphysics.'"[50]

To sum up, much of the contemporary Western thought, exemplified by Vattimo's *il pensiero debole* (the weak thought), advocates "accomplished nihilism," that is, ontological and epistemological anti-foundationalism, which compromises metaphysics and any other attempt at reestablishing a foundational system, and overcomes "the violence of metaphysical thinking," so that "nothing is left of being as such."[51] Postmodernity is the era of a "weak thought" and "weak

[44] Ibid., 170.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Gianni Vattimo, "Hermeneutics and Democracy," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 23.4 (1997): 5.

[47] Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity*, 170.

[48] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*) (1927), trans. by Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 229.

[49] Vattimo, "Hermeneutics and Democracy," 5.

[50] Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity*, 112.

[51] Vattimo, "Nietzsche and Heidegger," trans. Thomas Harrison, *Stanford Italian Review* 6.1–2 (1986): 28.

being," Vattimo claims, for there is very little of Being and beings left now, and the notions of truth and foundation for thought are decomposed in the process similar to "chemical decomposition," which, to Vattimo, represents the workings of philosophy as "chemistry."[52] Does this imply that the accomplished deconstruction and decomposition of all values and foundations have obviated the human need for a meaningful existence? Certainly not, but, according to the thinkers inspired by Nietzsche, no foundational thought may resist nihilism, as all foundations have already tumbled; on the contrary, a foundational thought, as Vattimo argues, being "nihilistic," can, curiously enough, strengthen the sense of senselessness and nothingness.[53]

The second approach to nihilism, which flatly rejects its existence by virtue of a fallacious interpretation of history, is, according to Critchley and Woodward, erroneous, as it questions the correctness of the philosophy of history and refuses to acknowledge the gravity of the problem.[54] Critchley observes that this view appears in fact metaphysical, as it rejects "the cultural and historical conditionedness of thought," and promotes "faith in positive science and transcendent 'rationality', which is to replace 'historical' thinking."[55]

The third response to nihilism, as identified by Critchley, is passive nihilism, a term borrowed from Nietzsche's differentiation into passive and active nihilism.[56] This alternative reaction to nihilism involves "accepting the meaninglessness of life, whether as a perennial condition of absurdity, or as the result of the prevailing historical and cultural conditions underlying contemporary Western society."[57] It is, therefore, a defeatist attitude that succumbs to nihilism and does not offer any alternative whatsoever. Most post-Nietzschean thinkers, including Baudrillard, Lyotard and Vattimo, do not approve of passive nihilism. Nor do they endorse active nihilism, though, which is the fourth response analysed by Critchley, for it strives to radically overcome nihilism by taking it to its end till it destroys itself, so that a non-nihilistic utopia might be built.[58] Most postmodernist theorists consider this idea to be mistaken and combative, arguing that an attempt to overcome nihilism preserves and reinforces nihilism instead, and may never succeed, for, as Heidegger illustrates it, "no one can jump over [their] own

[52] This is Vattimo's interpretation of Nietzsche's idea of deconstructing metaphysics to base feelings and motivations, introduced in Nietzsche's *Human. All-Too-Human*. Par. 638, 266–267. Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-Modern Culture*, trans. John R. Snyder (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1988), 169.

[53] Vattimo, *The End of Modernity*, 170.

[54] Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity*, 171.

[55] Ibid., 170. Critchley, *Very Little … Almost Nothing*, 10.

[56] Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity*, 171. Cf. Nietzsche, *KSA* 12:9 [35] *Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden: Sämtliche Werke*, (KSA), ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin: De Gruyter).

[57] Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity*, 171.

[58] Critchley, *Very Little … Almost Nothing*, 11.

shadow."[59] The human self is so much embedded in nihilism, they claim, that the more it struggles to be liberated from it, the more it plunges into it.[60] What is needed, Critchley suggests, is a subtler response to nihilism reflected in the fifth approach, which entails "overcoming the desire to overcome nihilism."[61] "It does not stipulate that nihilism must not be resisted," Woodward explains, but that an "imaginative resistance" ought to be developed "in new ways," whose variations can be found, for instance, in the writings of Lyotard, Baudrillard, and Vattimo, especially in Vattimo's weak thought, which attempts neither to promote nor to overcome nihilism.[62]

Since this paper does not aspire to explore the pressing problem of postmodernity in relation to neo-nihilism, but merely hints at their notions as a background and a starting point for the discussion of logotherapy, that is a minor alternative philosophy that offers a therapy and seeks a foundation, the above-presented overview at best scratches the surface of the problem and suggests few of its corollaries. What I attempt to present below is now a more practical consideration of people's responses to the contemporary culture of neo-nihilism, and an alternative approach to the dilemma of existential vacuum and futility, which may allow an effective (foundational) therapy for the postmodern oppressive sense of nothingness and its "fashionable nonsense."[63]

One may ask the following question: if accomplished nihilism is "positive," as Vattimo suggests, and if it is an achievement and a remedy not to desire to oppose it any more, as many postmodern thinkers claim, for "positive nihilism," to Vattimo, is "the sole opportunity for social emancipation in the current situation," why, then, is the acclaimed nothingness and meaninglessness still bothering people?[64] Why do so many people seem to embrace neither nihilistic purposelessness and devaluation nor the anti-foundational philosophy of life, declared by the mainstream philosophers as the only feasible stand? Why are the rates of existential neurosis, depression and, finally, suicide, still staggering in postmodernity, the age whose ideology largely endorses neo-nihilism?[65] Why cannot so

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[59] Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity*, 172; Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1959), 199.

[60] Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity*, 172.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science* or *Intellectual Impostures* (1997, 1998) is the title of a famous controversial book by Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont, demonstrating the incorrect use of scientific terms by many of the leading postmodern thinkers.

[64] Vattimo, *Nihilism and Emancipation: Ethics, Politics, and Law*, trans. William McCuaig, ed. Santiago Zabala (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 87.

[65] Suffice it to mention the names of some celebrity suicides, such as Ernest Hemingway, Sylvia Plath, Gilles Deleuze, James Robert Baker (a writer), Kurt Cobain (a musician), Michael Dorris (a novelist and a scholar), Sam Gillespie (a philosopher), or Jerzy Kosiński (a novelist).

many people endure the "accomplished nihilism" of relativeness and futility, feeling that something is missing?

If neo-nihilism negates the value and sense of existence, little wonder that suicide is still so popular. The statistics say that in the United States of America alone, on average, someone attempts suicide every 40 seconds, and someone dies of suicide every 16 minutes, and 88 people die by suicide each day; moreover, suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people aged 15–24; and the second leading cause of death for 25–34 year olds, and also for college students.[66] The World Health Organization concludes that globally a death by suicide occurs every 40 seconds, and that "in the last 45 years suicide rates have increased by 60% worldwide."[67] Interestingly, it is often the states of the highest standard of life in the US, as well as wealthy countries of the other continents (for instance Finland, Belgium, Switzerland, and Japan), which score a high suicide rate, caused mostly by an oppressive feeling of emptiness and absurdity.[68]

Victor Frankl (1905–1997), an Austrian doctor and philosopher who can hardly be called a theorist, as his thought resulted both from his experience of the Holocaust and his clinical practice of a neurologist, psychiatrist and psychotherapist, observes that the feeling of meaninglessness, which has been increasing and spreading rapidly in the postmodernity, symptomizes the "existential vacuum," or, in other words, a "mass neurosis."[69] This existential neurosis results from and reveals itself through the "mass neurotic triad": depression, aggression, and addiction," and the majority of patients in postmodernity, Frankl observes, "no longer complain of inferiority feelings or sexual frustrations as they did in the age of Freud and Adler," but they seek counseling from psychiatrists and psychotherapists "because of the feeling of futility: the problem that brings them crowding into our clinics and offices now is the existential frustration, their existential vacuum."[70]

What constitutes the essence of humanness and "man's primary concern," Frankl argues, is man's "will to meaning," rather than Freud's "will to pleasure" or Adler's "will to power" (whose variation is the "will to money"); and the "will to meaning" is not merely a "secondary rationalization of instinctual drives," but the "true manifestation of humanness," and the most fundamental desire to find meaning and purpose of life.[71] There are three tenets of logotherapy, Frankl explains, and these are: the freedom of will, the will to meaning

[66] Accessed September 15, 2015, http://www.suicide.org/suicide-statistics.html.

[67] Accessed September 15, 2015, http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en/.

[68] Accessed September 15, 2015, http://fathersforlife.org/health/who_suicide_rates.htm.

[69] Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1978, 1997), 25.

[70] Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, 23.

[71] Ibid., 121.

and the meaning of life.[72] While the first and the last notion are in logotherapy unconditional invariables, the second concept, that is, the will to meaning, is permutable and can be perturbed, which results in "existential frustration," or the "frustration of man's striving to find a concrete meaning in personal existence."[73] Existential frustration can in turn lead to "noögenic neurosis," another term coined by Frankl, which to him is not psychogenic, that is, not the "traditional" neurosis, but rather "noögenic" – the one that originates in man's "noölogical" dimension, (*noös* in Greek meaning mind), the faculty of critical existential thinking, considered as the "first component of spiritual [or existential] intelligence."[74] "The noölogical dimension," Frankl explains, "goes beyond the psychological dimension, and thus is 'higher'; yet being 'higher' means only that it is more inclusive, encompassing the lower dimension"; therefore this type of neurosis is more profound and elusive, and more difficult to treat, as it reflects people's inner emptiness and frustration at their inability to find a meaning of life.[75]

To Frankl, human existence is not only the composite of biological and psychological mechanisms, "conditioning processes and conditioning reflexes"; nor is man merely a being "whose basic concern is to satisfy drives and gratify instincts"; rather "a being in search of meaning – a search whose futility seems to account for many of the ills of our age," which often lead to suicidal thoughts.[76] Nowadays, Frankl remarks,

> suicides happen in the midst of affluent societies and in the midst of welfare states, … for too long we have been dreaming a dream from which we are now waking up: the dream that if we have just improved the socioeconomic situation of people, everything will be okay, people will become happy. The truth is that as the struggle for survival has subsided, the question has emerged: survival for what? Ever more people today have the means to live, but no meaning to live for.[77]

This, Frankl claims, is the effect of nihilism, or "learned meaninglessness," that is frequently espoused not only by thinkers, but, unfortunately, also by therapists.[78]

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[72] Frankl, *The Will to Meaning: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy. Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1969), 68.

[73] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 123.

[74] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 123. The term "spiritual intelligence" comes from Howard Gardner's *Frames Of Mind: The Theory Of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

[75] Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, 22.

[76] Ibid., 17.

[77] Ibid., 21.

[78] Frankl borrows the "learned meaninglessness" phrase from George A. Sargent, quoted in *Man's Search for Meaning*, 177.

"Meaning orientation," he concludes, "plays a decisive role in the prevention of suicide."[79]

What Frankl offers as an alternative to the contemporary neo-nihilism is logotherapy (*logos* in Greek standing for word, reason, also sense), that is, "therapy through meaning" – the third Viennese school of psychotherapy (after Freud's psychoanalysis and Adler's individual psychology), which bridges therapy and philosophy in a unique "foundational" thought and practice. Its purpose, Frankl declares, is to help people seek the "hidden logos of existence," which must be personally found by everyone in order to make their life meaningful under any conditions, especially in the face of the tragic triad of pain, guilt, and death, which constitutes an intrinsic part of human existence.

A survivor of four concentration camps (Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, as well as Kaufering and Türkheim – two camps associated with Dachau), where he spent as a Jewish prisoner three years (1942–1945), and where his parents, brother, and wife in her pregnancy perished, Frankl claims that "the meaning of life always changes, but it never ceases to be," and that a human being "is responsible and must actualize the potential meaning of her or his life."[80] In spite, or, perhaps, precisely because of his personal experience of the Holocaust, one of the severest traumas conceivable, Frankl developed logotherapy, according to which meaning is available and can be discovered under any conditions, even the most extreme ones, and its sources are always to be found in at least one of the three potentials: "(1) a deed to do (that is some work to create), (2) a person to encounter (to love and to be loved), (3) an attitude one can always adopt when fate and suffering are unavoidable."[81]

Of this trichotomy of creative, experiential, and attitudinal values that compose the meaning of life, the noblest and most difficult to choose, as he says, is the last option, which Frankl witnessed and learned personally in the extermination camps, for this is the stand everyone may take when being deprived of everything else, yet still exercising their own freedom to adopt an attitude towards inescapable suffering.[82] It was the last potential, which, when realized, enabled many prisoners of the concentration camps to discover meaning of their unthinkable suffering and imminent death. "It is true that if there was anything to uphold man in such extreme situation as Auschwitz and Dachau," Frankl notes, "it was the awareness that life has a meaning to be fulfilled, albeit in the future. But meaning and purpose were only a necessary condition of survival, not a sufficient condition. Millions had to die in spite of their vision of meaning and purpose. Their belief could not save their lives, but it did enable them to meet death with heads

[79] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 167.
[80] Ibid., 133.
[81] Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, 41.
[82] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 121.

held high."[83] "Everything can be taken from a man or a woman but one thing," Frankl adds: "the last of human freedoms to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."[84]

Synopsized by the editors of the American Journal of Psychotherapy as an "unconditional faith in an unconditional meaning," and "perhaps the most significant thinking since Freud and Adler," logotherapy does not prescribe a ready-made meaning, yet helps people launch a search for it, because "this meaning is unique and specific, and must be fulfilled by every individual alone."[85] Frankl makes it clear that "logotherapy does not dispense and distribute prescriptions," for "meaning must be found but cannot be given."[86] Therefore, "what is demanded of man is not, as some existential philosophers teach, to endure the meaninglessness of life, but rather to bear his [or her] incapacity to grasp its unconditional meaningfulness in rational terms. Logos is deeper than logic."[87] Meaning, one might conclude, needs both – the rational and the un-rational to be discovered and fulfilled. Logotherapy equally draws on faith, (understood as an un-rational belief in the meaningfulness of existence), and on a purely empirical ground and scientific reasoning, for "logotherapy is not moralistic but simply empirical," Frankl remarks.[88]

That embedment of thought in both reason and faith seems to convey precisely the same message as that of John Paul II, expressed in his *Fides et Ratio* letter, quoted above, even though Frankl was never a Christian and never linked his psychotherapy to any religion. Frankl's school of thought is addressed to all people, regardless of their views, beliefs and religious or non-religious convictions; quite similarly to John Paul II's universal message to humanity, calling for a return to foundations and resisting neo-nihilism, relayed, for instance, in the first chapters of *Fides et Ratio*. "Logotherapy is neither teaching nor preaching," Frankl notes, and its concept of unconditional meaning "is not necessarily theistic," though it does not exclude it, if a person is religious and espouses a belief in some ultimate meaning.[89] None the less, there is no arbitrary meaning logotherapy advocates, as everyone needs to find it on their own; hence, as Elizabeth S. Lukas says, "throughout the history of psychotherapy there has never been a school as undogmatic as logotherapy."[90] Of course, medical and philosophical ministry is no pastoral ministry nor spiritual guidance, and no logotherapist

[83] Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, 34.

[84] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 49.

[85] Ibid., 121. The opening two phrases are parts of a review of Frankl's *The Doctor and the Soul*, published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, as quoted by Frankl.

[86] Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, 69.

[87] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 141.

[88] Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, 40; *The Will to Meaning*, 69.

[89] Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, 63.

[90] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 178.

claims to have the answers to people's existential questions, nor do they impose any Weltanschauung or values on the patients.[91] True, logotherapists are convinced that there is always a meaning for a person to fulfill, Frankl admits, "but they do not pretend to know what the meaning is"; they may only help people search for it.[92]

Frankl takes a clear stand against neo-nihilism, against its passive and active forms, as well as against a resignation from attempts to overcome it. The nihilistic thought must be overcome, he claims, if the mass neurosis of today is to be effectively challenged, for "the existential vacuum, which is the mass neurosis of the present time, can be described as a private and personal form of nihilism; and nihilism can be defined as the contention that being has no meaning."[93] Consequently, Frankl warns of the corrupting influence of nihilism:

> If contemporary psychotherapy does not keep itself free from the impact and influence of the contemporary trends of a nihilistic philosophy, it represents [yet another] symptom of the mass neurosis rather than its possible cure. The neurotic fatalism is fostered and strengthened by a psychotherapy which denies that man is free. To be sure, a human being is a finite thing, and his [or her] freedom is restricted. It is not freedom from conditions, but it is freedom to take stand toward the conditions.[94]

Frankl disagrees, for instance, with Albert Camus's philosophy of the absurd, and with Jean-Paul Sartre's idea that man ought to accept the ultimate meaninglessness of life: what we must accept instead, Frankl argues, is our "incapacity to recognize the ultimate meaning within rational or logical terms."[95]

What Frankl advises is "rehumanization" not only of psychiatry and psychotherapy, but also of philosophy, which ought to be wary and critical of nihilism, and ought not to follow the postmodern pan-reductionism (the ubiquitous "nothing-but-ness" approach), pan-determinism (the view that man may not take any stand toward any conditions), and "sub-humanism" – the "masks of nihilism today."[96] The Freudian debunking and unmasking of man's unconscious drives and motives, a crucial finding though it is, has to stop at some point when it reaches the authentic, Frankl asserts.[97] Logotherapy by no means nullifies or invalidates the Freudian and Adlerian schools of thought, he remarks, but rather

[91] Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, 67.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 153.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid., 41.
[96] Ibid., 178.
[97] Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, 114.

reinterprets and reevaluates them by rehumanizing their findings; namely, having included their dimensions, it reaches further, to the noölogical, meaning-oriented essence of humanness, which seems to be overlooked.[98] Frankl declares,

> as a professor in two fields, neurology and psychiatry, I am fully aware of the extent to which man is subject to biological, psychological and sociological conditions; but in addition to being a professor in two fields, I am a survivor of four camps – concentration camps, that is – and as such I also bear witness to the unexpected extent to which man is capable of denying and braving even the worst conditions conceivable.[99]

Such extremities prove, according to Frankl, that man's orientation towards meaning overarches in many cases (depending on the person) the biological and psychological needs, so that human beings may rise above themselves by adopting an attitude to suffering, when it is inescapable, turning it into a valuable experience of personal growth. Frankl disagrees with the Freudian axiom expressed by Bertold Brecht in his *Threepenny Opera*, "food comes first; then morals," and describes the reality of the concentration camps: while some inmates followed their base instincts, losing the remnants of their humanity, there were also many others who gave away their last piece of bread, who supported firmly the weakest, or who organized religious activities, risking in each case a cruel, often protracted death.[100]

In his critique of nihilism, Frankl goes so far as to express his conviction that "the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Majdanek were ultimately prepared not in some ministry or other in Berlin, but rather at the desks and in the lecture halls of nihilistic scientists and philosophers."[101] To Frankl this is an example of what the anti-foundational culture of meaninglessness and relativity may produce, debunking all values, and revealing the destructive power of anti-human nihilism, which can very easily be turned against humanity, yet which cannot obliterate meaning: "man is that being who invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however, he [and she] is also that being who entered those chambers upright, with the Lord's Prayer or the Shema Yisrael on [their] lips," said a 90-year-old Frankl in 1995. As Matthew Scully puts it, "Frankl reminded modern psychology of one detail it had overlooked, the patient's soul," that is, man's supreme noölogical dimension.[102] To conclude, Frankl seems to argue, the

[98] Ibid.

[99] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 153.

[100] Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul* (New York: Second Vintage Books Edition, 1986), 38.

[101] Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul*, 42.

[102] "Victor Frankl at Ninety" – an interview with Frankl conducted by Matthew Scully, 1995, accessed December 12, 2011, http://www.firstthings.com/article/2008/08/004-viktor-frankl-at-ninety-an-interview-18.

trauma of concentration camps and gas chambers, generated by the Nazi on the grounds of nihilistic relativeness, meaninglessness and "subhumanization," testifies, paradoxically, to the opposite philosophy of life, strongly defending the universal foundation of meaning.

Referring to the majority of post-Nietzschean thinkers of postmodernity, who flatly reject the viability of any foundational thought, Frankl enquires, "how can a person who refuses to listen a priori to the unheard cry for meaning [which to Frankl is the voice of postmodernity], come to grips with the mass neurosis of today?"[103] If therapists and philosophers no longer acknowledge the necessity of foundations and purposefulness, how can they holistically view postmodernity and its ills, and how can they continue assisting people in understanding themselves, their lives, and in seeking wisdom, which is the goal of philosophy?[104] What Frankl calls the "unheard cry for meaning" is usually identified in the mainstream philosophy of postmodernity as a nostalgic and ridiculous sentiment for long-invalid foundations, or as a religious phobia, metaphysical horror (fear of the possible terrifying truths behind existence), or *horror vacui* (fear of the existential void and nothingness).[105]

A special focus of logotherapy is the search for the logos of pathos, for the meaning of suffering, which is a universal human dilemma postmodernity has tried to devalue, and which can be a valuable formation experience when faced proudly. Because of its rather unpopular tenets, which include the long-compromised notions of the unconditionality of meaning and the nobilitating experience of suffering, when it is unavoidable (a triad of pain, guilt or death), logotherapy has engendered both enthusiasm, as its effectiveness as a school of psychotherapy is unquestionable, and criticism, for some philosophers have accused Frankl of authoritarianism and religiousness.[106] Frankl retorts that a doctor who cares the most for the well-being and recovery of their patients and recommends treatment they have developed and used personally in the most extreme conditions, must not be reproached for authoritarianism; and, likewise, religion cannot be discarded only because it is "as an expression of man's longing for meaning" and because it seeks an ultimate meaning far beyond therapy.[107] Quite certainly, logotherapy has contributed to flouting the postmodern taboo of

[103] Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, 17.

[104] *Philosophia* in Greek means love of wisdom, and wisdom tends to involve being able to respond and counsel.

[105] *Metaphysical Horror* is a book by Leszek Kołakowski (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

[106] Clinical effects of logotherapy are presented, for instance, in the study of Terry E. Zuehlke and John T. Watkins, "Psychotherapy with Terminally Ill Patients," *Psychotherapy, Therapy, Research, and Practice* 14, no. 4 (1977): 403–410. One of the critics of logotherapy is Rollo May, cf. his *Existential Psychology* (New York: Random House, 1961).

[107] "Victor Frankl at Ninety," an interview.

talking about meaning as something meaningful, swimming against the tide of the mainstream.

If one attempted to place logotherapy within Critchley's scheme of contemporary responses to nihilism, quoted above, it would probably come as a variation of the first attitude, based on metaphysics or religion, and discredited by Critchley and the majority of postmodern philosophers as unsustainable. Logotherapy, however, is neither religious nor metaphysical, as it draws on strictly empirical, experiential and scientific foundation proposed by a doctor – a system some postmodern thinkers regard as unthinkable. Curiously, these thinkers are theorists and often abstractionists, (some of them, for instance Lacan, Derrida or Deleuze, notorious for obfuscation of meaning and, in case of Derrida, for "terrorist obscurantism"), whereas Frankl, a professor of psychiatry and neurology at the University of Vienna Medical School, is very much a practitioner who draws on his experience, facts and scientific data, and who uses a lucid, plain language, and in his books does not aspire to be ranked as a philosopher, though he has been duly acknowledged as such.[108]

Obviously, this paper does not do justice to Frankl's legacy, yet introduces logotherapy as an anti-nihilistic alternative undermining the mainstream theory of postmodernity, and a thought applicable not only to psychotherapy and philosophy, but also to other areas of human activity that constitute the potential media of therapy, such as arts and literature. "Every therapy must in some way, no matter how restricted, also be logotherapy," remarks Magda Arnold, concluding that helping people seek meaning of particular situations and their lives is the prerequisite for aid.[109]

To many psychotherapists, for instance to John McLeod, a professor of counseling and a practicing clinician, the basic vehicle of therapy is narrative, which "bridges the culture and the self."[110] McLeod argues that "all therapies are narrative therapies. Psychotherapy can only function in terms of telling and re-telling stories, yet there is no 'narrative therapy' [as such], … no one way of doing this. Psychotherapy can be viewed as a culturally sanctioned form of healing that reflects the values and needs" of the contemporary post-industrial world; "a cultural form" that "has undergone transition from religious to scientific modes of

[108] As a young man in Vienna, Frankl was a student of Freud and a friend of Adler, even though he challenged their schools of thought. In 1948 Frankl attained a doctorate in philosophy in Vienna for his dissertation *The Unconscious God*. He also met Heidegger a few times and discussed philosophy with him. Cf. Victor Frankl Institute, http://www.viktorfrankl.org/. The phrase "terrorist obscurantism" was allegedly used by Foucault referring to Derrida's style of writing, cf. John Searle, "Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida," *Glyph* 1 (1977): 198–208. Frankl is featured as a philosopher, for example, in the *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.

[109] Magda B. Arnold and John Gasson, *The Human Person* (New York: Ronald Press, 1954), 618.

[110] John McLeod, *Narrative and Psychotherapy* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 2.

intervention," and whose popularity has thrived precisely since the beginning of the postmodern period, roughly the second half of the twentieth century.[111]

Interestingly, McLeod, not being connected with Frankl's school of psychotherapy, seems to agree with Frankl's orientation towards meaning as a core of therapy, as he observes that "narrative, even when tragic and seemingly without hope, can help reclaim some of the more affirming chapters in the person's life, and find ways of seeing the awful things that have happened as episodes in a "bigger" life story that has meaning and purpose."[112] McLeod argues that meaning is what can be sought and discovered through narrative processes, by telling, editing and re-writing one's own story, which has become especially important in the "postmodern era of growing alienation and fragmentation," and in its culture of "the continual consumption of nonessential and quickly obsolete items and experiences."[113] Hence, as Philip Cushman remarks, "psychotherapy is one of the professions responsible for healing the post-war self," that is, in charge of counselling people and guiding them towards a meaning and purpose of their particular lives.[114] "Unfortunately," Cushman adds, "many psychotherapy theories attempt to treat the postmodern self by reinforcing the very qualities of the self that have initially caused the problem," thus leaving a massive void and offering no help.[115]

The word narrative comes from Latin *narrare* (to tell) and *gnarus* (knowing), and, as Victor Turner, a cultural anthropologist observes, narrative is a "term for a reflexive activity which seems to know [about] antecedent events, and about the meaning of these events."[116] As he notes, there seems to be an implication of meaning embedded in the nature of narrative, and this brings narrative perhaps even closer to the therapy through meaning, which employs narrative. Another affinity between therapy through meaning (or logotherapy) and narrative is the notion of *logos*, which embraces both "word" and "meaning." Meaning, which is the goal of logotherapy, cannot be construed outside words, ideas and events, which constitute narrative. This narrative of meaning may be professionally therapeutic, advised or inspired by clinical practitioners, and then the therapy will involve specialist medical treatment, or it may come from non-professionals, telling stories or helping others tell their stories in order to help those seeking meaning understand themselves, their thoughts, actions, and the narrative of their lives.

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[111] McLeod, *Narrative and Psychotherapy*, 2.

[112] Ibid., x.

[113] Ibid., 3.

[114] Ibid., 4.

[115] Philip Cushman, "Why the Self is Empty: Towards a Historically-Situated Psychology," *American Psychologist* 45 (1990): 599–611, 601.

[116] Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982), 86–87.

Thus, outside psychotherapy and philosophy, which are examples of professional disciplines able to pass on some advice and guidance on people's life situations, therapy can also work in its quotidian mode, among ordinary people in the narratives they make and exchange, as an ancient "culturally sanctioned" form of aiding and healing. That mode of therapy is reflected in its meaning: in Greek therapy (*therapeia*) refers to a "service rendered by one to another; medical service of curing or healing; and household service, a body of attendants, servants and domestics"; so it does not originally refer only to specialist medical treatment, but also to assistance and help rendered simply "by one to another."[117] A distinct space of such quotidian therapy, or *therapia pauperum*, is the narrative of literature, the natural habitat of language and logos, and hence, as it seems, of therapy. Bibliotherapy, that is, therapy through reading and writing literature, has been known since antiquity; for instance, the inscription above library doors in ancient Greece read that the library was a "healing place for the soul."[118] This mode of literary *therapia pauperum* is universally available, inexpensive and not limited to a group of professionals.

Logotherapy through various narratives of bibliotherapy appears viable and worthwhile because literature has a considerable therapeutic potential and may have a therapeutic content due to its narrative means that can lead to a therapeutic end, if it is dedicated to the search for meaning and relates closely to a person's problem. This is what many psychologists and psychotherapists practicing bibliotherapy have confirmed, and what Frankl also mentions, making a disclaimer that, unlike "so many contemporary writers dabbling in the field of psychiatry and psychotherapy," he by no means wishes "to become a psychiatrist dabbling in the field of [post]modern literature."[119] Frankl observes that a considerable "part of contemporary literature is a symptom of feelings of meaninglessness and emptiness, a sense of futility and absurdity, and frustrated will to meaning," and remarks that as long as literature reflects its authors" sense of nonsense and absurdity, it remains "just another symptom of the mass neurosis today."[120] Revealing symptoms of the problem, important though it is for diagnosis, needs, however, as Frankl argues, to be followed by therapy: "writers who themselves have gone through the hell of despair over the apparent meaninglessness of life can offer their suffering" in order to support other people, and can "help the reader who is plagued by the same condition with overcoming it."[121] Of course, Frankl continues, "the writer should be granted freedom of opinion and expres-

[117] The Greek Lexicon, http://www.studylight.org/lex/grk/view.cgi?number=2322; accessed September 15, 2015.

[118] Amie. K. Sullivan, Harold R. Strang, "Bibliotherapy in the Classroom: Using Literature to Promote the Development of Emotional Intelligence," *Childhood Education* 79.2 (2002): 76.

[119] Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*, 86.

[120] Ibid., 90.

[121] Ibid.

sion, but freedom is not the last word, it is not the whole story; freedom threatens to degenerate into arbitrariness unless it is balanced by responsibleness."[122] And, finally, Frankl refers to literature as a feasible medium of logotherapy:

> The least service the writer could render the reader would be to evoke a sense of solidarity. In this case, the symptom would be the therapy. However, if modern literature is to carry out this therapeutic assignment – in other words, if it is to actualize its therapeutic potential – it has to refrain from turning nihilism into cynicism. As justified as the writer might be in sharing his [or her] own sense of futility with the reader, it is irresponsible cynically to preach the absurdity of existence. If the writer is not capable of immunizing the reader against despair, he [or she] should at least refrain from inoculating them with despair.[123]

Thus, as Frankl seems to argue, when freed from the confines of "fashionable nonsense" and from the impact of the postmodern mass culture of ultimate meaninglessness and cynicism, literature may empower the self-industry of logotherapy, when the reader interacts with a narrative that encourages him or her to seek a meaning of their particular life situation rather than overwhelming with a prevailing sense of emptiness and nothingness, and when there is no other person in between the reader and the narrative. And this, Frankl claims, must not be a utopian or naïve narrative, as therapy can only succeed by helping a person grasp the value of suffering, when it is inescapable, connected with the human experience of pain, guilt and death.[124] Perhaps the foundation of logotherapy offers an alternative to the "liquid times" of postmodernity – "the age of uncertainty," whose instability and consumerism do not seem to leave space for an ethic of meaning.[125] As many readers of Frankl's books have agreed, "logotherapy is a psychotherapy for the man in the street; for all of us."[126]

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[122] Ibid., 92.

[123] Ibid., 91.

[124] Ibid., 95.

[125] The quoted phrases come from Bauman's book: *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty.*

[126] Reviewers from Oxford, UK; Princeton, NJ, USA; and North Carolina, USA; reviews accessed September 15, 2015, http://www.amazon.com/Doctor-Soul-Psychotherapy-Logotherapy/dp/0394743172.

Anna Cholewa-Purgał

Neonihilizm a fenomen logoterapii

Streszczenie

Przyjmując za Ahsleyem Woodwardem, że jedynym wątkiem wspólnym dla przejawów kultury ponowoczesnej jest filozofia neonihilizmu, artykuł przedstawia specyfikę tej uwspółcześnionej myśli Nietzschego, a następnie na jej tle rysuje myśl przeciwną, która odrzuca pojęcie nicości i egzystencjalnej próżni. Pośród antynihilistycznych szkół filozofii współczesnej istotne miejsce zajmuje logoterapia, będąca zarazem szkołą psychoterapii, zaproponowaną przez Victora Frankla (1905–1997), austriackiego neurologa, psychiatrę i filozofa, który ocalał z Holokaustu. Logoterapia, czyli terapia poprzez afirmację niepodważalnego sensu i znaczenia bytu, ma ciekawe implikacje dla kultury, a zwłaszcza literatury ponowoczesnej, przeciwstawiając się zjawisku masowej neurozy, pustki i negacji wszelkich absolutów.

Anna Cholewa-Purgał

Néonihilisme et phénomène de logothérapie

Résumé

En acceptant le point de vue d'Ashley Woodward constatant que la philosophie de néonihilisme est la seule exception commune aux manifestations de la culture postmoderne, l'article présente la spécificité de cette conception nietzschéenne actualisée, et ensuite, dessine à l'appui de cette conception une idée opposée qui rejette la notion du néant et d'un vide existentiel. La logothérapie, étant à la fois une école de psychothérapie proposée par Viktor Frankl (1905–1997) – neurologue, psychiatre et philosophe autrichien qui a survécu la Shoah – occupe une place importante parmi les écoles antinihilistes de la philosophie contemporaine. La logothérapie, c'est-à-dire une thérapie consistant à affirmer le sens incontestable et la dimension spirituelle de la personne, a des implications intéressantes pour la culture et avant tout pour la littérature postmoderne tout en s'opposant au phénomène de la névrose de masse, mais aussi à celui du vide et de la négation de tous les absolus.

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"So many pages a day" Writing, Compulsion, and Modernity

George Miller Beard's study of neurasthenia, *American Nervousness, Its Causes and Consequences,* published in 1881, attributed the recent increase of nervousness to civilization. Or, to be more specific, to modern civilization, differentiated from the ancient by such phenomena as "steampower, the periodical press, the telegraph, the sciences, and the mental activity of women."[1] All these, Beard argued, had a debilitating impact on the nervous system, leading to its exhaustion or bankruptcy, which is exactly how he defined nervousness: "a lack of nerve-force."[2] While the so-called brain-working classes, obviously including "men of letters,"[3] were particularly vulnerable to neurasthenia, this was however compensated for by their superior longevity. One of the factors accounting for this state of affairs was, in his view, the "large liberty" available to "nearly all intellectual employments."[4]

That liberty manifests itself specifically in control over time, as, for instance, literary men "can select the hours and days for their most exacting and important work; and when from any cause indisposed to hard thinking, can rest and recreate, or limit themselves to mechanical details."[5] The American neurologist imagines those who in their work rely on cerebral force living in ease when compared to muscle-workers carrying out forced and routine labour. In arguing for the superiority of brain-work, Beard liberates it also from worry to the extent that he sees the two in a healthy antithetical relation: "brain-work is the highest of

[1] George Miller Beard, *American Nervousness, Its Causes and Consequences* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1881. Reprint: Charleston: Bibliobazaar, 2008), 96.

[2] Beard, *American Nervousness,* 5.

[3] Ibid., 95.

[4] Ibid., 207.

[5] Ibid.

all antidotes to worry," and those who practise it are "less distressed about many things, less apprehensive of indefinite evil, and less disposed to magnify minute trials."[6] The reason for this was that in the life of those engaged in an intellectual pursuit there is, as he put it, "less of the dreadful," though, he was careful to add that this would hold true as long as they were successful. To second his points about the relation of age to work he studied the biographies of eminent brain-workers,[7] literati too, but intellectual mediocrity or failure did not enter into his investigation. When worry, distress or poverty engage Beard's attention, he tends to see them as afflictions experienced by those who live by the labour of the hands.

Ten years after Beard published his study, George Gissing wrote *New Grub Street*, a novel which may be seen as an inadvertent postscript to it, in that it broaches the subject of brain-work, exemplified by professional men of letters, but shows it haunted by anxiety, fear, and penury.

Bernard Bergonzi observes in his introduction to *New Grub Street* that work as a literary subject enters English fiction more prominently around the 1840s, and it means factory labour, though it is rare that novelists employ realism to flaunt before the reader their knowledge of the actual particulars of production.[8] Indeed, a typical Victorian rendition of industrial reality, Herbert L. Sussman wrote some years earlier, "consists of smoke and flame seen from a distance"; even in an overtly industrial novel such as *Hard Times* descriptions concern less the factory interior and more "the psychological state of a machine-tender."[9] It will take several decades for the novel to come up with a more comprehensive representation of the mechanics of work – this time, however, in the shape of the intellectual exertion of those who live by the pen.

With its insight into the world of literary production, the allied pressures of readership, market, and the publishing industry, *New Grub Street* deservedly merits the title of "the most explicit fictional study of literary life ever written in English."[10] At times this excessive explicitness, it is suggested, may have stifled fictionality, such that the novel reads like "a sociological document,"[11] and so does not obviously lend itself to a context-free textual interpretation. Perhaps

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[6] Ibid., 202.

[7] True, Beard actually analysed a comparable number of lives of persons of lesser distinction, and less known, but did not take under consideration the truly unsuccessful ones. Cf. Beard, *American Nervousness*, 220–21.

[8] Bernard Bergonzi, introduction to George Gissing, *New Grub Street* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), 9.

[9] Herbert L. Sussman, *Victorians and the Machine. The Literary Response to Technology* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), 9, 68.

[10] Bergonzi, Introduction, 9.

[11] J. P. Keating, *George Gissing: New Grub Street* (London: Edward Arnold, 1968).

responding to its transparency, many analyses of *New Grub Street* incorporate factual accounts of the new directions in the literary environment of the 1880s.[12] But the novel possibly may read also like a *psychological* document, for while it places literature on the receiving end, at which books and essays are finished articles – discussed, reviewed, purchased or ignored – it first of all puts under scrutiny the process of writing itself, and shows it to be an excruciating mental chore. Above all, in *New Grub Street* writing means labour: effortful, daily toil, propelled or stalled by the fear of failure.

As Bergonzi points out, in such a brutal depiction of writing Gissing distances himself from the popular image of the novelist as a genial, quirky character, never lost for words, whose works get written invisibly and, one is left to assume, easily. The conclusion drawn from such a representation is that the literary man is a figure of leisure with plenty of time on his hands.[13] Not only enjoying the luxury of leisure, writers, to return to Beard's comments on brain-workers, are "masters of their time" who "work when work is easy"; nor do they need to "waste their force in urging themselves to work."[14] In the eyes of many, intellectual or creative work would actually be non-work. That perception did not develop without the help of novelists themselves, somehow reluctant to associate writing with effort, since any open admission of painstaking creation, or, simply put, labour, would be an acknowledgment of professional weakness in a culture that aligns ease with cleverness and talent.

Focusing primarily on the process of making, Gissing deplores the contemporary commercialization of literature and its degeneration into trade, for which process he blames, among other things, modern journalism. Thus logically, the proposed neat, too neat and therefore unfair, dichotomy between culture and commerce has its embodiment in the contrast between the old and the modern type of writer, whose respective fields of production are novels and literary periodicals. And still more logically, he stands by the old-school novelist, even though, or perhaps precisely because, the hero Edwin Reardon, unlike entrepreneurial mercenaries, writes slowly, sufferingly, and also increasingly badly. He writes to fail. What Gissing conceived as a larger cultural crisis he expressed through an individual calamity: the mortification of a professional author, one who writes for a living, and whose "struggle for subsistence" undoes his "literary endeavour"[15] so that writing itself turns into a struggle.

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[12] Several of such studies point out that Gissing's depiction of the literary environment of the 1880s suffers from distortions as he does not take into account many aspects of the changes. Cf., for instance, John Goode, *George Gissing: Ideology and Fiction* (London: Vision Press Ltd., 1978), 117–18; and Adrian Poole, *Gissing in Context* (London: MacMillan, 1975), 140–46.

[13] Bergonzi, Introduction, 9.

[14] Beard, *American Nervousness*, 207–208.

[15] George Gissing, quoted in David Grylls, *The Paradox of Gissing* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 81.

When writing must happen, it often refuses to happen. Reardon's story is that of ongoing creative inertia, increasing resistance of "the outwearied imagination,"[16] and fear its gradual erosion breeds. These adversities turn work into mental torment. While words may get penned, the attempted novel fails to gather direction, let alone momentum; repeatedly, as if himself going through the motions of writing, Gissing churns out his character's accounts of aborted ideas and discarded sentences which fail to meet the self-imposed standards. While Reardon pronounces a "dry and powerless brain" to be one constraint, another is his sense of aesthetic integrity: "I had never written a line that was meant to attract the vulgar,"[17] he insists. However, this refusal to compromise one's standards of quality is perceived by those who count on the money a completed book may bring as "morbid conscientiousness."[18] The recurrent image of the writer at work is one of futility: "endless circling, perpetual beginning, followed by frustration": with a mind that is "a shapeless whirl of nothings,"[19] one can only "stare at the blank sheets of paper in an anguish of hopelessness"[20]; the only vision which this sight can inspire is that of empty pockets. In one of many attempts to grasp the reasons for his creative crisis and thus justify his indolence, Reardon says:

> My efforts are utterly vain; I suppose the prospect of pennilessness is itself a hindrance; the fear haunts me. With such terrible real things pressing upon me, my imagination can shape nothing substantial. When I have laboured out a story, I suddenly see it in a light of such contemptible triviality that to work at it is an impossible thing.[21]

Gissing is never one to equivocate: the crisis is set off when one writes with a vested interest, when one writes to get the book "finished and *sold*."[22] The real becomes the stumbling block for the imagination, which cannot eschew, or transcend, mundane concerns and mercenary purposes. The "substantial" which it is unable to shape means words on the page as well as, if not more than, the money they will bring.

In the "Gospel of Mammonism" chapter of *Past and Present* Thomas Carlyle asked: "What is it that the modern English soul does … dread infinitely, and contemplate with entire despair? What is this Hell? … what is it? With hesitation, with astonishment, I pronounce it to be: The terror of 'Not succeeding… '." Not

[16] Gissing, *New Grub Street*, 153.
[17] Ibid., 82.
[18] Ibid., 79.
[19] Ibid., 153.
[20] Ibid., 85.
[21] Ibid., 82.
[22] Ibid., 86. Emphasis mine.

succeeding, in turn, Carlyle defines simply as "not making money."[23] What with the increased commercialization of literary creation, in the later decades of the nineteenth century men of letters found themselves terrorized by the pressure of economically conceived success. And accordingly, poverty, material degradation aside, functioned as an all too legible index of failure, which therefore did not merit compassion but condescension. Amy Reardon's increasing disaffection for her husband has its origin in her acquired awareness of the power of money: "If I had to choose between the glorious reputation with poverty and a contemptible popularity with wealth, I should choose the latter."[24] While some residue of idealism may be discerned in her suspicion of popularity, which she clearly dissociates from reputation, it soon will become obvious that it is poverty that truly earns her contempt.

The fear of failure and the fear of destitution become inseparable. So by no means is there then "less of the dreadful" in the writer's life, nor is poverty a source of anxiety afflicting only muscle-workers. George Beard, like many others, was apt to accord to poverty some ambivalence, seeing in it a force that can possibly goad one to make an escape. Yet if poverty has the capacity to "stimulate and strengthen," these are rare occurrences. In most instances, "it subjugates and destroys."[25] In the case of Reardon such destructive work is done by not so much poverty itself, but its anticipation: the fear of poverty reified by the workhouse.

The workhouse, occasionally mentioned in the novel, invokes two principal anxieties: the prospect of penury and the pressure of time under which the professional writer travails. In *New Grub Street* the workhouse enters the consciousness as a sound: "the chiming and striking" of its clock heard on wakeful nights bring the "worst torture to his mind" because they get Reardon closer to facing writing, which, since becoming a necessity, has turned into "a dreaded task."[26] When George Crabbe depicts the workhouse in *The Borough*, he cannot do so without mentioning "That large loud clock, which tolls each dreaded hour," to then add: "Those gates and locks, and all those signs of power: / It is a prison, with a milder name, / Which few inhabit without dread or shame."[27] Throughout the nineteenth century the workhouse maintained its evil repute as the institution of utmost degradation that even the poorest became desperate to avoid. Crabbe's representation culminates with equating it with the prison, and so reinforces its notorious image of a place of stringent discipline rather than relief. To the already-mentioned fear of poverty and confinement which the allusion to the workhouse activates, one must also add associations with the industrial milieu.

[23] Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (Teddington: The Echo Library, 2007), 111.

[24] Gissing, *New Grub Street*, 83.

[25] Beard, *American Nervousness*, 296.

[26] Gissing, *New Grub Street*, 151–52.

[27] George Crabbe, *The Borough*, *Letter XVIII: The Poor and Their Dwellings*, accessed January 31, 2012, http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5210/pg5210.txt.

For Reardon the workhouse clock striking the hours in an inexorable countdown summons him to his task in the way in which the factory bell summons operatives to start their shift.

Gissing repeatedly deploys allusions to industry so as to indicate the mechanization of the creative mind and augment the sense of dreariness that coerced writing, done for the sake of remuneration and deadline-orientated, involves:

> The ordering of his day was thus. At nine, after breakfast, he sat down to his desk, and worked till one. Then came dinner, followed by a walk. … At about half-past three he again seated himself; and wrote until half-past six, when he had a meal. Then once more to work from half-past seven to ten. Numberless were the experiments he had tried for the day's division. The slightest interruption of the order for the time being put him out of gear; … .
>
> Sometimes the three hours' labour of a morning resulted in half-a-dozen lines, corrected into illegibility. His brain would not work; he could not recall the simplest synonyms; intolerable faults of composition drove him mad.[28]

For one thing, this description of work stands in stark contrast with Beard's idea of the writer enjoying liberty unavailable to muscle-workers. Even though the rigorous schedule within which writing is enframed is of the fictional novelist's *own* invention, it does not make him the "master of his time."[29] Not a master of his time, he is not the master of his mind either, when he tries to force his barren imagination to earn his keep. Clearly the self-imposed discipline of the time-table jars with writing so as to effectively disable the novelist, suffering and stuttering in a "creative agony."[30] To the casual observer, the schedule looks a wholesome and rational arrangement, yet no spell of work ends with a record of an actually accomplished task. If Reardon can mention any marks of progress resulting from one sitting, they are so paltry that they actually document stagnation: "half-a-dozen lines" or one page are his standards of measurement.

Such quantities are all the more pathetic when set against the goal of a three-volume novel, the format which still dominated the contemporary literary scene, and which seems to the suffering writer "an interminable desert."[31] At some point Jasper Milvain, Reardon's opposite, the modern professional man, calls it "a triple-headed monster sucking the blood of the English novelist,"[32] but since his own work does not entail fiction-making this phrase ultimately expresses lit-

[28] Gissing, *New Grub Street*, 154.
[29] Beard, *American Nervousness*, 207.
[30] P. J. Keating, *George Gissing: New Grub Street* (London: Edward Arnold, 1968), 13.
[31] Gissing, *New Grub Street*, 80.
[32] Ibid., 235.

tle genuine concern, and turns out to be yet another clever but vacuous metaphor. For novelists implicated in the system the completion of three volumes, however abominable, could not be dismissed because of its pecuniary ramifications. As Reardon explains,

> An author of moderate repute may live on a yearly three-volume novel … the man who is obliged to sell his book out and out, and who gets from one to two hundreds for it. … A sudden change to that system would throw three-fourths of the novelists out of work.[33]

Behind the system, it has to be remembered, stood circulating libraries which demanded novels in three volumes so that they could exact bigger subscriptions from their readers-cum-customers.

The point that Gissing makes is that in a situation when writing is one's sole occupation, and therefore one's sole means of income, books are not so much written as manufactured, and so implicated in a system of quasi-industrial regularity. Indeed, it is not just work but actually clockwork-like work that becomes a sign of apparent recuperation from imaginative crises. And yet this much-desired rhythm hardly looks healthy when it consists in

> ticking off [the] stipulated quantum of manuscript each four-and-twenty hours. [Reardon] wrote a very small hand; sixty written slips of the kind of paper he habitually used would represent – thanks to the astonishing system which prevails in such matters: large type, wide spacing, frequency of blank pages – a passable three-hundred-page volume. On an average he could write four such slips a day; so here we have fifteen days for the volume, and forty-five for the completed book.[34]

The mechanical mode of production makes writing involve calculation. Most scenes of or talks about literary creation that Gissing tenders are fraught with figures: numbers of lines and pages that are written, quantities of copies that can be sold, sums of pounds that can be earned, not to mention the sums borrowed and owed, and rent to be paid. The two kinds of figures are inseparable: to the relieved writer's announcement, "Tomorrow I finish the second volume," his wife responds with, "And in a week … we shan't have a shilling left."[35] But the calculation with which Gissing more heavily invests modern writing entails dishonest deliberation. Dishonesty informs publishers' methods as they deploy the aforementioned "large type, wide spacing, frequency of blank pages," while writers

[33] Ibid., 236.
[34] Ibid., 151.
[35] Ibid., 161.

invent, as if in response, their own artful expedients. How does one write when one *must* write, yet one's mind keeps drawing a blank? To put it frankly, one cheats. What is already in its inception "a 'thin' story," can be made even thinner when spun into three volumes,[36] if one falls back on "laborious padding."[37] With the frustrated imagination, padding means not verbosity but rather overproduction of blank space: "Descriptions of locality, deliberate analysis of character or motive, demanded far too great an effort … . He kept as much as possible to dialogue; the space is filled so much more quickly…"[38] In Gissing's reductive vision of the literary environment of his day, the alternative to "the facile pen"[39] wielded by new literary men are "cunning fingers,"[40] a phrase actually used in *The Nether World*, but quite apt in this context too. Still, these subterfuges, though exposed, are exonerated as long as they mortify those who employ them in their dogged determination "to go on at any cost, to write, let the result be what it would."[41]

When writing for money one cannot afford to take liberties with time: one must simply, as the modern practical approach dictates, "do a certain number of pages every day. Good or bad, never mind."[42] Economic constraint corrupts writing into not only a dishonest, but also a crude, repetitive performance. From this recommendation of mechanical regularity the time-table follows naturally, an obvious borrowing from the world of industrial production. Ironically, for the failing creative writer, turned literary labourer, it becomes the last resort, an ultimate strategy or stratagem that replaces inspiration which, however, goes awry as mental energy becomes misspent, and the mind, all too conscious of the external reality, fearful of potential discomforts and disruptions that could incapacitate writing, turns to the conditions of work rather than to the work itself. Hence the endless tinkering with "the day's division,"[43] each of which adjustments seeks to rouse the writer from mental indolence. It is precisely in such a course of action, bereft of spontaneity and focused on method, the "pre-established apparatus," that Carlyle saw "the mechanical genius of [his] time diffusing itself into other provinces."[44]

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[36] Ibid., 153.

[37] Ibid., 161.

[38] Ibid., 154.

[39] Ibid., 492.

[40] Gissing, *The Nether World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 11.

[41] Gissing, *New Grub Street*, 154.

[42] Ibid., 86.

[43] Ibid., 154.

[44] Thomas Carlyle, "Signs of the Times," in Alan Sheridan, ed., *Thomas Carlyle, Selected Writing* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), 65. For Carlyle another manifestation of the mechanical genius is the need to "make interest with some existing corporation." Writers no longer can go it alone when "Literature, too, has its Paternoster-row mechanism, its Trade-dinners, its Editorial conclaves, and huge subterranean, puffing bellows; so that books are not only printed, but, in a great measure, written and sold by machinery." Cf. page 66.

While recourse to the method and discipline does not work for Reardon, whom the novel posits as "the old type of unpractical artist,"[45] his counterpart, the up-and-coming "literary man of the 1882" comfortably employs it, and this ease with the "pre-established apparatus" epitomizes his modernity. Evidently, the contrast in the use of and attitude to the method is part of the already-mentioned larger juxtaposition between culture and commerce. Once again, at the centre of Gissing's attention is the act of literary production, here exemplified by Jasper Milvain's account of his busy day:

> I got up at 7.30, and whilst I breakfasted I read through a volume I had to review. By 10.30 the review was written – three-quarters of a column of the *Evening Budget*. … from 10.30 to 11.00, I smoked a cigar and reflected … At eleven, I was ready to write my Saturday causerie for the *Will o' the Wisp*; it took me till close upon one o'clock … At one, I rushed out to a dirty little eating-house … Was back again by a quarter to two, having in the meantime sketched a paper for *The West End.* Pipe in mouth, I sat down to leisurely artistic work; by five half the paper was done; the other half remains for to-morrow. From five to half-past I read four newspapers and two magazines, and from half past to a quarter to six I jotted down several ideas that had come to me whilst reading. At six I was again in the dirty eating-house, satisfying a ferocious hunger. Home once more at 6.45, and for two hours wrote steadily at a long affair I have in hand for *The Current* ….[46]

This resumé of the writer's day is a curious combination of the flamboyant and the pedestrian in that it registers an impressive number and variety of undertaken or accomplished tasks, but does so with a dire meticulousness which would have made Robinson Crusoe proud. Or envious – after all, he did not display a similar awareness of even quarters of an hour. While such exactitude seemed natural to the economically oriented consciousness, it seems out of place when exhibited by a creative mind. In the case of Gissing's modern literary man, writing becomes a tightly scripted activity as its different forms and installments get allocated within the requisite slots of the time-table. At work is the division of labour. What vindicates this otherwise demeaning clock-work regularity is the end product, or actually end products in the shape of so many pieces of writing for so many different literary periodicals, and so many different readers. Even though production does not have a mass character in the sense of making iden-

[45] Gissing, *New Grub Street*, 154. The expression is originally used by Milvain in a sympathetic yet somewhat patronizing manner. Certainly, within the scope of the modern literary market whose practices Gissing deplores, Reardon cuts a figure of obsolescence, whose refusal and failure to act practically force him out of business.

[46] Ibid., 213.

tical products, one cannot but entertain a vision of a one-man factory with finished articles coming off the conveyor belt.[47]

If Milvain professes himself the new literary man, the novelty inheres in his being, as Adrian Poole sums it up: "a hard working professional who hires out his labour at different levels, contributing to different grades of magazine and journal, reviews, essays, literary gossip, perhaps even a leader column for a daily paper."[48] Hard-working does not however mean here slow and laborious; rather it signifies quick, almost effortless, competent – in one word: efficient. And it is more than just speed, for the modern writer is one with not only an athletic but also an elastic kind of mind, able to negotiate between diverse styles and purposes. Varying his style depending on the magazine for which he produces a given piece, his remarkable powers of adaptation allow him to do well despite his acknowledged lack of talent. His deliberately pursued line of trade is not fiction, which demands originality, but journalism, which is better suited to his "facile pen." Having bragged of the number of jobs so promptly done, the writer hears a question which does, on the face of it, concern quality: "what is the value of it all?" but which he elects to understand economically: "Probably ten to twelve guineas."[49] And this evaluation completes the image of the new literary man as one who has grasped the importance of adaptation, for along with adjustments of the style, tempo or subject matter of writing, there is a question of larger adjustment whereby the writer, Gissing points out, may have to go with the flow of commercialisation of literature. Commercialisation and industrialisation of writing concur, because producing for the market requires that one adopt a clockwork mode of work to ensure efficiency, and therefore remuneration. And facile writing lines up with facile reading; the professional literary man should "know something about every subject – or … know where to get the knowledge."[50] Such is the function of the British Museum Reading Room, which the modern writer does not, and cannot, treat as a place of slow reading, but only one of skimming and "hurried consultation[s],"[51] productive of what David Grylls brilliantly calls "frothy omniscience."[52]

Ultimately, the fundamental difference between the two antithetical writers in *New Grub Street* lies in their response to their respective literary abilities.

[47] That creation of fiction can acquire a truly industrial dimension that may be illustrated with Alexandre Dumas's *Fabrique de romans*. Contemporary allegations had it that the French novelist's productivity, so extraordinary that it defied logic, was aided by a literary workshop of sorts, a fiction factory in which his assistants were helping him with research and fabrication of tales for which he gave outlines. Cf. Hannu Salmi, *Nineteenth-Century Europe. A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 14, 149.

[48] Poole, *Gissing in Context*, 141.

[49] Gissing, *New Grub Street*, 213.

[50] Ibid., 66.

[51] Ibid., 504.

[52] Grylls, *The Paradox of Gissing*, 79.

Both recognize themselves as men of limited talents: with no *mauvais honte* Reardon defines himself as a "mediocrity,"[53] while Milvain quickly realizes he has no talent for writing novels. Neither turns out to be cut out for making fiction, but Milvain can astutely reinvent himself for the sake of the success he craves, whereas Reardon begins his career as a literary man by writing critical essays, to then turn to novels with the awareness that he does it against his "intellectual temper … of the student, the scholar."[54] Misled by the moderate success of some of his early books, he carries on, soon to exhaust his creativity and find himself crippled financially and aesthetically. The destruction of the writer that is narrated in *New Grub Street* does not happen only under the influence of external pressures and the anxieties they foster; just as fatal is the lack of inner strength to negotiate them. In the jargon of the day this vital property is called "practicality"; the ability to conform to economic rather than artistic demands, the capacity for "mak[ing] concessions" so as to "supply the market." To survive one has to endorse the view that while literature may for some be practised as art, for scores of others it "is a trade." As Milvain says in his brash manifesto, "Your successful man of letters is your skillful tradesman. He thinks first and foremost of the markets; when one kind of goods begins to go off slackly, he is ready with something new and appetising."[55] On several occasions Gissing relates the cultural crisis of his day to a "conscious insincerity of workmanship,"[56] but he knows that in the end integrity may not be tenable when challenged by the problem of economic survival. Mere deficiency of creative energies may not destroy the writer, but deficiency in adapting one's energies does.

[53] Ibid., 83.
[54] Ibid., 88.
[55] Ibid., 38.
[56] Ibid., 83.

Małgorzata Nitka

„Tyle a tyle stron dziennie"
Pisanie, przymus i nowoczesność

Streszczenie

Artykuł jest analizą procesu twórczego ukazanego w powieści George'a Gissinga *New Grub Street*. Dziewiętnastowieczny neurolog amerykański George M. Beard uważał pracę umysłową za „najlepsze antidotum na zmartwienie", podkreślając, że w życiu ludzi skupionych na aktywności intelektualnej jest mniej miejsca na lęki. Jednakże powyższe twierdzenie jest słuszne tylko w wypadku, gdy pracę wieńczą sukces i satysfakcja.

Dziesięć lat po opublikowaniu przez Bearda studium neurastenii, Gissing wydał swoją powieść, której tematem jest między innymi świadomość pisarza. Bohater książki Edwin Reardon to przykład człowieka, dla którego pisanie jest rodzajem pracy umysłowej będącej, odwrotnie niż sugerował Beard, źródłem trosk i lęków, wręcz śmiertelną udręką. Pisanie może zmienić się w doświadczenie traumatyczne, gdy zdeterminowane ekonomicznym przymusem, dyktaturą bezwzględnych praw rynku wydawniczego i presją czasu polega głównie, a często wyłącznie, na zapełnianiu określonej liczby stron w określonym terminie. O ile podobne napięcia nie były dla twórców niczym nowym, o tyle w drugiej połowie dziewiętnastego wieku – w realiach komercjalizacji kultury – uległy zintensyfikowaniu, stanowiącemu jedną z cech nowoczesności.

Małgorzata Nitka

« Une telle quantité de pages par jour » Écriture, contrainte et modernité

Résumé

Le présent article est une analyse du procédé créatif montré dans le roman *New Grub Street* de George Gissing. George M. Beard, neurologue américain du XIX[e] siècle, trouvait que le travail intellectuel est « le meilleur antidote contre l'ennui » en soulignant qu'il n'y a pas de place pour l'anxiété dans la vie des gens concentrés sur l'activité intellectuelle. Mais cette thèse est juste uniquement au cas où le travail est couronné de succès et de satisfaction.

Dix ans après la publication de l'étude sur la neurasthénie de Beard, Gissing a publié son roman dont le sujet est entre autres la conscience de l'écrivain. Edwin Reardon, héros du roman mentionné, est un homme pour qui l'écriture est une sorte de travail intellectuel étant, contrairement aux suggestions de Beard, une source de chagrins et de peurs, voire un tourment mortel. Si l'écriture – étant déterminée par une contrainte économique, par la dictature des lois intransigeantes du marché de l'édition et par la pression du temps – consiste principalement, et souvent uniquement, à remplir un nombre déterminé de pages dans un temps déterminé, elle peut se transformer en une expérience traumatique. Si de pareilles tensions n'étaient rien de nouveau pour les créateurs d'alors, elles se sont intensifiées dans la seconde moitié du XIX[e] siècle – à l'époque de la commercialisation de la culture –, ce qui constituait l'un des traits de la modernité.

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Unnameable Loss: Melancholy and Postmodern Writing*

> To know that writing compensates for nothing, sublimates nothing, that it is precisely *there where you are not* – that is the beginning of writing.[1]
>
> There can be no language for unity; there is only language for separation.[2]
>
> Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from *one* side and you know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about.[3]

From the moment we take notice of the world around us, we become painfully conscious of the loss that shadows all human activity: absent homelands, destroyed objects, and eroded images of the past. For to be human is to know loss and to struggle with it. It is particularly true about the postmodern times which have filled their subjects with the unprecedented feeling of loss: loss of perceivable reality, objective truth, unalterable laws. Our faith in the purposeful sense of history has been shattered, hopes for the better future ruined, so greatly cherished myths and set of beliefs debunked. Yet, we do not plunge into despair, grieving for lost innocence, but frantically search for the ways to fill the hole that loss has opened in our world with something meaningful.

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[1] Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 116.

[2] Edmond Jabés, *El, or The Last Book*, trans. Rosemarie Waldrop (Boston: University of New England Press, 1990).

[3] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §203, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), 92.

Thus, we strive to overcome loss by naming it, by finding language which could retell, recall and resuscitate what has disappeared. Yet, the inexorably widening gulf, separating us from the past, from the world, from Being, is, and will forever remain, unbridgeable, since each of our verbal or visual forms of expression, aimed at compensating for the loss, is doomed to provide only inadequate representations of the objects of our desire. They are inadequate because the referent, that lost object or being, becomes part of the lack that loss establishes; it is swallowed up by the "hole in the real," as Jacques Lacan calls it, gaping void, which death, exile, loss create.[4] To make what is lost *re*-present itself, endowed with the immediacy and fullness that it once possessed is beyond the powers of imagination. It is beyond the power of language and of mimetic representation. Any attempt to make a transition from living in the world to speaking or writing about it turns out to be fatal to the immediacy of being. No words, figures of speech, artistic images or pieces of music are able to restore the lost object in the here-and-now reality, shaping an irreversible absence into tangible presence. The poet for whom the highest goal of poetry is, according to Paul de Man, "not only [to] speak *of* Being, but to say Being itself,"[5] recognizes eventually the sad truth that "as soon as the word is uttered, it destroys the immediate and discovers that instead of Being, it can only state mediation."[6] The fundamental consciousness that language expresses is, de Man writes, the consciousness of loss; it is the presence of nothingness, which language tries to name: "Poetic language names this void with ever-renewed understanding and, like Rousseau's longing, it never tires of naming it again. The persistent naming is what we call literature."[7] Since language is born of loss and has nothing that is truly its own, it must, in order to live, "incorporate" everything: it seduces, it moves, it wounds, it anesthetizes, it overwhelms – it seems to have all the powers. However, in its constant shift from seemingly absolute mastery and mesmerizing magic to the consciousness of its own essential emptiness, it alternates between manic triumph and melancholy.

This way of thinking is parallel to the analyses of Julia Kristeva, who in her study *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, discusses melancholia and loss in relation to art and literature. Loss is for her the unique precondition for language. Behind our words are a wound, a deprivation, a pain, which in themselves make speech possible:

> Our ability to speak, to situate ourselves in time for another person, could not exist anywhere else but on the other side of an abyss. The be-

[4] Lorenzo Chiesa, *Subjectivity and Otherness: A Philosophical Reading of Lacan* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007), 133.

[5] Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 256.

[6] De Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 259.

[7] Ibid., 18.

> ing who speaks – from his or her capacity to live in time to his or her enthusiastic, clever, or simply amusing constructions – must have, as the basis for existence, a rapture, an abandonment, a malaise.[8]

The Bulgarian-French philosopher and literary critic argues that the denial of loss is the origin of melancholia; consequently, "the most efficacious way of overcoming the latent loss"[9] is to name it and so exert a certain amount of control over it. Through the "sublimational activity of writing,"[10] one can find some antidote to melancholy and ameliorate the loss.

Since the notions introduced by the French philosopher could offer an apt theoretical starting point for examination of the strategies by which contemporary culture copes with the "abject experience of loss," in other words, melancholia, the reader might find it convenient to have a brief outline of Kristeva's theory before we proceed to the discussion of the relation between melancholy and writing. On the basis of her reasoning, the subsequent argumentation will aim to prove that in the works of postmodern writers the attempts to ward off melancholy can be traced in violations of "identity, system, order,"[11] found not so much in the subject matter of their writings but in the language itself and the forms used.

In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Kristeva, following Sigmund Freud's findings, calls attention to the relation of fear and phobia to the object: "From the start, fear and object are linked."[12] She distinguishes between different kinds of fear, especially between nameable fears and archaic, unspeakable fear. Fear is aroused in the phobic subject by the failure of language to symbolize or name what he/she is afraid of – the void or lack. It is also the sign of the paternal instance to put the prohibition of the mother firmly in place. In desperation, the phobic subject resorts to language to fill the gap. In *Black Sun*, Kristeva explains this state in different terms and here she connects it to melancholy as well as to fear. Again, she describes the phobic subject's fear of the unnameable – engulfment, dissolution, the void, the "Thing" or "loss which has no name"[13] – but the reaction to the loss or, as she calls it here, disinheritance, is ambivalent. Besides causing fear, it becomes the source of melancholy: "[T]he depressed narcissist mourns not an Object but the Thing. Let me posit the 'Thing' as the real that does not lend itself to signification."[14] The "Thing" is a loss which precedes all other

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[8] Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 42.

[9] Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 129.

[10] Ibid., 200.

[11] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4.

[12] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 34–35.

[13] Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 13.

[14] Ibid., 13.

losses and which can never be recuperated because it lies outside the "symbolic" side of language, where objects can be identified and named and therefore lose their strangeness. It is a loss which is necessary so that "this 'subject' separated from the 'object', might become a speaking being."[15] In order to keep both fear and melancholy at bay, the subject, especially the writing subject, resorts to language in a desperate attempt to name everything and bring it under control. Speaking the abject is a way of coming to grips with it rather than being controlled by it. In these terms, writing can be seen as a continuous struggle to bring those things into signification which otherwise cause anxiety. But this only succeeds at a price, and the price is the loss of the "Thing": "To speak, to venture, to settle within the legal fiction known as symbolic activity, that is indeed to lose the Thing."[16]

At the close of *Black Sun*, Kristeva emphasizes the great power of the concept of melancholia: while the psychological-literary syndrome of melancholy is articulated, transformed, or suppressed by the textual swings of cultural history, melancholy itself remains "essential and transhistorical."[17] The deathly fixation of melancholia, "the most archaic expression of the unsymbolizable, unnameable narcissistic wound,"[18] with all its deep longing for the prelinguistic Thing, obsessive-repetitive, necessary, and impossible search for the metalinguistic in language, for the unpossessible in desire, for meaning beyond any significance – articulates itself within texts, guides the productive imagination of authors, sinks out of sight only to emerge again. Melancholy has attached itself to the characteristic forms of literary expressions of every epoch. It has invaded the very capillaries of the text. Its latent operations have left ineffaceable traces in the minds and works of numerous writers.

Presumably, one of the most extreme examples of how melancholy asserts its rights over any writing that intends to deal with it is Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Burton explains his life-time involvement in the process of writing by his desire to distract himself from the torments of melancholy: "I write of melancholy, by being busy to avoid melancholy."[19] However, it turns out that it is melancholy which gets control of him. Burton's torrential prose becomes melancholy's "playground" where the malaise governs autocratically. Both the impressive analytic apparatus and the welter of authorities Burton cites and incorporates into his text serves as an artifice through which it expands, unobstructed, to touch every aspect of life. Readers of Burton's *The Anatomy* lose their way in this labyrinthine text because it is as fluid and restless as its author's affliction. Liliana Barczyk-Barakońska, while analysing *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, notices that,

[15] Ibid., 145.

[16] Ibid., 146.

[17] Ibid., 258.

[18] Ibid., 12.

[19] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Holbrook Jackson (New York: New York Review Books, 2001), 20.

paradoxically enough, writing which, according to Burton, is to have a therapeutic function and postpone melancholy, illustrates rather "the way melancholy spreads itself, stigmatizing and leaving traces in human imagination and body. Melancholy appears as writing whose operations are indelible."[20]

While revealing the ubiquitous nature of melancholy, Kristeva admits at the same time that the melancholic imagination as a source of literary creativity turns out to be particularly acute in "epochs of crisis," such as our own times, which are witnessing the collapse of all the political, social and moral ideals. "In times of crisis," writes the French theorist, "melancholy imposes itself, lays down its archaeology, produces its representations …."[21] In the postmodern context melancholy occupies the space that is carved between the subject and the object by a question concerning the possibility of meaning; a space the postmodern writers have sought to fill with a storehouse of images constructed in their frequently shocking, but at the same time healing, writing. In the course of the subsequent analysis I shall attempt to trace the link between melancholy and postmodern writing through an exploration of this space and examination of some formal literary characteristics – enumeration, heterotopia, allegory, fragment, quotations, allusions or textual wanderings – which, as I intend to demonstrate, may be perceived as constituents of postmodern aesthetics of melancholy.

Overnaming: "the linguistic being of melancholy"

Over the centuries melancholy has proven to be intrinsically ambiguous concept, and its unstable, fleeting and inconsistent nature has eluded any attempts at arriving at an ultimate, irrefutable definition of this phenomenon. The numerous scholars who took a risk of making melancholy a subject of their investigations and provided a plethora of divergent, often mutually exclusive descriptions, nominations and meanings ascribed to melancholy, would certainly repeat after John Donne: "if I were asked again, what is a *vapour*, I could not tell, it is so insensible a thing, so neere *nothing* is that that reduces us to *nothing*."[22] Liliana Barczyk-Barakońska maintains that the vagueness pervading melancholy and its inaccessibility to the senses make it particularly susceptible to utter annihilation;

[20] Liliana Barczyk-Barakońska, *The Melancholy Discourse in the Baroque. A Reading of Robert Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy"* (Katowice: PARA, 2009), 13.

[21] Julia Kristeva, "On Melancholic Imagination," in *Postmodernism and Continental Philosophy*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman and Donn Welton (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), 13.

[22] John Donne and Neil Rhodes, "12. Meditation," in *John Donne: Selected Prose*, ed. Neil Rhodes (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), 119.

yet there will always remain a narrow, unmeasurable line which would render it detached from nothingness and would provoke further linguistic investigations:

> Dislocated into the language of "so neere *nothing*," but still keeping its distance, melancholy regulates all attempts at approaching, circumscribing or formulating this almost negligible though irreducible distance separating it from nothing by creating a need for diversity of languages, terms, idioms, contradictory even, required to evoke the otherwise inarticulate distance. Melancholy generates a need for surplus, excess, profusion of names to mark its difference from nothing: it calls for overnaming.[23]

Overnaming thus becomes a useful device of dealing with melancholy in the field of language. However, we shall see as well that in the postmodern context it serves even more fundamental role as "the linguistic being of melancholy."[24]

In his 1916 essay "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" Walter Benjamin articulates his theological linguistics in which the fall of Adam and Eve instituted the fall of language, the arbitrary split of signifier and signified. Since Adam was charged with naming the animals, he originally spoke the divine language of names, which stood in an immediate relation to the creative Word of God. There was no difference of word and thing, appearance and essence; it was pure, transcendental speech. The Fall is the catastrophic end to this paradisiacal state of naming. It begins a descent into "the empty word, into the abyss of prattle"[25] and spurs the multiplication of human languages, the profusion of signs. Things no longer have one name guaranteed by God, but many, based on convention. Benjamin writes of postlapsarian – that is historical – nature: "Now begins its other muteness, which is what we mean by the 'deep sadness of nature.' It is a metaphysical truth that all nature would begin to lament if it were endowed with language."[26] The source of this sadness is fallen human language, which has ceased to be original and unique, in which name has already been "withered." In the postlapsarian epoch, human beings continue to name things but they do so arbitrarily, without reference to the Word. Any relation between the name and the world has been supplanted by a confusion of names, which, appearing in excess, achieve overprecision and, at the same time, inevitably fail to name the thing per se. The proliferation of human languages results in a multitude of names with things being misnamed and "overnamed." This is the source of their sorrow, for

[23] Barczyk-Barakońska, *The Melancholy Discourse*, 20.

[24] Walter Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected writings, Vol. 1: 1913–1926*, ed. Michael W. Jennings and Marcus Bullock (USA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), 73.

[25] Benjamin, "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man," 72.

[26] Ibid.

Benjamin perceives "overnaming as the deepest linguistic reason for all melancholy and (from the point of view of the thing) of all deliberate muteness."[27]

Although, as the example of Benjamin's reflections shows, the question of the inadequacy of language, meaning and expression is not a new one, it has never before gained such wide currency as in the postmodern times. The impossibility of a fixed, clear meaning, the slippage of the signifier from the signified, and the figurality of language that cuts across the entire process of verbal expression, constitute a central theoretical project in the discourse of postmodernism, which at the same time tells the story of a departure from traditional culture, the decline of classical metanarratives of legitimation, or the breakdown of the Western humanist heritage. Fredric Jameson, who has written extensively on postmodernism, often speaks of it as a cultural break. In Jameson's reading, the Lacanian conception of schizophrenia as "a breakdown in the signifying chain" becomes a precise simulacrum of this postmodern condition, a linguistic-psychoanalytic interpretation of the cultural break that characterizes the contemporary, postmodern and poststructuralist, cultural scene. "When that relationship breaks down, when the links of the signifying chain snap," says Jameson, "then we have schizophrenia in the form of a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers."[28] Indeed, break and breakdown seem to be the appropriate words for describing the postmodern condition – a condition of fragmentation and fundamental discontinuity in culture and in history. Separation of the language from the world opens up a wound, tearing, rupture, which the contemporary culture finds difficult to come to terms with. The postmodern literature being ushered in the idiom of loss, distance, disruption becomes evocative of melancholy. Longing to return to its innocent state and mourning for the past wholeness, it attempts to restore the unity which has fallen apart. Thus, the postmodern writers imitate, with "all" the possible words, the lost totality and coherence of the world, create illusions of the inviolate whole, which is already irretrievable, and hastily reconstruct the world in ornate depictions, all-encompassing definitions, pseudo-epistemological metaphors, sayings and proverbs expressing the universal laws of nature, but first and foremost in the imaginary collections of words created by the figure of enumeration.

Enumeration, catalogue structures, lists are recurrent devices of the postmodernist style. These contemporary forms of Benjamin's overnaming endeavour to grasp eternity and infinity of things in the fictional infinity of words. Yet, they ineluctably bear the traces of loss. The never-ending sentences enumerating countless things and people eventually circulate only around itself, speak only their own words, behind which there is invariably nothing. Brian McHale pinpoints the cause of this emptiness and meaninglessness of language in the fact

[27] Ibid., 73.

[28] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 26.

that the words listed in enumerations are detached from syntax. While analysing catalogues from the ontological point of view, he observes that their nature is paradoxical, namely, they can "appear to assert the full presence of a world" and "seem to project a crowded world … that defies our abilities to master it through syntax; the best we can do is to begin naming its many parts." But it can also "have the opposite effect, that of evacuating language of presence, leaving only a shell behind – a word-list, a mere exhibition of words."[29] For McHale, postmodern catalogues tend to gravitate towards the pole of the word-list. What is more, these are often hypertrophied lists or mock-Homeric catalogues, examples being Gilbert Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew*, Donald Barthelme's *The Dead Father* or Borges's short stories.

What markedly differentiates postmodern enumerations from traditional lists, for example blazons – devices of classic or realist texts, which are used by Roland Barthes in *S/Z* to refer to the inventory, or the attempt to "capture" a predicate (Barthes uses the example of Beauty) through a systematic and exhaustive enumeration of its parts, attributes, characteristics[30] – is their over-totality as well as the confusing disorder, in which completely inappropriate things are linked together. In *The Dead Father* Barthelme supplies the reader with a number of blazons: the inventory of the musicians and animals slain by the Dead Father; the inventory of the progeny from the Dead Father's affair with Tulla, the inventory of the types of fathers.[31] Barthes argues that "as a genre, the blazon expresses the belief that a complete inventory can produce a total body, as if the extremity of enumeration could devise a new category, that of totality."[32] But Barthelme's lists are hardly classical:

> First he slew a snowshoe rabbit cleaving it in twain with a single blow and then he slew a spiny anteater and then he slew two rusty numbats and then whirling the great blade round and round his head he slew a wallaby and a lemur and a trio of oukaris and a spider monkey and a common squid.[33]

Here, the inventory is over-totalized; there is an information overload. This list draws attention to itself as simply that, a device; what is embodied in this passage is not reality but discourse itself, its infinite lexicon. In the postmodern assemblages of associations words circulate chaotically around things and create the space not for one essential meaning but the void which can be filled with any

[29] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 153.

[30] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 113–14.

[31] Donald Barthelme, *The Dead Father* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 11, 52–53, 36–37, 136–37.

[32] Barthes, *S/Z*, 114.

[33] Barthelme, *The Dead Father*, 52.

meaning; words bombard things with its excess, torment them with their imprecision, overname and misname them.

Related to this device is Barthelme's treatment of the telling detail, the bit of superfluous information that in the classic text serves to reinforce the mimetic effect, linking the fiction to reality and validating the text. In *The Dead Father*, the significant detail is blatantly overdone, for instance, "Small gifts to the children: a power motor, a Blendor."[34] It is so incredible, so absurd, that it serves to countersignify; the material becomes simply the lexical. The detail's incompatibility, its implausibility, its excess subvert the reality effect, rupturing the continuity between fictional and real worlds.

This state of aesthetic incongruity may be even more aptly captured by the word *heteroclite*, whose sense is explicated by Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things*:

> That word should be taken in its most literal, etymological sense: in such a state, things are 'laid', 'placed', 'arranged' in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a *common locus* beneath them all …. *Heterotopias* are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, they make it impossible to name this *and* that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy 'syntax' in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together' … heterotopias (such as those to be found so often in Borges) desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences.[35]

The words in the postmodern texts remain in the perplexing disorder, emphasizing heterogeneity and separation of their locations (*hetero-topoia*). Disengagement of words from syntax leads to the foregrounding of the ontological difference between the stratum of words and the stratum of the world. Words are contours, seemingly empty, although interestingly shaped, containers that gain significance only by means of their relationship with other words on the page. They approach the status of objects in their own right, tangible *things*, having no reference to the outer reality. By means of a repertoire of stylistic strategies, examples being lexical exhibitionism, introduction of words which are "rare, pedantic, archaic, neologistic, technical, foreign"; "back-broke" and invertebrate sentences, "rambling, apparently interminable, shape-shifting constructions"; or heterotopian catalogues made up of fragments of a number of incommensurable

[34] Ibid., 17.

[35] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xvii–xviii.

orders,[36] the reader is constantly alienated and distanced from the world, and left facing the empty words on the page.

Litanies, catalogues, enumerations are laments over the world which has been reduced to an assemblage of incoherent *membra disiecta*, a heap of discrete fragments, impossible to be linked together into one logic whole. Disappearance of a higher sense, destruction of this metatextual (*meta*physical) syntax results in illegibility of the world which has become an unclear mosaic, where nothing speaks but everything only leans towards diffusion of sense. The beings are irreducibly disintegrated not by any inner decay of matter and its mortality but by enigma of the uniting principles of the world. Since reality has ceased to be a book to be deciphered and the problem of the meaning of the world has become insoluble, melancholy rhetoric of loss suppresses any phenomenology or hermeneutics and can at most indulge in "the only pleasure melancholic permits himself"[37]: allegory.

Allegory as the Ruinous Language of Melancholy

"Allegory" derives etymologically from the Greek *allegoria* which literally means "to speak otherwise" (from *allos*, other, and *agorein*, to speak).[38] It became immensely popular throughout the Middle Ages and into the age of the Enlightenment in a more satirical form (e.g. *Gulliver's Travels*), finally losing favour with the rise of realism and Romanticism until its resurgence in the modern era. At its simplest, allegory may be understood as a figure of speech in which an element or object comes to signify or stand for something else. Gold as an object or a colour, for instance, might be used to represent wealth. This process of signification may be subject to proliferation, and thus allegory emerges as a complex trope. Depending upon the context, gold can also, or instead, signify nobility, purity, beauty, pomp and splendour, ostentation, artifice, decadence, greed, or the vanity of earthly riches. As the example demonstrates, allegory may, as referents multiply, suddenly reverse direction to act as the negation of its other possible meanings. Walter Benjamin notes that within allegory "any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else."[39]

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[36] McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 151–56.

[37] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London and New York: Verso, 2003), 185.

[38] Victor E. Taylor and Charles E. Winquist, eds., *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 6–7.

[39] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 175.

In his attempt to appreciate the richness of allegory as a mode of expression, Benjamin, a key thinker in the allegory revival, juxtaposes it with a symbol, whose supposed merits were privileged and elevated by the nineteenth-century commentators. Whereas the meaning of an allegory depends upon an oscillation between two discrete terms, the power of a symbol resides in the unity and immediacy with which it expresses an idea. The full meaning of the symbol has to do with the connection between the material thing (word, image, or other) and the metaphysical idea to which the thing refers. The result of this unifying connection is that, as the mind comes to a comprehension of what is being symbolized, the material thing itself disappears into the greater idea beyond the thing. The meaning of a symbol is not dispersed across a plethora of disparate referents, but is concentrated intensively in a single image as a "momentary totality."[40] Full, complete, self-contained, the symbol encapsulates the virtues of clarity, brevity, grace and beauty, so much extolled by Romantic writers. Benjamin quotes, among many others, Friedrich Creuzer's eulogy of the symbol: "it is like the sudden appearance of a ghost, or a flash of lightning which illuminates the dark night. It is a force which seizes hold of our entire being …."[41] Overlapping with the universal as well as uniting essence with appearance, the symbol asserts that meaningful transcendence of polar opposites exists and an image of the divine is able to be captured and preserved in a historically situated text.

In contrast, allegory was perceived to be a feeble imitation of the symbol and denunciated as a mere mode of clumsy, crude and convoluted designation. Rehashing the suggestions made by Romantics such as J. W. Goethe – who first distinguished and consequently dismissed the allegory – or Arthur Schopenhauer, Benjamin seeks to rescue allegory and rethink it as a potent mode of criticism. The German philosopher is interested in allegory because of its mutating character, its assertion of the precariousness of any relation between form and content and its subversive nature.

It might be reasonably argued that the almost theological idea of symbol leads to a mythology of presence. This is particularly visible in Creuzer's introduction of temporal distinctions in his characterization of the symbol: "the momentary, the total, the inscrutability of origin, the necessary,"[42] against which allegory, with its repetitiveness, brokenness, conventionalism and arbitrariness, was perceived as a failed symbol, an expression of endlessness and displacement of the absolute meaning. But it is exactly in these features denigrated by Romantics that Benjamin sees the great value of allegory and its latent critical potential. The natural immediacy and completeness of the symbol creates an image of a divinely ordered and meaningful cosmos, however, "this image is rendered mythic and

[40] Ibid., 163.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.

deceitful by the objective state of fallen nature."[43] According to Benjamin, only allegory, dispersed into historical happening, can provide a genuine expression of the nature of the world and is capable of deconstructing myth promulgated by the symbolical.

Max Pensky seeks the source of the allegory's counteractive power in its "heterogeneous mode of expression and cognition," in its "paradoxical relationship to knowledge and question of meaning."[44] In contrast to the mythical evocation of unity and simplicity, allegory retains its dialectical impulse between the extremes:

> The measure of time for the experience of the symbol is the mystical instant in which the symbol assumes the meaning into its hidden and, if one might say so, wooded interior. On the other hand, allegory is not free from a corresponding dialectic, and the contemplative calm with which it immerses itself into the depths which separate visual being from meaning, has none of the disinterested self-sufficiency which is present in the apparently related intention of the sign [i.e., "symbol"].[45]

The symbol, pointing to a transcendental ideal, existing out of time, in the "mystical instant," leads to an esoteric knowledge held in the "wooded interior" and thus dissolves the dialectical relation between object and meaning, while the allegory keeps it open and remains always ready for destruction/deconstruction that would reveal what is kept within the hidden forest.

For Benjamin, allegory potently conveys the worldview of those thinkers, writers, artists who are not interested in creating coherent, neatly-ordered theories or works which lay symbolic claim to totality, but respond to what they see around. They find in allegory a true expression of history as an irreversible process of decay and dissolution:

> … in allegory the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocritica* of history as a petrified, primordial landscape. Everything about history that, from the very beginning, has been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful, is expressed in a face – or rather in a death's head … this is the heart of the allegorical way of seeing … secular explanation of history as the Passion of the world; its importance resides solely in the stations of its decline.[46]

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[43] Max Pensky, *Melancholy Dialectics: Walter Benjamin and the Play of Mourning* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 114.

[44] Pensky, *Melancholy Dialectics*, 114.

[45] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 165–66.

[46] Ibid., 166.

The allegorical way of seeing is, by this theological metaphor, intertwined with the melancholy vision of the emptied, dead world that has been drained of all its meaning, coherence and order. As Pensky points out, "[m]elancholy vision … necessarily precedes allegorical technique."[47] Any attempts to reconceptualize the abyss and assign one's own, subjective meaning onto unredeemed elements of "a petrified, primordial landscape" presupposes devaluation of an immediate, unproblematic relation to the sensuous world, which results in a crisis of meaning, and recognition of the world as a heap of discrete fragments.

Presumably, never before has this interweaving of melancholy and allegory been more conspicuous than in the postmodern times. Postmodernism with its sense of loss, discontinuity, fragmentation or disconnected, floating signifiers may speak only in the language of allegory, the language of cacophony and disruption. "We seem in the last quarter of the twentieth century to have reentered an allegorical age,"[48] writes Maureen Quilligan. This renewed interest in allegory is partly due to the critical insight of such theorists as Angus Fletcher, Theresa Kelley, Paul de Man and Maureen Qulligan,[49] but also even more important is the resurgence of the practice of allegory in the number of postmodernist narratives, including Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, John Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy*, Jerzy Kosinki's *Being There*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children,* Donald Barthelme's *The Dead Father* or "The Baloon," and many others. Fredric Jameson maintains that this revival or reinvention of allegory is significant and symptomatic of the present cultural and theoretical moment because it reveals "a generalized sensitivity, in our own time, to breaks and discontinuities, to the heterogeneous (not merely in works of art), to Difference rather than Identity, to gaps and holes rather than seamless webs and triumphant narrative progressions, to social differentiation rather than to Society as such and its 'totality', in which older doctrines of the monumental work and the 'concrete universal' bathed and reflected themselves."[50]

Since allegory has traditionally been understood as a discourse that exists not in and of itself but one that reveals a higher order of things, an order not directly present in the text of the allegory itself, there has always been in allegory a self-conscious recognition of the impossibility of direct presentation, but only an indirect re-presentation, of something other than what the text literally says.

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[47] Pensky, *Melancholy Dialectics*, 116.

[48] McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 141.

[49] Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Theresa M. Kelley, *Reinventing Allegory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979); and "Rhetoric of Temporality," in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

[50] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 167–68.

The meaning of allegory exists, as it were, on the other side of the signification, and so there is always the sense of a gap between the sign and the meaning it signifies, the sense of the need for an act of deciphering and uncovering. And it is this sense of gaps and discontinuities, this self-consciousness of the need for interpretation, for the reader's full and active participation in the production of meaning, that has made allegory one of the favourite tropes of postmodern criticism.

In his probably best-known essay on the subject of allegory, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," Paul de Man, in a way following the argument of Benjamin, presents a historical survey of the relation between symbol and allegory and by deconstructing the basic tenets of Romantic aesthetics makes allegory the triumphant figure over the symbol. It is de Man's conviction, argues Christopher Norris, that language is "radically incapable" of transcendence and that "allegory is the more 'authentic' mode in so far as it accepts and perpetually rehearses the fact of this negative knowledge."[51] That is to say, de Man has undertaken to correct the Romantic mystification by accepting the existential truth of temporality, by rigorously asserting the impossibility of language to coincide with empiric reality, or the impossibility of representation. The relation between sign and meaning is a matter of arbitrary linguistic structuring, which is deceptively concealed in the illusion of identification in the symbol but is honestly disclosed by the dissonance of the allegory.

The allegorical sign, explains de Man, can only "refer to another sign that precedes it. Therefore the meaning constituted by the allegorical sign consists only in the *repetition* (in the Kierkegaardian sense of the term) of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is of the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority."[52] What is crucial in de Man's argument is, firstly, that the sign does not refer to anything outside the linguistic system but only to another sign that precedes it, which deconstructs the usual commonsense notions of reference, mimesis, or representation; and secondly, that the relationship between signs, the repetition of one sign of another, is not coincidence but modification, that is to say, it is always a break, a discontinuous continuity. It is precisely on the grounds of such an overt acknowledgment of discontinuity that de Man prefers allegory to symbol:

> Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference. In so doing, it

[51] Christopher Norris, *Paul de Man: Deconstruction and the Critique of Aesthetic Ideology* (New York, Routledge, 1988), 10.

[52] De Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 207.

> prevents the self from an illusory identification with the non-self, which is now fully, though painfully, recognized as a non-self.[53]

The preference for allegory in de Man's writing thus takes on a moral significance as an honest, though painful, recognition of the disconnectedness of things, the temporal reality of discontinuity, change, and death in the human world, what de Man calls "the fallen world of our facticity."[54] The "authenticity" of allegory turns out to be rooted in the melancholic vision of the world which reveals the actual human condition, hence, it transpires once again that allegory is "a creative cognitive mode inseparably connected to the melancholic disposition: melancholics need not be allegorists, but allegory arises from melancholia."[55]

Allegory, capturing the world not in its illusory fullness and perfection, but in its collapse and fragmentation, finds its key emblem in the ruin:

> In the ruin history has physically merged into the setting. And in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay. Allegory thereby declares itself to be beyond beauty. Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things.[56]

In the chaotic cosmos of desultory, miscellaneous fragments, *membra disiecta* deprived of its own essence, the allegorist alone is a sovereign. He is responsible for bestowing meaning in the ruined world, in which "any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything. With this possibility a destructive, but just verdict is passed on the profane world: it is characterised as a world in which the detail is of no importance."[57] The melancholic gaze of the allegorist is focused on the fractured object world, and recognizes the capacity of things to point beyond themselves in the act of signification, but can discern no particular sense within them. Hence the brooder (*Grübler*) endlessly accumulates fragments whose meaning eludes him. Benjamin writes: "That which lies here in ruins, the highly significant fragment, the remnant, is, in fact, the finest material. For it is common practice in the literature of the baroque to pile up fragments ceaselessly, without any strict idea of a goal."[58] Incapable of restoring the original meaning of the fragments, the brooder begins to fit them together arbitrarily. In its very arbitrariness, the constructed allegory might point toward the "sacred" mean-

[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., 13.
[55] Pensky, *Melancholy Dialectics*, 117.
[56] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 177–78.
[57] Ibid., 175.
[58] Ibid., 178.

ing but this meaning is deferred in the very act of constructing it. This requires more allegories, supplements which add new arbitrary meanings to the antecedent ones, but are unable to fill the void of sense. "Deferral becomes a mournful subjection to the written, to the image of historical decay, the eternal postponement of the sensuous bliss that is encoded within it, to an ever-deepening concentration on the gap between meaning and image."[59]

The *modus operandi* of the baroque based on accumulation and arrangement parallels the postmodern practice of constructing, assembling the works out of quotations, allusions, references – the broken pieces of other texts. Robert Burton, whose *The Anatomy of Melancholy* is itself a compilation of citations, presents his method of writing by evoking the images of "a good housewife [who] out of divers fleeces weaves one piece of cloth" and "a bee [which] gathers wax and honey out of many flowers, and makes a new bundle of all."[60] However, unlike in the case of the exemplary bee and the good housewife, both baroque and postmodern allegorists do not proceed from diversity to unity, but produce writings which inevitably turn out to be "a rhapsody of rags … confusedly tumbled out."[61] They persist in collecting diverse pieces, shreds, molecules, combining them into new configurations, but a unified structure cannot be (re)built, since they cannot transcend the disjointed fragmentariness. Their process is ruinous because it consists in accumulating ruins.

Recapitulating the argument of this section, it may be stated that allegory, which does not operate in the world of ideas, totality and transcendence, but remains in the realm of the fragment and the incomplete, reveals itself as meaningless verbosity, as the broken, arbitrary, and thus truly authentic language of fallen humanity and mournful nature of postmodernity. There is no lofty flight of thought, but rather the allegorical struggle is one of stumbling over ruins, of limping, and, finally, of breaking the inevitable fall.

Fragments and ruins play here a fundamental role, because they are situated at a liminal site, a site of transposition between something and nothing. They arrest, however fleetingly, the process of death and decay, and offer an image to be melancholically contemplated:

> The ruin, awakening in the observer the desire to fill in its rifts, gaps and absences, at the same time frustrates the realization of the desire as it both inspires thought to perform the impossible work of completion and teaches … the lesson of the inevitable ruin, decay and ultimate loss, which is the lesson of the Baroque meditation: "Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate.[62]

[59] Pensky, *Melancholy Dialectics*, 124.
[60] Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 24.
[61] Ibid., 25.
[62] Barczyk-Barakońska, *The Melancholy Discourse*, 175.

The brooder, whose "conventional" image of reality has been shattered by melancholy, recoils with horror from the vision of an ensemble of unrelated and discrete pieces, dead ruins, but at the same time understands that the inability to oblige the elements of the appearance world to conform to their old, comfortable totality may correspond to a higher truth about the nature of things that had been concealed before: the world as shattered and meaningless is truer.

Textual Wanderings

"There is a specific kind of melancholia called in Arabic, kutabuk. This is the name of an animal known to run on the surface of water, back and forth, from one side to another side. The prey of the kutabuk are wanderers and vagabonds"[63] – we can read in *The Encyclopedia of Diderot and d'Alembert* under the entry "Melancholia." Although, on the face of it, the connection between Arabic type of melancholia and vagabonds might sound a bit exotic, a theme of wandering turns out to be a recurrent motif in the melancholic context. According to the astrological imagery from the period of the Renaissance a vagabond is one of Saturn's children. "I was born under the sign of Saturn – the planet of slow revolution, the star of hesitation and delay"[64] – writes Benjamin, a great witness of melancholy. This aimless and eternal wandering, conditioning the mode of existence of the melancholic, is also negotiated in the contemporary writing. The postmodern text, in/through/around which the postmodern melancholic wanders, emerges as only a provisional path that constantly constitutes itself and lacks any definite destination, as it ceaselessly modifies its directions.

One of the central metaphors for wanderings of postmodern fiction is a labyrinth, which makes the *signum* of narratives of Jorge Luis Borges (*Labyrinths. Selected Stories & Other Writings*), Thomas Pynchon (*Gravity's Rainbow*), John Barth (*Lost in the Funhouse*) or Italo Calvino ("The Count of Monte Cristo") among others. Umberto Eco claims that the labyrinth can assume three different forms: the linear, the maze and the net.[65] The first, the classical one, built by

[63] Denis Diderot, "Melancholia," in *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. Matthew Chozick (Ann Arbor: Scholarly Publishing Office of the University of Michigan Library, 2007), accessed December 5, 2010, http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.808, 308. Originally published as "Melancholie." *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 10, Paris, 1765.

[64] Walter Benjamin, "Agesilaus Santander (First Version)," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 2: 1927–1934*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, (USA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 713.

[65] Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 82–84.

Dedalus, was unicursal, with no dead ends, leading unfailingly to its centre. The second is characterized by the binary choices between right and wrong turnings, but the process of trial and error is based on a definite code that enables finding the way out. The maze, including the possibility of failure but not the suspension of dualities and values, might be regarded as an image of the modernist novel; whereas the postmodern literature finds its embodiment in the third type of the labyrinth proposed by Eco, that is, the net. The net has no way out and no single correct design of the route. It often evolves into its most complex and radical form, the "rhizome," which takes its name from Deleuze and Guattari's conception:

> A rhizome as subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicles. Bulbs and tubers are rhizomes …. Burrows are too, in all of their functions of shelter, supply, movement, evasion, and breakout. The rhizome itself assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretions into bulbs and tubers.[66]

The rhizome's basic principles provide key features of its labyrinthine parallel. It creates an open-ended configuration with no single, linear channel. The decentred, non-hierarchical lines connect with all other lines in random, unregulated relationships and shapes. They build a system of ramifications, a flow in a myriad of directions. There is no beginning and no end, but only the middle of dynamic movement and continuous change. "The rhizome is so constructed that every path can be connected with every other one. It has no centre, no periphery, no exit, because it is potentially infinite."[67] At first, the rhizome may appear to be a distortion of the maze concept. Since it has no periphery and no exit or entrance, one may wonder if there is a point to the decisions it asks its participants to make. With the literary rhizome, it is the process rather than emergence (that is, total completion of the novel) that is important. Consequently, rhizomatic novels are often cyclical. They provide unending paths, infinite twists and rewindings, offer endless possibilities of branching out, turning, reversing the direction; thus rendering the maze as a narrative structure inexhaustible and preventing an absolute conclusion of the story.

The plot construction of the postmodern fiction is often compared to Chinese boxes:[68] in every box there is another box there is another box etc.; or in each labyrinth there is another labyrinth there is another labyrinth and so on. A good illustration shall be once again provided by Borges's stories, where the linearity and end-directedness of the labyrinthine plots, for instance the quest,

[66] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London, Athlone Press, 1988), 6–7.

[67] Umberto Eco, *Reflections on The Name of The Rose* (London: Secher & Warburg, 1983), 57.

[68] McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 112.

are always translated into open-endedness by means of multiplying and superimposing motives, clues and directions in such a way that they become contradictory, diffused, ultimately unrecognizable, or at least attain an equal status of (non)probability for the reader, who finally finds himself or herself in a decentred maze without end. Consolation, however, always lies in the infinity of possibilities on the way; actually the way is the end. In John Barth's words, Borges "need *not* rehearse its [labyrinth's] possibilities to exhaustion"; what he needs is the awareness of the infiniteness of its possibilities to succeed in his "heroic enterprise, with salvation as its object."[69] Hence, it may be reasonably argued that it is the process that is the content of many postmodern novels, in which plots are practically deprived of beginning and end, or at least of the end; it is the *middle* that counts and provokes readers to explore.

The labyrinth emerges also as a central theme in Mark Danielewski's debut novel *The House of Leaves* with its conceptual focus, the Ash Tree Lane house, which takes on the terrifying traits of a maze: dark corridors, shifting unknowable proportions, and often-inescapable depths.[70] However, what seems to be even more worthy of note is the fact that the conceptual space of the house, its spatial confusion, is conveyed and mirrored by the structural foundations of the book. Danielewski organises the layout of his text on the page so as to emulate the motif of the labyrinth, treating the page as an omnidirectional writing plane on which text can go in many different directions. As if enacting what it names, chapter nine (titled "The Labyrinth" in the appendix) occurs to be a visual mosaic in which text bursts apart into fragments scattered around the page, written upside down, backward, horizontal or arranged in different columns and boxes telling two or three stories at the same time. Footnotes are nested within other footnotes and appear not only at page bottoms but in the middle or upper portions as well.

Exposed to the choice of multiple pathways in this new kind of textual space, readers must decide themselves how to navigate their ways through the maze of words. Danielewski seems to encourage them to find some exceptional routes, ignoring the order of the pages. Therefore, he uses a series of footnotes stemming from a single footnote, spiralling successively away from its main track and overcoming the main narrative. Furthermore, the footnotes direct readers to various sections, entangling them in labyrinthine movement through the book. For instance, footnotes 175 and 176 refer the reader to appendix E and B respectively, sections which provide insight into the main protagonist's character. The reader's choice of which direction to take, either moving to designated sections or reaching them according to the page numbers, changes his/her comprehension of the novel.

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[69] John Barth, "The Literature of Exhaustion," in *Postmodern Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Niall Lucy (Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishers), 321.

[70] Mark Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (New York: Pantheon Books), 2000.

Danielewski's experimental designs place *House of Leaves* in a tradition of books which test new spatial orientations and transform the written page into the labyrinth, some of the more spectacular examples being Derrida's double-column text *Glas* or Raymond Federman's novel *Take It or Leave It*, which opens with "Pretext" subtitled tellingly "a spatial displacement of words." Brian McHale, who argues that the common denominator of the postmodernist fiction is the foregrounding of ontology and the raising of the questions about the world (or worlds) we live in, notices that not only semantic and narrative discontinuity but also its physical "objective correlative," the *spacing* of the text, reflect the postmodern experience of brokenness, fragmentation and all-pervading sense of loss.[71]

To travel without reaching your destination, to wander around and meander in constant deferral of the purpose and aim, to linger within the ambiguous space of the border, the edge, the margin, to stray and lose your way by tracing the labyrinthine and circuitous route – this is the journey of melancholy which writes; and, like every real voyage, it does not want to know its end. And maybe during this long wandering, while probing beyond the veneer of the pages, searching for some secrets within the covers, pages, words, exploring the gaps and empty spaces left in the path and between points of direction, the melancholic vagabonds will discover some hidden levels below the surface they walk on, mysterious dimensions of the labyrinth which have so far been expressed only in their absence, as the void. And then they will behold this "something else, something beyond it all, a greater story still looming in the twilight which for some reason [they are now] unable to see."[72]

Conclusions

The present paper has proposed to approach the postmodern melancholy from the perspective of issues concerning writing. Postmodern works, produced from the condition of loss, fragmentation and discontinuity, have turned out to bear the ineffable traces of melancholy, whose presence are clearly visible in various literary structures, strategies, forms, analysed in the preceding pages. Enumeration with its subversive *heterotopias*, incessantly contesting any desire for wholeness, allegorical aesthetics of the broken and ruinous, and textual wanderings on the borders of the text or in the confusing space of labyrinth – all they have unravelled the latent operations of melancholy.

From the foregoing analysis, I hope, one might draw the conclusion that melancholy still remains "the ailment of our age," not only because, as Kristeva

[71] McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 181–82.
[72] Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 15.

claims, it corresponds to the very ground of our emergence as speaking and acting persons, but first and foremost, because the postmodern persists in penetrating those spheres of life which are close to *gravitas*. The crisis of meaning does not appear solely as an occasion for a good time, for comic dances of representations within the exhilarating space that dead meaning has left behind, but drives our culture into the secrets of its own inner illness. It is melancholy that instigates postmodernity to explore cracks, gaps, fragments, waste, antinomies, aporias, in which the inescapable truth about our illegible and sinister world is hidden. It is melancholy that is capable of reproducing also in us this troubling "affect" of malaise which brings our attention to the fact that we will not survive in this "heavy" world, in this postmodern life, in which ambiguity rules over clarity, uncertainty has taken place of comprehensibility and the sense of separation from the world forms the centre of experience, unless we respond to its call for action. This action, directed against the horror of complete silence and nothingness, is literature. Yet it is not literature which struggles to eradicate all the traces of loss by mythologizing, domesticating and enframing the meaningless world within the familiar intellectual concepts, but the one which works through the loss and is engaged with it. It is literature which does not limit itself to theoretical movements but takes roots in the world whose ambiguity and incomprehensibility is both the source of anxiety and of hope. This broken, fragmented, ruin-like world has gaps, where nothingness lurks and which cannot be pasted up, even with the most elaborate and beautiful rhetoric. Undoubtedly, the greatest achievement of postmodern writers is that they are not afraid of talking about these gaps.

Agata Wilczek

W obliczu tego co nienazywalne: ponowoczesna melancholia a estetyka tekstu

Streszczenie

Pojęcie melancholii cieszy się od dawna w kulturze europejskiej ogromną popularnością, stając się przedmiotem dogłębnych naukowych, psychologicznych, socjologicznych czy kulturowych badań. Niniejszy artykuł, wpisując się w tę długoletnią tradycję, podejmuje próbę zastanowienia się nad obecnością i statusem melancholii w ponowoczesności. Proponowane rozważania ukazują, że jednostronna interpretacja kultury ponowoczesnej jako beztroskiej, ludycznej, wesołkowatej, ekstatycznej – jednym słowem wybierającej „lekkość" w miejsce „ciężaru" bycia – nie jest do końca uzasadniona. Postmodernizm podszyty jest bowiem melancholią i nie cofa się przed egzystencjalnymi poszukiwaniami, penetrując obszary bliskie tradycyjnie pojmowanej *gravitas*.

Analiza podejmowanych przez wieki prób jednoznacznego zdefiniowania melancholii ujawnia złożoność i nieuchwytność jej natury. Melancholia pojmowana była jako choroba psychiczna, uciążliwy temperament, acedia, czyli duchowa ociężałość i obojętność, ale też skłonność ludzi genialnych, by ostatecznie uzyskać status doświadczenia metafizycznego i stać się podstawowym rysem człowieczeństwa. Zmieniające się warunki społeczno-historyczne towarzyszące kształtowaniu się nowego paradygmatu ponowoczesności w sposób szczególny przyczyniły się do tego, że świat, byt i człowiek jawią się jako istnienia z gruntu melancholiczne. Z doznania nieciągłości historycznej, poczucia straty i przeświadczenia o niejasności, zakryciu bądź braku fundamentu, na którym wznosi się nasza rzeczywistość, zrodziła się ponowoczesna melancholia. W rzeczywistości odartej z wartości, naznaczonej brakiem i pozbawionej sensu człowiek współczesny stał się wiecznym tułaczem, przemierzającym nieprzyjazne trakty tego świata bez znajomości kierunku i celu swej włóczęgi.

W sposób najbardziej wyraźny ponowoczesna melancholia dotknęła estetyki tekstu. W porządku pisma odpowiadają jej takie figury i techniki pisarskie jak alegoria, fragment, wyliczenie, dygresja, skłonność do wędrowania po peryferiach i marginesach tekstu czy błądzenie w przestrzeni labiryntu. Język melancholii ponowoczesnej zanurza się w przypadkowości, bełkocie, niewyraźności, pomieszaniu, tworząc formy szczątkowe, fragmentaryczne, dwuznaczne, tym samym pozwalając dostrzec, że nasz świat pełen jest dziur, pęknięć, sprzeczności, których nie da się zatuszować nawet najsubtelniejszą metaforyką.

Agata Wilczek

Devant l'innommable : mélancolie postmoderne et esthétique du texte

Résumé

La notion de mélancolie jouit depuis longtemps dans la culture européenne d'une popularité immense tout en devenant l'objet des études scientifiques, psychologiques, sociologiques et culturelles. Le présent article, tout en s'inscrivant dans cette longue tradition, essaye de s'interroger sur la présence et le statut de la mélancolie dans la postmodernité. Les réflexions proposées dans l'article montrent qu'une interprétation unilatérale de la culture postmoderne comme celle qui est insouciante, ludique, enjouée, extatique – en un mot choisissant la « légèreté » au lieu du « poids » d'être – n'est pas tout à fait justifiée. Or, le postmodernisme cache en lui la mélancolie, et il ne recule pas devant les recherches existentielles tout en explorant les terrains qui sont proches à *gravitas* traditionnellement saisie.

L'analyse des tentatives – entreprises depuis des siècles – consistant à définir la mélancolie d'une façon univoque dévoile la complexité et l'insaisissabilité de sa nature. La mélancolie était perçue comme une maladie psychique, un tempérament pénible, l'acédie (c'est-à-dire pesanteur et indifférence spirituelles), mais également comme un penchant des personnes géniales, pour finalement acquérir le statut d'une expérience métaphysique et devenir le trait fondamental de la nature humaine. Les conditions sociohistoriques changeantes et accompagnant la formation du nouveau paradigme de la postmodernité ont contribué d'une façon particulière à ce que le monde, l'existence et l'homme apparaissent comme des êtres entièrement mélancoliques. La sensation de discontinuité historique, le sentiment de perte et la conviction d'imprécision, la dissimulation ou l'absence du fondement sur lequel se dresse notre réalité ont contribué à la naissance de la mélancolie postmoderne. Dans une réalité dénuée de valeurs, marquée par la carence et

dépourvue de sens, l'homme contemporain est devenu un vagabond éternel parcourant les chemins hostiles de ce monde sans connaître ni la direction ni le but de son errance.

C'est bel et bien l'esthétique du texte qui a été le plus explicitement marquée par la mélancolie postmoderne. Il faut énumérer des figures de style et techniques littéraires telles que : allégorie, fragment, énumération, digression, tendance à déambuler dans les périphéries et en marge du texte, ou encore errance à l'intérieur du labyrinthe. Le langage de la mélancolie postmoderne se plonge dans le fortuit, le bredouillement, l'imprécision, la confusion en créant des formes rudimentaires, fragmentaires, ambivalentes et, par conséquent, permettant de voir que notre monde est plein de trous, de fissures et de contradictions que l'on ne peut pas voiler même par la métaphore la plus subtile.

Part Four

Searching the Self

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Illness – Therapy – Catharsis
Gender Roles, Camp, and Postmodern Identities in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*

In her 1990 breakthrough book, *Gender Trouble*, author Judith Butler writes that gender is established through gestures. Frank-N-Furter, in the 1975 film, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, seems to have known that already. In the following article I intend to define camp, whose embodiment is Frank, as a discourse or strategy which is conscious of the theatricality and fluidity of people's identities, both of which link it not only with Butler's concept of gender performativity but also with the whole postmodern discourse on identity.

Let me begin with the plot of the film. At the centre of my analysis are the aforementioned Frank as well as the couple Brad and Janet. The movie commences with Brad and Janet's friends' marriage along with their own engagement. As the criminologist – a unique narrator and commentator of the story – informs us: "It seemed a fairly ordinary night when Brad Majors and his fiancée, Janet Weiss – two young, ordinary, healthy kids, left their city to visit a Dr. Everett Scott, a former tutor and now a friend to both of them." Unfortunately, or from the perspective of postmodern and campy discourse I should write fortunately, they end up in the castle known as the "Frankenstein place," which is occupied by the neither "normal" nor "healthy" Frank.

I would like to focus for a moment on the adjectives which are used to describe Brad and Janet. Why are these two characters considered normal? What makes them seem healthy and ordinary? I will risk the answer (or maybe now there is no risk in saying such things) that they are normal because they are well-gendered. I would say that not only do Brad and Janet represent the young male and female of the Eisenhower era but I would also argue that they portray the conventional, commonly accepted and seemingly natural attributes of femininity and masculinity.

Janet, pretty and innocent, relies on her responsible and protective man. She quivers and faints, while being supported, as well as silenced, by him. He speaks for her, he calms her down, and he explains everything to her. Their interaction illustrates that the gender roles are divided. Brad and Janet simply try to fit into the conventional moulds of masculinity and femininity. However, "their performance of nature" is disturbed by the emergence of Frank, who does not allow them to reiterate the gender norms. His questions, along with his behaviour, strip gender of its seeming naturalness. As Fabio Cleto claims, camp, the embodiment of which is Frank, "works on the crisis of codes and signs, and through these, of the cultural hierarchies that are inscribed in all 'naturality of signs'."[1]

One of the main features of camp, whose strategies are used by Frank, as Fabio Cleto says, is incongruity.[2] It can be perceived in a variety of ways: a lack of adjustment between form and content, a change of perspective, or as strangeness. The first meaning of the term is described by Stefan Ingvarsson in his essay "Niespodziewany koniec campu? 15 stacji na drodze ku śmierci campu." According to him, camp is "talking about something serious and personal, often painful, using a form widely viewed as distasteful, low and exaggerated. And it is also reading something widely considered to be low, distasteful, or exaggerated in a personal and serious way"[3] [translation mine, AL]. The significance of incongruity as a change of perspective is explored by Esther Newton in her essay "Role Models." She sees camp as a strategy that transforms pain, fear, and sadness into a joke. She writes: "Camp is for fun; …. In fact, it is a *system* of humor. Camp humor is a system of laughing at one's incongruous position instead of crying."[4] The final characterization of camp is related to the fact that camp challenges the societal norms of order, identity, similarity, linearity, sense, and fitting, and consequently it is seen as strange, abnormal, artificial, and, above all, dangerous.[5]

[1] Fabio Cleto, ed., *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject. A Reader* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 19.

[2] Cleto, *Camp*, 12, 22.

[3] Stefan Ingvarsson, "Niespodziewany koniec campu? 15 stacji na drodze ku śmierci campu," in *CAMPania: Zjawisko campu we współczesnej kulturze,* ed. Piotr Oczko (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2008), 31.

[4] Esther Newton, "Role Models," in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject. A Reader,* ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 106. Frank is expressing similar feelings, when he talks about his life. This is the queer life of a campy man whose strategy is fun. There is one scene in the movie where Frank presents himself as suffering and paying a high price for being different. He says, "It's not easy, having a good time. Even smiling makes my face ache."

[5] Taking into consideration the campiness of the horror film genre, it is worth focusing on Tomasz Kaliściak's words. He writes: "from a normal, and therefore the normative point of view, camp is psychopathic: it causes the feeling of fear, anxiety, and horror, because it participates in the pleasure (perhaps prohibited) which the normal has been deprived of." Tomasz Kaliściak, "Święty kamp. Psychoanalityczne studium Świętego Sebastiana," in *CAMPania: Zjawisko campu*

These three understandings of camp contributed to its becoming the gay men's strategy, a strategy which helped them to survive in the hostile milieu of conventional, heteronormative society. Such words as Dyer's – "Camp kept, and keeps, a lot of gay men going"[6] – and Medhurst's – "gay men used camp as a survival mechanism in a hostile environment"[7] – show that camp has existed as "a form of self-defence,"[8] as a weapon against and a way of dealing with society.

In my article, however, I would like to examine camp as therapy for "normal" people. Since camp suggests that "the identity is self-reflexively constituted by the performances themselves,"[9] it reveals that the selves are not given, but constructed, and, consequently, it shows ways of liberating oneself from the restrictions of gender. Encouraged by the scholarly works of Gilles Deleuze with Felix Guattari and Guy Hocquenghem, I want to treat gender roles as a "unique illness," an illness which restricts the creative powers of humans and which also possesses a latent existence. The aforementioned scholars view desire as formless, aimless, and infinite flows, which can touch everything and everyone, thus creating a limitless web of connections. However, they all also claim that the productive power of desire[10] is restricted, categorized, and territorialized by the discourses of psychology, conventions, and society. Deleuze and Guattari write in their radical *Anti-Oedipus* that: "The prime function incumbent upon the socius, has always been to codify the flows of desire, to inscribe them, to record them, to see to it that no flow exists that is not properly damned up, channeled, regulated."[11] Hocquenghem adds, "To identify oneself, to bind the organs into a single person, means to leave behind the polymorphously perverse, or rather to initiate the perversity of the polymorphous."[12] Deleuze and Guattari, who are seen as the most

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we współczesnej kulturze, ed. Piotr Oczko (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2008), 140. (translation mine, AL).

[6] Richard Dyer, *The Culture of Queers* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 49.

[7] Andy Medhurst, "Camp," in *Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Critical Introduction,* ed. Andy Medhurst and Sally R. Munt (London and Washington: Cassell, 1997), 276.

[8] Dyer, *The Culture of Queers,* 49.

[9] Moe Meyer, ed., *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 4.

[10] For them desire is not connected with or caused by a lack of something, but it is productive, which means that it does not fill some gaps, but it creates new connections. Elizabeth Grosz in her book *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* writes that "they enable desire to be understood not just as feeling or affect, but also as doing and making.… As production, desire does not provide blueprints, models, ideals, or goals. Rather, it experiments: it is fundamentally aleatory, inventive." Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 180.

[11] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus,* trans. Robery Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (London: The Athlone Press Ltd, 1984; reprint, New York and London: Continnum International Publishing Group, 2011), 35.

[12] Guy Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire*, trans. Daniella Dangoor (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993; reprint, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 80.

radical thinkers of sexual postmodernism[13] claim that "there is no fixed subject unless there is repression"[14] and in turn, their *Anti-Oedipus* is the confirmation of Seem's and Miller's words, "for we are sick, so sick, of our *selves*!"[15] and "everybody becomes a healer the moment he forgets about himself."[16]

With regard to the above-mentioned ideas, Brad and Janet certainly suffer from this disease called gender roles. Their disease is contagious, hereditary, and social, but it can also be viewed as almost sexually transmitted.[17] The symptoms of this disease are the conventional distribution of gender attributes, and conventional morality, neither of which allow free realization of desire and pleasure independent of marital status, gender, and sex. Frank turns out to be an effective resistance to this disease. His campiness, especially with its parodic and transgressive flavour, appears to be the effective treatment of "naturality." Camp allows people to liberate themselves from gender restrictions and consequently – paraphrasing Miller's words – to heal themselves.[18]

Female and male genders along with the attributes ascribed to them have to be rethought by Brad and Janet. The main characters are forced to revalue and reshape their identities. Frank shows them that what they perceive as natural, inborn, and unchangeable is, in reality, only one way of acting out one's seemingly stable and solid core. Susan Sontag, who is commonly called the mother of camp, claims that camp "is the farthest extension, in sensibility, of the metaphor of life as theater."[19] By rejecting belief in the naturalness of one's identity, one's self becomes something to be created and played out. Through his behaviour, which I will describe in a moment, Frank reveals to the well-gendered Brad and Janet something Judith Butler also writes about – namely, that "gender attributes are not expressive but performative. They constitute the identity, they are said to reveal."[20] Frank persuades Brad and Janet that their identities, which are thought to be deeply imbedded in them, are just the reiteration of the norm. Conse-

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[13] Lisabeth During and Terri Fealy, "Philosophy," in *Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Critical Introduction,* ed. Andy Medhurst and Sally R. Munt (London and Washington: Cassell, 1997), 118.

[14] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus,* 24.

[15] Mark Seem, "Introduction," in Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus,* xxiii.

[16] Deleuze and Guattari, xxiii. Quoted after Henry Miller, *Sexus* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 429–30.

[17] Butler claims that the first moment in the delivery room is the act of categorization, which influences one's life. It is not a description or explanation of one's sex, but a performative act, which creates one's identity. From this moment on one builds one's identity according to the given label.

[18] Mark Seem, "Introduction," in Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus,* xxiii. Quoted after Henry Miller, *Sexus*, 429–30.

[19] Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp," in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing* Subject, 56.

[20] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990; reprint, London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 192.

quently, it turns out that this reiteration is inevitable if an individual is to be viewed as not only normal but as an actual person.

Let us look then at this subversive creature. Let us examine his extremely flamboyant lifestyle. Frank-N-Furter is an alien. He comes from another planet; he calls himself a "Sweet Transvestite from Transsexual, Transylvania." He is self-confident, imperious, but above all he is strange. He is beyond any kind of categorization. His black-cloaked, Draculish on-screen persona induces fear as well as admiration. There is the hidden provocative lingerie worn under his cloak. A man wearing feminine clothes can be viewed as bizarre, but this behaviour is easily related to drag performances which are viewed by Judith Butler as the parodic repetition of gender norms and as one of the possibilities of gender transformation. Consequently, these performances can be seen as the subversive act. For Frank, the strangeness of his wardrobe is intensified by the way he wears these clothes. This is not merely the simple adoption of things which are usually connected with the opposite sex, such as make-up, high-heeled shoes, beads, stockings, and a corset. Frank rebels by playing with these attributes' meanings. Of this the corset is an exquisite example. As a symbol of slavery, limitation, and oppression, the corset is not simply rejected but worn back to front. This is the first sign of the strategy which is the identity of Frank. This is the strategy of camp and campy identity. It is not merely enough to say that he refers to the possibilities that camp offers. I want to view Frank-N-Furter as pure camp.

I would like to make a brief remark here. I do not want to link the pureness of Frank's camp with Sontag's category of naïve, unconscious camp, because, in my opinion, Frank is aware of the existing conventions and how they can be undermined. This awareness is revealed in his ironic comments related to the traditional picture of man and woman. Let me quote one of his incisive remarks: "How forceful you are, Brad. Such a perfect specimen of manhood. So dominant. You must be awfully proud of him, Janet." It is this consciousness and irony that allows Frank to uncover the unnaturalness of gender categories. Furthermore, he recognizes these gender categories as an artificially constructed naturalness. His subversiveness allows him to see that identity is not something pre-given, inherent, and essential. Judith Butler writes: "Only from a self-consciously denaturalized position can we see how the appearance of naturalness is itself constructed"[21] and it seems to me that that is the exact position of Frank.

He points to the artificiality of any kind of judgment. He sings: "Don't get strung out by the way I look. Don't judge a book by its cover. I'm not much of a man by the light of day, but by night I'm one hell of a lover." He is a man and he is not a (traditional) man.[22] He pretends to be someone while still being himself.

[21] Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 149.

[22] Zachary Lamm in his essay points to the complications of identity which emerge with Frank's appearance. He writes: "Frank's body, regardless of its anatomical properties, becomes a canvas for play with genders while simultaneously refusing to be naturalized by them." Zach-

By questioning the naturalness of identity, he points to the freedom of choices we make to create ourselves.

His unconventional lifestyle influences Brad and Janet. They evidently start to rethink and re-feel their genders and the naturalness of the features which are ascribed to these genders. Frank shows them an escape from the essentialized notions of what it means to be woman and man. We observe their shift from being well-gendered, naïve followers of the demands of a seemingly pre-given identity to their becoming performers of the postmodern identity, an identity that is free-floating, unstable and changeable. Creative power, joyfulness, and plain old fun are all features that camp adds to this postmodern identity. Camp challenges the status quo and reveals the fact that "appearance is an illusion."[23] For camp everything is an illusion because everything is stylization and role-playing. Esther Newton says, "In fact, all of life is role and theater appearance"[24] and Richard Dyer adds that: "Camp can constantly remind us that what we are seeing is only a view of life."[25] This ontological flexibility allows the postmodern identity not to follow any fixed pattern. Resigning from the Platonic model of personality, it does not aspire to achieve some perfection. In other words, postmodern identity is perpetually stylized and because it can never be finished, accomplished, closed or exhausted, appears to be a never-ending evolution, as well as a self-creative process. Michel Foucault, one of the thinkers who shook the basis of every human quasi-immanent feature, encapsulates this new vision of identity in the following sentence: "Nothing in man – not even his body – is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for recognition or for understanding other men."[26] He elaborates on this vision of identity in the last two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*. His concept of the care of the self is extremely optimistic especially when compared to his earlier ideas, which tended to be more fatalistic. He rejects neither the concept of the *subject*ion, nor the conviction that each individual is constructed. However, he recognizes that these individuals have some power over this overwhelming power of discourses. He claims that "from the idea that the self is not given to us … there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art."[27] This is possible because, in Foucault's new view, every form of power entails "the potential of its

ary Lamm, "The Queer Pedagogy of Dr. Frank-N-Furter," in *Reading Rocky Horror:* The Rocky Horror Picture Show *and Popular Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 198.

[23] Newton, "Role Models," 99.

[24] Ibid., 105.

[25] Dyer, *The Culture of Queers*, 115.

[26] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 153.

[27] Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 351.

own undoing,"[28] which allows for the possibility of transgression. Therefore, the subject gains agency and despite the fact that it is still embroiled in the network of powers, it becomes conscious of autocreation. So the care of the self is about creating ourselves from both what we have and what we are given. It is about playing with the tools that surround us, because as Judith Butler claims, "power can be neither withdrawn nor refused, but only redeployed." She enumerates the main ways of transforming the gender distribution and I would argue that all of them appear in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show.* Firstly, there is the failure to repeat gender norms. Brad and Janet cease to behave as conventional man and woman, and accordingly they appreciate the proliferation of genders and the amalgam of their attributes. The second transforming technique is de-formity. In the early stages of the film, Janet labels as "unhealthy" the whole environment occupied by Frank, his guests (Transylvanians), and his servants – a brother and sister, who are not only siblings but also vampiric lovers. Despite the fact that Brad tries to "conquer" the otherness of the Transylvanians by calling them "foreigners with different ways," and "classify" their bizarre moves as "folk dancing," this abnormality, this abject, turns out to be not only repulsive but also interesting and alluring. The last but not least significant transforming practice is "a parodic repetition" that exposes the conventionality of gender's features. By his appropriating the attributes of two genders along with his ironic comments on Brad and Janet's conventional behaviour, Frank can be seen as an apparent gender failure. But he is laughing in the face of the regulatory practices of gender formation.

The matter at issue then is that Foucault's concept of the care of the self is focused on the fact that life is not the process of discovering the identity but the process of inventing and establishing it. The option of creating and not the option of being created is for Foucault of great importance. Additionally, he advocates creating not according to some given pattern, following the rules, sticking to norms or making one's identity closer to some ideal, perfect state. There is no universal way of living. People "exercise their lives" in ways that give them pleasure, satisfaction, and freedom. They utilize the possibility of constructing, modifying, and redecorating their identities. The concept of the care of the self, also-called aesthetization of life, employs the great powers of creativity, joy, energy, and willingness. And I really believe that this is what happens to Brad and Janet in Frank's castle.

The woman's desire is liberated first. Janet, who looks at Brad with devotion and claims that men with too many muscles are not her type, suddenly sings – upon seeing Rocky's well-built body – that she is "a muscle fan." However, the man's desire is also liberated. I would argue that the scenes in which Frank seduces

[28] Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living* (California: University of California Press, 1998), 117.

Brad and Janet do not praise promiscuity but criticize sexual conventions. Brad and Janet are not "afraid" of being unfaithful to each other, but they are "afraid" of doing something conventionally unacceptable. For Janet it would be a one-night stand, the horror of which would be intensified by a few facts. This would be pre-marital, non-procreative intercourse that would not take place between Janet and her fiancé.[29] As for Brad it would be the homosexual act. It is social restrictions which create their hesitation and not mutual love. They are rather scared by their nascent non-normative sexuality and that is why they finally bow to Frank. Janet says: "I was saving myself" and she adds: "Promise you won't tell Brad?" And when Frank, kissing Brad, says: "Oh, come on, Brad, admit it. You liked it, didn't you?" Brad does not object. The scenes of Brad and Janet's seduction are identical regarding the methods used by Frank, Brad and Janet's attempts at resistance, and finally their succumbing. This indistinguishability underlines the Frank's attitude that there is no significant gender difference between Brad and Janet. In other words, that gender difference does not influence the distribution of desire.

Brad and Janet feel obliged to "pass as straight." Janet, innocent and shy, and virile, self-confident and dominant Brad both play their parts perfectly. The campiness of Frank, however, stimulates them to act out their roles in a different way. Malwina Kucharska in her essay "Kampowa alternatywa" (Camp alternative) writes that camp "allows us to play masculinity and femininity in the ways we have chosen," and that "it is possible to play one's 'gender role' in the traditional way or to re-write it by using the mechanisms of camp."[30]

Frank's guests take the opportunity to alter their ways of "playing the being" especially in the final scenes in which the metaphor of theatre is presented directly to the viewer. Wearing erotic underwear, with make-up on their faces, Brad and Janet free themselves from the normative sexuality and the oppression related to it. Brad's initial fear and rejection change into sexual self-confidence. He sings: "It's beyond me. Help me, Mommy. I'll be good, you'll see. Take this dream away. What's this? Let's see. I feel sexy." His fiancée is pleased with the changes right from the beginning and she sings: "I feel released. Bad times deceased. My confidence has increased. Reality is here. The game has been disbanded. My mind has been expanded." Finally, accompanied by Frank, Rocky and Columbia, they sing a one-of-a-kind manifesto: "Don't dream it, be it."

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[29] Janet's liberation – Lamm claims – goes even further and it is visible in the scene of Janet and (not only) Rocky's intimacy. He writes: "The spectrum of lovers that Janet envisions hovering over her body (including Rocky and Frank as well as Riff Raff, Magenta, Columbia and Brad – with whom she has not yet had sex) shows that Janet has indeed 'wised up' to her sexual potential, imagining the erotic potential of heterosexual and lesbian, as well as transgendered, sex." Lamm, "The Queer Pedagogy of Dr. Frank-N-Furter," 201.

[30] Malwina Kucharska, "Kampowa alternatywa," accessed January 17, 2012, http://www.gender.pl/readarticle.php?article_id=113 (translation mine, AL).

They openly encourage each individual to be brave enough to follow one's desires, to be campy, to be overtly queer, to come out. Tomasz Kaliściak writes: "Camp, accompanying the process of a public coming out, is the acceptance and affirmation of diversity, which opposes the mechanisms of oppression."[31] Even Dr. Scott – a man who seems to be on the side of oppression and consequently on the side of order, purity, science, and control[32] – distances himself from his previous persona and bows to pleasure. Dr. Scott's monologue is a reflection of his state of mind. He has evolved from sticking to the norms and criticizing sexual freedom to embracing it. He declares: "We've got to get … out of this trap . . . before this decadence . . . saps our wills. I've got to be strong . . . und try to hang on. Or else my mind . . . may well snap. Und my life will be lived . . . for the thrill." Brad and Janet, along with Dr. Scott, have evolved from sticking to the norms and criticizing sexual freedom to embracing it. They all don high-heeled shoes and take part in a wild dance. This suspension of order, this kind of Bakhtinian carnival, is interrupted by the butler Riff Raff, who after accusing his master of living an extreme life kills him. It seems that the excessiveness of Frank's life is only an excuse for the actions taken by this handyman who is driven by envy and desperation.[33]

We are left with the forever-changed couple. Deprived of the security of a fixed, ontologically stable identity, Brad and Janet are altered, unable to believe

[31] Kaliściak, "Święty kamp," 141 (translation mine, AL).

[32] It may be significant that Dr. Scott is linked with German tradition (his accent and real name – dr. Von Scott) and Frank, in one of the scenes, wears (here) a red triangle. It is a well known fact that pink triangles were the signs used by Germans to mark homosexuals in concentration camps during the Second World War.

[33] How could a vampirising and incestuous hero condemn excess? Ben Hixon in his essay explains, in a very convincing and enlightening way, that killing Frank is seemingly a parodic triumph of normative authority (Hump-less Riff Raff and his sister appear to represent normality at the end of the film). This is the swimming pool scene – called by Hixon queer epiphany – which "settles" the meaning of the film. He writes: "Rather than a flood of narrative power and feeling that will entice the reader into accepting the subservient role of the queer to the norm, the queer epiphany is one that rides a wave of subversive power and feeling and, through the mechanisms discussed here – parody, masquerade, and the overthrow of abjection and prosthesis – shakes down the normative and prevents its assimilation of the queer or disabled, resulting instead in a promotion of the queer as a site of audience empathy and power." Ben Hixon, "In Search of the Authentic Queer Epiphany. Normativity and Representations of the Queer Disabled Body in *Rocky Horror,*" in *Reading Rocky Horror:* The Rocky Horror Picture Show *and Popular Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 186, 188. On the other hand, it is worthwhile to read Thomas G. Endres's essay "'Be Just and Fear Not'. Warring Visions of Righteous Decadence and Pragmatic Justice in *Rocky Horror*" in which the author tries to "prove" that the message of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* is, in reality, conservative, conventional or even moral. Endres writes: "Rocky Horror is, ultimately, a morality play that only can lead us to the conclusion that pure hedonism is an illusion and that those who attempt such a life will face retribution." Thomas G. Endres, "'Be Just and Fear Not'. Warring Visions of Righteous Decadence and Pragmatic Justice in *Rocky Horror,*" in *Reading Rocky Horror*, 218.

in the ultimate truth. Their queerness is visible in their words: "I've done a lot. God knows I've tried to find the truth. I've even lied. But all I know is down inside I'm bleeding," and it is also confirmed by the final song in which we hear: "Darkness has conquered Brad and Janet." We are also left with the hopeless words of the criminologist, who says: "And crawling on the planet's face, some insects called the human race, lost in time, lost in space and meaning."

Despite the gloomy and inconclusive ending, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*'s general atmosphere transforms the ontological uncertainty and vagueness of identity codes into a promising starting point for creating our own answers, our own meanings and consequently our own selves. This creation of "own" constitutes the cathartic power of the postmodern philosophy. Let me conclude by quoting the film's disciples of this philosophy: "Don't dream it, be it!"

Aleksandra Lubczyńska

Choroba – terapia – katharsis
Role genderowe, camp i postmodernistyczne tożsamości w filmie *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*

Streszczenie

Nadrzędnym tematem artykułu *Illness – Therapy – Catharsis. Gender Role, Camp, and Postmodern Identities in* The Rocky Horror Picture Show jest camp i jego rola w filmie *The Rocky Horror Picture Show.* Główni bohaterowie, czyli Brad i Janet oraz Frank, zwany Mistrzem, uosabiają opozycyjne dyskursy dotyczące tożsamości. Brad i Janet odgrywają swoje role genderowe w tradycyjny sposób podług pozornie stabilnych i naturalnych zasad dotyczących tego, co męskie, a co kobiece, podczas gdy Mistrz, który jest czystym wcieleniem campu, podkreśla niestabilność, płynność i zmienność tożsamości. Camp jest zazwyczaj przedstawiany jako strategia służąca „queerom" do przetrwania w nieprzyjaznym heteronormatywnym świecie, jednak w niniejszym artykule autorka postrzega camp jako swego rodzaju terapię dla „normalsów", a role genderowe, które ograniczają ludzką kreatywność prezentuje ona jako szczególną chorobę psychiczną, która zostaje wyleczona dzięki mistrzowskiej szokującej terapii. Poprzez odwołanie się do takich kategorii jak performatywność płci kulturowej autorstwa Judith Butler oraz estetyzacja egzystencji opisana przez Michela Foucault, autorka opisuje *katharsis* bohaterów, które w *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* sprowadza się do odrzucenia heteronormatywności i przejęcia campowych, bardziej różnorodnych sposobów realizacji swoich ról płciowych. Artykuł skupia się zatem na roli campu w procesie tworzenia postmodernistycznych tożsamości, które są nieciągłe, negocjowalne i płynne.

Aleksandra Lubczyńska

Maladie – thérapie – catharsis
Rôles de genre, camp et identités postmodernes dans le film intitulé *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*

Résumé

Le camp et son rôle dans le film *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* sont le sujet principal de l'article *Maladie – thérapie – catharsis. Rôles de genre, camp et identités postmodernes dans le film intitulé « The Rocky Horror Picture Show »*. Les personnages principaux, c'est-à-dire Brad, Janet et Frank – appelé le maître – représentent les discours opposés concernant l'identité. Brad et Janet jouent leurs rôles de genre d'une façon traditionnelle selon des règles apparemment stables et naturelles relatives au masculin et au féminin ; tandis que le maître – qui constitue une pure expression du camp – accentue l'instabilité, la fluidité et l'inégalité de l'identité. Le camp est d'habitude présenté comme une stratégie permettant aux « queers » de survivre dans un monde hétéronormatif qui leur est hostile ; toutefois, l'auteure perçoit dans son article le camp comme une sorte de thérapie pour les « normaux », et présente les rôles de genre – qui limitent l'activité humaine – comme une maladie psychique particulière qui peut être guérie grâce à une thérapie choquante du maître. En se référant à des catégories telles que la performativité du genre forgée par Judith Butler et l'esthétisation de l'existence décrite par Michel Foucault, l'auteure décrit la catharsis des héros qui dans *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* se réduit à rejeter l'hétéronormativité et à adapter des moyens de camp plus diversifiés pour réaliser leurs rôles de genre. L'article se concentre alors sur le rôle du camp dans le procédé de former des identités postmodernes qui sont discontinues, négociables et floues.

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Therapy or Obsession? Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Problems with His Self

A comment that can often be heard with reference to the paintings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti is that in all his works he painted the same woman. A strange enough comment, for there are very decisive differences between the women that appear in his *Ecce Ancilla Domini!* or *Venus Verticordia*, differences obviously coming from the different subjects of the paintings and from the physical differences between the models. On the other hand, all those women, perhaps with the exception of the early canvases for which the model was Rossetti's sister Christina, are disturbingly similar, almost identical, despite those obvious differences. The props may vary, but the female figure in the centre of a Rossetti's canvas remains the same: her naked face with a pair of languorous eyes, the copious hair, the garment, dominate the canvas and the viewer's attention. In a very fundamental way, the woman in Rossetti's paintings *is* always the same one.

There is another aspect of this problem – among the female faces that Rossetti's art is *made of*, so to say, there is one which occupies a privileged position: a face painted and repainted, sketched, drawn, portrayed, imagined and re-imagined, the prototype and the ultimate version of Rossettian beauty: the face of Elizabeth Siddal.

When she was "discovered" by the Pre-Raphaelite Brethren, Siddal worked in a London milliner's shop and was a simple, ordinary girl. Her beautiful face and coppery-blond hair attracted the attention of Walter Deverell, who persuaded her to model for his painting. Deverell introduced Miss Siddal to the other members of the PRB and quickly Siddal became the chief model for all the painters – her face can be seen in many of their early masterpieces, perhaps most characteristically in Millais's *Ophelia*, which, as is generally believed, depicts her features most accurately. She was a model for all, but her fate was to become the muse of only one of them – Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

For there is in the story of Siddal and Rossetti an element of what could be termed "fate," or perhaps more accurately, a self-fulfilling prophecy, and that element is the imagined connection between their story and the story of Dante Alighieri. Rossetti identified himself with Dante since an early age – it was in honour to that great poet that he started using his second name as first – and that identification only became complete when his own Beatrice appeared in 1850. The theme of a mourning for a lost love, a love made impossible by death, like the love of Dante for Beatrice, is omnipresent in his work ever since the early poem "The Blessed Damozel," and the two themes are brought together in an unfinished story entitled "St. Agnes of Intercession," a gothic-type, uncanny tale of authorial uncertainty, double identities and lost love, made even more uncanny and frightening if one realises how much it foretells the actual lives of Rossetti and Siddal.

The meeting points between fiction and reality in "St. Agnes of Intercession" are striking, especially that in 1850, when the story starts, most of that reality is yet to happen. The narrator is a young painter and in many ways Rossetti's *alter ego*. His initial interest in painting was kindled in childhood by a book he read at home, which resembles the circumstances in which young Dante Gabriel began his adventure with art, pouring over engravings in books or colouring into outlines of painting.[1] The narrator's artistic creed, which he pronounces while describing his work on his first successful picture, is the same as the idea that animates Rossetti's own artistic manifesto, his earlier story entitled "Hand and Soul" – the narrator of "St. Agnes" tells us, "… all work, to be truly worthy, should be wrought out of the age itself, as well as out of the soul of its producer, which must needs be a soul of the age."[2] This idea that artistic work should depict the artist's soul is a central one for Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and it sheds an additional light on the theme of Dante and Beatrice that his work explores.

The main similarity between Dante Gabriel and his narrator is that in the story, the symbolical identification of Rossetti with an earlier artist becomes an actual and terrifying reality. The narrator of "St. Agnes" discovers, to his horror, that his first successful picture, a portrait of his beloved, is in fact a contemporarily disguised copy from a fifteenth-century Italian painter. The young painter's initial apprehension, provoked by a remark of an art critic that the two paintings are very similar, turns into horror when he faces the painting in question after a long search:

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[1] Brian and Judy Dobbs, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: An Alien Victorian* (London: MacDonald and Jane's, 1977), 15.

[2] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "St. Agnes of Intercession," "Hand and Soul" in *The Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, edited with preface and notes by William Michael Rossetti (London: Ellis, 1911), 558.

> The picture is about half the size of life: it represents a beautiful woman, seated, in the costume of the painter's time, richly adorned with jewels; she holds a palm branch, and a lamb nestles to her feet. The glory round her head is a device pricked without colour on the gold background, which is full of faces of angels. The countenance was the one known to me, by a feeble reflex, in childhood; it was also the exact portrait of Mary, feature by feature. I had been absent from her for more than five months, and it was like seeing her again.[3]

As if it were not enough to have unknowingly copied an early Italian masterpiece (of course there is a deep current of authorial anxiety of influence here, carefully analysed for instance in Elizabeth Helsinger's *Poetry and the Pre-Raphaelite Arts*), the woman represented as St. Agnes turns out to be an exact copy of the narrator's fiancée. Finally, the narrator's eye is caught by the mention of that Italian painter's self portrait in the gallery catalogue, and when he walks up to see it, comes "face to face with [*himself*]!"[4]

The narrator's discovery of the two portraits understandably shatters his calmness and self-command. From among the possible explanations for the whole story, however, he chooses that which is obviously impossible and in that, very Rossettian:

> That it *was* my portrait, – that the St. Agnes was the portrait of Mary, – and that both had been painted by myself four hundred years ago, – this now rose up distinctly before me as the one and only solution of so startling a mystery, and as being, in fact, the result round which, or some portion of which, my soul had been blindly hovering, uncertain of itself.[5]

The swiftness with which the narrator moves from fear to an agitated acceptance of that impossibility is no less striking than his readiness to identify himself completely with the Italian painter whose work he mysteriously copied. The young painter is terrified at his discovery of this doubled double identity and the shock he goes through, the "tumult of spirit," brings upon him a serious health collapse.

There is, however, in this discovery and the young man's reaction to it, something of a hidden pleasure. The feeling he experiences on seeing his fifteenth-century "self-portrait" he describes as "the most lively and exquisite fear,"[6] the double meaning of "exquisite" suggesting pleasure and pain at the same time.

[3] Rossetti, "St. Agnes of Intercession," 564.
[4] Ibid., 566.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

It is as if the shock of having perpetrated an involuntary, unconscious act of plagiarism, were being alleviated by the recognition that his works, so similar to those of the Renaissance Italian painter in sharing "a certain mental approximation,"[7] were this way automatically becoming works of art endowed with the objective value of the masterpieces they so closely resembled.

"St. Agnes of Intercession" is a prophetic text not only with reference to Rossetti's relationship with Elizabeth Siddal but also to his general artistic life. The very description of the fifteenth-century painting of St. Agnes, with angels in its ornamental background, resembles more Rossetti's watercolours from the 1850s than actual Italian paintings from the fifteenth century, while the comment in the gallery catalogue on how the picture was produced provides an accurate, if at times cruel, description of Rossetti's usage of the face of his beloved in his paintings:

> The present picture, though ostensibly representing St. Agnes, is the portrait of Blanzifiore dal l'Ambra, a lady to whom the painter was deeply attached, and who died early. … [she decided that] Bucciuolo should paint her portrait before she died; for so, she said, there should still remain something to him whereby to have her in memory. … On the third day, while Bucciuolo was still at work, she died without moving. After her death, Bucciuolo finished the portrait, and added to it the attributes of St. Agnes, in honour of her purity.[8]

It is in one of Rossetti's most successful paintings, *Beata Beatrix*, that this sad link between art, love and death becomes realized.

Dante Gabriel celebrated his love for Elizabeth Siddal as a return to the story of Dante and Beatrice, seeing (or imposing) the resemblances between them as making the ordinary love-story between a working-class girl and a young painter something more, giving it a deeper meaning by putting it in a relationship with the important past; as John Dixon Hunt interprets it, "to paint his wife as Beatrice meant that, first, Elizabeth Siddal acquired the symbolical associations that Beatrice had for Dante Alighieri and, second, that Dante Gabriel was trying to heighten his own emotional existence by identifying himself and his wife with another, more moving relationship."[9] It is no wonder Rossetti chose such a patron to identify himself with – in his Anglo-Italian family home, Dante was something of a household god, *the* ultimate poet, and surely in Rossetti's eyes to become a real poet was to become like Dante, thence the early identification.

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[7] Ibid., 563.

[8] Ibid., 565.

[9] John Dixon Hunt, *The Pre-Raphaelite Imagination 1848–1900* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1968), 188.

The problem of identity in Rossetti's art, in poetry as in painting, occupies a central position. His poems often make use of his personal experiences and feelings, and there is always the question to what extent the text we are reading is a poetic creation, and to what an expression of the poet's own, personal feelings.[10] Because of its immense load of such private material, his poetry is often traced back to particular events in his emotional life, and many of the poems can be read as comments or reflections upon his actual experience, especially his relationship with Lizzie Siddal or Jane Morris.

But even if Lizzie Siddal reappears in Rossetti's poems, she more importantly animates his paintings. Rossetti's fellow PRBs all say that he painted and drew her face almost obsessively, and indeed there is an immense number of his sketches of her from the period of their engagement and short marriage. They all show a delicate woman in loose garments, whose pensive face is surrounded by a mass of hair. It is a face that positively haunted Rossetti even after his wife's death – it reappears in his paintings also after 1862, and perhaps the best illustration of this tendency is *Beata Beatrix*, begun when Siddal was still alive, and finished after her death, thus becoming a sort of tribute to her and to their love.

The painting represents Beatrice in the moment of transition between this world and heaven, in a sort of trance in which she sees the unseen with her half-closed eyes. There is a smoothness and mistiness in the painting, blurred contours and smooth brushstrokes, yet Lizzie's features are recognisable in the central figure. Siddal modelled for the painting and her face is portrayed as the face of Beatrice; but in real life, it was the face of Beatrice that Dante Gabriel saw in the face of Lizzie Siddal. Like in "St. Agnes of Intercession," the question is: Who are we looking at?

First of all, there is the Lizzie/Beatrice double identity, to which the painting is a kind of monument. Rossetti's identification with Dante, completed by the appearance of a Beatrice, was brought, painfully, to a completion by this Beatrice's untimely death, and it is this moment of death that is symbolically portrayed in *Beata Beatrix*. Beatrice in-between two worlds, surrounded by a light which does not actually shine on her, with the white poppy in her hands strangely suggestive of the opium which killed Elizabeth Siddal – the two women have become united in the painting, the double identity brought together into one. We are looking at Elizabeth Siddal modelling as Beatrice portrayed as Elizabeth Siddal. The identification comes full circle to where it starts from.

Yet the picture is hazy and the facial features of the central figure appear as if hidden behind a veil. Can we be sure it is Elizabeth Siddal that we are looking at? There is a similarity with other portraits of her produced by Rossetti – the shape

[10] This problem is of course present in perhaps any piece of poetry; the uniqueness of Rossetti's texts is that the tension between the intimate and the public is created deliberately and used as a poetic device.

of the chin or the quality of her hair, the shape of the eyelids. But the similarity is not so obvious anymore if the comparison includes paintings by other artists: Millais's *Ophelia* or Hunt's *A Converted Christian Family sheltering a Christian priest from the persecution of the Druids*. Siddal's face in those paintings is different, somehow more girly and her figure more petite than in the portraits done by Rossetti, it is closer to those descriptions that other Pre-Raphaelite Brethren have left of her. Finally, there is one portrait which contrasts most shockingly with the Rossetti's – Siddal's oil-on-canvas self-portrait from 1854. The face which looks out of that round painting is strikingly unlike any of the Pre-Raphaelite faces, it is, as Lynn Pearce describes it, an "austere and more 'Quakerish' presentation of herself [which] exists as a significant touchstone against which all Rossetti's studies may be read."[11] There is no "objective" evidence against which we could check the truthfulness of Siddal's artistic portraits. Naturally, Pearce's feminist reading of Rossetti's art as oppressively masculine vindicates Siddal as a victim of his male egocentrism; what the self-portrait might as well be testifying to are Siddal's mediocre artistic talents, her lack of skill with oil paints, or perhaps even her mental troubles. Whatever it is, however, that made her portray herself so harshly, does not obscure the obvious fact: Elizabeth Siddal did not look like what she did in Rossetti's pictures of herself. Who is it, then, that we are looking at?

Part of the answer to this question can be found in Rossetti's early short story entitled "Hand and Soul," published in the first issue of the Pre-Raphaelite periodical *The Germ*. Written during one night, it is the story of a Renaissance Italian painter Chiaro dell'Erma, another of Rossetti's *alter egos*, and his struggle for perfection in art. Chiaro seeks an ideal to follow, an idea to illuminate his art; not being able to find it in fame, faith and finally, the society, he falls into despair from which he is consoled by an unexpected vision of a beautiful woman "clad to the hands and feet with a green and grey raiment"[12] who, it is revealed, is the image of his soul. The consolation she brings to him is a revelation of the truth he was looking for – instead of turning to great ideas, he should search for inspiration within his own soul. The words the woman speaks to Chiaro are what is generally taken as Rossetti's artistic manifesto:

> Chiaro, servant of God, take now thine Art unto thee, and paint me thus, as I am, to know me: weak, as I am, and in the weeds of this time; only with eyes which seek out labour, and with a faith, not learned, yet jealous of prayer. Do this; so shall thy soul stand before thee always, and perplex thee no more.[13]

[11] Lynn Pearce, *Woman/Image/Text. Readings in Pre-Raphaelite Art and Literature* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo, Singapore: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 47.

[12] Rossetti, "St. Agnes of Intercession," 553.

[13] Ibid., 555.

The artist should draw his art not from any external influences but from his own soul – this is Rossetti's artistic creed, and it can be easily observed that this is the direction in which he veered after the initial PRB phase of his artistic life. Unlike his Pre-Raphaelite Brethren, Rossetti was more interested in painting visions out of his imagination than studying nature and painting realistic scenes.

To paint from his soul in the case of Chiaro means literally: paint his own soul as she appeared to him. The portrait in the story is described by the narrator as representing

> merely the figure of a woman, clad to the hands and feet with a green and grey raiment, chaste and early in its fashion, but exceedingly simple. She is standing: her hands are held together lightly, and her eyes set earnestly open.[14]

Thus, early on in Rossetti's career a picture whose central figure is a woman with beautiful hair and loose garment becomes the ultimate work of art, in terms of artistic as well as symbolic value. Of course the soul of Chiaro is not a woman – this is only a symbolic representation, the beautiful woman as the perfect beauty of the soul rendered in a visible form. But it is significant that out of all the beautiful objects in the material world, Rossetti decided to portray the soul as embodied in the perfect female form. This way, "Hand and Soul" provides another example of how Rossetti's early ideas have endured in his work until the end. The initial idea of identifying perfect spiritual beauty with perfect female beauty lingers on in Rossetti's poems and paintings. It is also there in his portrayal of Lizzie Siddal as Beatrice, who was herself a spiritual love for Dante, a perfect woman out of reach, to be adored and glorified in poetry.

Critics often write very harshly about Rossetti's treatment of Siddal, concentrating on the double identification with Dante and Beatrice as a means through which Rossetti substituted a perfect vision of a woman for the actual, flesh and blood person he married. The peculiarly artistic disrespect, or even abuse is also more than hinted at in the comments about Rossetti's use of the female figure, especially the female face, as an artistic theme, and his tendency to adapt his models' personal features to the ideal he already had in his head. It is the kind of judgment that I wish to avoid, partly because Dante Gabriel Rossetti was a very conscious designer of his artistic image and we will probably never know the truth behind his stories; and partly because even if it is true that the relationship between Siddal and Rossetti was in those many ways so abusive, there is another aspect in it which remains overlooked or not voiced enough.

Because even if we decide to think that Rossetti's love for the copper-haired beauty from a milliner's shop consisted in fact in his projecting aspects of himself

[14] Ibid.

onto her, which many facts from their lives do confirm, we should also ask, what did that mean for him? Why did a young, energetic, gifted, charismatic young man search for a confirmation of the worth of his love in its (perhaps imagined or imposed) resemblance to a love story from Renaissance Italy? Why did he paint the women he loved, first his wife, then his mistresses or simply the women he found beautiful ("stunners," as he called them with the word he invented), never as they really were, always altered, their features blurred out to resemble that ideal one he could see in his mind's eye?

It could be arrogance that was at the root of all that. But it could just as well be a hopeless search for spiritual perfection, not understood the Christian way, as goodness and personal improvement; but conducted by a man, whose peculiar vision of spirituality construed it as the realm of all that beauty his life and the world around him so obviously lacked. It is a proof, as John Dixon Hunt puts it, of "Rossetti's constant attempts to bridge the gulf between his ordinary existence and the ideal life of imagination."[15] It was a search which proved hopeless with every new attempt, for the beauty he looked for was neither in his soul nor in the faces of those beautiful women that stunned him with their eyes and their hair; an ideal as elusive as that beautiful woman he married, whose beauty it was impossible to capture in painting, even if he painted her as he saw her in her heart, a woman as elusive as the blessed Beatrice – still here with her body, but already somewhere else with her soul, herself and someone else at the same time, like Mary, the fiancée of the narrator of "St. Agnes of Intercession."

Like Chiaro, Rossetti paints what his soul searches for in the form of a beautiful woman. But Chiaro had seen his soul, had talked to her and she soothed him, and the figure in his painting is kind and gentle in her beauty; Rossetti's women are beautiful with a beauty that is dominating, powerful, that commands and controls the viewer's gaze. His women remain out of reach, hidden deep in their own thoughts, like Lizzie Siddal in his drawings and sketches. His paintings display Rossetti's desperate need for identification, the breach between the material and the spiritual that is already felt in "The Blessed Damozel." Like the lover in that poem, Rossetti yearns for that which is out of his reach; not a woman but an ideal, the spiritual beauty with which his soul could identify. When we look at a painting by Rossetti, with the beautiful, dominating female figure in the centre, we are not actually looking at a portrait of a model or of the artist's wife – we are looking at Rossetti's another attempt to paint his soul, another failed attempt to recognise and paint his self.

[15] Hunt, *The Pre-Raphaelite Imagination*, 188.

Maria Perzyńska

Terapia czy obsesja?
Tożsamość w twórczości Dante Gabriela Rossettiego

Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia zagadnienie tożsamości w wybranych dziełach Dante Gabriela Rossettiego. Na podstawie analizy niedokończonego opowiadania *St. Agnes of Intercession* oraz obrazu *Beata Beatrix*, ukazane jest nieustanne napięcie między rzeczywistością i ideałem, dążenie do doskonałego piękna oraz lęk przed wpływem, które to motywy stanowią centralny temat dzieł tego artysty epoki wiktoriańskiej.

Wychodząc od analizy sposobu przedstawienia postaci kobiecej w obrazach i tekstach autorstwa Rossettiego, artykuł ukazuje podstawowe założenie twórcze tego artysty, które brzmi: sztuka powinna ukazywać obraz duszy epoki i tożsamej z nią duszy artysty. U Rossettiego myśl ta wyrażona jest często w formie portretu zachwycającej postaci kobiecej, wzorowanej przeważnie na jego młodo zmarłej żonie Elizabeth Siddal. Drugim podejmowanym wątkiem jest kwestia niemożliwości osiągnięcia tego ideału, czyli niemożliwości oddania idealnego wewnętrznego piękna w dziełach, czy to malarskich, czy to literackich. Świadomość owego rozdźwięku między idealnym i rzeczywistym, duchowym i materialnym obecna jest w dziełach Rossettiego, sprawiając, że w tak wielu z nich podejmuje on temat tożsamości i wykorzystuje motyw sobowtóra.

Maria Perzyńska

Thérapie ou obsession ?
Identité dans l'œuvre de Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Résumé

L'article présente la question de l'identité dans des ouvrages choisis de Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Sur la base de l'analyse du récit inachevé *St. Agnes of Intercession* et le tableau *Beata Beatrix*, on a présenté une tension continue entre la réalité et l'idéal, l'aspiration à une beauté parfaite et la peur de l'influence ; ces motifs constituent le thème central de l'œuvre de cet artiste vivant à l'époque victorienne.

En commençant par l'analyse de la façon dont Rossatti présente le personnage féminin dans ses tableaux et textes, l'article démontre le principe créateur fondamental de cet artiste qui dit : l'art devrait présenter l'image de l'âme de l'époque et celle de l'âme de l'artiste qui s'y identifie. Chez Rossetti, cette idée est souvent exprimée sous forme d'un portait d'une femme ravissante, inspirée notamment de sa femme Elizabeth Siddal, décédée au jeune âge. L'impossibilité d'atteindre cet idéal, c'est-à-dire l'impossibilité de présenter la beauté intérieure idéale dans les ouvrages picturaux ou littéraires est un autre motif employé par l'artiste. La conscience de cette discordance entre l'idéal et le réel, le spirituel et le matériel est présente dans les ouvrages de Rossatti en contribuant à ce qu'il entreprend dans beaucoup d'entre eux le thème de l'identité et applique le motif de sosie.

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Trapped in a Vicious Circle of the Tragic Triad… Miltonian Satan and Conradian Kurtz's Process of Unearthing Authentic Identity

There are spheres of human culture that are capable of appealing with powerful force to a person's heart, at times allaying – like catharsis – surrounding anxieties and at times bringing the excitement of unexpectedness to an existence brimful with the quotidian.[1] One of these spheres is literature, the ever-growing circle of intertextuality and social communication that, as it is held by Stephen Greenblatt, is an inconceivable "circulation of social energy."[2] What is of significance, however, is the fact that literature is not only marked by openness on intertextuality within strict literary borders; it is likewise characterised by its readiness to mingle with other spheres of human thought. One of the most noticeable co-partners in such a symbiosis seems to be psychology and its various derivatives. That psychology reveals a lot in common with literature on the grounds of the same origin – the human psyche – is undisputable. According to Markowski, "psychoanalysis applicable to literary theory … focuses mainly on the nervous subject expressing its subjectivity through the text. The literary text, then, is treated as a symbolic representation of neurosis."[3] In truth, the literary figures that I propose to analyse in this article disclose, despite their powerfulness which is revealed in a variety of shapes, one serious weakness – they are, according to their morbid

[1] A different version of this article was incorporated into the author's doctoral dissertation, entitled *The Archetype of Evil Genius – A Comparative Study: John Milton, Joseph Conrad, Fyodor Dostoevsky*.

[2] Geoffrey Harpham, *One of Us – The Mastery of Joseph Conrad* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), xii.

[3] Michał Paweł Markowski, *Teorie Literatury XX wieku – Podręcznik* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo „Znak", 2007), 53 (translation mine, JG).

philosophy, subliminally deprived of something which is precious to them and to the development of their own subjectivity, and by reason of this lack or irrevocable wound, they experience a form of neurosis that pushes them towards evil, the only option for them. Thus, my intention here is to take a closer look at the attempt to unearth supremely evil characters' authentic identity while they are unconditionally plunging into iniquity.

Before the discussion turns to the sheer psychological aspects of the painstaking process of discovering one's authentic subjectivity, it is of significance to point to evil as the predominant attribute of both Satan and Kurtz's existence; the trait that initiates, facilitates and, in truth, concludes the entire process. To put it briefly, iniquity is brought onto the stage by such words as "Evil, be thou my good,"[4] and, in the Kurtz's case, the "wilderness … sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation. He was its spoiled and pampered favourite."[5] Wickedness powerfully shapes all spheres of Kurtz's existence and his relations to other characters. It provides him with a crucial dose of energy and incentive. He is defined by, attributed with, and eventually conquered by irrepressible evil – "Kurtz has indulged in unhealthy emotions to gorge his falsely nurtured ego. Since all he does is without any conflict of consciences, he becomes evil incarnate,"[6] writes Anita Mathew. The truth is that a proclivity for iniquity finds expression in the thought-out infliction of suffering upon natives. Thus, it seems feasible to propose the hypothesis that Kurtz, as if submerged in prehistory – one time Marlow asserts that "going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world"[7] – is an unadulterated descendant of Cain, the first murderer, "cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive his brother's blood,"[8] an inflictor of crime and torment. He is evil incarnate heralding the era of power and violence.

On the same front of wickedness emerges the figure of Satan, the archrebel from *Paradise Lost*, "the story of his inevitable degeneracy, the result of obstinacy in evil."[9] In fact, whatever he does, thinks or utters is provoked by malevolence which pulsates like blood in his damned heart incessantly. Whilst

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[4] John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (Edinburgh: Penguin Popular Classics, 1996), IV.110. The Roman numeral refers to the number of the Book, whereas the Arabic one(s) signifies the number(s) of the verse(s).

[5] Joseph Conrad, "Heart of Darkness," in *Youth and Two Other Stories by Joseph Conrad* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1928), 115.

[6] Anita Mathew, "An Eastern Appreciation of Joseph Conrad: His Treatment of Evil in 'Heart of Darkness' and *Under Western Eyes*," in *Joseph Conrad: East European, Polish and Worldwide*, ed. Wiesław Krajka (Boulder – Lublin – New York: East European Monographs – Maria Curie-Skłodowska University – Columbia University Press, 1999), 318.

[7] Conrad, "Heart of Darkness," 92.

[8] *The Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible* (New York and Glasgow: Collins' Clear-Type Press, 1971), Genesis IV. 11.

[9] David Daiches, *Milton* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1971), 158.

studying the Foe's limitless potential for evil, Helen Gardner acknowledges that Satan's

> inveterate hatred against God and his malice towards man belongs to the earliest beginnings of *Paradise Lost* in Milton's creative imagination. Satan has the objectivity of a dramatic figure, and resists all attempts to reduce him to a mere personification of evil.[10]

What is more, the Satan who feverishly soars towards Paradise is even more depraved than the one shown in the first two Books of the epic, in the den of sadness. His more sophisticated depravity is exposed by the fact that his evil is not only grounded in impulse but, first of all, in calculation. From this time forth it is for him a matter of cautious preference which stigmatizes his quest for revenge and subjectivity. Iniquity, in truth, is a force that pushes him into a solitary mission of destructiveness and finally devours its victim. Satan conjures up evil repeatedly like an addict who cannot exist without the thrill of indulging himself in wickedness.

The portrayal of the iniquity of those supreme evil characters can be enhanced by lines by William Shakespeare who in *Julius Caesar*, in the course of Antony's funeral oration, asserts that "the evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interrèd with their bones."[11] But is it possible that both Kurtz and Satan are ontologically unwavering in their wickedness; is there not a little bit of possible good and, consequently, dynamism in their psycho-moral constitution?

If the reader were to take Satan and Kurtz's wickedness aside for a moment and focus upon two passages, one could be stimulated to perceive the two figures from a different perspective. Thus, at the end of the novella the reader hears Marlow's conversation with Kurtz's intended, during which one becomes familiar with this news:

> I had heard that her engagement with Kurtz had been disapproved by her people. He wasn't rich enough or something. And indeed I don't know whether he had been a pauper all his life. He had given me some reason to infer that it was his impatience of comparative poverty that drove him out there.[12]

And in the epic, God in Book V makes this announcement:

> Your head I him appoint,
> And by myself have sworn to him shall bow

[10] Helen Gardner, *The Reading of Paradise Lost* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 32.

[11] William Shakespeare, "Julius Caesar," in *The Oxford Shakespeare – The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), III.ii. 76–77.

[12] Conrad, "Heart of Darkness," 159.

All knees in Heaven, and shall confess him Lord …
… him who disobeys,
Me disobeys, breaks union.[13]

There is not any doubt that those experiences (dire straits that those arrogant figures are forced to go through), either of being compelled to exist in a world where money is crucial in order to achieve a high social status, or of having to become subservient to a figure hitherto treated as equal, make Kurtz and Satan become disobedient. In truth, on account of these predicaments, they have an opportunity of being perceived not only as utterly wicked, but rather as being trapped in situations without an exit. They become ensnared in the tragic triad, a phenomenon described by Viktor Frankl, who holds that nobody is sure to be saved from coping with three commonly experienced realities in existence; namely: pain perceived as the reality of anguish, death as the reality of our mortality, and guilt as the reality of our human imperfection. Those three polarities of the tragic triad have "a great part in the life of the human and cannot be avoided."[14] Significantly, these three inevitable realities are factors of steady development. For this reason, the protagonists are thrust into the matrix of the tragic triad directing them, step by step, towards discovery of their genuine subjectivity. The process is nevertheless long and painful.

Firstly, it is not a complicated task to discern pain as an essential part of both Satan and Kurtz's existence. They are stigmatized by suffering which reveals its force while on their mission of wickedness and destruction. In truth, the first snap-shot of the fallen Satan, prostrate on the lake of fire, is marked with anguish, which is mixed with distress and uncertainty. The thought of permanent pain tortures him incessantly. What is more, apart from the anguish that the Foe bears with him wherever he betakes himself, Satan's brand new disposition is being continuously reiterated by means of other characters' vocalizations. The most noteworthy one is the rebuke administered by Gabriel, who in Book IV disparages the Arch-Rebel in such words:

But wherefore thou alone? Wherefore with thee
Came not all Hell broke loose? Is pain to them
Less pain, less to be fled? or thou than they
Less hardy to endure? Courageous chief,
The first in flight from pain.[15]

[13] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, V. 606–608, 610–11.

[14] Scott C. Peterson, "The Similarities Between Frankl's Logotherapy and Luther's Concepts of Vocation and the Theology of the Cross," in *Viktor Frankl's Contribution to Spirituality and Aging*, ed. Melvil A. Kimble (Binghamton: The Haworth Pastoral Press, 2000), 64.

[15] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IV. 917–21.

The stinging reproach is obviously answered by the loquacious Fiend but it does not force any change in the perspective from which the reader and other literary characters in the epic observe him as a fugitive from torment that has materialized in consequence of his own commotion, yet in the Empyrean.

Nevertheless, while Satan is primarily associated with internal anguish, Conrad's evil genius is even more miserable. Kurtz is stigmatized both with internal – at the end of his narrative Marlow stresses "the torment, the tempestuous anguish of his soul"[16] – and external suffering as well. The latter manifests its force in the shape of illnesses that, providentially for the agent, bring him closer, as Otto Bohlmann writes, to "his perception of his own nothingness."[17] The news of Kurtz's disease, the "external sign of Kurtz's inner madness (the disease of the soul),"[18] is initially brought by the manager whose familiarity with the matter is based solely upon gossip – "There were rumours that … Mr. Kurtz, was ill."[19] Other references to Kurtz's infirmities are made by his devoted follower, the Russian, who is remarkably proud of curing his master of two illnesses. What is more, the agent's pain is the platform upon which the reader is capable of drawing parallels between Kurtz and Satan, who is equally portrayed as defenceless after the fall – "'I heard he was lying helpless, and so I came up – took my chance,"[20] reports the Russian.

An existence submerged in agonizing distress unavoidably escorts both of them to the moment of their encounter with a shattering force of responsibility. In truth, guilt – the reality of innate fallibility – is grudgingly accepted by them. Their hectic activity whether in Hell, Eden or the jungle clearly testifies to their yearning to delegate culpability – another element of the tragic triad – onto the shoulders of the weaker ones, onto those who are, rather unwillingly, dependant on them. That is why Satan is bent on searching for unity with both his horrid crew and Adam and Eve on the mutual ground of disobedience and evil. The Fiend's sinister desire is exposed the moment he summons his army following their collapse, since the vision of him solely bearing the burden of responsibility for defiance and eventual fall is indeed excruciating. The Arch-Rebel acts fast and, after the preliminary courtesies, with derision he attacks his forces. He assaults those who have submissively listened to his orders – Lucifer's behest, passed to his copartner in crime, Beelzebub, is shown in Book V: "Tell them that, by command" they are "to prepare / Fit

[16] Conrad, "Heart of Darkness," 156.

[17] Otto Bohlmann, *Conrad's Existentialism* (New York: St. Martin's, 1991), 46.

[18] Ewa Bobrowska, "Above the Banks of Darkness: Joseph Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' and Søren Kierkegaard's Existentialism," in *Joseph Conrad: Between Literary Techniques and Their Messages*, ed. Wiesław Krajka (Boulder – Lublin – New York: East European Monographs – Maria Curie-Skłodowska University – Columbia University Press, 2009), 194.

[19] Conrad, "Heart of Darkness," 75.

[20] Ibid., 130.

entertainment to receive our King, / The great Messiah."[21] However in Hell he shouts:

> have ye chosen this place
> After the toil of battle to repose
> Your wearied virtue, for the ease you find
> To slumber here, as in the vales of Heaven?
> Or in this abject posture have ye sworn
> To adore the Conqueror?[22]

The reader perceives a radical shift from the pronoun "I" to "you," as though the army of the wicked were solely responsible for the present state of affairs. Moreover, the extent of his iniquity is so enormous that he desires to locate accountability for it upon the first people's shoulders as well. In short, his perilous enterprise could be summarized as an agonizing yearning, at best, to evade culpability altogether or, at worst, for shifting some part of it onto the blameless people: "League with you I seek / And mutual amity, so strait, so close, / That I with you must dwell, or you with me / Henceforth."[23] Satan's yearning is likewise tinged with a powerful dose of envy as he compares his wretchedness with the bliss of the first parents in the Garden of Eden.

Similarly to the Foe, Conrad's Kurtz – perceived as an inflictor of moral iniquity, the awe-inspiring agent who in the eyes of Marlow transforms "from the bearer of Western Civilization to the possessed demon,"[24] permeating and infusing with brutality, as if with pestilence, the realm of jungle – is struggling with all his might to shift the responsibility onto the natives for his being entrenched in the imperialistic machinery. The truth is that the process of colonization is marked not only with lofty ideals (sadly enough, they remain in the sphere of theoretical discourse, as shown on the example of Kurtz's hyper-eloquent, albeit hyper-faking report) but, to a more profound degree, it is stained with atrocities, dehumanization, the transgression of established limitations, voracity, and lack of restraint. Accordingly, we might formulate a hypothesis that while enhancing his inclination for crime-ridden iniquity along with his forcefully assuming the position of the natives' deity, Kurtz is, in reality, behaving like a neurotic child who is unable to deal with his predicament appropriately. Besides, Marlow hints that Kurtz, despite being possessed by the darkness of the jungle and of being an "extremist,"[25] can be recognized as an emotional per-

[21] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, V. 685, 689–91.

[22] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I. 318–23.

[23] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IV. 375–78.

[24] Liliana Sikorska, *A Short History of English Literature* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2007), 464.

[25] Conrad, "Heart of Darkness," 154.

son. He is capable of ingenuity, visualized by means of painting a picture, writing disturbing reports, and more importantly, of drawing "men towards him by what was best in them."[26] Hence, psychologically, a profoundly felt incongruity between theory and practice impels him to exercise himself in more sophisticated atrocities upon the natives (the reader is informed that Kurtz has ordered the heads of the rebels to be placed on stakes around his house). Thus, Kurtz's wickedness can be perceived as a manifestation of guilt experienced by a hypercreative person stigmatized with neurosis, a person whose heart is, on one side, capable of loving his intended and, on the other, of abominable treatment of the natives.

The two discussed elements of the tragic triad, that is, suffering and guilt, are augmented by another one. The concept of death – the reality of transitoriness – emerges as the most significant, yet it is the most horrifying. The truth is that the Foe is being exposed to a stable change for the worse, with an excruciating finish in the vision of an infernal serpent, "the shape he once adopted – so he thought – on his initiative."[27] Thus, although being portrayed as prevailing in his fall, the Fiend is crushed under the unbearable load of negative emotions which step by step devastate his glorious appearance and resolve, ruthlessly stripping him of the wealth of masks that became his element when he assumed the attire of the archetype of evil genius. Broadbent observes that the Foe "diminishes in stature all the way through and drops out two books before the end."[28] He starts to decompose and he knows that, which is why he is shown moving swiftly towards Paradise and Hell, wherein the ultimate image of degradation is appallingly projected. Denis Burden's explanation is worth citing at length:

> Milton's account of the transformation scene in Hell presents precisely the sort of tragedy that he does not want us to see in Book IX. Acted out in Hell is the tragedy of doom, its heroes the damned. In the midst of their applause for Satan's success with Man, the devils are turned suddenly into snakes.[29]

After having exultantly returned to his genuine abode – hell perceived as a spatial entity but as a state of mind as well – Satan is at last presented both to the reader and to himself in his true colours. Significantly, he accomplishes an inward progressive movement towards self-discovery, the psycho-moral effort advocated by

[26] Ibid., 159.

[27] Stanley E. Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 79.

[28] John Broadbent, *Paradise Lost – Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 157.

[29] Denis H. Burden, *The Logical Epic: A Study of the Argument of Paradise Lost* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 147.

Kierkegaard who asserts that the growth of "subjectivity requires the constant constructing of itself in the ancient dialectics of torment, namely, the yearning for being oneself and the analogous desire for not being oneself."[30] Nevertheless, from this time forth, the Fiend finds himself at such a juncture of his existence that he does not have to fake anything; his vile appearance reflects his innermost desires, presenting him as the evil genius profoundly racked with the iniquity he once accepted so enthusiastically.

Coming back to Kurtz, it is worth noting that, by situating a physical frailty prior to references to the agent's insanity and death, Conrad encourages the reader to observe that the first one is only the preface to more profound mental deformities. Hopefully, for Kurtz, the awareness of it dawns upon him at the moment of his death, allowing him to accept the excruciating truth about his existence, and being pressed "to confront the absurdity of his mission, placed in the reality that mercilessly reflects one's most repressed iniquities, he finally acknowledges the pitiful truth of his condition."[31] When Marlow eventually reaches Kurtz, he perceives a feeble and emaciated caricature of the once-powerful natives' sovereign who has been enduring deterioration as the corollary of his enthralment with the darkness of the jungle. Besides, Kurtz's decay is discernible while being juxtaposed with lunacy perceived as his enthusiastic involvement in rituals pervading the wilderness. His madness testifies to his inevitable corrosion which eventually reduces him to "the hollow sham."[32]

Unquestionably, although Kurtz's death is offered as the result of hatred, scheming, pride and voracious desire, it is the most momentous episode in his wicked existence. It mercilessly discloses, as by a sharp knife, his genuine identity as well as the motives that eventually led "him to become, as Marlow will say, "both 'lost' … and 'mad',"[33] one who is marked with ever-expanding narcissism that is "self-limiting and self-alienating," standing for "the root of evil" and shaping in that way the narcissist who "exists in social isolation."[34] Nonetheless, despite his infirmity, one of his greatest gifts remains, his profound voice, sounding deep to the very last breath, permitting him to articulate his farewell words which amount to the ultimate cry of self-condemnation of his atrocious existence.

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[30] Ewa Podrez, *W kręgu dobra i zła – Zarys historii etyki od starożytności do czasów współczesnych* (Warszawa: Wyższa Szkoła Zarządzania i Przedsiębiorczości im. Bogdana Jańskiego, 1998), 171 (translation mine, JG).

[31] Bobrowska, "Above the Banks," 194.

[32] Conrad, "Heart of Darkness," 147.

[33] Anna Teresa Tymieniecka, "Beyond Evil in *Heart of Darkness*: Levinasian Face-to-Face as Reliable Narration," in *The Enigma of Good and Evil: The Moral Sentiment in Literature*, ed. Anna Teresa Tymieniecka (Springer: Dordrecht, 2005), 97.

[34] Frederick Warren Morris, *Escaping Alienation – A Philosophy of Alienation and Dealienation* (Maryland: University Press of America, 2002), 58.

The truth is that even though both Kurtz and Satan seem to be equal with regard to the two previously-analysed constituents of the tragic triad – they similarly endure anguish and culpability – death steps forward as the reality that discriminates them completely. Being obstinate in wickedness till the end, the Fiend does not grasp an opportunity of definitely expressing his error and, in this way, of being redeemed by God. From the very inception, immediately after his collapse, the Arch-Rebel declares obstinate persistence in being iniquitous and, therefore, fallen forever:

> Infernal World! And thou, profoundest Hell,
> Receive thy new possessor – one who brings
> A mind not to be changed by place or time.
> …
> What matter where, if I be still the same.[35]

Significantly, Satan's refusal to be changed is sarcastically manifested by an image of his being reluctantly transmogrified into the serpent in Book X; although the external change does occur, the object of the process remains perfectly the same – either at the beginning in Hell (Book I and II) or at the end in Hell (Book X), Satan is still in his essence the rebellious angel of destruction. Conversely, at the moment of Kurtz's demise when he articulates his parting words – "The horror! The horror!"[36] – the agent is rewarded with a meaningful grasp of the truth of his deplorable condition, which in fact indicates his discovery of genuine subjectivity. As it is put by Bruce Johnson, an "awareness of the quality of nothingness – and I think Marlow believes Kurtz has gained such awareness – has always been prelude to spiritual growth"[37] of Kurtz. On his deathbed the agent is providentially granted special insight, obtained at great cost, which eradicates his internal blindness. Significantly enough, this illumination escorts him to redemption, and his concluding words disclose acceptance of wickedness and show "this sense of responsibility and freedom not only by his effect on the natives but from an increasing awareness of his own emptiness."[38]

The present author does not aspire to throw a completely new light upon the question of Satan's and Kurtz's entanglement in the matrix of the tragic triad. What emerges from the analysis, however, is the undeniable fact that these two supremely evil characters, accurately called embodiments of the archetype of evil genius, ought to be treated as dynamic characters – gifted with in-depth psychology – rather than static archetypal constructs. The truth is that a deep psycho-

[35] Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I. 251–53, 256.

[36] Conrad, "Heart of Darkness," 149.

[37] Bruce Johnson, *Conrad's Models of Mind* (London and Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1971), 87.

[38] Johnson, *Conrad's Models of Mind*, 87.

logical constitution allows them to undergo constant changes that, hopefully for them, facilitate the thorny procedure of ascertaining their genuine subjectivity. That their existence is exceptionally irksome is irrefutable, yet we cannot forget the painful truth that they are accountable for the course of events. However despondent they might be, they are outstandingly intelligent figures and, accordingly, they should have been able to foresee at least some consequences of their action. Nevertheless, it is beyond doubt that due to their rebellion and disenchantment, they took the hazardous route amidst the meanders of the tragic triad towards the truth about themselves.

Jarosław Giza

W pułapce błędnego koła tragicznej triady… Miltonowski Szatan oraz Conradowski Kurtz na drodze odkrywania autentycznej tożsamości

Streszczenie

Zgodnie z teorią Viktora Emila Frankla (przedstawioną głównie w książce pt. *Człowiek w poszukiwaniu sensu*) istnieją trzy niezaprzeczalne rzeczywistości, które każdy człowiek musi „przeżyć", aby odkryć swoją autentyczną podmiotowość. Są nimi: ból (zarówno ten wewnętrzny, jak i zewnętrzny), wina (obraz ludzkiej ułomności) oraz śmierć (obraz ludzkiego przemijania). I mimo że te rzeczywistości są negatywne, wręcz tragiczne (z tego też powodu nazywane są często tragiczną triadą), mogą przekształcić się one w coś pozytywnego i twórczego. Artykuł podejmuje próbę przedstawienia tragicznej triady w kontekście egzystencjalnych zmagań Miltonowskiego Szatana (z eposu *Raj Utracony*) oraz Conradowskiego Kurtza (z noweli *Jądro Ciemności*). Są oni przedstawieni jako postaci, które nieustannie doświadczają udręki oraz poczucia winy pogłębionego faktem braku akceptacji ustalonego porządku rzeczy w boskim wszechświecie (Szatan) oraz zdrady wspaniałych ideałów kolonizacji Afryki (Kurtz). Ostatecznie doświadczają oni śmierci, zarówno fizycznej (Kurtz), jak i duchowej (Szatan). Jednakże moment ten – istotnie ważny dla obu postaci – powoduje, że odkrywają oni swoją autentyczną podmiotowość. Pomimo różnic – Kurtz wypowiadając ostatnie słowa „Zgroza! Zgroza!" akceptuje cały bagaż swojego zła oraz zbrodni, natomiast Szatan nigdy nie przyznaje się do błędu i nieustannie neguje Boga jako swojego Pana – obaj poprzez wejście w rzeczywistość tragicznej triady okrywają bolesną prawdę o sobie samych.

Jarosław Giza

Dans le piège du cercle vicieux de la triade tragique… Satan miltonien et Kurtz conradien sur le chemin de la découverte d'une identité authentique

Résumé

Conformément à la théorie de Viktor Emil Frankl (présentée avant tout dans le livre intitulé *Człowiek w poszukiwaniu sensu* / *L'homme à la recherche du sens*), il existe trois réalités incontestables que chaque homme doit « traverser » pour découvrir sa subjectivité authentique. Ce sont : la douleur (aussi bien intérieure qu'extérieure), la culpabilité (l'image de la tare humaine) et la mort (l'image du caractère passager de la vie humaine). Bien que ces réalités soient négatives, voire tragiques (pour cette raison on les appelle souvent une triade tragique), elles peuvent se transformer en quelque chose de positif et créatif. L'article essaye de présenter la triade tragique dans le contexte de la lutte existentielle de Satan miltonien (de l'épopée *Le Paradis perdu*) et celle de Kurtz conradien (de la nouvelle *Au cœur des ténèbres*). Ils sont présentés comme des personnages qui vivent dans un état de souffrance permanente et sont rongés par le sentiment de culpabilité renforcé par le manque d'acceptation de l'ordre des choses fixé dans l'univers divin (Satan), ainsi que par le sentiment de trahison des formidables idéaux de la colonisation de l'Afrique (Kurtz). Ils éprouvent la mort, aussi bien physique (Kurtz) que spirituelle (Satan). Ce moment – fort important pour les deux personnages – contribue toutefois à ce qu'ils découvrent leur subjectivité authentique. Malgré les différences – Kurtz, en prononçant ses derniers mots « Horreur ! Horreur ! », accepte tout le poids de son mal et de son crime ; par contre Satan n'avoue jamais sa faute et refuse constamment d'accepter Dieu en tant que son Seigneur –, tous les deux découvrent une vérité douloureuse sur eux-mêmes en entrant dans la réalité de la triade tragique.

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Questioning the Cultural Industry of the Self: Fiction, Selfhood and Individualism in Patrick White's *The Vivisector*

Montaigne concludes his long essay, "An Apology for Raymond Sebond," by stating that there is "no communication with Being" possible: "[And] if you should determine to try and grasp what Man's being is, it would be exactly like trying to hold a fistful of water: the more tightly you squeeze anything the nature of which is to flow, the more you will lose what you try to retain in your grasp."[1] More recently, Janet Malcolm, paraphrasing Montaigne (himself quoting Plutarch), refutes the central premise of modern psychoanalytic theory: "To fully accept the idea of unconscious motivation is to cease to be human. The greatest analyst in the world can live his [*sic*] own life only like an ordinary blind and driven human being … The crowning paradox of psychoanalysis is the near-uselessness of its insights. To make the unconscious conscious – the programme of psychoanalytic therapy – is to pour water into a sieve. The moisture that remains on the surface of the mesh is the benefit of analysis."[2]

The two statements, while differing in scope and objective, can be seen as punctuating the historical period in which the modern human subject is said to

[1] Michel de Montaigne, *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne*, trans. and ed. M. A. Screech (London: The Penguin Press, 1991), 680.

[2] Janet Malcolm, *In the Freud Archives* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 25; Montaigne, "An Apology for Raymond Sebond," *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne* (1991, 680). See also Montaigne's essay "Of Repentance": " … I do not portray being: I portray passing … my history needs to be adapted to the moment. I may presently change, not only by chance, but also by intention. This is a record of various and changeable occurrences … ." (trans. Donald M. Frame, Everyman's Library: London. 2003, Vol. 3, 740). Malcolm obviously refines the metaphor used by Plutarch as quoted by Montaigne. See also Taylor (1989, 179) for Montaigne's original French and Taylor's translation.

have emerged; the long historical phase marked by the "turn to the self as a self" – the reign of the "highest sovereign, the individual human self" (as the character Lord Hauksbank proclaims in Salman Rushdie's recent novel, and with it, Western culture's dominant "first-person perspective," as the philosopher Charles Taylor puts it.[3] Contentiously, Malcolm and Montaigne cancel the humanist ideal: the "enigma of being" is annulled and the Socratic imperative made redundant because the self as a knowable entity and object of enquiry is deemed irrecoverably elusive. In the language of contemporary popular culture, the "journey" to authentic selfhood – the "truth" of one's life – is both illusory and futile.

Patrick White's novel *The Vivisector*[4] also courts contention in provoking confrontational questions concerning the very nature and meaning of the 'first-person' individual self, although it is less a meditative rumination on the mysteries of consciousness or a literary intervention in the "politics of identity" than a kind of creative antagonism by which the reader is challenged to countenance more nuanced possibilities of self – more expansive ideas about what might constitute the "right condition of self," in Lionel Trilling's fitting phrase. At a time when the daily lives of Australians (and inhabitants of Western culture at large) take shape under the ideological dictates of a "new" individualism, White's novel commands renewed attention and has relevance both for its irreverent scepticism and satirical energy, and for its insistent concern with that very same "being" Montaigne (perhaps disingenuously) denies. As a *Künsterroman*, White's novel carries an inferred formal unity (the "life" constitutes narrative structure) which in turn carries implicit meaning (the story of an artist's "education"). Yet the story is not resolved with the protagonist's attainment of his fully realised or completed self, to use the language redolent of the therapeutic profession so emphatically dismissed by Janet Malcolm. Rather, the novel places the very idea of self *in* question in a particularly concentrated sense – not, prepositionally speaking, *under* deconstructive erasure or *as* an exercise in the political dialectic of identity, but *in* a dramatised state of ontological tension figured as the protagonist's strenuous "argument" *with* and *about* self. The narrative, that is, inheres in the generative energy towards inward cohesion (self-forming) weighed against centripetal flux. For this reason, *The Vivisector* carries a potent charge of provocation, for White voices the mercurial felicities and repellent agitations of consciousness and perception; the challenging complexities and fugitive ambiguities involved in the grasping for understanding of self – the self as being, and being as meaning, and meaning always in urgent, necessary dispute. At a time when the effects of an ascendent individualism register on twenty-first-century Australian (and West-

[3] Salman Rushdie, *The Enchantress of Florence* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2008), 17; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 176.

[4] Patrick White, *The Vivisector* (New York: Viking, 1970); references to the text are included parenthetically, and refer to this edition.

ern) culture – we have slipped "unaware into the warm collective solipsism of the universal me," reports one critic; more ominously, another contends that the "individual self is being remade" through falsifying "metamessages" underpinning globalised consumerist markets[5] – White's novel comes into fresh alignment with the historical moment.

A "savage comedy," as Whites' biographer David Marr calls it, *The Vivisector* satirises the Sydney society of the day, a world of shallow *arrivistes* among whom the artist, Hurtle Duffield, circulates and with whom he makes tendentious compromises. As such, it is both a comically absurd and a mortally serious argument both about a life and *about* life and existence. Coloured by White's trenchant scepticism, mordant irony and humanist conviction, the flavour of the story owes something to Thomas Mann's wry observation in *Death in Venice* that, while we might give birth to our "original selves" in self-exiled solitude, it is at the risk of invoking the "perverse, the illicit, the absurd."[6] Indeed, during one of their arguments, the artist's step-sister Rhoda challenges his "religion" of art ("I believe … in art: I have my painting" (474)), claiming that he has only the fraudulent faith of self-worship: "Your painting. And yourself. But those, too, are 'gods' which could fail you" (474). "Self-seeking" becomes merely glorified self-delusion: "art" merely sanctifies vanity. Hurtle's career is a kind of contest to "be" and "become" that always entails its own ontological collapse – a dramatically elaborate "fight" with the very nature of self and being played out as a quest for artistic essence. Such an agonistic struggle might conventionally confer a validating authenticity on the experience; yet just such a "higher" meaning is enmeshed in the contradictions and conflicts forced upon him through his encounters with other characters, through his often absurdly theatrical "argument" with himself ("[Because] next morning remained an ordeal: he was so flabby, frightened that his only convincing self might not take over from him at the easel" (189)), and with socially endorsed assumptions about identity and self as interiorised models of individuality.

For all his fraught entanglements with other humans and the encompassing claims of the social world, the narrative pivots on Duffield's inward contest *with* and *for* self, with his own and others' repeated accusations of egotism highlighting the strong sense of the absurd that colours the novel. His is a protracted

[5] Elizabeth Farrelly, "Life as Seen by Me, Myself and I" ('News Review', *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 21–22, 2012), 22; Zygmunt Bauman, *Living on Borrowed Time: Conversations with Citlali Rovirosa-Madrazo* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2010), 148. Humans are being remodelled according to a new myth: "the myth that each one of us humans is not so much a person or personality whose proper, unique and irreplaceable worth resides in her or his singularity, but a higgledy-piggledy collection of more sellable or less sellable, desirable or useless gadgets" (162).

[6] Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*, trans. H. Lowe-Porter (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), 14.

"existential struggle" as the cliché has it, although, for all the pugnacious satirical irony – in fact, as an effect of this same irony and White's bold expressionist style – the novel reclaims the urgency of the idea. That numerous critics have found in White's fiction meaning that is tantamount to a form of psychological therapy (most often along Jungian lines of interpretation and with strong mystical overtones), anticipates a point I will make in the subsequent part of this essay. Certainly, the exaggerated symbolism orients the novel towards airier realms of allegory – the character-as-Artist is itself a declaration of aesthetic profundity; yet other critics have discovered the adumbrations of a distinctively Australian sense of self and being in White's fiction – one that "does not derive from European models"; a "vision" of a New World self representative of Australia's unique geography and the non-indigenous peoples' relationship with land and place; a transcendent "depth dimension" in the quotidian and physical.[7] The notion that there is fruitful potential for the development of human consciousness in the "New World" of Australia is certainly consistent with White's general outlook. Yet equally his novel offers no idealistic vision of a prospective "new man" (akin to notions prevalent in the late nineteenth century or more recent speculations[8]). The narrative, astir with the hectoring energy of intellectual protest and moral urgency, never offers much solace, let alone salvation; and while in unsettling assumptions about the Western idea of the individual selfhood it can be read as both modernist and postmodernist, such categorisations too readily elide White's idiosyncratic methods. For *The Vivisector*, expressionistically theatrical in style as it is, reads as an attempt to capture the inward *grounding* of the *common* experience of being, if through the ostensibly "uncommon" experiences of the artist-protagonist. Moreover, the effort to dramatise the mutable, often mutinous "action" of *becoming* a self as marked by inner conflict (self-division) and existential imperative (self-formation), is marked by an irreverent antipodean scepticism. In this way, White places the very idea of self under a particular kind of sustained scrutiny whose effect is underscored by the novel's resistantly ambiguous conclusion.

The Vivisector is a long and densely textured novel; and as I have suggested, White is not, stylistically or imaginatively, concerned with rendering finely-scripted naturalistic characters in service to the arid conventions of literary realism he so famously denounced. There is not space here, however, to conduct anything like a comprehensive literary analysis of the text, let alone an adequate survey of voluminous criticism devoted to White's work. The following critical

[7] John Carroll, ed., *Intruders in the Bush: The Australian Quest for Identity* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1982), 222; David Tacey, *Patrick White: Fiction and the Unconscious* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1988), 56–62.

[8] In arguing that the self is a "myth," Thomas Metzinger (2009) claims that humans are on the threshold of a historical transition in consciousness, which necessarily includes transformative concepts of the Self.

comments, then, will focus primarily on two interrelated aspects of the novel: the significance of the self-portrait scene in the novel and the stylistic device of "sliding" between second and third person pronouns. As my analysis of White's novel is necessarily selective, so the accompanying discussion of individualism is Procrustean; the topic, when considered in any serious critical way, immediately fans out in multiple interdisciplinary directions at once. Consider for a moment that the "triumph of the individual" (to paraphrase Eric Hobsbaum's phrase "the age of the individual"[9]), the effects of which many have complained about in recent times, not only points to broader social and political problems arising in the increasingly "borderless" globalised world – serious questions concerning identity, at once individual, national and cultural – but also to the striking irony that the Western ideology of individualism has, in connoting (amongst other values) a sanctified idea of freedom, emerged as an impediment to a richer, more diverse sense of identity, both culturally and individually, in the twenty-first century. As one of many writers puts it, "we pride ourselves on being 'free' – free democracies in which all are allowed to choose. But really, we can only choose between a few kinds of sameness."[10] The observation is not novel, but the cultural contradiction is more conspicuous now than ever.

Regarding the much-theorised subject of the self, Laura Cumming makes a valuable point in relation to the contemporary practice of self-portraiture (a theme central to *The Vivisector*): "The Self and oneself – worlds apart: one is academic, an issue, a theory, a philosophical knot; the other is alive and brimful of being. Artists who take it upon themselves to consider the former in self-portraits almost always kill off the latter."[11] Cumming neatly outlines the fact that any contemporary consideration of individualism and selfhood occurs in view of the postmodern 'turn against the self' (more lately including scientists), which seemingly militates against what millions of human beings take to be fun-

[9] Quoted in Inga Clendinnen, "Who Owns the Past?" (*Quarterly Essay* (23), Melbourne: Black Inc 2006): 65.

[10] Robyn Davidson, "Living in the Age of Noise" (*The Monthly*, June 2008), 46. The complaint has become journalistically routine: the "glue of society is weakening" due to the "modern ethos that champions individualism," opines one journalist (David Humphries, "Season of our Discontent." News Review, *Sydney Morning Herald*, (July 2–3, 9. 2011): 9); another observes that "We live in an age that is deeply individualist. … Even the triumph of romantic love, which seemed to promise connectedness, has ended up having the opposite effect, creating narrow, nuclear relationships that exclude wider families. Technological breakthroughs that ought to link us, isolate us even more …" (Thomas Hodgkinson, in a review of Tina Rosenberg's book, *Join the Club: How Peer Pressure Can Transform the World*, *Guardian Weekly*, August 23, 2011: 40). Complementarily, current neuroscientific explorations into the biological foundations of the self posit a densely interconnected, inter-animated brain in which cherished notions of free will and the autonomous self are not neatly accommodated.

[11] Laura Cumming, *A Face to the World: On Self-Portraits* (London: Harper Press, 2009), 265.

damental facts about their lives: one's self, and the right to claim, defend, define and discover this self; a fact taken as "natural" – a cultural, social and political given, and certainly not as abstract idea or concept per se (although quite obviously most people certainly have strong ideas *about* themselves). If reportorially convenient, Cumming's distinction also marks a boundary in cultural thinking about and debates over ideas of selfhood (and interrelated terms), and also, as I emphasise below, situates the borderland where literary explorations – the novel, primarily – both conjure and interrogate the "individual" as understood in Western culture.

Recent interpretations of the "new" individualism of the twenty-first century contend – persuasively, in my view – that the prevailing individualistic ethos constitutes a broad ideological "industry" of selfhood, resulting in a "manufactured" individuality serving the consumerist needs of late capitalism. However, it should be stressed that such political and topical readings tacitly relegate the long cultural history of the *self as a concept* to the discursive shadows, or at least take it as read; Dror Wahrman's study of the history of the self, for example, analyses the "effects of commercialization" in defining what she calls the "ancien regime of identity" – the precursor to the "new modern self."[12] Indeed, my literary critical motivations arise in part from just such an observation concerning the wider studies of Australian literature and society. Perennial questions concerning Australian identity, and the role of literature in contributing to the formation (or otherwise) of a collective "self," avoid for the most part direct discussion of individualism as a formative element in the social and cultural history of post-settlement European Australia, and thus simply presuppose the historical provenance of the Western idea of individual selfhood. Graeme Turner's excellent earlier analysis of nineteenth-century Australian fiction is a welcome exception, although there is little reference to the wider historical development of "the new modern self" in European and Western culture and as this concept of self necessarily continues in post-settlement Australian culture.[13] In its idiosyncratic dramatisation of the "problem of self" as I will refer to it here, *The Vivisector* brings the Australian experience of selfhood (such as it might be distinguished) within the wider frame of Western cultural history, in itself another aspect of the challenge the text poses.

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[12] Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2004), xiii/201–205.

[13] Graeme Turner, "Mateship, Individualism and the Production of Character in Australian Fiction," *Australian Literary Studies* 11, no. 4 (1984): 447–57. Of the many studies in this area, the following are representative: Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual, 1050–1200* (1972); Joan Weber, *Eloquent 'I': Style and Self in 17th Century Prose* (1968); John O. Lyons, *The Invention of the Self: The Hinge of Consciousness in the 18th Century* (1978); Stephen D. Cox, *'The Stranger Within Thee': Concepts of the Self in Late 18th Century Literature* (1980); Roberta Rubenstein, *Boundaries of the Self: Gender, Culture, Fiction* (1987); Timothy J. Reiss, *Mirages of the Self: Patterns of Personhood in Ancient and Early Modern Europe* (2003).

Since both White as biographical subject and his work have been the subjects of extensive criticism, I should also note that my critical interest in White's novel is in line with recent re-evaluation of his work, which positions itself to some extent against the formidable body of White criticism alluded to above. At least two generations of critics have applied diligent hermeneutics to White's novels: archetypal, allegorical and symbolic patterns have been mapped thoroughly; literary, mythical and cultural allusions traced and expounded; psychoanalytical dynamics and psychic dualisms configured; plots and characterisations subjected to comprehensive exegesis. In one scholar's somewhat Attic view, a treacherous interpretative geography confronts the contemporary critic: "to comply with the demands of recent White criticism would, evidently, mean steering between the Scylla of the imposition of extrinsic systems and the Charybdis of concentrations on intrinsic artistic achievement."[14] However exegetically fruitful such critiques might be – it would be presumptuous to deny their critical value – their effect as a body of critical work is to downplay the disruptive and discordant elements of White's expressionistic style, and thereby side-step certain implications of his complex intellectual energies. To adapt Bridget Rooney's recent phrase, critics transfixed with metaphysical abstraction tend to lose sight of the "textual irritation" that occurs at the ground-level of White's narratives, most conspicuously in *The Vivisector*.[15] One effect of this "irritation" is to create an insistent epistemological agitation around the seemingly self-evident "fact" of one's life – the existence of an inviolable private self: the "concept that every person is necessarily the centre of a complex, precious individuality," in Alain de Botton's elegant phrase.[16] Yet the result is not a literary rendition of social constructionist positions insisting on the self as "subject," but a depiction of the precarious and paradoxical subjectivity of selfhood. To adapt Andre Gide's observation on Montaigne's essays, *The Vivisector* works as a novelistic "essaying" of the same "self" Montaigne makes his

[14] Karin Hansson, *The Warped Universe: A Study of Imagery and Structure in Seven Novels by Patrick White* (Gleerup, Lund: CWK, 1984), 16. Richard N. Coe's view is that Hurtle as Artist is "symbol" elevated to "Platitude" (Coe's reading is admiringly satirical, it should be noted (1970, 526–27)). According to another view, we should in fact hesitate before critics who find "allegories of redemption" in *The Vivisector* (as in Rodney S. Edgecombe, *Vision and Style in Patrick White: A Study of Five Novels* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 2)); another coaches scepticism in viewing "systems" of symbolism, archetype and religious imagery, for they endorse "universalist assumptions" (Bandopadhyary 1984, 125). Lately, and more darkly, White's work has come to serve as an ideological marker in the generational battles among academic critics and theorists, a phenomenon ably summarised by Jennifer Rutherford in her contribution to a recent collection of essays reviewing White's work, and to some extent restoring his reputation (in McMahon and Olubas, 2010, 47–52).

[15] Bridget Rooney, "Public Recluse: Patrick White's Literary-Political Returns," *Remembering Patrick White: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. Elizabeth McMahon and Brigitta Olubas (New York: Rodopi, 2010), 3–18.

[16] Alain De Botton, Review, *Australian Financial Review* (August 13, 2010): 3.

defining subject-in-question: "[the] human personality which never *is*, but only conscious of itself in the evanescent moment of *becoming*."[17]

By immediate corollary, and in similarly general terms, I read White's novel *as a novel* in literary historical and cultural terms, by which genre and concept are coextensive. As Nancy Armstrong notes, the novel is responsible for the "creation of the individual": "the history of the novel and the history of the modern subject are, quite literally, one and the same" (albeit a "standard retelling" that Dror Wahrman contests).[18] To "produce" such a concept is not, however, merely a practical and procedural matter; in Milan Kundera's oft-quoted terms, the "art of the novel" is defined by two interlocking questions: "What is an individual? Wherein does his identity reside?" [19] Arguably, Kundera describes a modality – an implicit philosophical scepticism – rather than positing a formal theory of the novel as such. Importantly, the defining questions are not merely rhetorical: the novel does not answer these questions, at least not in any declarative or "factual" (empirical) sense, but rather places the individual self – as character and existential entity – *in* question in the imaginatively speculative and exploratory sense particular to the novel form. The emphasis, then, is on the (literarily serious) novel's distinctive capacity to explore in highly reflexive ways the manifold and intricate dynamics of self and identity, which are necessarily entangled with the crowding complications, animosities and antagonisms of material circumstance, and the confounding intrusions and impositions of society and "others." If, as is certain, the "question of *what we are* … necessarily calls upon a philosophical orientation" as another novelist concerned with the broader contemporary 'problem of self' correctly reminds us,[20] *The Vivisector* provokes the argument in animatedly pessimistic yet paradoxically constructive terms.

It is also worth mentioning that for writers such as Kundera and White, the genre of the novel also embodies "individuality" in another important sense; it enacts a freedom of thought we might call individualistic: "the aesthetic of the modern novel … is fiercely independent of any system of preconceived ideas …."[21]

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[17] Andre Gide, *The Living Thoughts of Montaigne* (London: Cassell, 1946), 7.

[18] Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think: The Limits of British Individualism from 1719–1900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 3; Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self*, 105.

[19] Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, trans. Linda Asher (London: Faber, 1988), 5–6.

[20] Siri Hustvedt, "Excursions to the Islands of the Happy Few," *Salmagundi* 168/169 (2010): 25.

[21] Milan Kundera, *The Curtain: An Essay in Seven Parts*, trans. Linda Asher (New York: Harper Collins 2007), 71. "I would even say it is purposely a-philosophic, even anti-philosophic … it does not judge; it does not proclaim truths; it questions, it marvels, it plumbs; its form is highly diverse" (71). Kundera celebrates what some would call "high" European literary art, yet in kis view "we are all hopelessly riveted to the date and place of our birth. Our 'self' is inconceivable outside the particular, unique situation of our life …" (62). Such a view does not contradict so much as complicate any understanding of individuality in both character and genre.

If antiquatedly humanistic by current literary critical standards, the notion is consonant with White's understanding of his own artistic endeavours, however pessimistic he felt about his efforts and however much he has been vilified as an elitist aesthete. In an interview White remarked that "life in Australia seems to be for many people pretty deadly dull [and so] I have tried to convey a splendour, a transcendence, which is also there, above human realities … superhuman realities."[22] Against the "flat" world of modern democratic Australia White invokes a Romantic metaphysics: art can not only conjure visions but reveal realities beyond the immediate world of practical concerns, material needs and conditioned sensibilities. Yet White's own comments, while useful, must always be measured against the text itself. Where he confirms that none of his characters are heroic (all are treated as "human beings"), the "religious" nature of Duffield's artistic efforts must be interpreted in qualified terms. Where Duffield's artistic endeavour is described as "a mode of worship … a celebration of the world in painting" (142), "celebration" and "worship" are refused their usually benign meanings by the Baudelairian excesses and absurd banalities of Duffield's erratic trajectory ("hurtle") through life and the sceptical tone of White's narratorial voice.

In these generalised terms, then, *The Vivisector* "tests ideas against complex spiritual, psychological and emotional experience,"[23] an observation which holds true for White's work as a whole. Concerning the aforementioned "irritation" at the sentence level, Duffield's story dramatises the formative, almost "live" sense of the dynamic and unstable relation between "seeing and being," lending the text an open, improvisatory quality. Indeed, Duffield's internecine "argument" with and about himself further reinforces the impression. The act of seeing – the pictorialist's stylistic challenge – doubles then as the individual's representative existential contest. Tellingly, the title denotes "incision": Duffield is at once subject and perpetrator of the act of "vivisection," the surgical "cutting open" to expose and reveal, violent and invasive as it must be – the "dissection by the knives of light" as it is described at one point.[24] As Duffield the artist "opens to sight" both himself and others, so White's narrative "opens" Duffield's self-as-character to the reader. Crucially, in a further doubling of implications, the act of incision also relates to the original meaning of a related term as used by the German poet,

[22] White quoted in Thelma Herring, "A Conversation with Patrick White," *Southerly* 33 (1973), 136.

[23] Susan Lever, "The Challenge of the Novel: Australian Fiction since 1950," *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, ed. Peter Pierce (Port Melbourne, Vic: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 498.

[24] Veronica Brady cites the important reference in Joyce's novel, *Stephen Hero*: the "modern spirit is vivisective … [it] examines its territory by the light of day," in contrast to the gentler speculations of the softer "ancient method" (1974, 136).

Durs Grunbein – "autopsy," meaning in the original Greek "seeing for oneself."[25] White gives powerful expression to the value and possibility of the "individuality" of consciousness, beleaguered and besieged with doubt and inconstancy as it must be, as rendered through his character's experiences, but also as "enacted" in the novel as form itself. Both Hurtle's struggle to reach "pure being" and the oscillation between the various other characters he encounters, make this clear; that is to say that the effort to "become" is more dramatically significant than any "completion" of self. Certainly, such a struggle towards such "purity" gestures towards some idealised state – redemptive or otherwise mystically elevated – or conversely, the paradoxical transcendentally immanent "higher" self. Yet, because White's novel neither reaches for fixed visions of exemplary or model identities, nor describes a negative sense of irresolution, it holds the "problem of self" as an open question – not as an abstraction to be analysed but as the grounding energy and necessary effort of one's being that animates the often confused interaction between character, personality and identity.

Towards individualism, Australians, abiding by the cherished "myth" of "utopian brotherhood," affect circumspection, even a confused aversion: in one prominent Australian writer's repetition of an oft-rehearsed adage, Americans are the "individualists" whereas Australians define themselves by innate fraternity – "a special ethos of solidarity."[26] It is a solidarity voiced as snide suspicion, a collective reflex aptly described in Tim Winton's novel *Dirt Music*: "'A bit of an individual' [is] the kind of phrase Australians still uttered with their mouths set in an uncertain shape, as though sensing something untoward."[27] The role and history of this "myth of brotherhood" in Australian culture warrants serious analysis, as does the extent that it determines Australian perceptions of US-Australian relations; again, however, this is not the place. The more important point is that individualism has apparently just "arrived" in Australian society (at least in party political and populist policy terms), although for some this news has arrived late.[28] In a recent speech, the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, officially confirmed the shift to such new and "modern" values – "individual choice" and "empowerment" are now the guiding values in Australian society. Her predeces-

[25] Adam Kirsch, "The Highest Art Form," *Australian Financial Review* (December 3, 2010): 6.

[26] Tom Kenneally, "Cultivating Identity," *Meanjin* 4, no. 70 (2011): 29.

[27] Tim Winton, *Dirt Music* (Sydney: Picador, 2001), 166–67.

[28] Anthony Elliott and Charles Lemert entitle their recent book, *The New Individualism: The Emotional Costs of Globalization* (2006). However, Dennis Altman is credited with originating the phrase "new individualism," though he is reluctant to use the term "dominant ideology," for such a term implies "a more consciously constructed set of world views" than he "believes to be the case" (1988, 10). Gregory Melleuish defines it more succinctly in his later study: the "desire for self-fulfilment and self-esteem," an extension of the drive for autonomy and independence (1999, 44–45). Among many others, Christopher Lasch, Richard Sennett, and Clive Hamilton have analysed the aspects and effects of this individualism.

sor, Kevin Rudd, had analysed the phenomenon in more morally rigorous terms, bemoaning the socially corrosive and nationally divisive influence of "individualism" in contemporary Australia.[29] Such readings beg more formal definitions: individualism has been defined as "the assertion of every person's claims to maximized freedom and the unrestrained liberty to express autonomous desires and have them respected and institutionalized by society at large"[30]; more generally, it denotes the fundamental creed and prevailing concept of selfhood in Western culture: the dominant idea of the human being as embodying a particular understanding of personal identity underpinning Christian, humanist, and modern liberal democratic values and principles.[31] Yet, as this ethos is interpreted across the popular culture, it betrays revealing contradictions.

The now-ubiquitous metaphor popularised through the mass media – "life as journey" – reads as one sign marking this shift to an individualistic ethos in contemporary Australian culture. This hackneyed trope democratises the "search for the self" as the idealised self-authenticating "journey" on which each and all are ostensibly bound. Redolent of the countercultural mantra of the late 1960s and early '70s, its ubiquity invites closer interpretation: the "journey" is a mass-marketed version of the Romantic literary quest narrative, flavoured with heavily diluted Buddhism, although the trope reinforces the primacy of one's individual self, not the devout Buddhists's process of self-dissolution as a means of attaining the enlightened state of the "higher self," nor, for that matter, the Romantics' ardent wish to dismantle and "cleanse" the self of socially imposed influences and elements in order to encounter the essential self. Does it confirm a favourable change in social conditions by which a truly democratic individualism, vouchsafing full autonomy and liberty to all, is possible? Can we see this collective self-questing as marking a Nietzschean "revolution of the soul," a mass apotheosis of "self-overcoming" as the result of the heroic struggle to achieve "individuation"? Does it mark some kind of refusal of the "postmodern turn" against the alleged tyranny of the "bourgeois subject," and thus a rejection of the depthless, fluid, "postmodern" self?[32] Indeed, perhaps like Oskar Matzerath in Gunter Grass's

[29] Kevin Rudd, "Faith in Politics," *The Monthly* (October 2006): 25.

[30] Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land* (London: Penguin Books 2011), 87–88.

[31] To which should be added the conventional and important distinction: *individuality* denotes the private, inner practice of personal identity, while *individualism* refers to the ideological effect of such a concept – the unifying and collectivising effect of a model of selfhood (Karl Weintraub, *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 28.

[32] Leslie Thiele provides one of the best accounts of Nietzsche's notion of the heroic individual as the personification of his "philosophy of individualism," not itself a doctrine or programme as such but the defining existential condition – a consistent subversion of one's own self ("self-overcoming") that is expressive of the "struggle within the soul" for the "apotheosis" of "radical autonomy" (*Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 22–44). Assaying the topic of evil,

The Tin Drum, inhabitants of the West have all instinctively refused the claim "that individuals have ceased to exist, that individualism is a thing of the past … that [people] all form some nameless mass devoid of heroes"[33]; each instead becomes the "hero" on his or her solo expedition to discover the source of "true" or authentic being; each individual's story supplants the collective narrative of history; we are our own entire worlds to explore, so to speak, and "captains of our own ships," to appropriate the famous Henley poem.

Satire insinuates itself here – consider Tom Wolfe reporting on the "alchemical dream of the Me Decade" of the 1960s and '70s: in mock alarm, he observes that Americans were earnestly committed to "changing one's personality – remaking, remodeling, elevating, and polishing one's very *self* …"[34] – but the point is serious. The metaphor is significant for the fact that it popularises a version or form of individuality: the "journey" is earthly and material, uncomplicated by political factors; our journeys are "naturally" our individual entitlements, confirmation of the "individual empowerment" of which Julia Gillard speaks; and these journeys promise "authenticity" – the intrinsic promise of a plenitude and completion of self; yet, emptied of "epic" significance and of all but the vaguest symbolic and spiritual meaning, the trope is crudely ideological, announcing "a profound epistemological [and] moral revolution" which sanctions the regressive fixation with "the personal" above all other concerns.[35] As such, it begs the question: are twenty-first-century human beings in the West *en masse* onanistically immersed in "the prospective orgy of knowing" themselves (195), as the self-engrossed Duffield is described as being at one point in *The Vivisector*? The "new individualism" of today seems to confirm such a view, at least according to the criticisms of many. The historian Tony Judt argues (in concert with others) that we have been sold a media-manufactured, mass-marketed version of self that conforms to and further enshrines the current "cult of privatization" central to globalised rationalist economic theory; an ideological "fashioning" of self and identity central to the "new master narrative of 'integrated global capitalism' … an updating of the high modernist faith in technology and rationalist management."[36] Accordingly, each individual's life is framed as a commodified "self-industry" (13): the self constructed as an entrepreneurial enterprise of image-based and image-enhanced individuality – fluid, mobile, expendable – in which each pursues "selfebrity" –

Terry Eagleton contends that the "postmodern man or woman [is] so cool, provisional, laid-back and decentred that he or she lacks the depth that true destructiveness requires" ("Exploring the Unfathomable," *The Australian Financial Review* (April 16, 2010): 7).

[33] Günter Grass, *The Tin Drum* (Orlando: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt 2009), 5.

[34] Tom Wolfe, *Mauve Gloves and Madmen, Clutter and Vine* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), 132.

[35] Elizabeth Farrelly, "Life as Seen by Me, Myself and I," News Review, *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 21–22 (2012): 22.

[36] Judt, *Ill Fares the Land*, 107–93.

"the vain pursuit of success through the contrived self-image" as another critic puts it succinctly.[37] The result is a dangerous, morally degenerative pathology: a collective and destructive condition of narcissism afflicting Western (and westernised) culture, resulting in the "corrosion" of social and communal identities and structures. The recent publication of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation study, *Contemporary Social Evils* (Polity Press, 2009), goes so far as to name individualism the chief "social evil" threatening British society.[38] By such reckoning, we are all in need of urgent collective psychotherapy.

There is much more to be said about the term and the phenomenon of individualism – "new" and "old," all the more so given the associated ideas about and philosophical debates over identity and selfhood, "authenticity," consciousness, and *being* itself. Regarding the Australian experience, ideological duplicities in the national culture were noted shortly after White's novel was published in 1970 by the Australian critic, Dexter Dunphy, who complained in his 1976 lecture, "Searching for the Self," that "[Australians] pursue an ideal of conformist individualism … ours is a derivative culture, inculcating a blend of individualism with no individuality, conformity with no community, morality with no responsibility" (176).[39] In the fabled "Me" decade of the 1970s, and for all the Australian mythology of larrikin outlaws and pioneering settlers, Australians merely imitated conformist *models* of selfhood rather than endeavouring to *be* more authentic individuals. The novelist Andre Gide inverts and sharpens the observation: "Let us not urge on to individualism that which has nothing individual about it; the result would be painful"; it is a point Don Watson's reprises when reflecting on the relationship between America and Australia, noting that "they took the individual out of individualism and put conformity in its place; as they took labour out of capitalism, liberalism out of enlightenment, the world out of worldliness and the taste out of food."[40] Narcissism can only be the antithesis of enlightened or transcendent individualism (an idealised model of selfhood in

[37] Judt, in the same breath as describing the deleterious effects of the "cult of privatization," relegates the phenomenon to cultural fashion – individualism is but the "cant of our days" (Judt, *Ill Fares the Land*, 87–88, 107).

[38] Commentators on the "crisis" of narcissism are too numerous to mention here; in addition to Christopher Lasch's classic study (1979), see James L. Collier (1991); Clive Hamilton (2003); Russell (2003); Richard Sennett (1998). Anne Manne's recent work on narcissism is perhaps the most comprehensive and morally urgent: "… so many contemporary problems derive from narcissism … the shift towards self-admiration means being famous is considered the new *right*. Perhaps even an obigation … it is given endless means of expression through reality TV and social networking" ("The Happy Life: Correspondence," *Quarterly Essay* 42 (2011), 74–76).

[39] Dexter Dunphy. "The Challenge of Change," collected in *The Boyer Collection: Highlights of the Boyer Lectures, 1959–2000* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1972 (2001)), 176.

[40] Andre Gide quoted in David H. Walker, *Andre Gide* (Hampshire: MacMillan Walker, 1990), 39; Don Watson, "Rabbit Syndrome: America and Australia," *Quarterly Essay 4* (December. Melbourne: Black Inc., 2001), 49.

any case); it might also be the ugly other face of Australia's mythologised "brotherhood," which, as we have seen, translates in practice into stifling conformity, a point the Australian novelist Richard Flanagan made recently in addressing "unfreedom" induced through the "new conformity" by which Australians surrender "truth and individual freedom" to the cynical self-interest of the "new class" governing the nation.[41]

Flanagan draws on the late novels of the dissident Soviet writer Vassily Grossman (*Life and Fate*; *Everything Flows*) to support his argument, and in doing so celebrates the power of literature against the encroachments of conformity and abuses of power. His humanistic view accords with White's; but while White's work is characterised by an obsession with "interiorities, with the extrapolations of psychology, with capturing the currents of desire and understanding and antagonism that flicker between human beings,"[42] it offers no therapeutic cure nor functions as a scripture that might heal the dislocated self or explain, even liberate, the repressed 'other' in some Freudian manner (many of White's critics deride him as a presumptuous 'high priest' scornfully upbraiding Australians for their crass materialism and vulgar suburbanised existences). Belligerently sceptical yet animated by complex concern for the "spiritual" possibilities of humanity, White's novel dramatises the problem of self – the self *in* question – as a paradoxical effort to extend the imaginative possibilities of individual selfhood. To appropriate Norman Mailer's phrase, the "problem" of self *is* the existential imperative: there is no treatment for the human condition but only the effort of attention to the experience of being, which inevitably entails the painful recognition of the "perverse, the illicit, the absurd," as Mann put it. *The Vivisector*, then, does not endorse the platitudinous contemporary obsessions with self-affirmation but draws up to the surface the common human experience of the deeper, always inconstant yet palpable state of 'being-in-the-world' (in Heidegger's term). In this way, the reader is compelled to consider the subtler existential gradients of self – the necessarily nebulous yet integral dynamics of identity, self and being that in turn inhere in the intricately fluid encounter between the outer social world and the interlocking subjective world.[43]

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[41] Richard Flanagan, "The Australian Disease: On the Decline of Love and the Rise of Non-Freedom," *Quarterly Essay 44* (November 11. Melbourne: Black Inc 2011): 89.

[42] Peter Craven, "Demise of a Dominator," *Australian Literary Review* (July 7, 20–21, 2010), 21.

[43] Simon During, in opposition to the stress on "metaphysics" in earlier White criticism, observes that in White's fiction, the characters' individuality is always relational – "their individuality is a reflex of their financial and class position (their "station") and then of their secular pride" (28) – thereby emphasising contemporary "deconstructive" readings of the self. Such views qualify, more than counter, illuminating and equally plausible observations from critics such as Brian Kiernan, who places considerable emphasis on the modernist dualistic dynamics of White's

> You didn't love books all that much, but wouldn't have known how to tell Pa you neither loved an 'honest trade'. You loved – what? You wouldn't have known, not to be asked.
>
> He loved the feel of a smooth stone, or to take a flower to pieces, to see what there was inside. He loved the pepper tree breaking into light, and the white hens rustling by moonlight in the black branches, and the sleepy sound of the henshit dropping. He could do nothing about it, though. Not yet. He could only carry all of it in his head. Not talk about it… . (12)

This description of the young Duffield's anatomistic habits as an expression of his embryonic artistic sensibility is balanced against the allusion to the problems he will experience as an older artist – isolation, alienation and solipsism ("he could only carry all of it in his head"). Duffield's "central concern [might well be] that of finding a unity for his ego, a comprehensive unity that will bring his disparate selves into a great harmony," the expression of which is the final picture he works towards, entitled "The Whole of Life,"[44] but the dangers of solipsism pose the greater challenge. One might seek solace by closing the world out – confinement in order to achieve contemplative solitude and thus a private salvation – but this in effect universalises the self: the "drama" of (self-) exile enlarges the self, at least for the subject. The passage also confirms that he is not revolting *against* social restriction and community in the more conventional sense – the oppositional or rebellious self so characteristic of American literature; rather, he is from the outset an outcast, the artist marginalised as a result of both circumstance and his recalcitrantly different sensibility.

Importantly, as the narrative develops – as Duffield "comes" into his being in what is his life – the reader is refused any easy identification with the character. That he appears at different angles to the reader is itself central to the dramatic effect of the novel; by turns repellently self-absorbed, childishly bewildered and offensively insensitive, he is "all too human" as the phrase has it. He is no hero, even as the epigraphs to the novel suggest that he might qualify perhaps as some kind of existential exemplar – some spurned and suffering vagabond of "divine" truth. Indeed, Hurtle is always the comic grotesque, neither the bold Nietzschean antinomian nor sanctified sacrificial innocent. He is too preposterous to welcome easy affinities with "real" people, or at least those we might wish to acknowledge. If he is some kind of "holy" monster, he is always also monstrously absurd, almost to the point of caricature. The effect is one of the complications of White's style. For example, his struggle elicits a guarded or hesistant recognition: as he nears

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characterisations, whereby the individual is seen as the beleaguered consciousness alienated from and assailed by the destabilising forces of modernity.

[44] Noel Macainsh, *The Pathos of Distance* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1992), 271.

his death at the close of the novel, the narrator speaks for Hurtle in stating that "achievement didn't help reduce the absurdity" (553), a display of a certain kind of vulnerability. Yet even as the reader listens to Hurtle berate himself in the closing stage of his life for being "bloody dishonest" (554), our compassion is refused by the text. White the novelist betrays no affection for his protagonist, though we might detect a certain dispassionate regard for his character's commitment to his existential struggle. And so, where the artist's quest for the ultimate truth of selfhood (the creative source as "pure being" or the "core of self" (314)) might well represent an idealised model of selfhood – the Romantic notion of secular salvation through art in the promise of transcendent revelation and psychic completion – the novel's ironic voice countermands any simple endorsement. The reader might fairly begin to ask whether the author's "vivisection" is an elaborate act of misanthropic literary sadism.

Novelistically, the simple historical "facts" of the character's life are less narratively significant than the inward action of perception and impression rendered in literary "objective," or expressionistic, terms – the enlarged interplay between surface and depth. Consider but one of many examples illustrating the manner in which Hurtle encounters natural phenomena in blatantly "expressive" terms: early in the story, his fledgling perceptions are described in heightened, synaesthesic terms: "[he sees] the two yellows of the sun and the sunflowers playing together, and the sticky green of the wilted leaves" (7). The passage adumbrates the ensuing "drama" of his emerging self, although the later shift in imagery ("the sunlight had sharpened. Its glass teeth met with glass …" (229)) points to what will become an increasingly turbulent and erratic tussle with consciousness, mind, will and being, one that occurs across a widening spectrum of experience centring on encounters with other individuals (in this same "self-portrait" scene, the "explosion" of "smashed glass" marks the death of the prostitute Nance Lightfoot (ibid.)). Rodney Edgecombe is right in saying that the novel's language embodies the tension created through White's own artistic struggle "to present an account of human striving …" (although it is less clear to me that the text subsumes "the whole to a somewhat intermittent and flickering allegory of redemption"[45]). More specifically, White's expressionistic methods work to bring the submerged world of human experience to the visible surface, but also to capture an individual's turmoil of sensibility arising from the peculiar sensate extensions of one's self in the world. In another scene, the reader is "shown" the underworld of the characters' selves – Nance, on meeting Hurtle, is for a moment "pictured" as an "orphaned baby"; her persona shifts into an "insatiable goddess"; both then "recover their identities," having "bared their teeth at each other" and then

[45] Rodney S. Edgecombe, *Vision and Style in Patrick White: A Study of Five Novels* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 1–2.

"resumed their actual lives" (192) – returned, as it were, to the surface of the "real" world of appearances.

As indicated, Hurtle's "education" occurs across a sequence of encounters he has with a variety of other characters: Mrs. Courtney, Boo Hollingdrake/Olivia Davenport (as both girl and androgynous woman), Nance Lightfoot, Soso the displaced half-Aboriginal girl, Hero Pouvlassis, Cecil Cutbush, and Rhoda, Hurtle's step-sister. In certain respects, however, the relationship with the prostitute Nance Lightfoot is the most significant, in part because their relationship culminates in the theatrical "self-portrait" scene in which Hurtle contends with both the *idea* and execution of the self-portrait which becomes central to the narrative. On conceiving of the idea of a self-portrait after having seen himself reflected in "plate glass," he is described initially as a comical onanist: "the prospective orgy of knowing himself encouraged him to run up the stairs …" (195). Later, he drags his "easel into relationship with the glass, and prepare for the portrait: the self-portrait" (213). "The self-portrait": the object separated emphatically by the colon. We must note the significance of the phrasing "into relationship with the glass": Hurtle works between mirror and glass in performing (the operative word) his self-portrait: "Presently he felt the need to go back: to find out how much of the truth that was reflected by the mirror had united with how much his mind might have confessed … He went so far as to smile at his alter ego of the board: when his conscience in the mirror caught him at it …" (214). The scene suggests both a kind of static mirroring (a fixed dynamic of duplication) but also an active "relationship" – an ambiguous relationality in the character's self occurs in argumentative tension between the abyssal blindness of egoism and some possibility of (relatively) objective "truth." This might be termed "ekphrastic"; yet more to the point, perhaps, is the experience and process of perception and consciousness itself. Later, for example, there is this description of the activity of painting: "He painted at times with a grimness which was flashed back and forth between glass and board" (219). The "charge" between the two different mediums – glass and board – depicts the activity of perception as reflective energy of self. His "grim" duty to capture self-as-image is at the same time infused with the "flash" of imaginative energy, which is to say a palpable life force in itself: "seeing" as "being." Significantly, the metaphor of electricity occurs in Hurtle's dying moments as he grapples with paint to capture his final expressive statement: in reaching the point of annihilation, he has shed the identity of "Hurtle Duffield the painter" and become an energised entity who is being "painted through" (552–56), as if by another, potentially higher force.

As has been suggested, Duffield's experience as an artist involves him in becoming aware of, and reacting to, the socially and culturally endorsed *idea* of the artist – the artist as emissary of truth. The reader learns that "he had painted out the self-portrait, and was working on a fresh version: more austere, more essential, more honest, he hoped, than the over-painted, self-indulgent, by now

nauseating, rejected naturalistic trash. … So he returned at last to wrestling with the honest version of his dishonest self" (218). The question of representation and genre ("[the] rejected naturalistic trash") is clearly integral to the vexing "problem" of his self: the portrait "depicts" him both vocationally (a milestone in the artist's evolution) and as his unique self – the "truth" in representative image. (Significantly, the portrait will be spurned following Nance's death, flung into the valley of her death.) It is clearly a problem concerning "seeing" and knowing himself – of seeing "for" himself in the full philosophically complex sense: an epistemological problem centring on illusion and reality, on the relation between perception and understanding. As with the "monster" of solipsism, the "demon" of illusion is ever-present. Earlier, when Hurtle and Nance achieve initial physical intimacy, it occurs through the mutual embrace of illusion: "They embraced for the illusion she had hoped to nourish, and for his own stillborn idea of the pure soul, and in this way came perhaps closest to loving" (322). She, in turn, will later capture a truth about Duffield when viewing his self-portrait late at night: "'There', she said, holding her torch. 'That's Duffield. Not bad. *True*. Lovun' 'imself'." (This echoes Hurtle's own earlier interpretation of himself as a "lyrical onanist" (215)). Unaffectedly, she interprets his self-discovery as proof of his solipsism and narcissism; yet the fact that the drunkenly sullen Nance has skewed perceptions, and that in Hurtle's eyes she distorts the portrait by holding the blazing lamp up for illumination – "she made it look devilish: furtive, ingrown, all that he had persuaded himself it wasn't, and worse than anything else – bad, not morally but aesthetically" (225) – only magnifies the question of self as a problem of perception and interpretation experienced both objectively and subjectively, so to speak.

As mentioned earlier, the four epigraphs to the novel announce the universalist theme of the novel: in being *bound to* and *bound up in* a striving, Hurtle's extended conflict or fight *with* and *for* self entails the most serious struggle to know the truth of his very being, which, since he is also always The Artist, is a representative, perhaps redemptive Truth. Yet indubitably the desire for transcendence is indissolubly mixed with the "earthly" existential burden of attaining self-knowledge – the (Rimbaudian) descent into the messy immanent depths of the self, which always entails a "fall" into egoistic delusion. In this White has been seen as typically Modernist, a literary "artist" himself seeking a vision of "unity, [yet] confronted continually by the fact of fragmentation," or from another analytical angle, as a writer who "is not making a case for the social representativeness of art at all … the stress on deviance … offers a critique in the sense that society is wrong, the 'normal' world is rejected."[46] Yet the tendency in such

[46] Ann Maree McCulloch, *A Tragic Vision: The Novels of Patrick White* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press McCulloch, 1983), 85; Michael Wilding, "The Politics of Modernism" in *Prophet from the Desert: Critical Essays on Patrick White*, ed. John McLaren (Melbourne: Red Hill Press, 1995), 27.

observations is to downplay White's idiosyncratic sense of comedy which, as I am arguing here, has the effect of putting the self *in* question to particular effect. As noted, Duffield's "contest" is always a struggle with meaning and language, as underscored by the terminal paradox: " … he returned at last to wrestling with the honest version of his dishonest self" (218). The promise of a more refined or "truer" truth, so to speak – an essence attained through stylistic honesty – is qualified by the invocation of the rueful paradox: the will to truth is knotted inextricably into an unreliable, deceptive self. Is self-contemplation mere sophistry? Later, one of many angular authorial interpolations sports with the ideal of Truth: "Flies die in the dunny at night on the yellow squares of the *Truth* you wipe your arse on" (226). The observation – a comic *aperçu* – punctures the theatrical self-importance of both Hurtle and Nance Lightfoot as they tussle over his self-portrait; high dudgeon brought low by vulgarity of the blunt fact of a scatological "truth." It is a deft, sardonic spike of bathos, the punning reference to the infamous Australian tabloid, the *Truth*, effecting a kind of figurative tautology: the lofty idea and concept of Truth is brought to metaphorical earth – demystified as *Drek,* as common as muck and elementary as excrement; a disavowal of the divinity of Truth, whether conceived as transcendental or immanent. The "divinity" of self-realisation is confused with delusional self-regard. The satirical tone places the central proposition – that art offers salvation; that the artist is representative of the human potential for growth towards the truth of self – at an irrecoverably ironic distance. The effect is that the reader, like White's protagonist, is returned to the often calamitous yet paradoxically imperative "problem" of self.

Of White's literary explorations of selfhood, James Clements contends that "It is not the belief in the self, but in the impregnable self, that must be overcome … one can transcend the boundaries of the self without transcending the world, moving into, rather than away from, one's surroundings."[47] The distinction is germane, although the novel goes further in endeavouring to capture the dilatory energy of perception and sensation, intuition and feeling as aspects of being. In this way, White captures the phenomenological mobility of sensibility – the activity of seeing and apprehending turns the concealed life of consciousness-as-becoming "out" towards the reader. It also unsettles perceptions of the character as a discrete naturalistic "object": character is rendered as an "expressive" presence, yet one that is always mutable, mercurial and ambiguous. The effect is emphasised in White's technique of frequently sliding between second and third person perspectives. The following are three of the many examples of this pronominal shift, or, to adapt White's own metaphor, "slide":

[47] Clement in R. Shepherd and K. Singh, *Patrick White: A Critical Symposium* (Adelaide: Centre for Research in the New Literatures in English, 1978), 133–34.

> 1) "Wasn't it nice?" She [Mrs. Courtney] was so amused at what she had done. She kept on looking at him, to see whether she had succeeded in getting him drunk. Her teeth looked as though they were against him. He felt ashamed, but it was some compensation to know you could see inside the faces of people who fail to get behind your own. (77)
>
> 2) Hurtle was so sleepy he couldn't find his boots: Father had to help him into them. Before they got down, Father put on an oilskin, not the overcoat of Hurtle's former imagining. To touch the oilskin made you shiver: it was so stiff and cold: but it made Father look real, more as though he worked. You were the one who was soft, in nambypamby new clothes, face ghostly green in the glass if you looked: only your thoughts real. (90)
>
> 3) Neither sleeping nor waking: it had been one of those moments when you half-consciously watch the slides experience is fitting into the frame of a dissolving mind; such a slide, perhaps, would best convey his conception of the drowning lover-cats. (321)

A more sustained analysis than is possible here would trace the network of such "slides" of point of view throughout the narrative, and so discern an important stylistic pattern.[48] For now, we can see that one immediate effect of this slide across perspectival boundaries is to unsettle the generic distinctions between fictional biography and autobiography. Not exactly a Brechtian defamiliarisation device, the frequent, often unexpected shifts in perspective act as a form of interruption in the narrative – the reader is brought to attention, put momentarily out of place. The second person pronoun creates a sense of "double vision" – a rapid shift of perspectives between authorial voice and character. They also work to subtly manipulate the relationship between reader, authorial voice and character; this in turn shades our perception of Hurtle – as if we, the "readers in the text" are brought forward into closer proximity with the character. However, this is less significant than the experience White describes in the last passage: the "sliding" depicts a kind of intrinsic "interplay" within the character's self; it points to the axis point of "the dialogical mirroring of "I" and "you," as the novelist Suri Hustvedt describes it.[49] It therefore externalises the interior dynamic of consciousness and perception, of seeing and "reading" (interpretation) as functions of being. This in turn is reflected in the sudden shifts characters execute between their social personae and more private, or simply less formal, and less formed selves – shifts expressed through Boo Hollingdrake/Olivia Davenport's

[48] Edgecombe reads this stylistic device as a slippage between the "childish" second-person and the "third-person limited perspective" – a universalist "you" to a relative "he" – although his argument is not completely persuasive (1989, 89).

[49] Hustvedt, "Excursions to the Islands of the Happy Few," 25.

ambiguities of gender and sexuality, for example. Viewed from a more detached literary critical distance, the long narrative arc of Hurtle's experience as a *being in the world* registers both the press of external forces that fashion and constantly infringe on his sense of self, and, in heightened interplay, the tentative, strangely precarious extension of his consciousness as it moves into, and comes up against, the erratic world of action, event and others. Human character is shown to fluctuate ambiguously between the outer world of social identity and the indwelling "space" of private being.

For all the dense complexity of *The Vivisector*, and for all its often extravagant hermeneutic taunting, the novel can be seen as offering an ironically humble gesture – a literary prompt to twenty-first-century readers to reimagine the possibilities of self – to "expand notions of selfhood" as the curator of a recent exhibition on self-portraiture expresses it.[50] The self that we take to constitute our beings is always becoming; we are defined by an animating ontological tension. We are "works in progress" in precisely the same way that Hurtle's self-portrait is a constant work in progress – in Robyn Davidson's Buddhistic formulation, we are constantly "selving": "We have [in the West] stopped being nouns; we are present participles." But in White's terms, this selving is never a linear "journey" or an innocently benign activity; nor is it axiomatically good in moral terms. Early in Hurtle's long approach to "the self-portrait" the text affirms the same view: "He had never been altogether dishonest: nor yet entirely honest; because that isn't possible. Even saints kid themselves a bit. God or whatever couldn't have been entirely honest in creating the world" (213). Whatever "truth" the self-portrait promises, the novel insists that it is always heavily qualified by complex and confounding questions involving meaning and intention, of "truth to self" and "self as truth."

In conclusion, White's novel, while enticing readers with the Romantic ideal of the artist as the modern hero of consciousness, makes neither essentialist claims to transcendent authenticity, Romantic assertions of unitary selves, nor "deconstructive" affirmations of decentred subjecthood as ontological fact. And in enforcing an insistent scepticism concerning the possibilities of arriving at some essential or "true" self, neither does it espouse nihilism, serve as salvational parable or some kind of therapeutic exercise, or offer enlightening quasi-mystical "Eastern" visions of the pure flux of being, although readers arriving at such conclusions should not necessarily be disabused. Rather, it takes seriously Montaigne's assertion that "we have no communication with being," novelistically reframing it as the most imperative of questions – a kind of intransitive state of "questioning" that characterises the experience of self-as-becoming, to fuse Davidson's and Gide's observations. As such, White's novel "opens" to the light of

[50] Christine Clarke, "Introductory essay: Beyond the Self," accessed August 2011, http://www.portrait.gov.au/site/exhibition_subsite_beyondtheself_essay.php.

readerly awareness, the all-too-human tendency to retreat from the disturbing energies and contradictory antagonisms of self and being, mind and body that characterise consciousness; in turn, readers are compelled to contend with the self as concept and idea – grand abstractions that ordinary, practical, sceptical Australians are said to abjure. At a time when there are compelling reasons to be suspicious of culturally dominant models of selfhood – when there are grounds for interpreting contemporary individualism as coercive ideology – the "self in question" offers a kind of counter-vision. *The Vivsector*, then, can be seen as a kind of restorative protest against complacency and conformity, yet it achieves its full measure in unsettling our complacency before contrived notions and specious models of individuality, and, by immediate association, the blandishments designed to endorse dubious versions of democratic values. There may be no assured resolution or faith in transcendence as a means of cancelling the contradictions of self and reconciling the human being to the encompassing world and reality; but it is also right to argue for the importance of learning to "see for oneself," less as high moral value than as fundamental need.

Stephen Harris

Burzenie kulturowego przemysłu osobowości: literatura, osobowość i indywidualizm w *The Vivisector* Patricka White'a

Streszczenie

Definiowanie twórczości Patricka White'a z punktu widzenia jej głównego tematu: kryzysu osobowości – utraty i egzystencjalnej walki, by odzyskać własną duszę i prawdziwe „ja" – stało się tendencją krytycznoliteracką. Z tej perspektywy twórczość White'a staje się ważnym głosem sprzeciwu wobec ograniczeń racjonalizmu, wyjałowienia materializmu, zwodniczości *ego* oraz powodujących alienację skutków nowoczesności. Jednakże począwszy od połowy XX wieku, dyskurs na temat osobowości stał się znacznie bardziej rozproszony, szczegółowy i prowokacyjny, podlegając transformacji, od podejścia psychoanalitycznego z połowy XX wieku – będącego podstawą *self industry* psychoterapii – poprzez postmodernistyczne i poststrukturalne dekonstrukcje tego burżuazyjnego tematu, aż po bardziej skomplikowane debaty dotyczące tożsamości i osobowości w zglobalizowanym XXI wieku. Ostatnio publiczna debata w Australii (podobnie jak w Wielkiej Brytanii i reszcie Europy) skupiła się na destrukcyjnych skutkach „nowego indywidualizmu" w kulturze zachodniej. Termin ten oznacza właśnie ów wielokrotnie omawiany kryzys narcyzmu, ale równie dobrze może oznaczać przejściową fazę w doświadczeniu kultury Zachodu. W niniejszym artykule na nowo rozważam główne tematy twórczości White'a w odniesieniu do tej pogłębiającej się krytyki indywidualizmu, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Australii. Skupiając się na powieści *The Vivisector* (1970) – kluczowej powieści w jego twórczości – pokazuję jak White, na swój typowo modernistyczny i ekspresjonistyczny sposób, bada możliwości i ograniczenia indywidualnej osobowości na tle ograniczeń australijskiego społeczeństwa i obecnych w nim postaw.

Stephen Harris

Démolition de l'industrie culturelle de l'identité : littérature, personnalité et individualisme dans *Le Vivisecteur* de Patrick White

Résumé

La définition de l'œuvre de Patrick White du point de vue de son thème principal : la crise de personnalité (la perte et la lutte existentielle afin de retrouver sa propre âme et le vrai « moi ») est devenue une tendance dans la critique littéraire. Dans cette optique, l'œuvre de Patrick White devient une importante expression s'opposant aux limitations du rationalisme, à l'épuisement du matérialisme, au caractère trompeur du « Moi » et aux conséquences de la modernité qui engendrent l'aliénation. Mais dès le début des années 50 du XX^e^ siècle, le discours sur la personnalité est devenu beaucoup plus éparpillé, minutieux et provocant, tout en subissant une transformation dès l'approche psychanalytique des années 50 du XX^e^ siècle (qui est le fondement de *self industry* de la psychothérapie) jusqu'aux débats plus compliqués concernant l'identité et la personnalité dans le XXI^e^ siècle mondialisé, en passant par les déconstructions postmodernes et poststructurales de ce sujet bourgeois. Récemment, un débat politique en Australie (comme en Grande-Bretagne et dans d'autres pays européens) s'est concentré sur les conséquences destructives du « nouvel individualisme » dans la culture occidentale. Ce terme signifie justement cette crise de narcissisme itérativement discutée, mais il peut signifier aussi une phase passagère dans l'expérience de la culture occidentale. Dans le présent article, j'étudie – tout en mettant en relief l'Australie – les thèmes principaux de l'œuvre de White par rapport à cette critique de l'individualisme qui s'intensifie toujours. En me focalisant sur le roman *Le Vivisecteur* (1970) – roman clé dans sa création littéraire –, je montre comment White examine, à sa manière typiquement moderniste et expressionniste, les possibilités et les limitations d'une personnalité individuelle par rapport aux limitations de la société australienne et aux attitudes qui y sont présentes.

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I Am Not Me. The (Re)construction of the Self in Graham Swift's *Ever After*

Graham Swift's *Ever After* (1992) is narrated by – in the protagonist's own words – "a dead man."[1] Shaken by his father's suicide, an uneasy relation with his mother and stepfather and finally by the suicide of his wife, Bill Unwin is troubled throughout his life by a sense of inauthenticity and an obsessive desire to discover patterns of signification which might free him from it. His desperate efforts to find a source of stable identity are repeatedly frustrated, leading ultimately to a suicide attempt, after which he embarks on a quest to understand his new self, the man "born again in plastic."[2] His stepfather's manufacturing of plastic, the loathed financial base of Unwin's unconvincing academic career, is juxtaposed with the imagery of the supposedly more authentic mining industry, brought into his narrative by the diaries of his Victorian ancestor. Unwin's obsession with the artificiality of his own life is extended to the whole post-World War II reality, which he associates with the production of synthetics and the empty language constructs of academia. His contempt for these is contrasted with a nostalgia for the well-ordered, "real" reality of the nineteenth century, which is in turn related in his narrative to the excavation of fossils and ores, advancing tangible, biological discovery and "organic" heavy industry. As Frederick Holmes observes,[3] in being connected both to nature and technology, mining implies both the possibility of finding a core of identity, unearthed in its natural state like ore, and the need to refine, process, manufacture what is discovered.

[1] Graham Swift, *Ever After* (London: Picador, 1992), 1.

[2] Swift, *Ever After*, 9.

[3] Frederick Holmes, "The Representation of History as Plastic: The Search for the Real Thing in Graham Swift's *Ever After*," *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* vol. 23, no. 7 (1996): 25–43.

Considered in the light of Freudo-Lacanian theory of mourning as a process analogous in many ways to Oedipal resolution and thus crucial to subject formation, Unwin's gradual acceptance of his ambiguous and unresolvable attachment to the mourned and his rethinking of the strict distinction between the scorned substitute and the ever-elusive "real thing" may be seen as the reluctant achievement of what Tammy Clewell reads to be Freud's recommendation "to relinquish the wish for a strict identity unencumbered by the claims of the lost other or the past."[4] In Lacan's terms, Unwin's evolving worldview corresponds to the final stage of the process in which personhood is established, that of the subject's entry into the Symbolic, which necessitates accepting lack as constitutive of selfhood and involves abandoning the fantasy of an object that will conclusively satisfy desire. The task facing Swift's protagonist, therefore, is that of detaching himself from the longing for the original lost object and instead accepting it as never having been in his possession, in order to be able to function within the social reality. Like Hamlet, on whom Unwin models himself, he needs to complete his symbolic castration, which, "for Lacan, involves the process of giving up the identification with this imaginary phallus, and recognizing that it is a signifier and as such was never there in the first place. What Freud called castration, therefore, is a symbolic process that involves the [subjects'] recognition of themselves as 'lacking' something – the phallus."[5]

Bill Unwin signals his fantasy of an ultimate plenitude beyond the limitations of the symbolic when he remarks early in the novel that the narrative is an attempt "to recover my substance."[6] Admittedly, he also expresses doubt about such recovery: in observing the change wrought in him by the suicide attempt, he states, referring to seeing his own face in the mirror: "I recognize that I have never truly recognized it."[7] Not only the possibility of returning to it, but the very existence of an "original" or "real" version of himself is thus put in doubt. Perhaps even more significantly, Unwin questions quite explicitly any notion that his "substance" might fit into the symbolic system: "these *words*, or rather the tone, the pitch, the style of them and consequently of the thoughts that underlie them, are not mine … this way in which I write is surely not *me*."[8] However, as his repeated declarations of searching for or indeed having found "the real thing"[9] suggest, Unwin persistently attempts "to ignore loss as a constitutive dimension of the human condition."[10]

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[4] Tammy Clewell, "Mourning beyond Melancholia: Freud's Psychoanalysis of Loss," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 52, no. 1 (2004): 65.

[5] Sean Homer, *Jacques Lacan* (London: Routledge, 2005), 55.

[6] Swift, *Ever After*, 10.

[7] Ibid., 3.

[8] Ibid., 4.

[9] Ibid., 94, 149, 218, 251.

[10] Stef Craps, *Trauma and Ethics in the Novels of Graham Swift: No Short-Cuts to Salvation* (Brighton and Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), 121.

His wish to regain the sense of self-completion which he ascribes to the time before the deaths of his father and wife might be seen to express the pathological dimension of fantasy, present in many of Swift's narrators who deny "the failure of the symbolic to render us complete: the fantasy arises where the subject deludes itself that the symbolic knows what it is supposed to be. The subject is thus trying to install the Law without the price that the Law exacts, as if desire and drive were of one mind."[11] Fantasy functions as a veil, hiding from the subject the trauma of castration understood as the realisation of the lack that the Other involves.[12] "Through fantasy, the subject attempts to sustain the illusion of unity with the Other and ignores his or her own division."[13] To enter the symbolic, one has to abandon the illusion of complete satisfaction of desire and subject oneself to the absolute otherness of the symbolic, a system which allows the articulation of desire, binding it with the desires of other subjects to the extent that "we are condemned to speak our desire through the language and desires of others."[14] Bruce Fink stresses that for Lacan "there is no signifier in the Other that can *répondre de* what I am [meaning] 'answer for,' but [also] 'account for,' 'take responsibility for.' It is not simply a signifier that tells you what you are but one that takes you under its wing, defines you, protects you, and constitutes your *raison d'être*. There is no such signifier, but not every mother allows her children to realize that."[15] Fink discusses this inadequacy of the Symbolic in the context of Hamlet's inability to situate himself in it, caused, in Lacan's view, by Gertrude, who posits herself as the signifier explaining all. In the case of Swift's protagonist, it is his father who is taken to guarantee freedom from ambiguity and absence, freeing Unwin from the quest for the *objet a* which would make him whole again, and give him a firm sense of identity. After his father's death, Unwin looks for the same kind of guarantee in the clearly symbolic constructs of literature, romantic love and history and, as Stef Craps demonstrates, he is disappointed each time. In rejecting the inadequacy of substitutes, Unwin insists on returning to a state in which he feels himself complete, negating the claim of psychoanalysis that "to come into being as desiring subjects we are forced to acknowledge the impossibility of the total fulfilment of our *jouissance*."[16] Unwin obsesses over his lost objects, the ever-elusive "real thing," even though he acknowledges that, in the words of his stepfather, "the real stuff is running out, it's used up, it's blown away,

[11] Elizabeth Wright, *Speaking Desires Can Be Dangerous* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 5.

[12] Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 61.

[13] Homer, *Jacques Lacan*, 87.

[14] Ibid., 70.

[15] Bruce Fink, "Reading *Hamlet* with Lacan," in *Lacan, Politics, Aesthetics*, ed. Willy Apollon and Richard Feldstein (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 190.

[16] Homer, *Jacques Lacan*, 99.

or it costs too much."[17] However, his wish to reverse the process of castration is impossible to satisfy since, as Elizabeth Wright points out, for Lacan the loss of a loved object leads to a melancholic reaction in which "the trauma of this loss forces a repetition of the original entry into the symbolic" and this involves precisely paying the price of "a renewed acceptance of castration."[18] Lacan presents castration as the process of giving up the imaginary phallus, the object presumed by the child to fulfil completely the mother's desire, normally imagined to be possessed by the father. The child's realisation that the mother's desire is not directed at him or her in its entirety marks the collapse of the pre-Oedipal union between the two and the child's attempt to become the completing object for the mother is an inevitably failed endeavour to re-establish the union. This failure forces the child to recognise that the mother is also a desiring subject, marked by a lack, and to have its desire repressed by a third figure intervening between the mother and the child, enforcing an interminable delay of the satisfaction. Therefore, the transition from the influence of the mother to that of the intervening third (the "Name-of-the-Father") involves exchanging the lure of satisfaction for an endless deferral of desire in a constant shift from one signifier to another, all characterised by the same absence.[19] Failure to mourn conclusively the sense of self-completion associated with the imaginary phallus on the symbolic level and to accept castration results in a disturbance both in the subject and in the system of signification: "The work of mourning is first of all performed to satisfy the disorder that is produced by the inadequacy of signifying elements to cope with the hole that has been created in existence, for it is the system of signifiers in their totality which is impeached by the least instance of mourning."[20] Paradoxically, Unwin appears to be aware that the system of signifiers that he suspects his father of dreaming up is an illusion. Remembering his father as caught in a longing for an imaginary world of old values, he wonders whether Colonel Unwin was creating a new order after the trauma of World War II or rather trying to re-create

> some old dream-world restored, in which implacable British sergeant-majors bawled for ever over far-flung parade grounds and men followed well-trodden paths to glory and knighthoods? He was fifty-five. And I had the insight of an infant. But it seems, now, that I could have told him then: that world was gone. An axe had dropped on it.[21]

[17] Swift, *Ever After*, 7.

[18] Wright, *Speaking Desires*, 81–82.

[19] Elizabeth Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticism – A Reappraisal* (New York: Routledge), 103.

[20] Jacques Lacan, "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*," *Yale French Studies* 55/56 (1977): 38. Lacan also emphasises the communal aspect of mourning in this context: "The work of mourning is accomplished at the level of the *logos:* I say *logos* rather than group or community, although group and community, being organized culturally, are its mainstays."

[21] Swift, *Ever After*, 18.

All of Graham Swift's novels are built around traumatised narrators striving to reintroduce order into their lives precisely through the symbolic mourning of what is gone, with varying degree of success. It may in fact be argued that the protagonists' tendency for totalising first person narratives, which fail to recognize the lack implied in language, gradually diminishes. One might situate Bill Unwin halfway between the rigid, monologic and manipulative narratives of Swift's early novels (*Sweet Shop Owner* (1980) or *Shuttlecock* (1982)) and the variety of voices or the ethically "awoken" protagonists of his later output (*Last Orders* (1996) or *The Light of Day* (2003)). This article aims to discuss this process as epitomised in the gradual maturation of the protagonist of *Ever After* towards becoming the Lacanian castrated subject in the context of the latter's discussion of the analogous progression in *Hamlet*.

Stef Craps convincingly argues that Unwin's initial approach to his lost others through literary conventions makes him a melancholic subject, pointing to the character's "moral narcissism" and his use of literature for "aesthetically defusing the threat posed to one's self-conception by a traumatic reality." Unwin's "complacent self-enclosure"[22] is not unlike the avoidance of the dialogic nature of language and the persistence "in an unconscious commitment to suffering as a way of refusing to mourn," observed by Julia Kristeva in "borderline" patients.[23] The refusal to mourn the loss in turn involves the cannibalistic incorporation of the lost other through identification and in denying substitution blocks the movement of desire. Unwin's insistence on retaining his lost loved ones also implies a reluctance fully to enter the symbolic order and embrace the lack involved with it, since, as Sean Homer notes, for Lacan, "the lower case 'other' always refers to imaginary others. We treat these others as whole, unified or coherent egos, and as reflections of ourselves they give us the sense of being complete whole beings."[24] It is therefore not surprising that the suicide of his terminally ill wife Ruth, followed shortly by the deaths of his mother and stepfather, shatters the stability of Unwin's identity entirely, depriving him of all influences that give meaning to it. His response to Ruth's death bears clear melancholic characteristics when he states: "But only Ruth will do. She represented life to me. I know that, now that she is dead. She was life to me."[25] Unwin quite explicitly refuses to be consoled by the elegiac conventions of linguistic substitute in an explanation of the reasons behind his consistent rejection of suggestions that he should write a biography of his wife, who had been a famous actress: "Each time, it has come with the tacit, the soft-toned hint that this might be, as it were, a cure for grief. But it seems to

[22] Craps, *Trauma and Ethics*, 140–41.

[23] Wright, *Speaking Desires*, 5: "In her clinical material she shows her patients to be wavering between neurosis and psychosis in their attempts to avoid dialogue with the world as it is represented by their analyst and significant figures of their past."

[24] Homer, *Jacques Lacan*, 70.

[25] Swift, *Ever After*, 120.

me it would be an impossibility, a falsehood, a sham. It's not the life, is it, but the *life*? The *life*."[26] In an almost literal rendering of the melancholic condition in which the lost object becomes identified with loss itself, Unwin concludes: "And nothing is left but this impossible absence. This space at your side the size of a woman, the size of a life, the size – of the world. Ah, yes, the monstrosity, the iniquity of love – that another person should *be* the world."[27] Unwin's insistence on refusing substitutes is matched by the insistence with which substitution is pressed on him. In fact – as Stef Craps observes – his suicide attempt is triggered precisely by the realisation that a new object could replace his lost other: when the wife of a fellow scholar attempts to seduce him; to his own surprise he does not remain indifferent to her advances and concludes: "It could have been her. It could have been us."[28] This incident takes place three days after the stepfather's revelation that Unwin is not the son of the man he had mourned. The rejected substitute father thus also makes Unwin realise that the "genuine article" was no more than a substitute himself. Unwin has to recognise that it is impossible to use strictly symbolic structures – the models of literature, romantic love – which are repeatedly demonstrated by the narrator himself to be no more than the product of literary conventions, or the narratives of history – to recreate the pre-lingusitic sense of unity with the world. Disgusted as he is with the hypocrisy and inauthenticity of social existence, Unwin has no choice but to face the fact that the very notion of "the real thing" is a construct precisely of the Symbolic.

The protagonist's eventual reluctant embrace of the inevitability of substitution comes only after a long struggle, initiated by a disturbed Oedipal resolution, marking his later relations to his others. Colonel Unwin's suicide triggers in his son a re-entry into the symbolic in which he self-consciously identifies with Hamlet, presenting himself as similarly haunted by the neglect of mourning rituals and a "ghostly identification"[29] with his dead father, making his turmoil parallel to Shakespeare's "drama of blocked desire [and] the mourning that is required to unblock it,"[30] at the same time allowing it to be considered from the perspective of Lacan's elaboration of symbolic castration and constitution of the subject by use of *Hamlet*. Lacan's profound reworking of the Freudian interpretation of the play involves a shift from a focus on Hamlet's Oedipal desire to "his situation of dependence with respect to the desire of the Other, the desire of his mother."[31] The child is wholly at the mother's mercy when he faces the fact that her desire is not directed at him in its entirety. It is her reply to the child's question about his place in the structure of signification that causes him to realise that his desire

[26] Ibid., 253.
[27] Ibid., 256.
[28] Ibid., 245.
[29] Ibid., 63.
[30] Wright, *Speaking Desires*, 81.
[31] Lacan, *Interpretation of Desire*, 17.

may never be fulfilled because his mother's is not either. This reply makes the child realise that he is merely a substitute for the mother's missing phallus.[32] Gertrude's inappropriately quick second marriage is in a sense such a reply to Hamlet's "What do you want from me?" question, one which, according to Bruce Fink, does not explain to Hamlet his position in the structure of the symbolic but rather converts his desire into a demand for attention.[33] Hamlet is therefore not introduced to the signifier of lack in the other, which might effectively enable the fully-fledged desire and *jouissance* associated with symbolic castration.[34] He is instead left to continue striving "to separate himself from the demand of the (m) other and realize his own desire."[35]

Like Hamlet, Bill Unwin finds himself unable to mourn his dead father. After Colonel Unwin's suicide, he is preoccupied with mourning for the paradisiacal world of his childhood, spent largely with his mother in Paris, a city described by him as a "palpable network of 'scenes'"[36] impossible to distinguish from his perception of it. This is his imaginary period of the mother-child dyad, where he learns from Sylvia Unwin, his mother, "to see the world as a scintillating shop window, a confection, a display of tempting frippery."[37] In this setting, Unwin feels much closer to her than to her considerably older husband and his reaction to the latter's death is not unaffected by the context. At first, the young Unwin's sorrow focuses on not having been able to participate in his father's imagined life as a spy: "For a while the delusion was so strong that it turned into a pang of regret: I had discovered this source of excitement too late – I could never, now, have access to it."[38] Even when the sorrow for the loss of the father – or the remorse for the absence thereof – finally appears, it also takes a form of mourning the imaginary: Unwin refuses to grieve for the deceased, focusing instead on being deprived of the experience of encountering a "vision made fact"[39] in the shape of Paris. "Only when the image of my ballet-girls faded did grief for my father emerge to take place. Or rather … a nagging, self-pitying, self-accusing emotion born of the guilt at not feeling grief." Unwin also describes "a mood of redundancy, which it occurred to me my father must have felt too," which appears when he takes the position of the father as "an adjunct, an accessory, a supernumerary" to the mother and her lover. This identification in turn moti-

[32] Dylan Evans, *Dictionary*, 117.

[33] Fink, "Reading *Hamlet* with Lacan," 190: "according to Lacan she says she has to be 'getting it' all the time." Her reply to her son's question, focused according to Lacan exclusively on herself: "I am what I am; in my case there's nothing to be done, I'm a true genital personality – I know nothing of mourning."

[34] Fink, "Reading *Hamlet* with Lacan," 191.

[35] Homer, *Jacques Lacan*, 78.

[36] Swift, *Ever After*, 13.

[37] Ibid., 16.

[38] Ibid., 21.

[39] Ibid., 19.

vates the idealisation of Colonel Unwin: "I began to summon a father I had never really known: noble, virtuous, wronged."[40] According to Elizabeth Wright, an analogous approach to his own father indicates Hamlet's inability to complete the process of castration.[41] Unwin thus appears to persist in his attachment to the imaginary phallus, like Hamlet "unable to mourn the loss of the phallus that will inaugurate the movement of his own desire" and stuck in a narcissism associated by Lacan with the imaginary order.[42]

The questions Bill Unwin might want to address to his mother, concerning his identity and origins, remain unanswered until Sylvia is on her deathbed.[43] This reticence is explained by her distrust of storytelling, contrasted with the raw, immediate experience: "For all her vocal powers, for all her capacity to chatter, squeal, and, sometimes, shriek, my mother was never an eager *raconteuse*. I think she regarded reminiscence and tale-telling as a kind of weakness, an avoidance of the central issue of life, which was to wring the most out of the present."[44] Sylvia Unwin's role in her son's Oedipal crisis is suitably analogous to that of Gertrude in *Hamlet*. Described by Unwin as "a woman given to severing herself from the past,"[45] marked by a sensuous enjoyment of the present and insatiable sexuality, she remains appropriately unmoved by her husband's desperate deed. When announcing the tragedy to her son, "she is not smiling (or crying). She is composed and authoritative; the hug is like some solemn ceremony."[46] Like Gertrude's, her basic inability to mourn also constitutes a message to her son, complicating his quest to understand the desire of the Other and his position in it. Sylvia Unwin corresponds well with Lacan's interpretation of Gertrude as the (m)Other who aims to satisfy her own lack and prevents her son's entry into the symbolic by communicating to him that achieving this does not involve castration.[47] Her advising Unwin "against the ruinous desire to outwit mortality"[48] may be interpreted in this light as a form of taking a stance against entering the symbolic, against the lack that this involves, a declaration of living entirely in the present. However, like Hamlet, Bill Unwin is no longer able or willing to return to the pre-Oedipal dyad.[49]

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[40] Ibid., 63.

[41] Wright, *Speaking Desires,* 84.

[42] Homer, *Jacques Lacan*, 77.

[43] And even then the reply leaves out crucial information, such as the identity of Bill's father.

[44] Swift, *Ever After*, 26.

[45] Ibid., 45.

[46] Ibid., 20.

[47] Wright, *Speaking Desires*, 79.

[48] Swift, *Ever After*, 231. Describing the fates of her grandfather's and her uncle's failed careers, Sylvia claims that in both cases "it was craven fear of oblivion, the desire to cheat death by the vain quest for distinction that was the root of the matter" (27).

[49] As an adult he questions his mother's relation to him; her "divinizing the world and emphasizing the bond between them is revealed as a crude strategy of self-aggrandizement and egotistical projection" (Craps, *Trauma and Ethics*, 125).

Bruce Fink argues that this is impossible for Hamlet, because the first stage of his symbolic castration, that of alienation, has already taken place. Similarly, Unwin "has entered the Other's world … and assimilated the Other's language and the desire with which it is ridden, but separation has not occurred."[50] He declares a love of literature as "this other world, this second world to fall back on – a more reliable world in so far as it does not hide that its premise is illusion,"[51] which, as Stef Craps notes, is valuable to him primarily as a stabilising influence on the chaos of reality. In Unwin's narrative, literature, "instead of being a locus for the meditation of one voice against another, turns into a single subject's fantasy of its full accession of drive, an anarchic conviction that the symbolic guarantees the unalloyed, unrestrained achievement of a blissful union in which the pain of division would be expelled forever."[52] His identifications with literary models appear to ignore the limitations of the symbolic; both his others and he himself are assumed to be figures in prescribed scenarios and Unwin is repeatedly surprised by people not behaving the way he imagines they should. True to his Hamlet identification, Unwin expects a confession of guilt and shame at contributing to his father's suicide both from his mother and stepfather. As an adult, remembering himself asking Sylvia Unwin about the motives of the desperate act, he still believes that "it was the moment, of course, for her to have broken down, wept, begged my forgiveness, confessed that her shamelessness had driven a man to his death. The things that happen in opera, they happen in life too. But she didn't."[53] Sam Ellison also refuses to play along with Unwin's imagination when, years later, he decides to reveal that the main motive might have been the fact that Colonel Unwin was not Bill's father: "You see, I think, astonishing as it seems, that he is coming, after all these years, to *apologize*; to make a clean breast of it … He is here (Claudius at his prayers) to atone for his part in my father's death."[54] Unwin himself is unable to enforce the adolescent dream of killing his stepfather who, like Claudius for Hamlet, "represents the completion that [he] wants to be for the mother: this completion must be there because this is where Gertrude finds it with Claudius."[55] This in turn does not allow Unwin to separate himself from the other's desire, not having confronted a lack in his mother, for whom there is apparently nothing to mourn. The melancholic refusal to mourn observed in Unwin indeed equals the subject's inability to abandon the assumption that he or she can become the only object of the mother's desire (in replacing the father whom Unwin quite literally imagines to have embodied it) and in consequence to perceive the phallus as representing her lack rather than self-

[50] Fink, *Reading*, 192.
[51] Swift, *Ever After*, 69.
[52] Wright, *Speaking Desires*, 39–40.
[53] Swift, *Ever After*, 22–23.
[54] Ibid., 154.
[55] Wright, *Speaking Desires*, 84.

sufficiency and completeness. The narrator's failure in making this shift is arguably repeated when he loses his wife – once again, in a parallel to *Hamlet*, in the context of repeated insufficient mourning.[56]

What Elizabeth Wright proposes to be the task of the artist in the light of Lacan's contribution to critical theory is arguably what Unwin is initially unable to achieve in his narrative. Lacan believes that "the artist knows – and shows the spectator that he knows – that he himself suffers the same lack." Therefore, the role of a work of art is not to enable the artist to share with the audience a sense of inner harmony but rather a desire or lack, in order "mutually to sustain a renunciation of a *fantasy*."[57] This is arguably what the text of Matthew Pearce's notes finally does for Unwin. Stef Craps points out that Unwin's pre-Oedipal sense of completeness linked with times before his "world … had fallen apart (it did, you see) with [his] father's death"[58] is an entirely fictional construct corresponding to Lacan's imaginary order and the protagonist's task after his own "little bout" with death is not to regain the supposed lost paradise but to find a way "of acknowledging and affirming its radical absence."[59] Craps further argues that in the course of his narrative Unwin achieves a change towards a more dialogic understanding of speech and abandons his insistence on "capturing 'the real thing', the elusive self-completing object, necessarily replaced by substitutes."[60] This movement towards accepting the lack inscribed in the symbolic is motivated by his encounter with the radical otherness in the form of his maternal great-grandfather's diary and letters, effectively opposing his totalising interpretation. Initially, the figure of Matthew Pearce performs for Unwin the same role that Laertes performed for Hamlet as the ideal ego. Treated like a relic of a pre-Oedipal omnipotence associated with infantile narcissism, Pearce becomes for Unwin "an original core of identity,"[61] which he inscribes with "stability, … an intuitive sense that all things must have their basis."[62] Unwin's initial treatment of his ancestor's testimony is in a way analogous to the operation of ideal ego, which is satisfied with the illusion of omnipotence, in contrast to the ego ideal, whose self-esteem is based on following the standards set by the superego. As Sophie De Mijolla-Mellor puts it, "The ideal ego … appears to be a way of short-circuiting the work that the ego ideal requires by assuming that its goals, or any others that

[56] Lacan refers to Polonius's hasty, secretive inhumation and "the whole business of Ophelia's burial" (*Interpretation of Desire*, 40); in *Ever After*, Unwin describes Sylvia's death soon after Ruth's as cruelly "stealing her afterlife" but at the same time perhaps mercifully "shocking him out of the shock" (Swift, *Ever After*, 30–31).

[57] Wright, *Reappraisal*, 110.

[58] Swift, *Ever After*, 114.

[59] Craps, *Trauma and Ethics*, 125.

[60] Ibid., 121.

[61] Ibid., 138.

[62] Swift, *Ever After*, 91.

might be still higher, have already been attained."[63] Openly acknowledging that this is a manipulation, Unwin ignores evidence that Pearce's wife Elisabeth might have been unfaithful to him and creates an idealised image of their marital life to quiet his suspicions concerning his own wife's fidelity. The figure of Pearce becomes for Unwin an idealised imagined father by means of an analogy introduced in the diaries themselves which describe Pearce finding a substitute for his own estranged father in the person of his father-in-law. Eventually, Matthew is reconciled with his father, who

> confessed, if not in so many words, that he was always jealous of the faith that *I* had kept but which he in his innermost heart had lost. Jealous, furthermore, of the good Rector, in whom he thought I had found a father – since a spiritual father – preferable to him … he supposed that I found thereby a sanctuary he could not provide.[64]

However, the sanctuary of re-found religious certainty eventually proves contingent and insupportable. While the bereavement of his pious mother in his childhood only strengthens Pearce, since "her memory became a shrine of all his religious feeling," and "the Bible would remain for him the sole consolation for his mother's inexplicable departure, the only true reply to death," the loss of his son, combined with his discovery of an ichthyosaur skeleton ten years earlier and the resulting interest in Darwin's theory of evolution, shakes the very framework to which Pearce referred in managing the first bereavement. As Unwin observes, commenting on Pearce's life story, "for all his early training, he does not seem to have been able to sustain the same trauma from the opposite end: the death in 1854 of his son Felix … heralded the collapse of Matthew's spiritual certainty."[65] After a long period during which Pearce hides his doubts out of a sense of duty towards his family, he finds himself unable to keep up the pretence. A final confrontation with his father-in-law, with whom he had been sharing his troubled thoughts, leads to the painful decision to abandon his wife and children. Later, he decides to leave for America and in a farewell letter to his wife, Elizabeth, confesses "to have struggled to keep doubts under guard while maintaining a sanguine face to the world, like a sick person wishing not to infect others," but concludes that he "came to believe … that though ignorance may be bliss, happiness is not to be purchased by a refusal of knowledge."[66] In the same letter, Pearce leaves to his wife the evidence of his spiritual torment in the form

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[63] "Ego Ideal/Ideal Ego," in *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Alain de Mijolla (2005), accessed December 28, 2011, http://www.enotes.com/ego-ideal-ideal-ego-reference

[64] Swift, *Ever After*, 54.

[65] Ibid., 95.

[66] Ibid., 52.

of his notebooks. Surprising in their significance even to their author,[67] the notes may be seen as serving to overcome the "symbolic impasse" which Darian Leader presents as an aspect of negotiation of losses.[68] Unable to give up the self-image based on how she was perceived by the mourned person, the bereaved may find it impossible to locate herself in the Symbolic, since "the symbolic Other is not there to situate him, and so all he is left with is his own image, unanchored and unchained."[69] Once Pearce arrives at the decision to leave his family, the notes are discontinued as if they have served their purpose. The act of giving up what he describes as "evidence of *me*"[70] constitutes the kind of symbolic sacrifice which, as Leader argues, is crucial to the work of mourning as a means of constituting the object. Unlike melancholia, where the lost object embodies the dimension of lack itself and thus becomes impossible to give up without experiencing the loss as "an unbearable whole which threatens to engulf [the melancholic] at all times,"[71] mourning allows for a separation of the object from the space previously occupied by it and thus enables substitution. The abandoning of the book is very much like the rituals referred to by Leader, where throwing into the grave a part of the mourner's body (a lock of hair, a fingernail, a finger) prevents the mourner from being engulfed whole by identification with the dead.[72] Pearce's notes are such a substitute, a trace of the subject sacrificed instead of the subject himself.

This ability to sever the links with the past even in the face of their persistence is entirely beyond Unwin's grasp. While Stef Craps calls Pearce another "victim to the imperialism of Bill's voracious self, which seeks to reduce the outside world to its own solipsistic terms,"[73] he nevertheless concludes that in this case "the possibility of possession of the other is exposed as a delusion" since, instead of stabilising Unwin's sense of identity, Pearce's narrative undermines his totalising tendencies, forcing him to surrender "the narcissistic fantasy that the self-completing object can be had and that the real thing can be seized hold of."[74] Pearce's incomprehensible behaviour – abandoning the illusion of familial happiness in the face of his loss of religious faith – confronts Unwin with "the signifier of desire that just is – having no rhyme or reason, no explanation, justification, or *raison d'être*." Thus, Pearce might be seen as enabling Unwin to associate the object of the other's desire with *objet a* rather than the phallus, triggering separation for him and

[67] Shortly before finishing them, Pearce wonders: "What have I become, that I have parted from my wife, but still keep company with this book?" (Swift, *Ever After*, 183)

[68] Darian Leader, *The New Black. Mourning, Melancholia and Depression* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2008), 187.

[69] Leader, *New Black*, 186.

[70] Swift, *Ever After*, 52.

[71] Leader, *New Black*, 193.

[72] Ibid., 194.

[73] Craps, *Trauma and Ethics*, 139.

[74] Ibid., 144.

allowing him to conclude his accession to the symbolic.[75] Unwin's mourning may finally become adequate and "the narcissistic investment that prevents [him] acting in his own time be surrendered." As a subject no longer striving for imaginary plenitude, he can be situated in the symbolic register,[76] following the example of Pearce himself, faced with the absence of religious certainty (also in the persons of his father figures).

If mourning of the phallus is to be accomplished on the level of the symbolic, and the result of the process is to be the acceptance of its inadequacies, one might say that this is what Unwin achieves in his diary, as demonstrated by the final scene of the novel, the reminiscence of his first night with Ruth during which he shared with her the memory of his father's death. Like Hamlet, half-detached from life by his own suicidal attempt (he speaks of "a ghostly disconnection from myself"[77]), Unwin demonstrates his recognition of the lack in the Other by marking the romantic union with his consciousness of both Ruth's and his own later repetition of Colonel Unwin's gesture of self-annihilation. The ambiguous chorus of the section, "He took his life," apart from its obvious melancholic connotations, implies a readiness to embrace the contingency of the human condition with its inevitable losses, demonstrating Unwin's liberation both from the destructive melancholic wish to retain the lost past and from the obligation of complete mournful decathexis, the struggle against which had brought him to the brink of self-annihilation. Wendy Wheeler notes: "This ambiguity – a sort of agreement not to close off, or possess, the meaning of the object – suggests a desire to tolerate anxiety and ambivalence which is part of the relinquishment of narcissistic melancholia."[78] As Lacan puts it, explaining Hamlet's hesitation in taking his revenge on Claudius: "It's a question of the phallus, and that's why he will never be able to strike it, until the moment when he has made the complete sacrifice – without wanting to, moreover – of all narcissistic attachments, that is when he is mortally wounded and knows it."[79] The final scene of the novel could in this light be seen as the surrendering of the imaginary pre-Oedipal completeness and thus fulfillment of the precondition for castration, the shift from imaginary to symbolic phallus enabling the (re-)entering into the symbolic order of social interaction.

Bill Unwin's encounter with his own transience leaves him in a state where he is indeed "mortally wounded" and forces him to give up the dream of a stable, original, complete selfhood based on his narcissistic emotional investments. Unwin's

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[75] Fink, *Reading*, 191.

[76] Wright, *Speaking Desires,* 82.

[77] Swift, *Ever After*, 231.

[78] Wendy Wheeler, "Melancholic Modernity and Contemporary Grief," in *Literature and the Contemporary: Fictions and Theories of the Present*, eds. Roger Luckhurst and Peter Marks (Harlow: Longman/Pearson, 1999), 75.

[79] Lacan, *Interpretation of Desire*, 51.

relinquishing of the imaginary phallus is indicated in a desperate renunciation of his quest for a clear ground of his identity: "Who am I? Who am I? A nobody. An heirless nonentity. What's more – a bastard."[80] The ultimate recognition of his affinity with the father figure is grounded precisely in the latter's constitutional absence. Unwin is finally able to become reconciled with his own losses when he acknowledges the double absence of the father figure[81] and recognizes the same deadly emptiness in himself as a failed suicide. The father becomes his *objet a*, not an original object to be retrieved but a non-existent one, given value only by Unwin's desire "to fill the emptiness or void at the core of subjectivity and the symbolic that creates the Thing, as opposed to the loss of some original Thing creating the desire to find it."[82] All the defining discourses and figures in Unwin's life are revealed as insufficient or missing in more than one sense and he arguably accepts that as a subject he is literally dependent on the absences he has been forced to face.

[80] Swift, *Ever After*, 232.

[81] That is, the fact that the man whom he mourned was not his biological father and that the biological father himself had been killed in the war before the other's suicide.

[82] Homer, *Jacques Lacan*, 85.

Sławomir Konkol

Ja to nie ja
(Re)konstrukcja tożsamości w *Raz na zawsze* (*Ever After*) Grahama Swifta

Streszczenie

Na powieść Grahama Swifta *Raz na zawsze* (*Ever After*, 1992) składają się – jak mówi sam narrator – „słowa nieboszczyka". Naznaczony przez samobójstwo ojca, niełatwą relację z matką i ojczymem, a w końcu samobójczą śmierć żony, Bill Unwin zmaga się przez całe życie z poczuciem braku autentyczności i obsesyjnym pragnieniem odkrycia takich metod autoidentyfikacji, które mogłyby go z niego wyzwolić. Jego rozpaczliwe próby wykształcenia stabilnej tożsamości niezmiennie spełzają na niczym, prowadząc ostatecznie do próby samobójczej, po której Unwin podejmuje wysiłek zrozumienia swojej nowej sytuacji, jako człowieka, który „reinkarnuje się w plastiku". Obrazy związane z przemysłem górniczym, które w narracji Unwina pojawiają się za sprawą pamiętników jego wiktoriańskiego przodka, sugerują, jak zauważa Frederick Holmes, zarówno możliwość odnalezienia rdzenia tożsamości, odkrycia jej jak rudy, w stanie naturalnym, jak i konieczność rafinacji, przetwarzania czy produkcji tego, co zostaje odkryte. W świetle psychoanalitycznej teorii żałoby jako procesu pod wieloma względami analogicznego do rozwiązania sytuacji edypalnej, a tym samym kluczowego dla formowania podmiotu, fakt stopniowej akceptacji przez Unwina jego niejednoznacznego i nierozwiązywalnego przywiązania do opłakiwanych bliskich oraz że rezygnuje on z jednoznacznego rozróżnienia między pogardzanym substytutem a nieosiągalną autentycznością, można postrzegać jako – jakkolwiek niechętne – wypełnienie Freudowskiego wezwania do, cytując Tammy Clewell, „wyrzeczenia się pragnienia jasno określonej tożsamości, nieobciążonej zobowiązaniami wobec utraconych innych czy przeszłości".

Sławomir Konkol

Moi ce n'est pas moi
(Re)construction de l'identité dans *À tout jamais* (*Ever After*) de Graham Swift

Résumé

Le roman *À tout jamais* (*Ever After*, 1992) de Graham Swift se compose – comme le dit le narrateur lui-même – « des propos du cadavre ». Marqué par le suicide de son père, par une relation difficile avec sa mère et son beau-père, enfin par la mort suicidaire de sa femme, Bill Unwin se débat durant toute sa vie contre le sentiment du manque d'authenticité et le désir de trouver de telles méthodes de l'autoidentification qui pourraient l'en délivrer. Ses tentatives désespérées de développer une identité stable échouent constamment en le menant finalement à une tentative de suicide, après laquelle Unwin s'efforce de comprendre sa nouvelle situation comme un homme qui « se réincarne dans du plastique ». Les images liées à l'industrie minière (qui apparaissent dans la narration de Unwin à cause des mémoires de son ancêtre victorien) suggèrent – comme le note Frederick Holmes – à la fois une possibilité de trouver la quintessence de son identité, de la découvrir comme on découvre du minerai, à l'état naturel, et la nécessité de raffiner, de transformer ou de produire ce qui est découvert. À la lumière de la théorie psychanalytique du deuil en tant que procédé analogue à plusieurs égards à la solution d'une situation œdipienne et par conséquent essentiel pour la formation du sujet, le fait que Urwin accepte petit à petit son attachement ambivalent et insoluble aux proches qu'il déplore, et qu'il renonce à la différentiation univoque entre un substitut méprisé et une authenticité impossible à atteindre peut être perçu comme – quoiqu'à contrecœur – une réalisation de l'appel freudien à – en citant Tammy Clewell – « abandonner la volonté d'avoir une identité clairement définie et n'étant pas chargée d'obligations envers les proches décédés et le passé ».

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Romantic Legacy in Non-Romantic Times Two Different-Similar Approaches to Searching for Self-Identity

Although the observations that Romanticism and Romantic ideas persist in literature and criticism[1] may be of limited critical value, they serve as useful points of departure for understanding why Romanticism continues to be stimulating for generations of post-Romantic poets. Why in times of reason, logic and science might a poet turn to nature, mysticism and spirituality? Why are certain features revived in poetry whereas others are generally rejected or accepted only by individuals?

The following essay is an endeavour to answer these questions. Its main thesis is derived from the conviction that an individual's process of self-definition occurs not only by means of reasoning and logic but also through spirituality and imagination. It holds that when, in the age of reason, logic and science fail to provide meanings and facilitate self-definition, room is made for imagination, spirituality and mysticism which might enhance the defining of the self. On the examples of two modern poets, Patrick Kavanagh and Robert Graves, we would like to show how in the case of poetic self-definition, turning to imagination, mysticism and spirituality may further the search for poetic identity.

Despite abundant literary affinities, such as Georgianism, war poetry and the poetry of emotional conflict, Robert Graves created his *magnum opus*, the

[1] Marshall Brown, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Volume 5. Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1; and David Simpson, "Romanticism, Criticism and Theory," in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. Stuart Currant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1–24.

mythopoeic theory of the White Goddess, in considerable detachment from the cultural-literary trends of early twentieth-century Europe. Disillusionment with and divergence from the modern world, being for the poet the aftermath of World War I, pushed him to redefine his poetic self. The outcome of Graves's search for poetic identity was the creation of a poetic universe ruled by the White Goddess,[2] in which poetry was *spiritus movens* and in which he lived the life of a poet hymning the muse. Firstly, the poet was a devotee of the Goddess for whom he wrote and from whom gained his inspiration. He used poetry to shape the poetic universe and his poetic self. Secondly, his poetry was concurrently addressed to the White Goddess and an effect of her inspiration. In this way, the poet defined his self and created his poetic universe. Thirdly, the White Goddess – the source of inspiration and addressee of his poetry – provided the poetic rules for both the shaping of the universe and poetic identity.

Graves's adoption of such a perspective for the interpretation of reality and himself as a poet has two crucial implications for this essay. First of all, its result is deliberately autobiographical, personal and self-serving poetry, which with respect to the content conveyed is cohesive with the author's opinions. Moreover, behind the White Goddess myth stands, among other things, the Romantic fascination with nature, mysticism and spirituality. Therefore, the intellectual value of this construct lies not only in the minimization of the breach between Graves's real life and the world depicted in his poetry, but also in an unconventionally creative way of adapting Romantic ideas to the personal mythology of Graves which furthered the poet's self-definition.

Graves believed that a poet was to tell "one story and one story only,"[3] hymning the White Goddess, his muse. She was the lady of his heart, incarnated in an earthly woman, to whom he confessed his love. In return, she bestowed on him inspiring dreams, trances and visions to be put into verse. The consequences of such Romantic worship were stringent rules that the poet had to follow, but which, paradoxically, allowed him to concentrate on his poetic self-development.

Firstly, the inspiration was a gift from the Goddess which the poet did not actually have to seek. Graves's interpretation of all events as signs from the muse made inspiration obvious and it was merely a question of time:

> When a dream is born in you
> With a sudden clamorous pain,
> When you know the dream is true

[2] Robert Graves, *The White Goddess. A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* (London: Noonday, 1973).

[3] Robert Graves, "To Juan at the Winter Solstice," in *Robert Graves. Selected Poems*, ed. Paul O'Prey (Michigan: Penguin 1986), 158.

And lovely, with no flaw no stain,
O then, be careful, or with sudden clutch
You'll hurt the delicate thing you prize so much.[4]

In a dream or trance the Goddess spoke to her poet, gave him visions and guided him through mazes of intuitive thinking. What the poet was left to do was to put "the delicate thing" into verse and perfect it to please his Goddess. Presented with inspiration, the poet was spared the need to wonder about its potential sources and reasons; he could concentrate on forging the ideas into words.

Being limited to the themes connected with the muse also facilitated the development of Graves's poetic self. As much as the granted inspiration freed him from the burden of searching for ideas for poems, the topical restrictions enhanced the quality of the verse he created. Instead of getting sidetracked by minor issues, the poet concentrated on perfecting his lines. The point for the poet was not to write in abundance, but to explore the depths of his feelings for the Goddess, to put quality over quantity.

Moreover, as the muse's lover, Graves did not write for the masses; he did not want to win fame or honours. The rules of the Goddess were clear: poetic life for absolute devotion. Any departure from commitment to the muse triggered a loss of poetic integrity and sincerity. The integrity of the poetic self, preserved when the author composed out of poetic necessity, fell apart when he subjected himself to external influences and created without the inspiration of the Goddess. In turn, sincerity required writing about personal and direct experiences.[5] His meetings with the muse, which happened in the poet's dreams and trances, or with her earthly incarnations, were these personal and direct experiences which he was to put into verse. Composing for the muse granted the poet a life in the poetic universe and consequently one with inspiration, integrity and sincerity.

The relation between them was circular in the sense that the poet wrote to praise her, she acknowledged the tribute and, in turn, gave him further inspiration to write on. Thus, for the poetic self, the remaining elements of the poetic universe were the means by which it created, sustained and developed itself. From this perspective, the Gravesian poet may be said to write for himself, for his own poetic development.

The Graves of the pre-Goddess period moved from Georgianism, admiring the beauty of rural landscapes, through patriotic war-poetry, to poetry of emotional conflict in an attempt to appease his neurasthenia. However, none of these fascinations made Graves feel he was engaged in writing true poetry. We can only

[4] Graves, "A Pinch of Salt," in *Fairies and Fusiliers*, ed. Robert Graves (New York: Heinemann, 1918), http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10122.

[5] George Stade, *Columbia Essays on Modern Writers. Robert Graves* (Irvington, New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 4–5.

deduce that this was the case because his poems were embedded in logic, reason and materialism, which were not enough for Graves. After the tragedies of World War I he considered twentieth-century England to be a country filled with:

> traces of ghostly struggle
> for the entrails torn from the earth
> here sweat is growing and apathy
> wooden pavements of good intentions
> bad illusions on which is raised
> the shining edifice of so-called prosperity[6]

All that he believed in, all that he fought for, turned out to put humanity "on the death curse" and the poet could no longer define himself by means of science, reason and logic. Turning to muse poetry became a catharsis which fully revealed to Graves the futility of the mechanistic world and freed him from abiding by its rules. Common logic or objective truths were no longer of importance – "poetic unreason" and poetic truth[7] became principles against which to define and interpret the surrounding world.

Poetry then, functioned as a tool for the creation of both Graves's poetic self and his poetic universe. The universe existed not so much as an alternative world, but rather as an alternative interpretation of the world. For an object, person or happening to become a part of the universe required them to be interpreted as constituents of the myth of the White Goddess. When described in poetic terms, they automatically took roles and functions provided by the myth. And so Graves's wives and lovers were incarnations of the muse, their departures were reflections of the Goddess's customary ridding herself of her suitors, and their gifts were talismans possessing divine power. The poetic universe of Graves consisted of real people, things and events; what made a difference was their interpretation.

Similarly, the poet's self was also shaped by poetry. As has already been mentioned, poetic interpretation gave objects, people and events meaning within the White Goddess myth. Since Graves considered himself the muse's lover and poet, he ascribed to himself the role of the mythical partner of the Goddess, the God of the Waxing and Waning Year. Moreover, apart from assigning him meaning within the myth, poetry also supplied principles for self-development. In return for the passionate devotion, it gave his poetic self integrity and sincerity. With each address to the Goddess, Graves built up his poetic universe and poetic self.

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[6] Robert Graves, "On the Bolton – Manchester Line." in *Duet*, ed. B. Tamborski (London 1975), 3.

[7] Stade, *Columbia Essays on Modern Writers*, 37.

The third constituent of Graves's poetic universe was the Goddess, whose role was to inspire him, provide him with poetic rules, and receive his poetry as her due tribute. The figure of the muse is drawn from an ancient rite of annual sacrifice to a lunar deity identified by Graves as the White Goddess. In the ritual, which was an imitation of the natural cycle of life and death, the God of the Waning Year, who represented death and decay, was replaced by the God of the Waxing Year, a representative of new life. In return for the sacrifice, the White Goddess made performers of the ceremony fall into trances; her poets experienced inspirational visions as the new cycle of life was initiated. Her role then was that of a stimulant and catalyst.

The constituents of Graves's poetic universe possessed functions resulting not only from the fact that they were part of it, but also from the interactions that occurred between them. Having a closer look at the interactions between the White Goddess and the poet we can identify her remaining tasks. Firstly, as Graves rejected absolute systems such as philosophies or religions, he needed some personal system to live by. The White Goddess myth and its poetic universe became his personal system, which he substituted for religion. Secondly, also in a Romantic vein of opposing mechanistic laws and rational understanding, the poet turned to intuitive knowledge and thinking:

> In which the emancipated reason might
> Learn in due time to walk at greater length
> And more answerably.[8]

Graves averred that although reason and logic enabled cognition, they were at the same time its limits. What could be known and understood was only what reason and logic could lead to. Everything that was beyond, that was "swifter than reason,"[9] was accessible only through intuitive thinking in which the Goddess was his guide.

Finally, as has already been mentioned, the muse was also responsible for enhancing imagination of the poet. Not only did she guide him in his imaginative thinking, but also provided feelings and impulses for self-definition. As all objects, people and events entering the poetic universe of Graves were signs from the muse, his life was a constant flow of signals confirming her presence and stimulating him to create.

Patrick Kavanagh, regarded as one of the leading Irish poets of the 20th century, is an example of an individual who, although encircled by the rationality

[8] D. N. Carter: *Robert Graves: The Lasting Poetic Achievement* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble, 1989), 31.

[9] Douglas Day: *Swifter Than Reason. The Poetry and Criticism of Robert Graves* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963).

and logic of the 20th century, rejected modern values and managed to create his own, unique poetic personality, derived from several norms originating in the Romantic Era. His poetry is rooted in the places of his birth and residence, and Kavanagh could not depict their beauty and mysticism without reaching back to the Romantic legacy of his ancestors. He was a unique poet who searched for self-identity through creating poetry, and defined his personality through his poetic self. Kavanagh's identity was strictly combined with the poetry he created. Because he believed that he had a mission that had to be fulfilled in the society, poetry was his tool to convey his views and opinions. That is the reason why his poetry had nothing in common with self-fashioning – Kavanagh depicted his genuine personality in his poems. He was not concerned about any socially acceptable standards. He did not consider himself to be an artist in the sense of a man who is appreciated by critics and public opinion. In the poem *Portrait of the Artist* Kavanagh summarizes his life and his attitude to poetry:

> I never lived, I have no history,
> I deserted no wife to take another,
> I rooted in a room and leave – this message.[10]

In this poem, Kavanagh clearly defines his intention – to convey beliefs and ideas to society. He did not connect being an artist with fame, splendor, or leading life full of escapades and adventures. He found his identity in creating verse, in a conviction that he was able to influence the world that surrounded him. In the Preface to his *Collected Poems* Kavanagh presented his Romantic approach to the search for the self-identity:

> There is, of course, a poetic movement which sees poetry materialistically. The writers of this school see no transcendent nature in the poet; they are practical chaps, excellent technicians. But somehow or other I have a belief in poetry as a mystical thing, and a dangerous thing.[11]

This materialistic "movement" mentioned by Kavanagh surrounded him, and, at the same time, limited the poet's mind and sense of freedom. Creating "safe" poetry aimed at being appreciated by the critics did not allow for a wide-range development of the poet's imagination. Therefore, Kavanagh chose "dangerous" poetry – he risked that his literary output might not be valued by the reviewers. He resigned from the commercial and materialistic aspect of his literary works and decided to create mystical, spiritual poetry.

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[10] Kavanagh, "Portrait of the Artist," in *Collected Poems* (New York: Norton, 1973), 121.
[11] Kavanagh, "Preface," in *Collected Poems*, xiii.

Kavanagh himself claimed that his works are best read without any comments from scholars: at the very beginning of his preface he stated "I have never been much considered by the English critics."[12] In his poems he praises the rural landscape and people. He believed in the unique wisdom of the uneducated, in the mystical features of the country's landscape, of the places "where ghostly poplars whisper to a silent countryside."[13] Simultaneously, Kavanagh denies the value of technological and scientific development and of commonly accepted ancient knowledge:

> Splendours of Greek,
> Egypt's cloud-woven glory
> Speak not more, speak
> Speak no more
> A thread-worn story.[14]

That is the reason why Kavanagh himself called his poetry dangerous. He was aware that rejecting commonly accepted truths probably would not be approved by the critics. Being conscious of this risk, he established his own, unique mode of creating. According to Kavanagh, nothing is obvious in poetry; it is impossible to interpret poems in one commonly established way. He stated that "A sweeping statement is the only statement worth listening to. The critic without faith gives balanced opinions, usually about second-rate writers."[15] Kavanagh rejected the conventional literary criticism that was prevalent among twentieth century writers and poets. By making such a statement he admitted his contempt for the established norms, and his preference for his own individual way to create a personal poetic self that satisfied his own ego, not that of those around him.

In his poetry Kavanagh turned to the holy, the mystical and the spiritual. Despite living in a twentieth-century world full of science and technology, he claimed that turning to nature was the only approach to establishing one's individuality.

> Now in the passionate moon
> The no-good dames
> Tattoo my flesh with the indelible
> Ink of lust.[16]

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[12] Kavanagh, "Preface," xiii.
[13] Kavanagh, "The Intangible," in *Collected Poems*, 6.
[14] Ibid., 6.
[15] Source: http://www.famousquotesabout.com/quote/A-sweeping-statement-is/442050.
[16] Kavanagh, "At Noon," in *Collected Poems*, 21.

Earth was a holy place for him: he claimed that the innocence of the human soul was being destroyed by the industrialization and technology of modern life. In her book describing the mystical imagination of the poet's literary works, Una Agnew states, "Kavanagh's poetry is the principal vehicle of his spirituality."[17] The land in which he was born, Inniskeen, influenced and transformed his spirit. One may thus claim that his life was a kind of mystical journey, and his poems are the consequences of his unique, mystical voyage. The poet's spiritual longing to be closer to uncovering the world's principles appeared in one of his poems, *Blind Dog*:

> I follow the blind dog,
> Crying to my star: O star
> Of a passionate pagan's desire,
> Lead me to the truths that are.[18]

In this voyage, the connection with Polish Romanticism is easily noticed in the common sense of a mission for the poet in the society. Kavanagh claimed that his unique role as a poet is to protect society from the dangers of materialism and the cruelty of life. He compared these representations of depravity to a kind of "fog" that must be removed from people's minds so that they might be purified. These visions he shared with the neo-Romantic Irish poet William Butler Yeats and with one of the chief representatives of English Romanticism, William Blake. Kavanagh in his poetry frequently appeals to the Christian faith to emphasize his sense of mission. For him, a poet is a theologian and his role is a kind of calling, whose purpose is to convey Christian ideas to the society.

> To Your high altar I once came
> Proudly, even brazenly, and I said:
> Open your tabernacles I too am flame
> Ablaze on the hills of Being.[19]

The poet mentions the City of God. He combines Romantic ideals with the Christian faith. According to Kavanagh, God is not a distant and abstract idea, but truly exists among people. He is present in everything he has created – in the fields, flowers and all elements of nature – "The maiden of Spring is with child By the Holy Ghost."[20] As a consequence, there is no Augustinian gap any more between "the City of the World" and "the City of God." This perspective is very

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[17] Una Agnew, *The Mystical Imagination of Patrick Kavanagh* (Dublin: Columba Press, 1998), 11.

[18] Kavanagh, "Blind Dog," in *Collected Poems*, 17.

[19] Kavanagh, "Worship," in *Collected Poems*, 12.

[20] Kavanagh, "April," in *Collected Poems*, 18.

close to the Romantic ideals of praising nature, giving it a unique and mystical role in people's faith.

After analysing the Romantic features that were adapted by Kavanagh and Graves, it is possible to conclude that certain characteristics borrowed from the Romantic period were valuable for these two twentieth-century poets in creating a unique and extraordinary poetic self. Kavanagh's places of birth and residence were central to his individuality and his native countryside was for him a constant source of inspiration. He used the Romantic vision of nature as something holy and spiritual, because it was impossible for him to depict the charm and magnificence of those places by using contemporary poetic devices based principally on reason and logic. Rejecting conventional literary criticism, claiming that poetry cannot be interpreted in one established way, was connected with the Romantic belief that all conventional norms should be eliminated because emotions and passions are the only tools which are able to perceive the world accurately. Kavanagh used all these devices to create his unique poetic self, as his sense of mission in the society, turning to the holy and spiritual in nature, did not correspond to contemporary literary trends and movements. He was a man living in the twentieth century, yet his soul and poetic identity could not integrate with contemporary norms. That is the major reason Kavanagh reached for the Romantic legacy.

Graves's motivation to turn towards intuitive thinking, spirituality and nature in his poetic practice resulted from his disillusionment with the world of reason, rationality and logic. He saw reason, rationalism and logic as the forces that stood behind materialism, decay and war. Unable to understand the absurdity of the wars that they had brought about and unwilling to move forward by their means Graves found himself locked in the twentieth-century cage of reason. The way out of it could be only something which would go beyond reason, offer eternal truths and also give the possibility of understanding. Poetry which was permeated with a Romantic attraction to nature, mysticism and spirituality provided an alternative to beauty-oriented Georgianism, patriotic war-poetry and the rationalizing poetry of emotional conflict. It gave Graves poetic truths and principles that he could hold and which facilitated the development of his poetic self.

Romanticism continues to provide stimulation for generations of post-Romantic poets because it puts forward values, and allows for sources of inspiration and impulses alternative to those propagated during the age of reason. It rejects objective truths and absolute systems in favour of subjective values and individual systems which tend to put their creator at the centre. It gives priority to mysticism and spirituality, and generally to feelings and sensations, in which poetry tends to excel more than it does against the backdrop of reason, logic and materialism. Kavanagh and Graves drew from the Romantic legacy to create their own, unique poetic selves. Although the road they took to achieve it differed, the final result of their search for the self-identity was similar.

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Romantyczne dziedzictwo w nieromantycznych czasach
Dwa różne/podobne sposoby poszukiwania tożsamości

Streszczenie

Wiele prac wskazuje na znaczący wpływ, jaki romantyczne dziedzictwo ma na twórczość współczesną. Dwudziestowieczni poeci i filozofowie żyjący w tych jakże nieromantycznych czasach mimo wszystko deklarowali swoje przywiązanie do romantycznych idei. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest skonfrontowanie dwóch podejść do tworzenia poezji, poszukiwania odrębności i pracy nad rozwojem intelektualnym i poetyckim. Robert Graves i Patrick Kavanagh to nie tylko poeci, ale i wielcy filozofowie poezji. Kavanagh czerpał z mistycyzmu, wyobraźni, z tego co nieodkryte i niepoznane. Graves podkreślał rolę wizji sennych, katartyczny charakter poezji i jej magiczne pochodzenie. Twórcy Ci reprezentują więc różne a zarazem i podobne podejście do poszukiwania tożsamości.

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Patrimoine romantique aux temps non romantiques
Deux moyens différents/semblables de chercher son identité

Résumé

Beaucoup de textes scientifiques démontrent l'influence considérable qu'exerce le patrimoine romantique sur la littérature contemporaine. Des poètes et philosophes du XX^{e} siècle vivant aux temps tellement non romantiques déclaraient, malgré tout, leur attachement aux idées romantiques. L'objectif du présent article consiste à confronter deux approches liées à la création poétique, à la recherche d'une particularité ainsi qu'au travail sur le développement intellectuel et poétique. Robert Graves et Patrick Kavanagh sont non seulement des poètes, mais aussi de grands philosophes de poésie. Kavanagh puisait dans le mysticisme, dans l'imagination, bref, dans tout ce qui n'était pas découvert et connu. Graves soulignait le rôle des visions oniriques, le caractère cathartique de la poésie et son origine magique. Ces créateurs représentent alors une attitude à la fois différente et semblable envers la quête d'identité.

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Frame of Mind
Self Industry in Performance

Introduction

> So this meeting – which has just opened – is an international colloquium…. Generous hospitality. Invited guests?… And all these problems of identity, as we so foolishly say nowadays.[1]

The above quotation from Jacques Derrida about the topic of an international conference in Louisiana, or rather a supplement to Derrida (as I have added to it an extra tense, ellipsis and a new context), seems a perfect sketch of what I would like to discuss, namely *Sketches about Ophelia*, a new performance by Teatr A Part, involving "all these problems of," mind you, neither identity nor self, but identification and self industry, themselves supplements to the infamous identity and self.

In fact, the very word "sketch" – "a hasty, undetailed drawing or painting often made as a preliminary study"– necessitates the logic of supplement. It is like the three dots of ellipsis, which need a complement to make up for what is missing. Not unlike Marcin Herich's *Sketches*. After all, they are a monodrama and a solo performance by Monika Wachowicz as Ophelia, and thus an obvious ellipsis of Hamlet as a character. Furthermore, the elliptical title in the plural suggests more than one ellipsis and calls for more than one supplement. This plurality seems to be no coincidence. Because the supplement acts, in fact, like a self-producing virus. As Derrida puts it: "It is impossible to arrest

[1] Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 14.

it, domesticate it, tame it."[2] Most importantly, its virulence has serious implications for self and identity, which implications become conspicuous in Herich's performance (therefore *Sketches* are referred to in plural), and not only in Ophelia's case.

Self-Productive Liminality

Interestingly enough, in order to analyse the self-producing strategy of supplement, Derrida turns to art (which will be discussed further in the text). In the book *The Truth in Painting*, he observes: "It [supplement] is first of all on the border."[3] And this border is quite problematical to Derrida; there seems to be nothing more difficult to determine. Derrida uses a painting frame as an example. Most importantly, all of his argument is also illustrative of Herich's supplement necessitating *Sketches*, themselves, perhaps, not a *work* but an *event* of art and a form of painting, too – a kind of action painting, in fact. Not totally unlike Jackson Pollock's paintings. But let us stick to the frame, if that is possible, because:

> Where does the frame take place. Does it take place. Where does it begin. Where does it end. What is its internal limit. Its external limit. And its surface between two limits.[4]

"The frame is essentially fragile," Derrida concludes. It is in its essence to be unsettled by the supplement if the latter is to do its job and supply the inside from the outside. Therefore Derrida arrives at a final conclusion that the frame is actually "the decisive structure" of the supplement. For this reason, "there is no natural frame… the frame does not exist."[5] And a frame of mind is no exception. It leaves mind frameless.

Accordingly, the frame can be neither inside nor outside. It is in between. Split. It seems that an Ophelia-like split personality disorder, or "disorder of identity,"[6] the phrase that Derrida juxtaposes to the "foolish" concept of identity, is a common frame of mind.

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[2] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 157.

[3] Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 53.

[4] Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, 63.

[5] Ibid., 60–61.

[6] Derrida, *Monolingualism*, 14.

By the same token, *Sketches about Ophelia* are nothing but a borderline performance. And it is the continual collision and disruption of different frames in *Sketches* that makes them both transgressive and self-producing. It all begins with the constant oscillation between the frame of a ritual and that of a spectacle in *Sketches*.

Herich's performance is a spectacle by virtue of its story line (based on the figure of Ophelia), which seduces the audience into watching it. And what makes it ritualistic in the first place is its transformative power. Transformation is the very essence of a ritual. Most importantly, according to Arnold Van Gennep, the author of *Rites of Passage*, transformation in a ritual is self-production per se. It leads people into "a 'second reality,' separate from ordinary life. This reality is where people become … selves other than their daily selves. Thus ritual … transform[s] people,"[7] to quote Richard Schechner, a performance theorist (ritual is a kind of performance) and a performer himself.

Interestingly, transformation in a ritual takes place right on the border, just like Derrida's supplementation and Wachowicz's perfromance. In ritual studies and in performance theory, this border is called "limen." Victor Turner, in his *Ritual Process* and *From Ritual to Theatre*, argues that the relationship between limen and transformation as well as self-production is not accidental: "It is as though, … liminal entities … betwixt and between the positions … assigned by law, custom, convention and ceremonial … are being reduced or ground down … to be fashioned anew and endowed with additional powers."[8] That is to say, one becomes lawless, powerless, identity-less and self-less when on the margin, and therefore one stands in desperate need of supplementation. Not unlike Wachowicz and her audience.

In fact, borderline self industry in *Sketches* starts as soon as one reads the title. *Sketches* are exclusively about Ophelia. Separation from the group and from the ordinary space-time (in this case, from the other characters and from the play itself, as well as from the theatrical stage) is a prerequisite for self-transformation in a ritual. That is to say, Ophelia undergoes the pre-liminal phase of a ritual already in the title. The title of Herich's performance is thus performative, to use John Austin's term. That is, it effects Ophelia's exclusion, which triggers a series of self-transformations involving both the performer and the audience of *Sketches*.

[7] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 52

[8] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure* (New Brunswick: Aldin Transaction. A Division of Transaction Publishers, 2009), 66

Spectators and Self-Producing Role Reversal

The spectators sit in two rows facing each other; the stage – a black rectangular frame on the floor – is in the middle. In fact, the spectators frame the stage. Wachowicz comes from behind them, that is, from the outside, crosses the black rectangular frame on the floor and goes inside. This constitutes a symbolic attack on the framed integrity of both the audience and the performer. *Sketches* are no longer limited to the stage and to the fictive world. As a consequence, everybody gets out of their assigned roles and selves.

Traditionally, the role of a theatregoer is considered to be that of a passive observer. However, in *Sketches* the frameless spectators get transformed into performers. It is the spectators who are observed, at first, by the other spectators sitting in the opposite row, and then by Wachowicz. After crossing the frame, Wachowicz walks slowly along the rows and looks directly at each spectator. Wachowicz takes time to examine every single face. She smiles at some, frowns at others or wonders, and deliberately turns towards or away from some individual audience members. Most importantly, the spectators actively respond to her provoking behaviour. They smile back and frown back. They also initiate actions on their own and provoke Wachowicz's reactions. Thus, everybody becomes involved in the performance, although to indeterminate degrees and in indeterminate capacities. That is to say, Herich's performance takes place on yet one more boundary, namely the one between subject and object. In borderline *Sketches*, the subject and object are no longer dichotomous but oscillatory. Do the involved spectators establish a relationship among themselves and Wachowicz as equal participants, as co-subjects, or do they, by initiating interaction with the artist and provoking her spontaneous responses, turn her into an object, or do they, perhaps, act as her puppets?

There are no definite answers to the questions about the selfhood and hierarchical status of all the participants in *Sketches*. Actually, *Sketches* repeat after Derrida that all these questions of identity are, in fact, out of question. Herich's performance is, first of all, process-oriented. It is not an *object* of art for interpretation but an open-ended, unpredictable and uncontrollable, to some degree, *event* for participation.

Thus, Herich's performance proves to be again like Derrida's supplement: "threatening … and … critical." It plunges its participants into a crisis (a series of liminal situations) that cannot be overcome by referring to their traditional roles. They must constantly redefine themselves, which "exacts a price"[9] – a stable self price. At one point in *The Truth in Painting*, Derrida compares the experience of supplement to playing "Russian roulette … which can make one lose one's head suddenly."[10] Who can *embody* that better if not Ophelia?

[9] Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, 57.
[10] Ibid., 79.

Performer and Embodied Self Industry

Just after crossing the frame, Wachowicz does a short warm-up and some stretching, and drinks a brand of mineral water called Nałęczowianka. Definitely, Wachowicz is not playing Ophelia at Elsinore. Actually, she is not playing anybody. Wachowicz is using her *real* body, which imposes itself on the audience with its open physicality and sensuality throughout the whole performance. The actions that she carries out do not simply mean "drinking," "working out" or "stretching"; they accomplish precisely what they signify. They are self-referent, and therefore self-producing. In short, they are performative, to use Judith Butler's term for self-producing body acts. In other words, Wachowicz violates the relationship between the corporeal and semiotic, and turns her body into a performer; and the performing body, given agency, neither expresses nor represents self – be it Ophelia's or Wachowicz's self. Instead, it produces a singular self. To adapt Judith Butler, one *is not* simply a self, but one *does* one's self. An embodied self, or an "embodied mind,"[11] in the words of Erika Fischer-Lichte. "A hybrid of outside and inside … which is not a mixture or a half measure,"[12] to quote Derrida on supplement, but a singular entity.

The emphasis on the performative potential of the human body is no accident in *Sketches*. Teatr A Part is a physical theatre. In its perfromances, the human body is never in the state of being but always in permanent transformation, or self-production. And it is no coincidence either that there are two versions of *Sketches* – verbal and non-verbal. The latter version foregrounds the performativity of the body and the violation of the relationship between the corporeal and semiotic even more.

On the other hand, it is not impossible – in fact, it is quite plausible – to refer Wachowicz's de-semioticized drinking of the mineral water to Ophelia's drowning in the brook. Thus, *Sketches* constantly oscillate between Ophelia, Wachowicz and self-producing ellipsis of Wachowicz and Ophelia. Furthermore, *Sketches* as a ritual make extensive use of symbols and thus allow the performer and the spectators to set diverse interpretative frames. Thus, the scene of Ophelia's crucifixion, linking her body to that of Christ's, might symbolize embodied self performance; in the figure of Christ, the opposition between matter and spirit collapses. Christ's body is both flesh and spirit. In other words, it is an embodied self, or en-selfed body. Embodied self grows even more symbolic thanks to backlighting. The *Contre-jour* technique causes Wachowicz's body, in a dazzling white costume, to emanate brightness. Her whole physicality is as if produced by inte-

[11] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance. A New Aesthetics*, ed. Saskya Iris Jain (New York: Routledge, 2008), 82.

[12] Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, 63–64.

rior shining of a spirit, or self. This results in what Arthur Danto calls "the Transfiguration of the Commonplace";[13] corporeal becomes spiritual in *Sketches*.

The frustrating oscillation between semiotic (symbolic) and desemioticized (non-symbolic) induces what Fischer-Lichte calls a perceptual multistability. The perception constantly shifts in *Sketches* as the spectators are in no position to name the performing self. Thus, to adapt Derrida's phrase for Shakespeare: "the theatre of the impossible," *Sketches about Ophelia* are a performance of the impossible. And while *Romeo and Juliet* is, in Derrida's words, "theatre of the name,"[14] *Sketches* are theatre of naming, or self industry.

Performance and Self Industry

Most importantly in the context of *The Self Industry* conference, general participation in *Sketches* makes it difficult to speak of producers and receivers in the performance. Rather, the performance produces the spectators and the performers. Furthermore, through their unpredictable and uncontrollable actions, Wachowicz and the involved spectators constitute an ever-changing feedback loop, which in turn produces the performance itself.[15] This makes *Sketches* self-producing: self-productive and self-produced at once. Both a producer and a product, *Sketches* are then an aesthetic example of autopoiesis.

Autopoiesis is a biological term for the self-producing operations of living systems. While all other kinds of systems produce something different, autopoietic systems are at once producers and products. Our body cells are an example of this dynamic and so are *Sketches*.

As embodied selves, we are involved in autopoiesis continuously in our being in the world. So what's the point of intensifying that in our free time and not for free? It seems that autopoiesis is so common that we lose sight and touch of it, and, by the same token, of its unbounded potential. Herich's performance, through its structural, formal and technical means, animates and directs our attention to autopoiesis, or self industry, if you wish. "Self" suddenly becomes self-less. A sketch. Perhaps sketches. Not unlike Derrida's supplement, which is "exceptional, strange, extraordinary."[16] Thus, Herich's performance "reenchants"

[13] Arthur Coleman Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace. A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 281.

[14] Derrida, "Aphorism Countertime," in Jacques Derrida and Derek Attridge, *Acts of Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 425–26.

[15] Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power*, 59.

[16] Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, 57.

self, to use Fischer-Lichte's term.[17] It transfigures the commonplace. It seems that Herich, not unlike Derrida, "painstakingly effaces any … familiarity, defamiliarizes what seemed 'normal', producing a radical transformation or 'deformation' of what we might have thought was the 'original' concept under the discussion."[18] In this case, self is defamiliarized. Derrida and Herich make it clear: there is no self. There is self industry. And the latter always involves adding on, complementing, being in place of and role reversing; "we are (always) (still) to be invented,"[19] as Derrida puts it. Thus, the time might be set right in joint, and Ophelia become a record-breaking long-distance swimmer or a happily married Mrs. Hamlet. Austin's *infelicitous* performatives? No. Dollan's *utopian* performatives? Yes, indeed. To quote Jill Dolan, who coined the term and introduced it into performance theory, Herich's performance "lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense."[20]And, according to Derrida, "the impossible happens"[21] thanks to Herich. For Derrida's supplement is like a dramatic character in a text – an incomplete human being, a sketch, which needs a supplement itself. This might be the reason for Derrida's recourse to art in *The Truth in Painting* while analysing supplement.

According to Victor Schklovsky's definition of art: "art exists so that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things."[22] That is to say, Herich's performance gives genuine flesh to Derrida's supplement: the bodily co-presence of the performer and the involved spectators. This brings Derrida's supplement alive and makes the participants in the performance re-enchanted with its virulence, or self industry.

Initially, my intention was to explore self industry in terms of body acts. However, I decided to expand the scope and explore it in terms of performance. This seems to comply with the logic of supplement; a writer can never have complete control over what he or she writes. The writer can always say "more, less or something other than what he would mean."[23] The writer is always taken by surprise, or self industry, if you wish. "There is always a secret of 'me' for 'me,'"[24]

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[17] Fischer-Lichte, *The Transfromative Power*, 181.

[18] Nicholas Royle, *Jacques Derrida* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 49

[19] Derrida, "Psyche: Invention of the Other," in Jacques Derrida and Derek Attridge, *Acts of Literature* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 342.

[20] Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance. Finding Hope at the Theatre* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), 5.

[21] Derrida, "Aphorism," 420.

[22] Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, ed. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (The University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 12.

[23] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 158.

[24] 23 Derrida, "Dialanguages," trans. Peggy Kamuf, in *Points… Interviews, 1974–94*, ed. Elisabeth Weber (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 134.

as Derrida puts it. "We know what we are, but know not what we may be," in Ophelia's very words. After all, "the owl was a baker's daughter,"[25] which is basically what *Sketches* and self industry are all about.

[25] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Act 4, Scene 5) (London: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2002), 120.

Monika Gorzelak

W ramach „ja"

Strzeszczenie

Przedmiotem refleksji w artykule jest spektakl Teatru A Part pt. *Szkice o Ofelii*. Do analizy spektaklu wykorzystano figurę suplementu w rozumieniu Jacques'a Derridy oraz związane z nią pojęcie limenu z teorii performance'u.

Idea szkicu z definicji wymaga uzupełnienia, które Derrida lokuje na granicy. Tym samym naruszona przez suplement granica zostaje podana w wątpliwość. Niemożność jej ustalenia dotyczy również jaźni, czego przykład stanowią właśnie *Szkice…* , a ściślej: stanowią one przykład performance'u borderline. *Szkice…* stawiają bowiem pod znakiem zapytania wszelkie ramy, generując tym samym coraz to nowe „ja". Nieustannie oscylują między przedstawieniem teatralnym i rytuałem, który prowadzi do transformacji, problematyzują relację podmiot–przedmiot, znaczący–znaczony, duchowy–materialny itd. Co jednak najistotniejsze, *Szkice…* unieważniają podział na widzów i aktorów; *Szkice…* to nie *dzieło*, a *wydarzenie* sztuki. Dzięki sprzężeniu zwrotnemu, każdy z uczestników ma realny wpływ na ich przebieg. *Szkice…*, będąc zarazem produktem i producentem jaźni, stanowią estetyczny przykład *autopoiesis* – nie ma „ja", a co pozostaje to produkcja „ja".

Monika Gorzelak

Dans le cadre du « moi »

Résumé

Le spectacle du Théâtre A Part intitulé *Szkice o Odfelii* (*Esquisses sur Ophélie*) est l'objet d'analyse dans le présent article. Pour analyser le spectacle, on s'est servi de la figure de supplément selon l'avis de Jacques Derrida et de la notion de *limen* – liée à cette figure – de la théorie de performance.

L'idée de l'esquisse exige par définition un complément que Derrida situe à la frontière. Ainsi, la frontière violée par le supplément est révoquée en doute. L'impossibilité de déterminer cette frontière concerne aussi le Soi, et les *Esquisses…* en constituent un exemple ; et plus précisément, elles constituent un exemple de la performance borderline. Les *Esquisses…* remettent en question tous les cadres en générant ainsi le nouveau « moi » qui ne cesse d'évoluer. Elles oscillent constamment entre le spectacle théâtral et le rituel qui aboutit à la transformation, problémati-

sent la relation sujet-objet, signifiant-signifié, spirituel-matériel, etc. Ce qui est le plus important, c'est que les *Esquisses…* annulent la division en spectateurs et acteurs ; les *Esquiesses…* ne sont pas une *œuvre*, mais un *événement* artistique. Grâce à la rétroaction, chacun des participants a une influence réelle sur leur déroulement. Les *Esquisses…*, étant à la fois le produit et le producteur du Soi, constituent un exemple esthétique *autopoiesis* – il n'y a pas de « moi », et ce qui reste c'est une production du « moi ».

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Venice–Iceland: A Journey to Utopia*

> England will never be civilised till she has added Utopia to her dominions. There is more than one of her colonies that she might with advantage surrender for so fair a land.[1]
>
> Oscar Wilde

The map of Europe, several photographs and two German words. It seems little from which to tell a story of the non-normative English identity of three writers: W. H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood and Stephen Spender. The map of Europe that I am thinking of does not differ in its visual aspect from an ordinary map of the Old World that can be found in any atlas. However, this map is at the same time a map of a utopian land and in this sense, referring to the Greek etymology of the word "utopia," such a map, just like the places it describes, does not exist. It is a dream vision. And if so, then – paradoxically – the science of maps or the science based on maps, geography, which always consists in describing places, does not describe in this case anything at all. Thus, the Italy, Germany and Iceland that I describe in this article are rather phantasmatic utopian places of the brooding of a non-normative subject, and their geography is here more of a biography. It is not about the truthfulness of the description, but about the autobiographic, existential character of these places.[2] The places I am writing about in the following

* The text was first published in January 2011 by *InterText*, an online journal of the Gdańsk "Łaźnia" Centre for Contemporary Art (CSW "Łaźnia" w Gdańsku) under a title "Mapa Europy, kilka fotografii i dwa niemieckie słowa / The maps of Europe, several photographs and two German words," http://www.intertekst.com/242_artykul.html (accessed September 15, 2015).

[1] Oscar Wilde, *The Critic as Artist*, in Oscar Wilde, *The Prose of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2005), 166.

[2] Spender construed geography in this way; in his preface to *The Temple*, which takes place mostly in Germany, he wrote: "The geography of Hamburg and Rhine is left vague here, because this Germany is really a country of Paul's autobiographical fictionalizing." Stephen Spender, *Introduction* in Stephen Spender, *The Temple* (New York: Grove Press, 1997), xiii.

sections are linked by means of the photographs I mentioned in the title, as well as by two German words. Beginning this armchair voyage in Trieste and in Venice, the *specialité de la maison* of the German *Geist* which tries to find its identity on the Lido, as if it could not find it on the Neckar, I am travelling to Germany in the company of three Englishmen, only to finish the journey in Iceland with Auden. This way of ordering things suggests, I suppose, that the Italian journey that the Germans began in the eighteenth century ends in the twentieth century in the middle of the Atlantic.

Germans in Italy

If we wanted to detect the beginnings of the founding myth of Italy that functioned in the official German culture and its semi-official "secret" version, we would need to move back to the beginning of the sixteenth century when a young Nuremberg artist, Albrecht Dürer, went south to, as he put it, get to know the secret.[3] Of course, this secret was the science of perspective painting, the Italian invention of "real" scientific painting and the realist depiction of the world. The sentence Dürer included in his letter to Pirckheimer is interesting in some respects. It combines secret with truth; truth which takes place in some secret circumstances of discourse. This is a motif of no small importance for it can be found in all the later Italian journeys in search of identity in which Venice, along with Trieste, Capri and Sicily, occupies a special position. The difference is that the secret in question would no longer concern the technique of perspective that Dürer "blurted out" after his coming back north. The secret will lie in the traveller's identity, while the truth will lie in the liberation and explication of that secret that are possible only in the south.

The model example of such a journey is the one undertaken by Johann Joachim Winckelmann, the art historian and archaeologist, whose bad taste influenced the fashion of his entire epoch. This man, in love with Greek art and Greek love, as well as being a man of erudition, died from being knifed in Trieste in 1768. The reasons why he died, just like his identity, were surrounded by a veil of mystery. Dominique Fernandez describes Winckelmann's death, uncovering the secret and revealing his true identity: "he lived like a man and departed a complete human being."[4] The veil remained until 1961 when *Il segreto* (*The Secret*) was written by – who else – a mysterious anonymous author. Fernandez, disclosing the secret

[3] Cf. Jan Białostocki, *Dürer* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo „Ruch", 1956), 34.

[4] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Winckelmann and His Age*, in *The Collected Works, vol. 3: Essays on Art and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 121.

and the real identity of the deceased, as well as that of the author of *Il segreto*, describes the events of two centuries ago in the following way:

> Winckelmann, who rediscovered Greek art for Europe and who was the first theoretician of neoclassicism, was murdered in Trieste in 1768. We know the name of the murderer: Arcangeli. It is said that he killed the German polymath to steal his collection of medals. It is not true; wishful thinking hides a much more terrifying truth. Winckelmann, who feigned loving the Athenian ideal, brought boys he picked up in the harbor to his room. Besides, he lived at an inn under a false name as Signor Giovanni. Arcangeli, whose face was ugly and pockmarked, did not look like a model of Praxiteles. No, not at all. Winckelmann was not bewitched by the boy's beauty but by his vigor. Italian energy has always fascinated German rationality. Trieste, which looks like the North but which has the climate of the South, became the grave of this Aschenbach *avant la lettre*.[5]

Some details in Fernandez's description are crucial and essential for understanding all later journeys to the Italian utopia. First of all, as we have already seen in Dürer's case, the conflict between secrecy and (in this case) the terrifying truth is already visible here. Secondly, thanks to the comparison between Winckelmann and the protagonist of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, Trieste appears to us as Venice itself. Trieste has been even described as Venice: neither the North nor the South. The city's nature seems to be mysterious, unspecified, and muzzy. Trieste is a kind of ghost-city that is nowhere, which is *u-topos*. Venice is neither the North nor the South, neither the East with its Byzantine past nor the West, due to its being, after Florence, the cradle of the Renaissance. And finally, which seems most obvious, Venice is neither the land nor the sea.[6]

Trieste, like Venice, is a place where the non-normative "I" discovers its identity and dissolves in it through death, like the murdered Winckelmann who, as Fernandez suggests, actually *wanted* to die, and just like Gustav Aschenbach, who knew the danger of staying in Venice with the epidemic spreading, yet nevertheless was seduced and decided to stay there. Trieste and Venice are two great *liminal* cities where the law – including the natural law – have been suspended, and where their undetermined nature allows a person to be equally undetermined.

[5] Dominique Fernandez, "Śmierć w Trieście," *Zeszyty Literackie* 2 (2005): 92.

[6] More on this issue in: Wojciech Szymański, "O czym nie mówią kamienie Wenecji," *Odra* 9 (2009): 69–71.

Englishmen in Germany

To take into consideration such a perspective on the Italian journey undertaken by the Germans is important when reading about the German journeys of English writers who during the 1920s and '30s went on the Rhine and the Spree.[7] I mean here, of course, the three characters mentioned at the outset; friends who, besides friendship, were linked by an entirely different bond. According to a contextually-oriented reading of their journey, which would pay attention most of all to its sociopolitical aspect, as well as to the one that has dominated the interpretation of both the journeys and their literary representation, the value of travelling and literature is limited to giving the testimony of the times.[8] This is so especially as far as Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* is concerned. Yet a similar interpretive model is noticeable in case of W. H. Auden, the account of whose German experience is often limited to an anecdote which culminates in his melodramatic relationship with the Manns and his existential premonition of the decline of the old world.

Auden's "head upon which all the ends of the world are come" is, however, more complex. A contextual kind of reading seems not to remember this, locating the entire drama in a quite narrow crack of history situated between the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich, and leaving all the rest to the mercy of the anecdote. Thus, anecdotal in this sense is the sexual, existential level of Isherwood's short story with a key entitled *On Ruegen Island*, and similarly anecdotal is Stephen Spender's declaration in the preface to *The Temple*, begun in 1935 and published only as late as 1987, in which he wrote: "Censorship, more than anything else, created in the minds of young English writers an image of their country as one to get away from: much as, in the Twenties, Prohibition resulted in young Americans like Hemingway and Scott Fitzgerald leaving America and going to France or Spain. For them, drink; for us, sex."[9] Auden, Spender and Isherwood are, however, *older than the rocks amongst which* – in the anecdote – *they sit*.

[7] Germany played a significant role not only in the imagined geography of the non-normative "I" searching for identity. The Germans themselves, at least since the unification of the 1870s, had viewed themselves – an opinion enhanced by Bismarck's propaganda – as an opposition to the West. In this sense, Germany, like Trieste and Venice, was located nowhere. It was not the West, yet neither was it the East.

[8] A good example of such a contextual reading can be found in blurbs on the covers of new editions of Isherwood's book. On one of the Polish editions of *Goodbye to Berlin* we read: "the extraordinary atmosphere of decadent Berlin at the dawn of Hitler's rise to power." Cf. Christopher Isherwood, *Pożegnanie z Berlinem*, trans. Zofia Uhrynowska-Hanasz (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2009). Such a limited reading of Isherwood's books was certainly influenced by Bob Fosse's Cabaret. Since then many covers of the book have featured Liza Minnelli.

[9] Spender, *Introduction*, in *The Temple*, x.

The fact that the German journeys of the Englishmen and the imagined geography of this country refer to the tradition of the Italian journeys of the Germans is confirmed by its complex iconography. For Germans travelling to Italy, a custom which culminated at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, photographs constituted a typical iconographic model, or a visual expression of literariness. The most significant were created by two Germans who worked in the south: Wilhelm von Gloeden and Wilhelm von Plüschow. Plüschow came to Italy in the 1870s to photograph young boys from the streets of Naples bathed in sunlight. Gloeden, who was Plüschow's cousin, came to Sicily to cure his tuberculosis, settled in Taormina and began taking pictures of the local boys posed to look like Greeks. The pictures made by the two barons were at that time very popular among certain circles of European society.[10] These photographs constituted a visual image of the different geography which suggests its own description and characterization of the places from the atlas. Their literary counterpart can be found in literature: "Aschenbach noticed with astonishment the lad's perfect beauty. His face recalled the noblest moment of Greek sculpture – pale with a sweet reserve, with clustering honey-coloured ringlets, the brow and nose descending in one line, the winning mouth, the expression of pure and god-like serenity."[11] Aschenbach's eyes, with which we can see the phantasmatic image of Tadzio, do not fully belong to him, nor to Thomas Mann; they are also the eyes of the two German barons.

The Englishmen's journeys to Germany also had their own iconography which, however, was extraordinarily similar to the one developed within the circle of the homosexual barons and which was a direct descendant of it. I am thinking about the pictures by Herbert List. List was a photographer of young naked or half-naked boys, and the possibility of publishing his photographic images was made possible by posing the boys as participants of naturalist movements and the naked *Wanderung* that was popular at the time in Germany; the antique costumes of their subjects provided a similar "alibi" for Gloeden and Plüschow.[12]

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[10] Von Gloeden's pictures were seen by the artists who visited him in Italy, among others Oscar Wilde, André Gide, Gabriele d'Annunzio, Stefan George and Karol Szymanowski. The popularity of von Gloeden's photographs and the familiarity with the homoerotic codes they used among the homosexual and artistic circles is attested by a photographic portrait-nude of Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz entitled *Dionysia 1921*, modelled directly on the photographs of the German baron. More on this topic in: Tomasz Cyz, *Powroty Dionizosa. „Król Roger" według Szymanowskiego i Iwaszkiewicza* (Warszawa: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2008), 74–76.

[11] Thomas Mann, "Death in Venice," in *Death in Venice and Seven Other Stories*, trans. Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 21.

[12] The antique costume, the references to the Greek ceramics, models as extras in antique ruins and landscapes – all these elements used by von Gloeden made it possible for the photographer to publish his work and earned him a name as an "antiquity-oriented" artist. The wider public did not read his pictures the way the insiders, his homosexual friends and acquaintances,

List was also a friend of Spender and it was he who was described as Joachim in the first part of *The Temple*, entitled, significantly, *The Children of the Sun*.[13] It was with List and his lover that Spender went on his first journey along the Rhine. The photographs that List later took for magazines such as *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Life* created a phantasmatic object of the homosexual desire of the second half of the twentieth century no less than Tennessee Williams and Elia Kazan did by engaging and "arranging" Marlon Brando in *The Streetcar Named Desire*. One might say the same thing about the earlier works of List, which were well known to the Englishmen who travelled to Germany.

It is a photograph of an unknown young man dropping out of an album on the floor that intrigues Paul and becomes a pretext for his getting to know Joachim and their going together on a journey along the Rhine,[14] while a phantasmatic depiction of Otto Nowak in Isherwood's short stories is not only proof of the English writers' fascination with the proletariat, but even more an erotic description based on List's photographs.

One of the ways Isherwood describes Nowak is as follows: "Otto is sixteen or seventeen. … Otto has a face like a very ripe peach. His hair is fair and thick, growing low on his forehead. He has small sparkling eyes, full of naughtiness, and a wide, disarming grin, which is much too innocent to be true. When he grins, two large dimples appear in his peach-bloom cheeks," and he continues with: "Otto is his whole body. … Otto moves fluidly, effortlessly; his gestures have the savage, unconscious grace of a cruel, elegant animal."[15] Isherwood's eye is just like that of Mann *vel* Aschenbach creating Tadzio. It is also the eye of Gloeden and List, although perhaps it does not know this.

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did. Most perceived this work as ethnographic, being interested in either the landscape of Sicily or the image of the inhabitants of the Sicilian countryside, who looked as if they came from antiquity. For this reason, von Gloeden could exhibit his work, for example in London (1893), Berlin (1898–99), Philadelphia (1902), Budapest (1903), and Dresden (1909). His photography was also published in the London magazine *The Studio* in 1893. This success did not mean that the more erotically explicit photographs (especially complete nudes) were known to more than a small group of artists who came to Sicily. In the 1930s they were considered pornographic and immoral. It is estimated that the Fascist regime confiscated and destroyed about 3,000 glass negatives and prints.

[13] Cf. Sutherland, *Stephen Spender. The Authorized Biography* (London: Viking Penguin, 2005), 93.

[14] Cf. Spender, *The Temple*, 33.

[15] Isherwood, "On Ruegen Island," in *The Berlin Stories* (New York: New Directions, 2008), 78.

Prospero in Iceland

Finally, the dreamed-of Germany provided two notions that were crucial for Auden, the last of our three English writers, and the one who most consistently, in fact throughout his whole life, ran away from England. These notions became constitutive of his future work and were used for the description, self-analysis and interpretation of his own identity. These two existential notions, formulated within the recesses of the German non-normative soul (*Geist*) are: *Anders wie die Andern* [different from others] and *das lebendigste* [the most lively]. The first of them was used by Auden on February 20, 1943, in conversation with Elizabeth Mayer. He is said to have expressed himself in the following way: "Being 'anders wie die Andern' has its troubles. There are days when the knowledge that there will never be a place which I can call home, that there will never be a person with whom I shall be one flesh, seems more than I can bear."[16] In Auden's work, this notion is related to a feeling of homelessness, not-being-home, and loneliness. What is most interesting, however, is perhaps the fact that this notion comes from the emancipatory trend in German sexology and it is directly related to the utopian vision of Germany as a country where the Englishmen, searching for their identity, are able to find it. Auden must have known it because it was discussed during his stay in Germany. For *Anders als die Andern* is the title of a film by Richard Oswald from 1919. Oswald worked on the screenplay with a well-known sexologist, the founder of the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft, Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, who also played in the film. The film postulated the abolition of Paragraph 175 of the Criminal Code which penalized homosexual intercourse. Its title, as Auden's case suggests, was also an internalized notion, a category that defined a non-normative sexual identity.

The second key German notion for Auden is the word *das lebendigste* [the most lively]. The poet used it in his letters to Isherwood and Theodor Spencer in 1944. He wrote : "Caliban (The Prick) as the representative of Nature and Ariel as the representative of Spirit," "It's OK to say that Ariel is Chester, but Chester is also Caliban, 'das lebendigste', ie Ariel is Caliban seen in the mirror."[17] When writing these words Auden was working on *The Sea and the Mirror*, and the German *das lebendigste* which he used to define the identity of Ariel and Caliban was borrowed from Friedrich Hölderlin's poem "Socrates and Alcibiades."[18] This

[16] Cited in: Arthur Kirsch, Introduction, in: W. H. Auden, *The Sea and the Mirror: A Commentary on Shakespeare's The Tempest*, ed. Arthur Kirsch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), xviii.

[17] Kirsch, Introduction, xviii.

[18] Here is Hölderlin's poem in German and English: "'Warum huldigest du, heiliger Sokrates, / Diesem Jünglinge stets? kennest du Größers nicht, / Warum siehet mit Liebe,/ Wie auf Götter, dein Aug' auf ihn?' / Wer das Tiefste gedacht, liebt das Lebendigste, / Hohe Jugend versteht, wer

way he not only invested the relation of the two Shakespearian characters with homosexual features, referring them to the relation between Socrates and Alcibiades, but also identified Caliban with Ariel,[19] and Socrates with Alcibiades. *Das Lebendigste*, that which is the most lively and unrestrained, become the basis of a narcissist aesthetics,[20] a mirror image from the past in which Ariel recognizes himself in Caliban, Socrates in Alcibiades, Aschenbach in Tadzio. Auden is given all of these roles, and an additional one: that of the wizard Prospero.

Before Auden wrote his commentary on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, he went to a distant island himself. He travelled in the company of Louis McNeice. He admits that Iceland and its magic character have always attracted him in *Letters from Iceland* in the following way: "In my childhood dreams Iceland was holy ground; when, at the age of 29, I saw it for the first time, the reality verified my dream; at 57 it was holy ground still, with the most magical light of anywhere on earth."[21] The book, written together by the two poets and published in 1937, is actually an account of Auden's Italian journey, that Auden who translated Goethe's *Italienische Reise* into English. The book, just like the literary account of the German journeys, has usually been described in political and anecdotal terms, either as one of the funniest guides through a remote part of the world in the 1930s, or as a quasi-journalistic account of a journey to a faraway land (Auden in those days really did go to Spain and China). The book can be – and is – also read as an expression of literary escapism and an escape from declining Europe.

And yet *Letters from Iceland* is all these things and something more. The journey to an island and its literary description are yet another journey of an English poet to a liminal place in search of identity. Iceland has all the features of Venice, Trieste and the dream-vision Germany; it is neither Europe, nor Arctic, a rock thrown into the water between the old and the new world. Neither land, nor the

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in die Welt geblikt, / Und es neigen die Weisen / Oft am Ende zu Schönem sich." "'Why, holy Socrates, do you Court / This youth all the time? / Don't you know of anything greater? / Why do your eyes gaze on him with love, / as if you were looking at the gods? / He who has pondered the most profound thoughts, loves what is most alive; / He who has seen the world understands lofty virtue. / And in the end, the wise will often / Bend toward that which is beautiful." Trans. Emily Ezust.

[19] In a Postscript that follows *The Mirror and the Sea* Ariel addresses Caliban in the following way: "Never hope to say farewell / For our lethargy is such / Heaven's kindness cannot touch / Nor earth's frankly brutal drum / This was long ago decided / Both of us know why, / Can, alas, foretell / When our falsehoods are divided, / What we shall become / One evaporating sigh / I… ." Cf. Auden, *The Sea and the Mirror*, 55–56.

[20] More on the reflection and narcissism in the context of non-normative sexuality and their role in the queer universe in: Steven Bruhm, *Reflecting Narcissus. A Queer Aesthetic* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

[21] W. H. Auden, Louis MacNeice, *Letters from Iceland* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1985), 10.

sea, it is a volcanic fold, constantly in progress. It is a place in-between where after the decline of the German utopia, Auden, *anders als die Andern*, contemplates the strange nature of *das Lebendigste*, as does Prospero on an island after the fall of Milan. Iceland seems here a land of personal freedom. He writes to Isherwood in a clearly ironic tone: "Now, as to your questions. … 'What about the sex-life?' Uninhibited. There is little stigma attached to illegitimacy. … Homosexuality is said to be rare."[22]

It was Auden who undertook the last modernist identity journey modelled on the Italian ones, discovering, as if by chance, next to Venice, Trieste and Germany, a new unknown land, a new utopia in Iceland, so important for the non-normative imagination of the second half of the twentieth century. *Letters from Iceland* is a fantasy on geography which turns out to be an autobiographical account in search of an "I." Auden himself summarizes this issue briefly: "There is an English poem: Biography / Is better than Geography, / Geography's about maps, / Biography's about chaps."[23]

[22] Auden and MacNeice, *Letters from Iceland*, 25–27.
[23] Ibid., 210.

Translated from Polish by *Karolina Kolenda*

Wojciech Szymański

Z Wenecji na Islandię: podróż do utopii

Streszczenie

Artykuł omawia fantazmatyczną geografię Europy z punktu widzenia nienormatywnej podmiotowości, która ujawnia się w angielskiej literaturze XX wieku. Proponowana tutaj trasa, aby pozostać w obrębie geograficznych skojarzeń, wiedzie przez Triest, Wenecję oraz Sycylię, na przykładzie których ukazany zostaje wypracowany we wczesnej nowoczesności sposób myślenia o wyobrażonej mapie starego kontynentu, a także konwencje jego reprezentacji; zarówno w literaturze, jak i w sztukach wizualnych. Zbudowana za pomocą powyższych przykładów rama konceptualna zostaje następnie zastosowana do dwudziestowiecznych podróży angielskich pisarzy – Christophera Isherwooda i Stephena Spendera – odbytych przez nich w międzywojniu do Niemiec okresu weimarskiego. Podróże te stały się kanwą ich własnej twórczości literackiej. Fantazmatyczny obraz Niemiec, jaki się w niej pojawia, jest następnie zestawiony z opisem islandzkiej podróży, jaką na odległą wyspę odbył uczestniczący w niemieckich peregrynacjach angielskich pisarzy W. H. Auden. Islandia jawi się w takim kontekście jako Wenecja północy, a islandzka podróż poety staje się w takiej optyce ostatnią modernistyczną podróżą nienormatywnego „ja"; realnie odbytą i fantazmatyczną zarazem.

Wojciech Szymański

De Venise en Islande : voyage vers l'utopie

Résumé

L'article examine la géographie fantasmatique de l'Europe du point de vue d'une subjectivité non normative qui se manifeste dans la littérature anglaise du XXe siècle. Pour rester à l'intérieur des associations géographiques, l'itinéraire que l'on propose conduit par Trieste, Venise et Sicile. À l'exemple de ces endroits, on a présenté la façon de penser – élaborée à la modernité précoce – à la carte imaginée du vieux continent, mais également les conventions de sa représentation aussi bien dans la littérature que dans les arts visuels. Le cadre conceptuel construit à l'aide des exemples donnés ci-dessus est ensuite appliqué aux voyages qu'ont faits au XXe siècle les écrivains anglais – Christopher Isherwood et Stephen Spender – à la République allemande de Weimar, donc à l'époque de l'entre-deux-guerres. Ces voyages sont devenus la base de leur propre création littéraire. L'image fantasmatique de l'Allemagne qui y apparaît est ensuite juxtaposée à la description du voyage islandais qu'a fait à cette île éloignée W. H. Auden, participant dans les pèlerinages allemands des écrivains anglais. Dans ce contexte, l'Islande apparaît comme la Venise du Nord, et le voyage islandais du poète devient dans une telle optique le dernier voyage moderniste du « moi » non normatif, un voyage réellement fait et fantasmatique à la fois.

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"The term 'industry' can be stretched, either towards the conjoined pillars of a society of mass consumption: the production of goods and the necessary production of desire in willing consumers; or towards the fabrication of mind and self among the synapses within the human brain: the spark within our flesh somehow enables an *I* and an *eye* to emerge, an identity that can (and should) then be implemented into the processes of the world out there, of the world that is not-I and not-eye."

(From the essay by Benjamin Betka)

"Fiction" and "therapy" and relation between the two may provoke various interpretations and approaches. The present volume comprises articles based on the papers delivered at *The Self Industry: Therapy and Fiction* symposium held in Ustroń, Poland, 21–24 September 2011, one of the annual conferences organized by the Institute of English Cultures and Literatures of the University of Silesia, Katowice. It is a unique combination of essays written by scholars from Poland, Germany, Sweden, Swaziland, and Australia and a comprehensive collection of insights into texts of culture and their therapeutic functions.

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