

Word Subject Nature

**Studies in Seventeenth-
and Eighteenth-Century Culture**



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Word Subject Nature

Studies in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Culture

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reface

The essays presented in this collection focus on the problems of nature, human self, and their representations in literature and philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe. As Svend Eric Larsen puts it succinctly at the beginning of his paper, they are “stories of nature [which] always deal with the interplay between the same basic elements: word, nature and subject”. What remains to be done is to map the territories of this interplay and thus obtain a certain coherent vision of reality but, having said this, we immediately realize that both concepts (“reality” and “vision”) are neither unproblematic nor clearly separated from each other. Many essays therefore approach, in a more or less direct manner, this nodal point of anxiety and uncertainty which is located at the junction of “reality” and “vision”. A philosophical background behind these works has been largely constituted by a recognition of the fact that one has neither a binding theory of reality nor a decisive theory of vision and, when trying to conceive such theories (or are they mere “descriptions” of “reality” and “vision”?) we inevitably have to move among certain metaphors (sometimes they are as unusual tropes as that of insects and spiders or nettle as Marek Wilczyński and Aleksander Nawarecki respectively show in their papers). Thus, although on the hand one can pursue with Francis Ronnau-Bradbeer the development of the eighteenth-century ownership system in its growing nervousness and brutality concerning securing one’s property against potential trespassers and offenders, on the other hand, one has to simultaneously note with the same author that it is accompanied, if indeed not countered, by the insistent emphasis on the perception of land as a sphere of harmonious relationships and thus of moral edification.

Definitely one cannot pass the word “perception” in silence. As Ronnau-Bradbeer puts it: “I am interested in tracing the very complex path that has brought us to this **perception** [emphasis added] of the countryside as a morally qualifying location” It is precisely such a path which has been taken by many authors in the volume, the path which weaves its way not only through the Eng-

lish and French eighteenth-century gardens (like Shenstone's Leasowes, or Delille's *Jardins*) but, in order to do so, it must lead us into a narrow passage between reality and vision where questions about both notions are being asked.

One could begin with Wittgenstein and his hesitation as to the question of "reality": "Reality is not a property still missing in what is expected and which accedes to it when one's expectations come about – Nor is reality like the daylight that things need to acquire colour, when they are already there, as it were colourless, in the dark."¹ What is at stake is the **visibility** of the world, a hypothesis that world's reality depends on the eye and its look not for the very fact that the look takes place, not because the eye merely sees, but because it never sees innocently, and its look always constructs a world on the foundation of the construction of a vision itself. Since there is no "chaos" of the eye, the world must be visible and describable in its outlines, and thus the look always belongs to the domain of art. This is one of the central recognitions of the eighteenth century to which one must add a conviction that the art of the eye consists in such a perception of reality which allows for its placement in between nature and culture. The eye traces the artless art of – in Pope's words – "nature methodized", and – paradoxically – the secret of world's visibility relies on the eye being able to descreetly see what cannot be seen and what should not be viewed openly – "night, confusion, and absolute chaos". Hence as Tadeusz Rachwał points out "The art of designing is a secretive activity which must not be seen by others", since as Shenstone maintains: "Art should never be allowed to set a foot in the province of nature, otherwise than clandestinely and by night. Whenever she is allowed to appear here, and men begin to compromise the difference – Night, gothicism, confusion and absolute chaos are come again." The visibility of the world may be suspended in this sphere, but it is precisely this region upon which the efficiency of our look is founded. Thus, in a footnote to Wittgenstein's remark we could claim that our response to "reality" depends upon a degree to which we can think world's visibility as founded upon the invisible, nature upon art, property upon disappropriation.

Thus in the eighteenth-century English garden the eye is an instrument less of geometry and more of art: it incises and marks the smooth and clean surface of objects thus instituting world's visibility as a certain script. What is visible is what we read as a writing of our eye upon the page of the world (Liliana Barakońska studies the metaphor of writing and seeing in the seventeenth-century work of Burton and Bright and the thought of the Baroque). **Reality is where our eye is active, where it constructs and not merely records.** In another note Wittgenstein more dramatically formulates a similar claim: "We do not see the human eye as a receiver, it appears not to let anything in, but to send something out. The ear receives; the eye looks. . . One can terrify with one's eyes, not with one's ear or nose."²

¹ L. Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 13e.

² *Ibid.*, p. 40e.

Such an understanding of visibility locates many essays in the sphere of cultural geography whose practitioners “interpret landscape not as a material consequence of interactions between a society and an environment . . . but rather as a gaze which itself helps to make sense of the particular relationship between society and land. They have stressed the importance of the look to the idea of landscape and have argued that landscape is a way of seeing which we learn”³

But if one wants to approach the question of a “visual ideology”, of a constructing, although, at the same time, mystifying, eye, then necessarily one will have to deal with a question of the self which constitutes the immediate context for the seeing eye. The metamorphosis of the self starts with the construction of the bourgeois rationalist subject praised, as Martin Conboy demonstrates, by Daniel Defoe, the subject which was soon to be modified by the civil subject (a subject as citizen and not merely a merchant) who is trying to find for himself/herself not only an appropriate place in the emerging political order but also to develop his/her own speaking modes (a development of journalism). The public, social, and economic spheres must somehow be related and made compatible with the individual and his/her structures and dilemmas not only of desires and passions but also, as Debra Bronstein points out, of gender. Andrzej Wicher shows that a reconciliation of *amour propre* and the public good has constituted an important aspect of Adam Smith’s philosophy, whereas simultaneously there were two other important processes which perforated and helped to deconstruct the solidity of the rationalist self. One was a growing insistence on the significance of reading as a self-forming activity (Leszek Drong traces it in Rousseau’s *Confessions*); the other an emerging category of intimacy and discreet communication which, on the one hand, potentially threatened the lucidity and transparency of the public sphere and, on the other hand, formed a new literary genre – the epistolary novel (both aspects are approached by Małgorzata Nitka and Madeleine Descargues).

The portrait of the self, even if it is a self-portrait (as it clearly is in Rousseau but also in Sterne), must therefore be always incomplete, must found (as Smith’s political economy) its rationality upon nonreason in the same way as the visibility of reality is constituted by our ability to establish it upon the dark and invisible province of art (but also, one may continue with several authors in this collection, of the feminine). There is this ghostly absence and incompleteness which twists itself even in the most intimate situations and which ruins the subject like the English eighteenth-century garden was largely a ruination of the geometrical, complete, project of Le Notre. Hence, the motives of the Gothic, of the spectral and apparitional are never far away from this book, either when they refer to the spectral absence of the labouring tenants kept carefully away from the garden scene, or whether they speak (like in David Jarrett’s essay) about Ann Radcliffe’s spectral excitements. It will be therefore appropriate to close this introduction, with a clear reference to the intimacy of the eighteenth-century sentimentality of Richardson but, first of all, of Lawrence Sterne (of whom Maciej Nowak writes in his paper),

³ G. Rose, *Feminism and Geography* (London: Polity Press, 1993), p. 87.

on the note of the incompleteness as an architectural, horticultural, and emotional mode of the eighteenth century. If there is a love (and let us remember that Fragonard and Watteau are children of the same century in which Angelica Kaufman painted scenes from Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*) in the garden scenery of the Leasowes, then it is first of all a love of the ruin and of and between the ruined subjects. As Jacques Derrida maintains: "What else is there to love anyway? One cannot love a monument, a work of architecture, a institution as such except in the experience itself precarious of its fragility: it hasn't always been there, it will not always be there, it is finite. And for this very reason I love it as mortal, through its birth and its death, through the ghost or the silhouette of its ruin, of my own – which it already is or prefigures. How can one love except in this finitude? Where else would the right to love, come from?"⁴

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⁴ J. Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'", tr. M. Quaintance, *Cardozo Law Review*, 11:5/6 (1990): 1009.



Stories of Nature: The Urban Subject between Word and Nature

Stories of nature always deal with the interplay between the same basic elements: word, nature and subject. Nevertheless the stories are very different. Some defend a well-established or even pre-established harmony between the three components; others convey the process of their disastrous disjuncture to us; and yet others try to convince us that a re-establishment of their harmony, perhaps of a new kind of harmony, is necessary and even possible.

In his book on *Politics* Aristotle claimed that the city, the *polis*, had a natural foundation, as a material and social entity as well as in its essence.¹ Since then it has occupied a privileged position in the stories of nature, both as a metaphor and as a socio-material unit. According to its ideal definition the city sets an ideal standard for man's relations to nature. A good city equals a good relationship to nature; it gives the human being a position as a true human subject, and establishes the communicative space where words carrying the stories of nature can be produced and exchanged, in philosophy, in science and in the arts. But apart from this utopian city, the historical city also provides us with the most striking examples of successful or devastating management of our approach to nature. When the city is involved, instances of man-nature relationship undergo a metamorphosis from singular events to general examples.

In this paper I shall first present an example from the eighteenth century of the use of the city as metaphor supporting the harmony thesis. In the rest of my paper the main focus will be the role of the eighteenth century material city in the disruption of the word-subject-nature complex and in the attempts of reintegration on new conditions. When I have finished you will have heard two stories and the beginning of a third.

¹ Aristotle, "Politica", in *The Works of Aristotle*, Vol. 10 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1921), Ch. VII.

The urban metaphor is introduced by Leibniz in his *Monadology* from 1714 to underpin his claim that nature is a pre-established harmony, built up by monads:

Now this *connection*, or this adaptation, of all created things to each other and of each other to all, brings it about that each simple substance has relations which express all the others, and that, consequently, it is a perpetual living mirror of the universe. And as the same city looked at from different sides appears entirely different, and is as if multiplied perspectively; so also it happens that, as a result of the infinite multitude of simple substances, there are as it were so many different universes, which are nevertheless only the perspectives of a single one, according to the different *points of view* of each monad.²

In his argument Leibniz takes the word–subject–nature relationship for granted. He first alludes to the monads if not as words then at least as signs, i.e. as expressive and reflecting elements, along the lines of the notion of words and signs in the major part of the eighteenth-century theories of language and meaning; then he focuses on the subjects, i.e. the monads as sites of infinitely different, dynamic, individual, purposive and complete universes; finally he arrives to nature, that is the single one and only universe comprising all the others and expressed by the monads. The city is the metaphor that contains and expresses this harmony. The monads constitute an urban community. Thus, in Leibniz' text, i.e. in his words and through his subjectivity, the natural harmony is related to the teleological nature created by God. He exemplifies a well-known tradition in Christian discourse: in praising the creator in the created things you become yourself part of the creation. Through your words you unify subject and nature, and like the monads you become a mirror of the universe.

In the simple words of Thomas Traherne in the mid-seventeenth century:

The skies in their magnificence,
The lively, lovely air;
O how divine, how soft, how sweet, how fair!
The stars did entertain my sense,
And all the works of god so bright and pure,
So rich and great did seem,
As if they ever must endure,
In my esteem.³

Lisbon

This harmony was struck by an earthquake 40 years after Leibniz finished *Monadology*. It took place in a city as real as Warsaw, suffering from a destruction as real and as devastating as the German bombardement of Warsaw. On

² Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "The Monadology", *Selections* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 544.

³ Thomas Traherne, "Wonder", repr. in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. 1 (New York: Norton, 1974), p. 1553.

November 1, 1755, All Saint's Day, the imperial city of Lisbon was destroyed by an earthquake unparalleled in European history. 2/3 of the city disappeared and 35,000 people were killed, 1.5 times the population of Copenhagen around 1750. A major city confronted with a major catastrophe coming out of the blue, out of nature, and even on a very specific holiday. This could not be an isolated event, it had to be interpreted as a symbolic event pointing to a new interpretation of nature, of God, and of the role of human subjects, and also, although more indirectly, of the relation between word and nature.

One of the most remarkable interpretations was made by Voltaire in his poem from 1756 *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne, ou examen de cet axiome: Tout est bien*. This and other writings were circulated all over Europe with a pace that anticipates today's electronic media, the internet and the World Wide Web. Like the melting down of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant and other large scale disasters of today caused by humans, the destruction of Lisbon was questioned both in terms of material effects and in terms of underlying intentions and decisions. Why did God do this to us, what were his intentions, what is the meaning of it? Such events transcend the level of simple occurrences and grow to a combined material and symbolic fact acquiring a life of its own on a mythological level, exemplifying a natural or cultural state of affairs. Therefore, Voltaire can use the description of the devastation of Lisbon to investigate an axiom. The axiom to be examined refers to Leibniz, who claimed that we are living in the best of all possible worlds, for the simple reason that if God, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, had known a better possibility among the infinite possible universes he could envision, this other possible world would have been realized as our world.

For a number of writers the disaster of Lisbon confirmed the age of old religious teleological cosmologies, in accordance with the Leibnizian world view. Like Sodom and Gomorrha the dilapidated Lisbon is a sign from God to the human beings, warning them that they are about to turn away from Him. The harmony of nature is not breaking down, as some may believe, but it is defending itself with heavy weapons.

Voltaire, however, adapts another position and asks a couple of disturbing questions. What about the innocent children being engulfed in Lisbon? If Lisbon is supposed to be a warning, what about the inhabitants that succumb under the rubble? They have no chance to learn from warning and pursue a better life. Are they lost for ever, for the sake of the living but wicked people who get a possibility to reshape their lives, but perhaps do not care to read the signs of warning? They may have died in vain. In Voltaire the firm belief in providential harmony and in the intentional fabric of the universe receives a blow that is difficult, if not impossible, to overcome. It seems more reasonable for Voltaire to accept the idea that nature is governed by arbitrary and non-intentional structures, and that it is definitely not the best of all possible worlds. But after all, it is the only one we humans are left with.

Voltaire ends his poem with the words of a fictitious individual, a non-Christian, a Muslim caliph. Ironically, he is the one that addresses and characterizes God on behalf of mankind:

“I bring you, the one and only King, the only infinite being,
everything you do not possess in your immensity,
mistakes, regrets, wickedness and ignorance”
– But he might also have added *Hope*.⁴

The last line, though, is Voltaire’s own conclusion. Hope is a property or rather a capacity of imperfect and deficient beings like humans, not of God. The almighty and omniscient does not need hope. Therefore, it is in the hands of humans, it is their privilege and responsibility, to change bad to good, to see where and when change is necessary, to introduce order among the disconnected things of the world, to overcome mistakes, regrets and ignorance. Nature may have order, but it is the duty of humans to recognize it and make it visible and accessible. Hope is the essence of our subjectivity, it is our nature. The course of nature at large is based on the nature of human subjects, not the other way round as in the teleological world order of Leibniz and his forerunners. We have entered a new relationship between subject and nature.

But what about the word? I will recapitulate the traditional view, as echoed in Leibniz, before I return to the position exemplified by Voltaire. Saint John tells us: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” And in *Genesis* we learn that first light and then the rest of the world are created through the word of God. God’s word is in nature. Therefore, nature has meaning, it is purposive; the course of nature manifests itself in signs referring to the intentions of God. Nature “talks” to us, as in Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “Nature” from 1836:

But every night come out these envoys of beauty, and light the universe with their admonishing smile . . . Nature says [to me], – he is my creature . . . I am part and parcel of God . . . The greatest delight which the fields and woods minister is the suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowledged. They nod to me, and I to them.⁵

Nature takes on behavior like humans, even when it acts against the background of dead humans as in Thomas Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” from 1745, to take but one example from among a *legion*:

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,

⁴ François Voltaire, *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne, ou examen de cet axiome: “Tout est bien”*, repr. in Francis J. Crowley (ed.), *Voltaire’s Poème sur la loi naturelle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1938 [1756]).

⁵ Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*, repr. in *The American Tradition in Literature*, Vol. 1 (New York: Norton, 1967 [1836]), p. 1065 ff.

The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
nor more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.⁶

However, the most important point in such images is not that nature is an image of man, but that the presence of God's word in nature allows humans, the only creatures possessing verbal language as part of their nature, to communicate with nature on human terms without learning it. Words create the relation between subjects and nature, not as a third instance apart from humans and nature, but as a common distinctive feature of both.

Therefore, the medieval image of nature as a book, the Great Book of Nature, is very powerful and longlived, as explained in detail in Hans Blumenberg's *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt*.⁷ We encounter the metaphor as late as in one of John Clare's poems, "The Voice of Nature" from the 1840s, and today it continues to leave footprints on the soil in the world of deep ecology. Here Clare:

The voice of nature as the voice of God
Appeals to me in every tree and flower,
Breathing his glory, magnitude and power.
In nature's open book I read and see
Beauty's reach lesson . . .⁸

The foundation of Leibniz' *Monadology* is the expressive nature of the monads, from the most inferior to the all-embracing God-monad. Every monad is as a word in the book of nature, and can be transcribed as an element in his so called *Characteristica Universalis*, the universal logical and mathematical semiotic system that expresses all substances and their relations in the entire universe. Leibniz had been ruminating over that system since his youth.⁹ But it disappears once and for all under the rubble of Lisbon. Voltaire begins to speak a new language, the language of human hope not of God's will. The human being inspired by the hope of Voltaire shall listen more to his own words than to the words of nature. He has no immediate access to the interpretation of the signs of nature.

But of course, nature still has an order, a form. It is not chaos. But the signs constituting the language of nature are no longer considered to be words, expressing and containing the intentions of God and to be interpreted by those beings who possess language. Galileo saw this clearly when he formulated the law of gravity in the dawn of modern science in a direct opposition to the Aristotelean view of the world as penetrated by final causes. His dialogue on the two world systems from 1632 is dedicated to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, one of the Medicis later

⁶ Thomas Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard", Louis Simpson (ed.), *An Introduction to Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1967 [1845]), pp. 156–60.

⁷ Hans Blumenberg, *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1986).

⁸ John Clare, *Selected Poems* (London: Everyman, 1984), p. 185.

⁹ The relation between logics and metaphysics is a recurrent theme in the literature on Leibniz, for example G.H.R. Parkinson, *Logic and Reality in Leibniz' Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).

to become Pope Urban VIII. Therefore, he wisely refers to the book of nature although he constantly denies the old meaning of it. God is not basically the creator or upholder of intentional order, but a skilled constructor of right proportions:

He who looks the higher is the more highly distinguished, and turning over the great book of nature (which is the proper object of philosophy) is the way to elevate one's gaze. And though whatever we read in that book is the creation of the omnipotent Craftsman [Artifactor] and is according excellently proportioned, nevertheless that part is most suitable and most worthy which makes His world and His craftsmanship most evident to our view.¹⁰

In his earlier works on the theory of science he is more explicit about the character of the proportions you have to select as the most prominent part of the book of nature, and which gradually reduces of role both of words and of God:

Philosophy is written in the book which is constantly open to our eyes (I am speaking of the universe), but one can not understand it without first learning to understand its language, to know the characters with which it is written. It is written in mathematical language, and its characters are triangles, circles and other geometrical figures without which it is impossible to achieve a human understanding of what it says.¹¹

Geometrical figures cannot express intentions like words, geometrical figures are not immediately accessible to human intelligence, they have to be learned and, therefore, our understanding of nature is related to knowledge of mechanical principles. Humans are no longer part of nature in the sense that they have an inherent capacity in their own nature to communicate with nature directly. Also the signs Leibniz wants to use in order to re-write the book of nature, the *Characteristica Universalis*, are defined as numbers and mathematical relations, not as words, although he thinks that a mathematical calculus once formulated correctly, in spite of its arbitrary character in relation to substances, will in the end express God's intentions.¹²

Francis Bacon presents an even more audacious claim in *Novum Organum* (1620) (the title refers to Aristotle's collected works on logic). According to Bacon, the order, or the form, of nature is not accomplished until it has been brought into the open through human intervention. The fundamental arbitrariness in structures made by humans does not indicate a deviation from nature, but constitute the highway to nature. Therefore, the history of nature and the history of technology may be seen as one and the same history:

It is the task and power of human to generate and superinduce a new nature or new natures on a given body. It is the task and purpose of human knowledge to discover the form of a given nature, or its true specific difference, or nature-engendering nature Natural

¹⁰ Galeo Galileo, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962 [1632]), p. 3.

¹¹ Galilei Galileo, *Opere* (Milano: Ricciardi, 1953), p. 121.

¹² See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Logical Papers*, tr. G.H.R. Parkinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. xvii.

history is therefore threefold . . . the *History of Generations, of Pretergenerations and of Arts*, the last of which I also call *mechanical and experimental*. However, I do not insist that these three should be handled separately.¹³

The effect of this approach to nature is that human creativity is raised to the level of the acts of God, and therefore we see an anticipation of the hope expressed at the end of Voltaire's poem:

The person who knows forms embraces the unity of Nature in substances utterly different from each other, and can therefore uncover and produce effects that have never been produced before . . . And there is another ground for *hope* [ital. mine], in that some of the inventions already made have been of such a kind that, before they were invented, it would hardly have occurred to anyone to have the least idea about them; they would have derided them as impossible.¹⁴

When we have fully digested this insight, we will be the masters of the entire globe, we "shall equal the wide world in our range".¹⁵

When Voltaire separated humans from nature he also abandoned the image of the book of nature written in intentional language – signs, words – through which man and nature could engage in a communication, based on the immanent principles of nature. Instead, human language is now used to communicate between humans on the principles of nature, these principles themselves being of a purely quantitative and operational nature. Meaningful coherence is a product of human nature, based on the geometrical and mechanical properties of nature, which we can learn through scientific training, not through immediate experience and communication. In order to obtain a global and even universal knowledge we will have first to look into the nature of humans, into the language of human and then into nature. Here Immanuel Kant looms in the horizon with his uncanny questions in *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781): how is experience possible, how is objectively true knowledge possible?¹⁶ With these questions the first of my stories of nature comes to an end.

Paris

The shift of focus from nature embracing man to man embracing nature is clearly manifested in another urban story of nature. In this context the second great event of the eighteenth century, after the earthquake of Lisbon, is the French Rev-

¹³ Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, tr. Peter Urbach and John Gibson (Chicago: Open Court Editions, 1994), pp. 133, 301.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 135.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

¹⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975 [1781]).

olution. Its main events took place in Paris, although its sources were the feudal distribution of power and land, but throughout the nineteenth century Paris still kept the symbolic role as the site of the Revolution of Revolutions. Religion was abandoned as the basis of the society, instead the Nation, *la patrie*, and the Free Individual were celebrated on Champ de Mars on July 14, 1790. In the beginning were the natural human rights, not the word and the creation of God.

In August 1789, during the early days of the revolution when it was still bursting with energy and jubilation, the German publisher Joachim Heinrich Campe wrote a letter describing the center of the center of the Revolution: Palais Royal in the heart of Paris. This locality was a site for liberal political manifestations: here Desmoulin lit the torch of revolution on July 12, 1789 with an inflaming and rebellious speech. But Palais Royal was also a public recreational resort: here modern and anonymous urban life of loose formal restrictions unfolded – gambling, fashion, commerce. When the simple wooden constructions of the area burned down in 1827, it was replaced by one of the wonders of the nineteenth century, *Galerie d'Orléans*, the world's first shopping mall, the absolute interior environment excluding the unstable and uncontrollable changes of nature outside and commodifying the rest inside.

In 1789 the old garden of Palais Royal was *the* meeting place of pre-revolutionary and early revolutionary Paris:

This garden . . . is rightly and in more than one sense called *la Capitale de Paris* and is considered the center not only of the city but of the entire kingdom. . . . Even if a man had never been away from this wonderful and magic place since he was born, still he would have been entitled to claim that his knowledge of the world and of mankind as well as of any pleasure and enjoyment – except for the enjoyment of nature – could be compared to anyone else's, had he crossed the entire globe in all its length and breath . . . As soon as he enters this place, the Parisian stops being French; he becomes for a certain amount of time a complete Republican, a cosmopolitan that no longer acknowledges any civil or other conventional restrictions, no longer bound by any chains.¹⁷

For Campe, the suppression of all social divisions and differences in Palais Royal makes it the true center of revolutionary Paris, and the transcendence of not only the social order of France but of any social order turns it into a magic, a supernatural place. More natural than nature itself. It becomes the center of the universe, and its universal human character makes it a center on human conditions, i.e. on the conditions on human nature: the nature of the free individual, the hero who emerged out of Galileo and Bacon and who felt the impetus of hope through Voltaire, not the hope to fit into God's plans, but to fully realize his human potential.

Therefore, the possible lack of enjoyment of nature, mentioned only in brackets, does not reduce the universality of the experience of Palais Royal. It is a minor detail. Nature is just a specific dimension of the human lifeworld, not its founda-

¹⁷ Johann Heinrich Campe, *Briefe aus Paris zur Zeit der Revolution* (Braunschweig: Schulbuchhandlung, 1790). My transl.

tion. The center for this new relation between word, subject and nature is urban. The word of man – as in the declarations of independence and of the human rights and in the *liberté-fraternité-égalité* slogan – creates subjects as free individuals on the basis of their own nature. The rest of nature may or may not be added as an arbitrary and additional enjoyment. Man enjoys nature in the full sense of the word: useful for work, pleasurable for leisure.

The relation to nature as a specific enjoyment and not as a fundamental or foundational experience has also been formulated in the late eighteenth century – in Edmund Burke's notion of the sublime and Immanuel Kant's more developed notion of *das Erhabene*. Without going into detail with these notions I just want to retain two aspects of Kant's notion as explained in *The Critique of Judgment* (1790).¹⁸

First, there is a difference between the beautiful, *das Schöne*, and the sublime, *das Erhabene*. Both are properties of nature experience, not of nature as such. The beautiful belongs to the nature experience of Traherne, Gray, Emerson and Clare – an experience of non-human nature immediately accessible to humans and in harmony with humans, but beyond any consideration of its specific usefulness. The beautiful is experienced in a disinterested approach. The sublime, on the other hand, is an experience that transgresses human proportions – the gigantic or the *geometrical* sublime – as well as human forces – the immensely powerful or the *dynamical* sublime. A mountain and an earthquake are examples. Hence, the experience of the sublime is both frightening and joyful, threatening and elevating.

Second, the experience of the sublime leads to an experience of freedom, because it transcends all standards and categories that human experience can identify and retain, but still it is undeniably real. It is, as Isak Dinesen puts it, "outside the range of imagination, but within the range of experience".¹⁹ We are in a context which itself has no context: an object that cannot be compared with anything else, an experience that can not be related to any known standards. Here Kant hesitates: does this experience of freedom make us acknowledge the autonomy of the phenomena that has given rise to the experience, i.e. the autonomy of nature? Or, does it inspire us to celebrate our own power emerging from the experience of absolute freedom, i.e. is to indulge in the autonomy of our own freedom? This leaves the human subject, the free individual, in an empty space: he does not know if the freedom leaves him alone or places him in nature, and he has no words for this ambiguous freedom because it, although real, transcends human imagination. It becomes magic, as Campe characterizes Palais Royal. This is the end of my second story, an open ending like the ending of the first one and therefore leading us to the third story.

¹⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975 [1790]).

¹⁹ Isak Dinesen, *Out of Africa* (New York: Vintage, 1985 [1935]), p. 398.

Strasbourg

The third story of nature is not yet finished. It tries to tell us about a new relation between word, subject and nature after the reassuring harmony in Leibniz and others has been disrupted by the earthquake in Lisbon and its interpretation by Voltaire. The word of God no longer transforms nature into a book where humans read the truth about their position in the universe. Defined and determined by the order of his own experiences, the human subject can find no words about nature outside himself, but has to express words about his own nature and demands. From this antropocentric outset nature is defined and shaped. The loss of subjectivity on these conditions is fatal; there is no place in nature or elsewhere where the human being can find his proper place or carry out his proper function. As his subjectivity is bound to his own words, he is also struck by silence when his subjectivity is lost. Therefore, nature and subjectivity disappear in the same abyss. Also this natural and existential drama is staged in the city.

The Danish cosmopolitan poet Jens Baggesen was deeply inspired by Kant whose name Immanuel he adopted; he was a restless traveler in the early days of the French Revolution, and visited Paris and danced enthusiastically on the remnants of the Bastille. Later he married Sophie, the grandchild the Swiss poet Albrecht von Haller, author of a poem on the Alps, *Die Alpen* (1729) that acquired European fame in the eighteenth century and saw numerous editions. Baggesen himself also wrote a long poem in German on the Alps, *Parthenais oder die Alpenreise* (1803). The Alps were a hit.

In 1792–93 Baggesen published a book on his dedalic travels in Europe, *The Maze* written in the style of *Sentimental Journey*. Cities are the most important stations on his tour, and his account of his visit to Strasbourg is one of the highlights of the book. The climax is reached after the climb of the tower of the cathedral. Here he encounters the sublime. As the sublime is not a property of nature, but of a certain type of experience, there need not be any difference between climbing a tower or a mountain in the Alps. But let us follow Baggesen in Strasbourg before we return to the mountains.

First he approaches the church on street level:

We went right to the *Münster* (the excellent name of the old Cathedral), without being distracted in our pious course by the luring posters, pubs, cafes or bookstores, and suddenly we found ourselves right in front of or rather below the enormous facade of the tower.²⁰

A split of the subject is indicated but not fully expressed: on the one hand, an observing subject is operating who takes notice of the luring details of the city, and, on the other, there is a walking subject that is absorbed beyond the point of distraction and does not remark anything around him. Later this split becomes more

²⁰ Jens Baggesen, *Labyrinten* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1968 [1792–93]), p. 288. My transl.

radical, but first the traveller confronts the church. A comparison with mountains comes to his mind, embedded in the Kantian categories of the geometrical and the dynamical sublime:

What weight! What height! What gigantic *epic of stone*! Is the Earth capable of supporting this artificial mountain? Will it not succumb under the foot of the terrifying *Colossus*? . . . Is it a pleasant or an unpleasant view? It is impossible to decide. . . . The surprise, the thrill, the horror it provokes, take hold of your mind although they hurt it.²¹

Inspired by his ambiguous feelings, trembling from a thrilling joy, he enters the church and ascends to the very top of the tower:

My knees trembled, my warm sweat turned cold, I had no more force, I almost fainted, while the entire living world disappeared under my foot – but I gathered all my vanishing strength with convulsive energy – and now! What a victory, what a sky that makes me dizzy . . .

The whole of *Strassburg*, with all its buildings (nothing but a trampled down anthill), with all swarm and noise from bustling workers, walkers and marching troops, surrounded by innumerable, smaller hills, villages, woods, country houses – the entire boundless surface with the meandering river *Rhine*, *Elsass*, *Baaden* and *Brisgau*, encircled by the mountains of *Lothringen* and *Schwarzwald* – is stretched like a map deep down under my descending look! Triumph! So troublesome and dangerous is the road to *self-satisfaction*; but so overwhelming is the overview from the bright summit . . . Strange, horrifying, celestial feeling! No! Never have I felt so overwhelmingly the divine! Are my senses still alive? I see nothing! I hear nothing! I sense nothing! I touch nothing! Everything is emptiness around me – everything is an infinite space, an unconceivable void . . .²²

The description of this condensed transcendental experience is more directed toward the subjective feelings than toward the object arousing the emotional reactions. And when God appears in his vision, the presence of God is determined by the intensity of his emotions, not the other way round.

The description of the view from above begins with the view of a clearly structured environment. The landscape is ordered like a map – from the urban center we move further out to the villages and finally to the remote hills and mountains. But at the same time the landscape is disturbingly boundless, it contains a meandering river, things become innumerable, and the elements of the landscape de-urbanize and de-humanize the city that becomes not only an anthill but a trampled down anthill. The experience on the spire is the culmination of his combined mental and bodily elevation and, page after page, it is transformed into an ecstatic feeling of himself, of his presence as such as a being throwing off from all ties to other beings or other things. *This* is the sublime and equals any experience of nature.

No wonder that Baggesen alludes to mountains and massives of stone. They were the emblem of sublime experience, especially the Alps. But the tower is not a small scale compensation for Mont Blanc. They are at the same level because

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 298 f.

they release the same experience. Neither intentional nature nor geometrical nature leads to a similar assumption of a radical arbitrariness between human experience and nature. Nature, according to both views, is formed by human intervention in various degrees, and often one cannot not see where the natural stops and the cultural begins. But there is a limit, even if one cannot not trace it precisely, either determined by God's will or by the restricted skills of the human.

The role of the Alps underwent radical changes in the 1780s. First of all because humans sat foot on the very summit of Mont Blanc for the first time in history. Horace Bénédict de Saussure, the grandfather of the famous linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, went to the top with a couple of friends on August 14, 1787. Mont Blanc was not just any piece of rock, and the Alps were not just any group of mountains.²³ For centuries the Alps had been interpreted as an almost mythological phenomenon – a natural and cultural if not a mythological limit for the Romans, the latin prefixe *strans-* and the *cis-* were heavily loaded with semantics, and to ascent a top in the Alps or to cross the Alps presented a challenge almost transcending the power of humans.

Thus, the Alps were a symbol of the suprahuman present in the world of humans. It was a material as well as symbolical reality, a sign in nature to be interpreted by humans to help them define their humble position in the universe. That was the role of the Alps inside the intentional conception of nature. In this perspective Albrecht von Haller used the city to explain the meaning of the Alps in his didactical poem *Die Alpen*.²⁴ As opposed to the Alps the city was the place of human greed and corruption where people forgot that they were created in the image of God in order to live a humble, obedient and industrious life. The Alps themselves were actually divided in two places, according to Haller. Down in the valleys humans settled in non-urban communities living a modest but decent life, because they had the overwhelming and immediate view of the Alps, reminding them of the infinite power of God and the limited capacities of humans. The Alps could only retain this meaning as long as they remained untouched by humans.

In the introduction to his *Voyages dans les Alpes*, Vols. 1–4 (1779–1796)²⁵ Saussure remarks that Mont Blanc presumably is the highest mountain in the world (with the possible exception of some summits in South America). No humans would ever be able to climb to the top: superstition would that all kind of ghosts protected it, and common sense told you that you could not do it without one night's sleep in the heights which would kill anyone. But Saussure did it, and he did it more than once. Others did it as well over the next years. Tourism flourished: to see the impossible made real! If only by others than yourself, at least by human beings. Both Haller and Saussure studied the nature and culture of the Alps in great detail, Haller observing things as signs of God and organising them accordingly,

²³ Cf. Numa Broc, "Une découverte 'révolutionnaire'. La haute montagne alpestre", in *Compos-er le paysage*, ed. Odile Marcel (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1989).

²⁴ Albrecht von Haller, *Die Alpen*, repr. in *Gedichte* (Leipzig, 1923 [1729]).

²⁵ Horace Bénédict de Saussure, *Voyages dans les Alpes* (Neuchâtel, 1796).

Saussure analyzing things as a modern classifying scientist would do it. Haller had no desire to climb the top and thus make his world view break down. Such an idea did not occur. Saussure, on the other hand, wanted to complete his knowledge and classify what belonged to the entire region, and consequently – naturally as it were – he had to make an attempt to reach the top. When he succeeded the Alps were integrated in Bacon's and Galileo's nature – a realm of reality accessible to man independently of any divine intentions. Nature before and after human intervention is the same nature, only different in degrees.

On such conditions the church tower and Mont Blanc are of the same kind, and the emotions inspired by one or the others have the same value. But then the tower and the mountain shed shadows of doubt on the uniqueness of nature. How can one find words about such a nature, if one does not know what they refer to, but only where they originate, namely in the imagination of humans. How can one define a subject without knowing where to situate it? And how can one define nature when it is known only through one's own arbitrary reactions? The answer came up toward the end of the eighteenth century: tourism or nature as entertainment – one of the two meanings of "to enjoy". If something else than nature can give the same kick, their difference does not matter. This attitude is similar to that of radical utilitarianism: nature as raw material for the satisfaction of our material needs, the other meaning of "to enjoy". If something else than natural products can fulfill our needs, the difference is of no importance. From the top of Mont Blanc or the church tower we overlook a world penetrated by human categorization. If it is a natural world, then it is the world of our nature. It is the world of urbanites.

Shelley wrote a poem on Mont Blanc hundred years after Haller, in 1817. He also used the city to conceptualize and visualize the mountains. But not the city as an alternative locality, as in Haller, not the city explained by mountain imagery, as in Baggesen. But the city used as a metaphor to explain the unconceivable piles of rocks and chaotically steep ravines to the reader. Thus the city is assumed to be an important interpretative key for the reader. Not the city as a well-defined entity, but as another experience on the borders of human's knowledge. The metaphor can be used to visualize what cannot materially belong to any city, and even the non-urban is seen through the city:

...there, many a precipice,
Frost and Sun in scorn of mortal power
Have piled: dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,
A city of death, distinct with many a tower
And wall impregnable of beaming ice.
Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin
Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
Rolls it perpetual stream;...²⁶

²⁶ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Mont Blanc", repr. in *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. 2 (New York: Norton, 1974), p. 532.

Returning to Baggesen in the real city of Strasbourg, coming down from the Alp-like heights of the tower, we see that the city is not necessarily a comforting experience. There is no place where the sublime experience can be placed. As long as you remember it, you are bound to two places: one on the ground, one in the air. The division of the subject foreshadowed in the beginning of Baggesen's description of his visit to Strasbourg, now becomes conscious and painful. He would understand Shelley's imagery:

My eyes were hurt by the pavement and the surrounding buildings; they searched for a horizon but found none; they looked for an abyss, there was none – but still, I clinged to my friend fearing to get off my balance. Like being still seasick on land, so I was still airsick in the street. I looked up to the spire and saw myself still up there. In this was I was staggering along to the pub.²⁷

To live, or better to survive, in a social and natural world after the experience of speechless autonomous freedom is painful. Here a new connection between word, subject and nature is required. We urbanites have no words for it yet, and we do not longer know if we are the mastering subjects of anything. But we know that nature is there whatever we say or do. Better find words for it. Such words would be the third story of nature, *our* story. Will it be a story of nature as a themepark or as an industrial plant, or will it be a story of nature as...?

²⁷ J. Baggesen, *Labyrinten*, p. 301.

“Philosophy Directs the Ruling Helm”: Landscape and Political Power in Eighteenth-Century England¹

I

When most of us consider the countryside we see a terrain innocent of any restrictions. We regard as an intrusion into our picture of the countryside any consideration of rights of access or of use. We draw a veil between rural land and ourselves which conveniently screens out boundaries of ownership or signs of management and we reserve our highest praise for countryside that we term “natural” or “unspoilt”.

Of course, **intense** regulation usually extends over the rural land we regard in this way whether it is organised for agriculture or for recreation, but in a modern, urban, industrialised and comparatively leisured society our acknowledgement of this fact is wilfully obscured.

In place of this regulated and artificially shaped location most of us construct an alternative. We create a countryside that does not suggest man’s involvement in terms of ownership, management and access but claims instead a profound intellectual connection between man and the natural world.

We view the countryside as a place of retreat. A place where natural phenomena share a more harmonious relationship and offer a spiritual correction to the

¹ The quotation is taken from James Thompson’s *Summer*, ln. 1778, published first in 1727 and then reprinted in 1730 as part of a collected edition entitled *The Seasons* containing poems on all four seasons. The line appears at the book’s climactic moment when, having outlined the surroundings most suitable for reflection and characterised those most able to benefit from a presence in such places, the poem’s narrator claims the natural world as the appropriate location for those seeking to fit themselves for good governorship.

distracting life of the city. We also see the countryside as a retreat in the sense that it allows a sort of going back, a retreat to another time where virtues that we consider threatened in our present age remain visible and unchanged.

Our attraction to a countryside recreated in this fashion thus lies in its supposed provision of a moral education. It is, in short, a view which claims rural land as a site for self-improvement. I am interested in tracing the very complex path that has brought us to this perception of the countryside as a morally qualifying location but want to concentrate here on one particular stretch of that journey.

I shall outline some of the economic, agrarian, social and juridical changes taking place in areas of the English countryside during the closing years of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth. In doing this I hope to sketch in a framework against which the representations of rural land in the poetry, painting, and landscape gardening of the period might be discussed.

I feel there is an intriguing coincidence between these historical changes, which tend increasingly toward the reification of rural land as private property, and changes in the representation of rural land, which increasingly offered the countryside as a site for the self-conscious moral improvement of those observing it.

I believe the reflection of the countryside evident in these literary, painted and cultivated landscapes can, in fact, be read as contributions to a necessary new mythology; a mythology constructed for a powerful social elite seeking to re-define political qualification at a moment of critical separation from an earlier, customary involvement with the land.

II

At the end of the seventeenth century the first widespread survey of Britain's population and economy estimated that half of the rural land in England and Wales was already under either arable or pastoral cultivation. In addition perhaps a further quarter of this land was woodland or common land; also very much part of well developed rural economy. The rest, some ten million acres according to the same source, was heath, moor, mountain and other wasteland useful at best for rough grazing.²

The distribution of such land use was immensely varied and it is possible that forty distinct "farming counties" may have existed across England alone.³ Fundamental features of this variety were, of course, local soil types and weather but these considerations were further differentiated by numerous interconnected fac-

² Gregory King, *A General Account*, a survey of the economic and social structure of England and Wales in 1688, published in 1696.

³ Eric Kerridge, *The Agricultural Revolution* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1967), pp. 41–73. See also Joan Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, Vol. V (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 1–112, which suggests rather different boundaries for such regions.

tors such as population pressure, local inheritance patterns, the proximity of markets and the regional history of product price fluctuation.⁴

The particular local combination of these and other influences ensured that differential pressures in the rural economy led to the development of a very heterogenous agrarian map across Britain. Bearing this substantial caveat in mind I think it is still instructive to try and isolate a number of characteristics governing the relationship that existed between rural land, its owners and others in the agrarian population.

On the most basic level of all, rural land directly supported over three-quarters of Britain's population at this time. A few owned that land; a larger proportion farmed as tenants, and the vast majority lived on its farms or in its cottages existing through the provision of labour for others, through subsistence farming on their own account, or through a plethora of household based industrial occupations available on a permanent or temporary basis during the year.

For the first of these groups income from tenancies tended to predominate although such landlords were often engaged in agriculture on their own account. Office-holding, patents, monopolies, commerce, and finance were important areas in which there were growing opportunities for members of the gentry and the aristocracy to augment their income, but for most owners the land retained a pre-eminent role.⁵

For the leaseholding members of the rural population, whether they held that land by freehold or copyhold, the sale of produce inevitably predominated. The larger tenant might, however, be engaged in sub-letting parts of his holding by this date and so gain access to a subsidiary rental income.⁶

⁴ The literature on these topics alone is both extensive and a continuing arena of academic debate. Large scale theoretical models have been suggested to describe land use in Britain at this period and comparatively recently local historical studies have revealed the minutiae of such organisation. Useful works include: J. Chambers, *Population, Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972); I. Blanchard, "Population Change, Enclosure, and the Early Tudor Economy", *Economic History Review*, 2nd. Series, XXIII: 427-46; E. Jones and G. Mingay (eds.), *Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Arnold, 1967); J. Goody, Joan Thirsk and Edward Thompson (eds.), *Family and Inheritance, Rural Society in Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage 1500-1800* (London: Allen Lane, 1977); M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities, English Villages in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974); Alan Everitt, "The Marketing of Agricultural Produce", in Joan Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*; C. Chalkin and M. Havinden (eds.), *Rural Change and Urban Growth 1500-1800* (London: Longman, 1974); W. Wrigley, "A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy, 1650-1750", *Past and Present*, XXXVII (1967): 44-70; W. Abel, *Agricultural Fluctuations in Europe* (Hamburg: Methuen, 1980); P. Bowden "Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits and Rents", in Joan Thirsk (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, pp. 593-695; W. Hoskins, "Harvest Fluctuations and English Economic History, 1620-1759", *Agricultural History Review*, XVI, (1968): 15-31; E. Phelps-Brown and S. Hopkins, "Wage Rates and Prices: Evidence for Population Pressure in the Sixteenth Century", *Economica* (Nov. 1957): 289-306.

⁵ G. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), Introd.

⁶ D. Coleman, *The Economy of England 1450-1750* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 42.

For the rest, and this was by far the larger part of the rural population, a much less secure relationship existed. Here households were rarely in a position to enjoy a measure of independent existence as a direct result of work done on land that they farmed. Instead, many had smallholdings on which a few vegetables could be grown and where perhaps enough land could be found to graze domestic livestock. A large proportion of the living extracted from the land by such people came from agricultural wages paid for work done as either retained farm servants or as labourers hired for specific, often seasonal, tasks.⁷

Rural industry could augment the income of some of these cottagers. This depended very much on local farming practice, however, both in terms of raw materials produced and the existence of a seasonal timetable that allowed alternative occupations. The preparation or finishing of products from the arable or pastoral economy was in any case carried on in a small, local, household-based way and was part of a flexible system of varied employment rather than work carried on by workers in a separate industrial sector.⁸

If this flexible system was to work successfully, and it allowed at best a very precarious living to be gained from the land, then access to common land was usually necessary. For the cottager and labourer such land provided a vital fillip to the household economy. The very small amount of grazing possible on land attached to their rented houses could be increased here. Fuel, in the form of wood, scrub or turf could be cut. Many useful wild plants, nuts and berries could be gathered and gleaning carried out – benefits termed “usufruct” and significant enough to be mentioned specifically in lease documents. Wood for making tools was available and also allowed construction and fencing to be achieved cheaply. In forest areas in particular, common land provided the raw materials for numerous crafts and local industrial occupations.

III

Having briefly indicated the practical importance of the land to rural society it is essential to realise that the terms: “ownership”, “tenancy”, “rent” or “common land” signified a very different relationship between land and rural society than that which we now understand.

Ownership of land was a condition set about with limitations. An owner acquired land, whether it was through inheritance or purchase, with a powerful network of proscriptive rights already superimposed upon it. There were tenants holding that land by freehold who had to pay certain dues to the landlord but whose rights to using that land were significantly independent of intervention by that landlord.

⁷ R. Malcolmson, *Life and Labour in England 1700–1780* (London: Hutchinson, 1981), p. 35.

⁸ D. Coleman, “Industry in Tudor and Stuart England”, in *Studies in Economic and Social History* (London: Macmillan, 1975), p. 12.

There were tenants holding land by copyhold. Some of these had rights which enabled them to pass on their tenancy, others were granted holdings for fixed periods. Such periods tended most commonly to be for so many "lives", however, rather than for a fixed period of years. As well as a rent payment such copyholders were required to pay "entry fines" or "quit rents" each time a new tenancy was begun or ended. Additionally such leases might still have a number of other, non-financial obligations attached, such as the provision of certain agricultural produce or the services of farm labour at certain dates. Such an arrangement was often of a complex and inflexible nature.

Lastly, in respect of the landlord/tenant relationship, there were the tenants-at-will and plain leasehold tenants. Such men, frequently the poorer cottagers and the labourers, usually held shorter leases, for a variety of periods, and at a simple money rent.⁹ Whilst perhaps the least secure of the different tenants even these men would nevertheless still enjoy rights of use and access to common land.

All these forms of tenure were regulated by appeal to custom, i.e. to the historical precedents applying to previous holders of the land. Such customary rights were enforceable at law and placed considerable restrictions upon the latitude which any landlord had to raise rents and fines; to alter the length of leases, or to control land use. Even the physical organisation and field use patterns were subject to a locally varied system of communal agreement and customary use.

When common land is discussed it is within this network of customary usage that such discussion should take place. It is perhaps most accurate not to talk of common *land* at all, as though this was land set apart from that owned by the landlord. Rather, common land was *owned land* over which common *rights* existed. Some of this land was entailed to the particular cottage or other dwelling of the tenant. Some was more generally available to the village community. All, was owned by the landlord but his rights to it were regulated by customary usage rather than by any simple title through which he had independent control.

Even the concept of "rent", when used in the context of landholding prior to the eighteenth century, is not the direct economic construct we might imagine. The economic historian Keith Tribe has written very persuasively about the anachronism of assuming that the letting of land between owner and tenant has, at all times, implied a similar relationship between the two parties.¹⁰ He notes that although the feudal system of land grants to tenants in return for service is, by the seventeenth century, in complete decay, the payments made by tenants to a particular landlord are still not expressed by a simple economic formulation. The fines and the quit rents paid by the tenant are not simply monies calculated on the basis of

⁹ For a discussion of the not necessarily coincident divisions of status and occupation within society at this time see: Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (London: Methuen, 1971), Ch. 2; Keith Wrightson, *English Society* (London: Hutchinson, 1983), pp. 23–38.

¹⁰ Keith Tribe, *Land, Labour and Economic Discourse* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), Ch. 2.

the productive value of the land, charged at so much per acre and paid by the tenant for use over a fixed period. They are, instead, payment for the use a named set of lands with a network of customary relations attached.¹¹

If the historical picture I am building up here is accurate then it is possible to claim that, by the end of the seventeenth century, rural land in much of Britain could still not be *owned* in the sense that term is understood today. The rights which an owner enjoyed in relation to the land were closely related to a number of rights of access and use held by others and the holding of these customary entitlements limited his absolute and exclusive control of that land.

It would be wrong, however, to understand from this that land owners viewed their involvement in a such network of customary relations simply as an irksome brake on their own, more progressive intentions. Such a network of custom was intimately involved in establishing the social structure of rural society. Put slightly differently it could be said that land was less an independent element in an equation concerned with the cost of agricultural production, than a framework upon which a structure of dependent social relations could be erected.

It is crucial to understand that this structure was seen by contemporaries to extend beyond the boundaries of village life. It was considered, particularly by the ascendant Tory landed interest, as the absolute guarantee of good governance in the country's highest political fora.

Land ownership was the legal pre-requisite of holding political office at both local and national level and political theorists wrote extensively to justify a model of authority that favoured those at the apex of the pyramid of customary relations. Works such as Sir Robert Filmer's significantly titled *Patriarcha* traced an ordering principle for authority through the family, the household, through the relation of master and servant, through the relation of church and people, through the hierarchy of rank to the King and ultimately to God himself.¹² Within such a hierarchy the landowner, claiming a local position as father of his community could, with some justification, present himself as best placed to understand and represent matters of concern to those fixed in degrees beneath him.¹³

Let us move forward some 90 years to 1770 and compare this view with that of a different writer, albeit a writer still deeply concerned with the relationship of rural land to society. While discussing the profits made from improving soil quality Arthur Young could describe that society in the following terms:

The farmers receive, in the first place, the total of this amount: Out of it they dispense income to the other classes in rent to the landlords; in the amount of labour to the industrious poor and in tithes to the clergy. Their other expenses, in various instances, maintain many other ranks of people; and the surplus remains for their own profit; not to lay up

¹¹ Keith Tribe, *Land, Labour and Economic Discourse*, p. 25.

¹² Sir Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha*, publ. posthumously in 1680.

¹³ H. T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property* (Methuen, 1977), p. 51; see also G. J. Schochet, *Patriarchalism and Political Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975).

as savings but to maintain themselves and their families in necessities and superfluities; that is chiefly in the consumption of manufactures.¹⁴

The land of the farm is now being presented as the site of a combination of capital and labour where profit is created which in turn fuels other areas of a wider economy.¹⁵

Clearly a change of emphasis is evident here and I want to suggest two factors that seem to me crucial in shaping that change. The first of these is a sustained fall in agricultural prices during the period we are looking at here; the second a rapidly escalating land tax.

Depending on the local pattern of land use different regions of Britain would have been affected with differing degrees of severity by these factors. Nevertheless, there is firm evidence from modern studies to suggest that a general decline in prices occurred for all agricultural produce from the later seventeenth century.

The fall in grain prices would have been of particular significance; cereals being the single most important agricultural product. In all areas of the country prices for this commodity fell steadily during the 1660s and 1680s, with record lows in 1666 and 1688. After the turn of the century the decline continued and, for the 40 years that followed, farmers experienced great difficulty in ensuring adequate returns on any investment. After bad years in 1706, 1723, and 1732 grain reached it's lowest price for 80 years.¹⁶

It seems likely that these falling prices were the result of national overproduction. Whatever the cause, however, this posed a set of very specific problems for two interrelated groups within the rural population. For many of the landholders, farms became far less profitable, rents became more difficult to pay and arrears built up.¹⁷

For the smaller landowners, among the lesser gentry and the squirearchy in particular, the burden of falling rent returns on existing land combined with the inflexibility of the tenancy arrangements already mentioned, and made it very difficult for these men to expand their income by making more land available for cultivation.

The position of these men was worsened, at this particularly sensitive moment, by the imposition of a steep rise in land taxes. Applied by an expansionist government desperate to fund costly foreign wars and provide continued support for commercial adventure abroad, this tax was introduced in 1693. It was levied nation-

¹⁴ Arthur Young, *A Six Month Tour Through the North of England* (1770), p. 521. For a fuller discussion of this passage See Keith Tribe, *Land, Labour and Economic Discourse*, p. 66.

¹⁵ The genre of books offering advice to farmers from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries will provide a very fruitful area for further research. It seems to me that investigation of such works solely from the point of view of technological innovation has largely ignored their reflection of changing social relations to the land. For the development of such works in England, see G. Fussell, *The Old Farming Books. From Fitzherbert to Tull* (London: Crosby Lockwood, 1947); G. Fussell, *More Old Farming Books* (London: Crosby Lockwood, 1950); Blanche Henrey, *British Botanical and Horticultural Literature Before 1800* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975).

¹⁶ W. Abel, *Agricultural Fluctuation in Europe*, p. 168.

¹⁷ D. Coleman, *The Economy of England*, p. 128.

ally on all landed property and gradually, along with other taxation measures, imposed still more pressure on the smaller landowner.¹⁸

It would, of course, be wrong to see these features as the only contributions to a more difficult economic climate for the smaller landowner. Moreover, it would be simplistic to assume that all such men were affected to a similar degree. Nevertheless it now seems that, particularly for those men without a non-landed financial buffer – such as court office or commercial interests – the sale of land was becoming a more frequent recourse.

Habakkuk and Thompson, have suggested that the characteristic feature of land sales during this period was a movement of land away from the smaller landowners and a corresponding concentration of that land in the hands of the aristocracy, the county magnates already owning large tracts of rural land and those with other, non-landed, sources of wealth.¹⁹

The process of engrossing landholdings which had already begun to effect the ownership and distribution of land in many areas of Britain during the seventeenth century now assumed a faster pace. The accumulation of land by purchase was increasingly accompanied by a refusal on the part of the new landlord to renew copyhold tenancies, and by attempts to grant shorter tenancies or simple economic leases.²⁰ These moves were paralleled by an increase in enclosures which, through their ability to sweep away existing tenancies, further enhanced the landowners ability to rearrange and consolidate his land.²¹

In addition, it is clear that areas of waste were being taken into productive use in very large quantities. Forest, fen and other areas where massive investment was necessary to produce farmland of high rental value were increasingly being exploited by these larger landowners.²²

Such changes inevitably hastened a profound shift in the way rural land was perceived. For the landowner these changes came to mean farms of substantially larger size where holdings could be redistributed, consolidated and subdivided with regular hedging. The absence of communal farming and the customary restrictions that accompanied this allowed a system of more simply economic rents to grow up as land increasingly became a commodity that, being absolutely *owned* could be *leased* absolutely. Further, upon any later sale of such land this absolute ownership could be *transmitted* absolutely.²³

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 123–4.

¹⁹ H. Habakkuk, "English Landownership 1680–1740", *Economic History Review*, X (1940): 2–17; F. M. L. Thompson, "The Social Distribution of Landed Property in England Since the Sixteenth Century", *Economic History Review*, XIX (1966): 505–17.

²⁰ R. Butlin, *The Transformation of Rural England*, p. 37.

²¹ G. Mingay, *Enclosure and the Small Farmer in the Age of the Industrial Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 21. For a detailed account of the complex chronological and geographical development of enclosure and its legal, social and agricultural implications see J. Yelling, *Common Field and Enclosure in England 1450–1850* (London: Macmillan) and H. Fox and R. Butlin (eds.), *Change in the Countryside* (Institute of British Geographers, 1979).

²² R. Butlin, *The Transformation of Rural England*, p. 38.

²³ Keith Tribe, "Economic Property and the Theorization of Ground Rent", *Economy and Society*, XI (1977): 69–88.

The historian C.B. Macpherson puts this reification of land very succinctly when writes that

limited and not always saleable rights *in* things were being replaced by virtually unlimited and saleable rights *to* things.²⁴

For the *landholder*, on the other hand, the position was increasingly that of the sole productive user of a particular parcel of rural land. The network of social relations stretched over rural land under more customary conditions was coming to be perceived more and more in terms of a purely economic equation – as the extract noted earlier from Arthur Young’s work illustrated.

Revealingly, this consolidation of land and the erasing of customary entitlements to use such land was bolstered simultaneously by an unprecedented rise in the number of legal statutes enacted in England to bring harsher penalties upon the heads of those found guilty of trespass and damage.

Work by E. P. Thompson and Douglas Hay has examined the increasing nervousness of the landowning elite in Hanovarian England over such matters. They have recorded how by the end of the eighteenth century there were laws that allowed the ultimate, capital sentence to fall on those found guilty of the theft of, or damage to, grain, woodland, timber, fruit, freshwater fish, dogs, cattle, horses and other livestock, and the destruction of hedges and fences erected by their owners.²⁵

Poaching was a particularly sensitive issue in this respect, perhaps due to the social prestige attached to the sporting pursuit of game. And in addition to the proliferation of statutes concerned with punishing those found guilty by the courts, the law increasingly allowed owners or their employees to take more immediate, arbitrary action. At precisely the time they excluded those people who had hitherto enjoyed access to much of their land, these owners were increasingly free to deploy savagely indiscriminate devices such as the spring-gun and the mantrap to protect their property.²⁶

The economic changes, of which these new laws were an expression, inevitably transformed life for those, the vast majority of the rural population, who depended heavily upon common rights and the customary rights attached to the smallest of landholdings. The removal of cottages with common rights attached, the restrictions of access to areas where common rights had traditionally been observed and the large scale exploitation of the country’s wastes by the larger landowners, may have placed an often critical burden upon the fragile subsistence economy of these people.²⁷

²⁴ C. B. Macpherson, (ed.), *Property: Mainstream and Critical Positions* (Toronto: Univ. Toronto Press, 1978), p. 8.

²⁵ H. T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property*, p. 162; E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters* (Harmondsworth: Peregrine, 1977), pp. 270–7.

²⁶ F. E. Huggett, *The Land Question* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), p. 80.

²⁷ R. Malcolmson, *Life and Labour in England*, p. 144.

For some, migration to local towns may have been a possibility – and during this period the movement of the landless poor did increase rapidly. For some of those that remained, full-time work in local industries was gradually offering more of an alternative.²⁸ For the rest, agricultural wage labour came to occupy a more dominant position.

For such people, instead of being a place where grazing, gathering or other peripheral rights existed the countryside was becoming an area where, in certain places at certain times their labour might be bought and deployed by others.²⁹ Beyond the terms of that contract, beyond the workshops, fences and hedges that now marked the borders of what may now accurately be termed private property, their access was curtailed.

IV

What I hope I have conveyed here is that prior to changes taking place during the later seventeenth and early eighteenth century, a form of political qualification existed that depended largely on the ownership of land. That ownership of land placed the owner and those renting and using that land in an ancient and complex network of customary relations, and it was this network which was presented by those in positions of political power as the best guarantee of disinterested participation in the political system.

I hope I have been able to indicate too a little about the way in which the foundations of this system came under pressure and, in looking at the movement

²⁸ A process that occurred in greatly varied ways at different regional locations. For accounts of the local pressures affecting agrarian households see: J. Chambers, "Enclosure and Labour Supply in the Industrial Revolution", in *Agriculture and Economic Growth in England 1650–1815* (London, 1967), pp. 94–127; B. Hoselitz, "Population Pressure, Industrialisation and Social Mobility", *Population Studies*, II (1957): 123–35; F. Mendels, "Proto-Industrialisation: The First Phase of the Process of Industrialisation", *Journal of Economic History*, 32 (1972): 241–61; T. White, "Enclosures and Population Movements in England 1700–1830", *Explorations in Entrepreneurial History*, 2nd. series V (1968): 175–86. For more wideranging surveys of the relationship between agriculture and industrialisation see: Joan Thirsk, "Industries in the Countryside", in F. Fisher (ed.), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1961); R. Braun, "The Impact of Cottage Industry in an Agricultural Population", in David Landes (ed.), *The Rise of Capitalism* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1966); E. Jones, "Agricultural Origins of Industry", *Past and Present* XL (1968): 58–71.

²⁹ R. Malcolmson, *Life and Labour in England*, p. 137. For some of the repercussions of this change in the areas of social and political attitudes to work see: C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1962). There seems little doubt that as this process developed the growth of a landless rural population became recognised quite cynically as the growth of a pool of rural labour. E. P. Thompson notes in *The Making of the English Working Class* (p. 243), the remarks of a contributor to *The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine* of 1800 who expresses this with chilling frankness. The writer suggests that enclosures should

of agricultural prices and land tax, I have suggested two specific economic factors that seem to have contributed forcefully to that pressure.

I think there can be little doubt that by the mid-eighteenth century the network of custom attached to the ownership and use of rural land, and the political qualification based upon it, were in a state of crisis from which they would never recover.

I find it telling, therefore, that just as this process was gathering momentum we find increasing reference in the poetry, painting and landscape gardening of the period, to the idea that an alternative form of political qualification was available in the countryside. One that offers the British countryside as a terrain of nationally beneficial self-improvement, traversed by an elite whose claim to be suited for political power is now based on intellectual rather than customary involvement.

allocate only a quarter of an acre of "garden ground" to any cottager. He calculates that this will allow the man to avoid destitution and so prevent him from becoming a burden on the poor rates, yet not encourage the man to become a "petty farmer". This latter state must, at all costs, be avoided for:

When a labourer becomes possessed of more land than his family can cultivate in the evenings . . . the farmer can no longer depend on him for constant work, and the hay-making and the harvest must suffer to a degree . . . would sometimes become a national inconvenience.

Given such attitudes it is not surprising that nineteenth-century religious writers and social commentators should frequently insist that a well kept garden was a sign of – even a route to – moral elevation. See Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), pp. 234–5.

Liberty and the Art of Walking

Sitting in an English garden
Waiting for the sun
If the sun don't come you get a tan
From standing in the English rain
– Lennon, McCartney

Describing a gravel walk in his garden (*To a Gravel Walk*, 1795), William Mason praises it for its being an emblem of liberty. He says:

Here, as thou leads't my step through lawn and grove,
Liberal though limited, restrained though free,
Fearless of dew, or dirt, or dust, I rove,
And own those comforts all derived from thee!
Take then, smooth path, this tribute of my love,
Thou emblem pure of legal liberty!¹

What makes Mason's walk pleasurable is the guidance of the gravel walk which directs his step. His walk is in fact a guided tour of sorts, and it is the nature of the guide which gives the walker the feeling of security and pleasure. Rather than telling Mason where to go, the path protects him from aimless wandering, from getting lost among lawns and groves, for instance. Restrained freedom is thus protective and, like the law ("legal liberty"), it guarantees the absence of transgressive and threatening elements, such as "dew, or dirt, or dust".

The paradox of guidance in Mason's poem is, of course, that it does not lead anywhere. Mason's tour is not even a picturesque tour in search of beautiful views

¹ William Mason, "To a Gravel Walk", in John Dixon Hunt (ed.), *The Oxford Book of Garden Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 131.

as “lawn and grove” might be, but a walk upon some territory through which the rover passes without actually paying much attention to it. What is praised in the poem is, in fact, the existence of the road as the source of comforts which it offers as commodities to be owned. It is, interestingly, not the garden which, though Mason’s, is the object of Mason’s owning, not even the path, but the security of his freedom limited so naturally, that its restraining power also seems to be a part of his internal landscape. Read as a metaphor of one’s life, which is always at hand when travelling is at stake, the path is a guide to a territory citizenship in which demands an aestheticization of the political system whose presence can be rendered as an object of admiration which does not intrude into the individual freedom. What makes this individual freedom possible, however, at least in the case of Mason, is that the individual actually possesses both the territory (garden) and the road. The natural nature of this possessing is so apparent that it need not even be mentioned in the text. For what Mason possesses in the poem is not land, but the commodified “comforts” derived from the properly organized space. Possessing land is as natural as being, while pleasures and comforts are rewards for the possession.

Read in the light of John Locke’s theory of property from some hundred years earlier (*The Second Treatise on Government*, 1690) a walk in a garden might be regarded as labour of appropriating the field of comforts and pleasures. Man, according to Locke, has an undeniable property in his own person, and “his body and the ‘work’ of his hands, we may say, are properly his”.² It is not quite clear what sort of activity Locke means by work here, and for some reason he himself puts the word in inverted commas. Then he defines “work” as removal of something “out of the state that Nature hath provided and left it in”. This removal is achieved by way of mixing labour with nature which thus becomes man’s property because he has “joined to it something that is his own”.³ In other words labour consists in changing nature by adding to it and thus endowing it with new properties which legitimize property as one’s possession. This addition, or “annexation”, by labour renders property as an extension of man – one is what one has, as it were. Since nature, by definition, cannot be possessed in its natural state, property also necessitates improvement, a bettering which gives it the property of property. This labour of improvement irrevocably separates man from nature and actually defines nature as Otherness without properties.

Mason, however, does not address himself as the maker of the gravel walk, as its designer, for instance. The walk simply is there, giving him some secure position away from lawns and groves themselves also designed to form a landscape garden. The only labour he seems to be carrying out there is observation and recognition of what is right or wrong qua the feeling of comfort. Very much like Pope’s rules of “Nature methodiz’d” to be followed in *An Essay on Criticism*, Mason’s gravel walk leads to the discovery of the proper, of a legal liberty which

² John Locke, *The Second Treatise on Government* (1690), cited in S. Helsztyński (ed.), *Specimens of English Prose and Poetry*, Vol. 2 (Warszawa, 1973), p. 82.

³ *Ibid.*

begins to speak by itself when one undertakes the labour of recognition, that is to say, of taking a walk in which there is no risk of seeing anything wrong, of being misguided. Such freedom to walk, not too far, of course, the oxymoronic restrained freedom can thus only take place within an already restricted territory, a territory annexed to one's property whose legal status politicizes it, translates it into a politically ordained social space which is simultaneously rendered as, say, aesthetically positive, as the field of agreeable pleasures and comforts of Burke's "beautiful" things.

Calling "beauty a social quality", Burke talks of the pleasure of beholding beautiful things and talking to agreeable people, but also of our willingly entering "into a kind of relation with them".⁴ The space of a garden is such that one really willingly enters because man, unlike other creatures, "is not designed . . . to live at large". Neither is he guided by the general unselective passion but he connects it with "the idea of *social* qualities, which direct and heighten the appetite which he has in common with all other animals".⁵ This heightened appetite is, of course, taste as a guiding principle of selection. What one is capable of selecting, however, must already be marked by a sign of property, of commodity which can be legally transferred among the members of the society simultaneously remaining within it as an object of the aesthetic appetite for beauty which is also inextricably linked with the law. Mason's garden path, which in itself is not so much an object of admiration as a position from which a property can be viewed, grants the one who walks a feeling of pleasurable comfort exactly by invisibly marking the proper via its status of "emblem pure of legal liberty". A walker is legally free only provided that he follows the transparent inscription of the legal whose legality is confirmed by the feeling of comfort offered to him. The labour of walking is thus an extension of the labour of appropriating which legitimizes the latter. What is thus also produced is an identity of an ideal social individual who finds pleasure in what he has due to his full identification with the law which actually constitutes a part of his property. Private property, which divides and separates, has within it some generalized spirit of the law which by making this property naturally secure raises it to the common sphere of shared pleasures available to anyone who owns a property.

An individual thus produced is incapable of suffering what Burke calls "the pain of absolute solitude" in which "*pain* is the predominant idea".⁶ "Good company," he says,

lively conversations, and the endearments of friendship, fill the mind with great pleasure; a temporary solitude on the other hand, is itself agreeable. This may perhaps prove, that we are creatures designed for contemplation as well as action⁷

⁴ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 39.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Temporary solitude is thus a more passive kind of social existence in which we contemplate over our active participation in the world. Burke reads both action and contemplation as pleasurable states of mind without mentioning any labour which would be hard to classify as either sublime or beautiful. The labour of having a property seems to have been already done and the time has now come to an agreeable coexistence of friendly creatures who only actively exchange ideas or have agreeable solitary walks in their gardens. A solitary walker, like Mason, cannot go too far or get lost unless he should give up following the gravel walk and thus experience the pain of absolute solitude. An individual is secure both in the company of his neighbours as well as away from it, he is free from the threat of loss, of losing and being lost at the same time.

Such a well balanced way of living in which the individual is an extension of the social is somehow reminiscent of Rousseau's "chosen country" in which he would like to live in his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. He imagines it as "a free nation situated among several different nations, none with any interest in invading it – in short, a republic that did not tempt the ambitions of its neighbours"⁸ The grounding principle of such a society is exactly freedom from loss which is granted by the lack of desire to possess what is not mine projected upon others. Such a disinterestedness is possible only provided that full satisfaction of desire is granted to an individual who can now virtuously, without desire, enjoy the pleasures offered by the world in which one's harmonious inside is a reflection of the equally harmonious outside. The ideology thus produced is one which meets Terry Eagleton's prerequisites for its efficiency: it is "pleasurable, intuitive, self-ratifying: in a word, aesthetic".⁹ What is, quite symptomatically, also aestheticized in Rousseau's state is the military which, though really unnecessary in his ideal republic, will remain there as the sphere of aesthetic cultivation of taste:

It follows that in such a fortunate situation it would have nothing to fear but itself, and if its citizens were trained in arms, it would be more for the sake of maintaining that soldiery spirit and noble courage that are so well suited to freedom and cultivate the taste for it rather than from the necessity for the citizens' actual defence.¹⁰

The pleasure of free citizenship is thus also accompanied by a soldiery spirit, perhaps a reminder of the threatening other with which the individual had to fight in order to forge both himself and others. A walk in a garden, like Mason's, can also be read as an act of cultivation of a once courageous spirit which has overcome its partiality and self-interest thus transforming what Eagleton calls "structures of power" into "structures of feeling", "property" into "propriety".¹¹ It is the feeling of being proper, and thus of being oneself, which makes Mason enjoy the

⁸ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, tr. F. Philip (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 5.

⁹ Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 41.

¹⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin Inequality*, p. 5.

¹¹ Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 42.

comforts of legal liberty in his poem. It also makes him feel “fearless” of the outside, which noble courage is offered to him by the absence of the outside which he owes to the guidance, or command, of the path which he identifies as his own nature. Legal freedom needs a soldiery spirit, an aestheticized soldiery which can be noble only as long as there is nothing to fight for or against, as long as it can remain an agreeable sport, an exercise or an outing within a territory without an outside.

Though seemingly already a perfect source of security and innocent pleasures, such a territory can still be improved, though not by extension. Rather, the improvement is thinkable in terms of further elimination of the outside, in terms of domesticating the outside without, however, enclosing it within one’s own territory. An example of such a practice comes from Joseph Spence’s letter on gardening to Rev. Mr Wheeler (1751) in which a sand walk is seen as an improvement of a gravel walk. “I can go all round my little territory in half an hour after a shower or rain,” he says,

without being wet: for sand dries soon and is much easier hoed and kept clean than gravel, besides its being much cheaper, especially to me: for God help us, we live in the neighbourhood of one of the most dreary, sandy heaths in Europe.¹²

The dreary heath, in itself useless and unwelcome, provides means for cheap improvement of Spence’s garden walk thus partaking of the aestheticization of his “little territory”. This dreary neighbourhood is one that, from a distance, spoils the pleasure ground of Spence’s garden, threatens with lack of properties. It is a neighbourhood with which nobody wants to either socialize or walk in, but it is also a neighbourhood which is simultaneously made familiar by its reduction to usefulness. The task of the improvement, on the other hand, is to open up an easier access to Spence’s territory, even when the weather, for instance, is not favourable. This improvement of the garden walk is also a step towards the elimination of any displeasure and effort of movement, of the travail of travel, as Anne D. Wallace phrases it, whose absence transforms landscape garden into a sphere of purely visual aesthetic contemplation.¹³

The invisibility, or reduction, of the outside from the perspective of the garden is not seen as art in the eighteenth century. Rather, it defines the realm of the natural whose aestheticism is read physiologically as a matter of taste which classifies those who classify as properly human to the exclusion of others. For “taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier”, as Pierre Bordieu puts it.¹⁴ In this way taste becomes the decisive factor in establishing social distinctions on the basis of capability to see within the world of an aestheticism which, to quote Bordieu again,

¹² Joseph Spence, “Letter to the Rev. Mr Wheeler”, in J. D. Hunt and P. Willis (eds.), *The Genius of the Place. The English Landscape Garden 1620–1820* (London: Paul Elek, 1975), p. 271.

¹³ Cf. Anne D. Wallace, *Walking, Literature, and English Culture. The Origins and Uses of Peripatetic in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 46–9.

¹⁴ Pierre Bordieu, “Distinction and the Aristocracy of Culture,” in John Storey (ed.), *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture. A Reader* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), p. 448.

“presents the aesthetic disposition as a universally valid principle and takes the bourgeois denial of the social world to its limit.”¹⁵ This principle, as in Mason’s reading of the law, is not even seen as a principle, but as a natural predisposition to seeing the already organized as the limit of the perceivable beyond which there is nothing social, nothing, say, ethically aesthetic. And ideally there is no limit to Mason’s garden world, and there is no way out of it. Nor is there a way for others to participate in the pleasures of walking unless they are already endowed with his classifying taste, with the ability to see what should be seen. A walk in an English garden is an endeavour undertaken not quite in order to see things and places, but in order to see that they are there, in order to confirm the propriety of property. Sitting in an English garden, even without walking, one takes part in a guided tour through one’s own nature which is so purely natural that no doubt as to the presence of anything artificial is possible. For art, like wildness, is a threat to legal liberty, and, as William Shenstone teaches us, it can come to one’s garden only at night, when nobody sees it. In his “Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening” (1764) he says:

ART should never be allowed to set a foot in the province of nature, otherwise than clandestinely and by night. Whenever she is allowed to appear here, and men begin to compromise the difference – Night, gothicism, confusion and absolute chaos are come again.¹⁶

This nightmare of art, of construction and destruction at the same time, is an unwelcome visitor returning from the past which threatens with questioning the classificatory judgement of taste, with compromising the difference which is constitutive of the natural aesthetics of the garden – art should be equally unpleasant as rain and cold. But art also figures here as a woman, a secret lover who comes at night, but who must not be allowed to appear in daylight. The darkness of the night is thus the only marginal sphere in one’s garden, the sphere where the visibility of the world is suspended along with the guidance of garden walks. The art of designing is a secretive activity which must not be seen by others. Shenstone sees this art as artless planting and compares to overtly artful art of building. “The works of a person that builds,” he says,

begin immediately to decay; while those of him who plants begin directly to improve. In this, planting promises a more lasting pleasure, than building¹⁷

Planting is thus a preferable kind of activity as it produces development and growth rather than decay and ruin. “Trees”, as he teaches us, suit our taste not because of some stable quality, but due to their having a “circumstance” of “annual variety”.¹⁸

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ William Shenstone, “Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening”, in J. D. Hunt and P. Willis (eds.), *The Genius of the Place. The English Landscape Garden 1620–1820* (London: Paul Elek, 1975), p. 293.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Building breeds pestilence and decay because this decay is inscribed as an artificial foundation within the very activity of building. Trees annually change and grow while buildings as it were diminish to debris – their rise is marked, or contaminated with destruction. What, on the other hand, situates and legitimizes planting within “the province of nature” is the absence of the artificiality of design achieved by way of concealment of any kind of labour and by rendition of planting as a natural act of procreation. This, at least, can be read in one more unconnected thought of Shenstone’s which he adds to the paragraph on the superiority of planting: “It is a custom in some countries to condemn the characters of those (after death) that have neither planted a tree, nor begat a child”.¹⁹ Dying, say, gardenless is thus like dying childless.

Some hundred years earlier, towards the end of the seventeenth century, Richard Ames, one of numerous authors of satires on women wanted to live on “some *Island* vast and wide” where he, “with a Score of *Choice Selected Friends*” could

Live, and could . . . procreate like Trees,
And without *Woman's Aid* —
Promote and Propagate our *Species*.²⁰

In Shenstone, as we have already seen, woman (at least in the form of art), is allowed to enter the garden, but only secretly, at night. Her invisible aid in planting trees, in the aesthetization of the territory, promotes and propagates a species which, like Mason, finds pleasure and comfort in cohabitation with nature thus already constructed and, in a sense, in cohabitation with itself. Cohabitation with a woman is shameful, immoral and actually unpleasant compared to the pleasures of contemplating the legal liberty of a Mason’s garden. Since this legal liberty is also a representation of the moral order, this order has very little to do with women. The aesthetization of law and order excludes the feminine, paradoxically, by including it within its very structure. Law, as a source of agreeable pleasure is beautiful, like a woman, and it needs this femininity in order to efface the possibility of authoritarian, masculine imposition. The law must remain “undesigned” – artless and authorless at the same time. “Beauty,” as Eagleton says in his discussion of Burke, “is necessary for power, but does not itself contain it; authority has need of the very femininity it places beyond its limits”.²¹ The secret presence of art/woman in the design of Shenstone’s “province of nature” renders this nature attractive and lovely provided that it/she remains unnoticed in the daylight, during one’s walk in one’s garden. Hence the appearance of decency of the social space reflected in the figure of the garden where there is nothing either seductive or threatening to the civic spectator.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Richard Ames, “The Folly of Love”, in *Satires on Women* (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1976), p. 26.

²¹ Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 59.

This concealment of sexual desire via the absence of the feminine actually fashions the virility of the virtuous, civic subject. This virility, as John Barrell notices, “is not confirmed but wasted by his sexuality”.²² Sexual indulgence testifies to inability to resist desire and thus to an effeminate weakness of character. What confirms virility and virtue is the art of abstaining, of impartial admiration of the aestheticized world with one’s eyes closed to its originary carnality.

It is perhaps for this reason that one of the walks in Shenstone’s garden at the Leasowes leads to the statue of the Venus de’ Medici. Once freely guided to see it, however, one sees the meanings usually associated with Venus already “policed” by epigrams and inscriptions informing that she is not the goddess whose “amorous leer prevail’d/To bribe the Phrygian boy”. Shenstone’s Venus, half-revealing and half-concealing her nakedness, is”, as John Barrell puts it, “an emblem of good taste, of taste absolutely opposed to the luxurious, effeminate, and meretricious display which may be taken to characterise the goddess in some of her other manifestations”.²³ In a sense Venus also stands, perhaps paradoxically, for Pallas traditionally represented as a “virilized” woman – armed, with a manly face – to symbolize virtue. Though virtuous, Pallas is unsuitable an object in one’s garden as her figure is reminiscent of androgyny, unaestheticized soldiery, and, as a goddess of painting, she is also reminiscent of art. Since being virtuous consists in resistance to desire, there is nothing in the figure of Pallas which offers itself to resistance. The virtue of Shenstone’s Venus, on the other hand, is also based on the lack of seduction achieved by way of covering her both with a veil, and with a writing telling the viewer that what he sees is not what he sees and thus positing desire beyond accomplishment.

An accomplished subject, at least in the eighteenth century, is one who follows the guidance of a walk from which he cannot be seduced as long as he follows its guidance.²⁴

²² John Barrell, *The Birth of Pandora and the Division of Knowledge* (Houndmills and London: MacMillan, 1992), p. 82.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

²⁴ Interestingly, what Thomas Jefferson used as his guide in England was Thomas Whatley’s *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770). Also interestingly, what he admired, were not so much the gardens which he visited, but Whatley’s natural resistance to seduction:

I always walked over the gardens with his book in my hand, examined with attention the particular spots he described . . . and saw with wonder that his fine imagination had never been able to seduce him from the truth. (Thomas Jefferson, “Memorandum Made on a Tour to Some of the Gardens in England”, J. D. Hunt and P. Willis (eds.), *The Genius of the Place* . . . , p. 333.)



risons and Pleasure Parks in the Work of James Thomson and Ann Radcliffe

Ann Radcliffe's multiple citation of poetic texts by James Thomson provides a frame which might seem to validate a kind of female romance through apparent alignment with Augustan patriarchal norms with respect to constructions of nature and their implications for the justification of existing gender and property relations. The texts with which I am concerned here have been popular fictions over a long period, read in many different ways and recycled dependant upon context, adaptation and selection. The most obvious points of contact between these texts cluster round epic sweeps of landscape description, generally embodying moral reflections on domestic life and personal conduct, coupling images of expansion and excursion with those of retreat, retirement and, in Radcliffe, imprisonment. These last images introduce into Radcliffe's texts ambiguity, disruption and repression which approach the unspeakable. To oversimplify, what cannot be spoken may be that imprisonment is the norm in female experience within patriarchal structures rather than the exotically extraordinary lot of an untypical enforced tourist.

The encyclopaedic tendency of Thomson's verse tourism embodies Newtonian, loosely deist concepts of order and (often violent) power, legitimating as natural certain gender- and class-based social and political norms, with particular reference to ownership of property conceived as harmoniously tied to the stewardship of state. Such legitimation is effected through the language of the landscape aesthetic. The speaker in Thomson's *The Seasons* (1726–30) sometimes occupies, or expresses a desire to occupy, a retired space under the patronage of a celebrated owner of much larger spaces. Radcliffe's heroines also retreat into such small spaces, which prompt Thomsonian expansive and consolatory reflections, but, in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), the heroine emerges herself as the inheritor of property.

This paper proposes to demonstrate how Radcliffe's epigraphs and quotations from Thomson's poetry promote and condition preferred readings of her texts; how less overt references to Thomson's work flow from the quotations, encoding meanings in Radcliffe which must be less accessible to readers unversed in Thomson; how contested or oppositional readings may be constructed on the basis of what is omitted from or modified in the quotations.

The expansive first chapter of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, with its dramatic landscape descriptions, its representation of the sentimentally congenial family atmosphere in which Emily St. Aubert is brought up, contains three quotations from Thomson's *The Seasons*. Indeed the first words of the romance are really Thomson's, since the epigraph to this chapter reads:

home is the resort
Of love, of joy, of peace and plenty, where,
Supporting and supported, polish'd friends
And dear relations mingle into bliss.¹

These lines are from *Autumn*, and their subject and sentiment initiate the tone for the chapter which is to follow. The excitingly varied landscape in which the St. Aubert house is located emphatically bespeaks plenty, for it is "gay with luxuriant woods and vines, and plantations of olives" (I, i, 1), and such cultivation is dependant not only upon family harmony, but upon peace in a wider social context too. The threatening, turbulent aspects of the landscape, "partial vapours" rolling about "the majestic Pyrenees" with their "tremendous precipices" (I, i, 1), are rendered safely picturesque by distance and enhance the security of Emily's home.

Thomson's emphasis upon the *polish* of congenial friends is matched in the domestic ideal that Radcliffe elevates in this first chapter. St. Aubert pere is concerned to form Emily's mind with good sense, to instruct her not just in literature but in science too. The responses of Emily and her father to "Nature" are sophisticated according to Radcliffe's contemporary codes. It is their refinement which allows them to find pleasure in pastoral artlessness and ruggedness. In Emily's early setting — almost Edenic, though touched by mild contemplative melancholy in her father — there is no place for idleness or elevation of the noble savage. The verse paragraph from which Radcliffe's first epigraph in *Udolpho* is taken begins with a celebration of Industry, which is characterised as

. . . the kind source of every gentle art
And all the soft civility of life.

(*Autumn*, 45–6)

¹ *Autumn*, ll. 65–8. Line numbers refer to J. Logie Robertson (ed.), *James Thomson: Poetical Works* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965). In quoting passages from Thomson used by Radcliffe I have retained her spelling, punctuation and layout. Other quotations are drawn from Robertson (ed.), *Poetical Works*. This first epigraph appears in Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho: A Romance, Interspersed with some Pieces of Poetry*, ed. Bonamy Dobree, Oxford English Novels (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), Vol II, Chap i, p. 1. All subsequent references are to this edition.

Udolpho reasserts the Thomsonian emphasis on industry and engagement, and St. Aubert's present retreat does not contradict it, for he "had known life in other forms than those of pastoral simplicity" (I, i, 1). His dying advice to Emily not only warns her against "the pride of fine feeling, the romantic error of amiable minds" (I, vii, 79), but also climaxes with an emphatic and repeated exhortation to industry; and he insists that apathy is not just a failing but a positive vice. It is apathy that prevents the polish and refinement of the ideal domestic organisation. The lines which immediately follow in *Autumn* the passage *Udolpho* takes as its first epigraph reject, with Hobbesian force, the ideal of the noble savage:

But this the rugged savage never felt,
Even desolate in crowds; and thus his days
Rolled heavy, dark, and unenjoyed along –
A waste of time! Till Industry approached,
And roused him from his miserable sloth.

(*Autumn*, 69–73)

Perhaps the thematic climax of *Autumn* is a passage concerned with Philosophic Melancholy, inducing an emotional state in the speaker suited to the season. The arrival of this personification is characterised thus:

His near approach the sudden-starting tear,
The glowing cheek, the mild dejected air,
The softened feature, and the beating heart,
Pierced deep with many a virtuous pang, declare.
O'er all the soul his sacred influence breathes;
Inflames imagination; through the breast
Infuses every tenderness.

(*Autumn*, 1006–12)

Thomson's speaker goes on to specify that Philosophic Melancholy leads to

The love of nature unconfined, and, chief,
Of human race.

(*Autumn*, 1020–1)

There follows a panegyric on Lord Cobham in the context of his estate at Stowe, the ownership and continued "improvement" of which signify his fitness for stewardship of state. Radcliffe's St. Aubert, though not in the running for such an exalted role, is a composite of the attributes of the ideal philosophic man in rural retirement who emerges from a reading of *Autumn*, (which is, of course, a very different construction from that of Cobham the self-seeking military adventurer, such as we might encounter in a history book);² and Cobham's Stowe is a product of a retirement from the world of public affairs akin, when idealised in panegyric, to St. Aubert's. The soothing melancholy of St. Aubert is stressed from the first pages of *Udolpho*, and the death of his wife, together with his own approaching

² E.g., E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977).

death, allow for the predominance of this trait. Pleasing melancholy is, indeed, the dominant mood of Radcliffean romance; more so than, say, startled horror. It is distinguished from disillusionment which leads to misanthropy, and St. Aubert's "mild dejected air" is combined with constant exercises of practical benevolence. Radcliffe stresses early on that his sorrows have left "his benevolence unchilled" (I, i, 1). In *Autumn* practical benevolence is represented as a key attribute of the virtuous person, so that what begins in the section on the harvest as if it is to be businesslike Georgic advice, such as is not uncommon in *The Seasons*,³ modulates into an exhortation to practical charity (*Autumn*, 166 ff). Of course, such exhortations are also businesslike and political in their way, for the work of relief is left, to do or not to do, to the individual choice of those possessing adequate resources to perform it. St. Aubert's dying advice to Emily concludes with passionate emphasis upon the necessity for active benevolence. "Sentiment is a disgrace, instead of an ornament, unless it lead us to good actions," he says (I, vii, 80). "How despicable is that humanity, which can be contented to pity, where it might assuage!" (I, vii, 81)

St. Aubert is morally defined in Radcliffe's text through his landscape surroundings, as are Thomson's ideal men in *The Seasons*.⁴ For Pope, like Thomson promulgating politically charged constructions of nature, Lord Cobham's Stowe was the best example of the landscape park in which the dictum of good taste (itself a powerful ideological construction offering itself as natural) had been followed to "Consult the Genius of the Place in all";⁵ and Thomson, too, admires what is construed as refined respect for nature on the part of Cobham. By Ann Radcliffe's maturity much of this "nature" appeared decidedly artificial to many.⁶ Radcliffe, like Jane Austen, offers partial reinforcement of some of these Augustan constructions, though her romances also embody challenges to them. In a discourse which prefigures the terms of cultural debate in Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), the first chapter of *Udolpho* illustrates St. Aubert's Augustan respect for nature, barely distinguishable from inherited property, in his conversation with M. Quesnel, who intends to "modernise" the St. Aubert ancestral estate. Part of Quesnel's intended depredation is to cut down venerable chestnut trees, which for St. Aubert have come to symbolise ancestral virtue, stability and identity, and to replace them with Italian poplars represented as out of place in a more robust northern landscape. It is hard, in this context, not to read the imagined French terrain of this part of the romance as the more familiar, but equally imaginary, world of England constructed out of images of extensive private holdings of land.

³ See, e.g., *Spring*, 120–36; *Winter*, 265–8.

⁴ See, most notably, the enthusiastic celebration of George Lyttelton at Hagley Park in *Spring*, 904–62.

⁵ Alexander Pope, "Epistle IV: To Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington", *Moral Essays* (1731–35), l. 57. In *Udolpho* Mme. Cheron's Timon-like tastelessness is represented in the "straight walks, square parterres, and artificial fountains" of her gardens (I, xii, 120).

⁶ Compare the readings of Hagley Park offered by, e.g., J. Thomson, *Spring*, 904–62, and Richard Warner, *A Tour through the Northern Counties of England and the Borders of Scotland*, 2 vols. (London, 1802), p. 69.

Such definition of moral status through landscape is central to *Udolpho*, and Emily's education, overseen by St. Aubert when alive, is measured out in her responses to ever more emotionally demanding landscapes. She lives out something like the kind of progress in which the reader of *The Seasons* partakes, exposed to a wide variety of terrains, from the deceptively open-seeming private estate to the mind-defying sublime, viewed from multiple perspectives, including the aesthetic and the scientific.

The first chapter of *Udolpho* presents St. Aubert and Emily, contented after discharging certain acts of benevolence, returning home through calm and picturesque woodland. An element of romantic enchantment is introduced into the account of the experience through another quotation from *The Seasons*, which characterises the woods as

where
At the fall of eve the fairy people throng,
In various games and revelry to pass
The summer night, as village stories tell.
(*Summer*, 1672–5)

What is excluded from Radcliffe's quotation here may be as significant what is included. In *Summer*, immediately after the lines concerning villagers in search of fairy-folk, it is pointed out that the country people studiously avoid the grave of one who had committed suicide.

The lonely tower
Is also shunned; whose mournful chambers hold,
So night-struck fancy dreams, the yelling ghost.
(*Summer*, 1679–81)

The violence, mortality and hauntings which are associated with *Udolpho* itself are only covertly implied in the characterisation of Emily's early edenic setting. The buried quotation, the invisibility of Thomson's "lonely tower" and, more significantly, of suicidal apathy in Radcliffe's text, implicitly foreshadow dark *Udolpho* at the core of the romance.

A further telling detail links these two parts of Radcliffe's and Thomson's texts. In itself it may not amount to much, but it justifies my attention to buried quotation in Radcliffe, to repression and silence. After the lines last quoted above, *Summer* continues:

Among the crooked lanes, on every hedge,
The Glow-worm lights his gem; and, through the dark,
A moving radiance twinkles.

(*Summer*, 1682–4)

In *Udolpho* St. Aubert and Emily, in enchanted reverie as they walk, observe a light at the root of an old chestnut. Emily seems ready to believe it a supernatural phenomenon, though her father, with his characteristic Thomsonian combination of sentiment and science, corrects her with affectionate irony:

'Are you such an admirer of nature,' said St. Aubert, 'and so little acquainted with her appearance as not to know that for the glow-worm? But come,' added he gaily, 'step a little further, and we shall see fairies perhaps'

(I, i, 15)

Emily is encouraged by the beauty of the scene and by her father's indulgence to recite one of her compositions, *The Glow-Worm*. It is an immature and rather precious performance, seeming to derive from an enthusiastic reading of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It may be read as revealing the relative artlessness, the innocence and enthusiasm of its fictional author. St. Aubert's tactful silence confirms this framing of the youthful female discourse by authoritative male indulgence. "Whatever St. Aubert might think of the stanzas, he would not deny his daughter the pleasure of believing that he approved them . . ." (I, i, 17). Then, almost immediately, Radcliffe quotes Thomson again.

As Emily and St. Aubert continue their walk, the latter falls contemplatively silent, at which point the following lines are introduced:

A faint erroneous ray
Glanc'd from th' imperfect surfaces of things,
Flung half an image on the straining eye,
While waving woods, and villages, and streams,
And rocks, and mountain-tops, that long retain
The ascending gleam, are all one swimming scene
Uncertain if beheld.

(Summer, 1687-93)

The topographical sweep of these lines is characteristic of *The Seasons*, the estranging transformation of the familiar images perhaps less so. The introduction of the passage into *Udolpho* is abrupt, and it serves not only to imply the appearance of a scene in which the two figures are set, but also to signal a sudden change of mood which is less anchored in the known terrain of home ground and in which the enhancing obscurity of evening fades into the worrying uncertainty of night. Strain and strangeness are forced upon the observer. The passage prefaces the account of Mme. St. Aubert's mortal illness, and her death at the end of the chapter is the first disaster in Emily's testing growth to maturity.

The passage evoking twilight gains further significance when read in the context of Radcliffe's previous quotation, concerning the fairy-hunt, from *Summer*. Emily's composition about the glow-worm is flanked by two quotations from *Summer* which are separated by only eleven lines in their original context. Those lines, as well as referring to the suicide and tower, allude to a glow-worm. It may be that the reader versed in Thomson is invited to contrast Emily's relatively untutored efforts with what is authorised as philosophic maturity through Radcliffe's use of quotation and allusion. Or it may be that Radcliffe, who is the author of Emily's text, constructs herself for the reader as a kind of Emily in contrast to the authority of the Thomson canon. Given the popular audience to whom Radcliffe's romances were directed, it is possible to read these nested quotations and compositions as validating, within the safety of apparent apologetic tribute to the male canon, a feminine discourse for the participation and, perhaps, emulation of certain kinds of reader.

Chapter V of *Udolpho*, in which is depicted the growing attachment between Valancourt and Emily under paternal supervision, is prefaced by an epigraph from *The Seasons*, like chapter I, which also stresses Emily's innocence and inexperience in a near-Edenic setting. Radcliffe takes the lines, fittingly, from *Spring*:

While in the rosy vale
Love breath'd his infant sighs, from anguish free.

(*Spring*, 250–51)

They are drawn from Thomson's account of prelapsarian pastoral bliss, so that Emily's happiness is underscored by the myth of a Golden Age. Some of the features of that age in *Spring* are, not surprisingly, close to those which signify innocence in *Udolpho*. For example, Thomson – Miltonic in this as in so much – insists upon the vegetarianism of innocent man (*Spring*, 235–41). Though St. Aubert and Emily may not be vegetarians, when *Udolpho* makes specific mention of food, as opposed to referring to "provisions" (I, v, 54) or "other rural fare" (III, xiii, 500), it tends to be "fruit and cream" (I, i, 2) or "fruit, wine, cheese" (III, xiii, 500). This is the case in *Udolpho* particularly when the food is made pleasureable by pastoral surroundings.

Thomson's evocation of the Golden Age is not long preceded by a reference to the botanist (*Spring*, 222–4) and by a specifically scientific passage in which the rainbow is explained in terms of Newton's optics (*Spring*, 185–221). Because "the swain" is represented as responding to the rainbow as a "bright enchantment" (*Spring*, 212–3), Romantic readers might negotiate a meaning which minimises the text's condescension to the unscientific gaze. However, the preferred meaning must privilege the trained, extensive vision; in *The Seasons* those who see most extensively tend to own the most extensive property. Early in *Udolpho* we are told that St. Aubert is a botanist (I, i, 3; I, ii, 21). He conforms to a Thomsonian ideal, showing a degree of indulgence to romantic enthusiasm, and himself responding with ordered scientific wonder to the complex and interconnected organisation of the natural world. *Udolpho* briefly draws attention to the combination of sentiment and science in St. Aubert when it tells of the pleasure he takes in observing, in sublime Alpine scenery, the friendship of Emily and Valancourt:

St. Aubert, as he sometimes lingered to examine the wild plants in his path, often looked forward with pleasure to Emily and Valancourt, as they strolled on together . . .

(I, v, 49)

On an earlier journey with Emily, St. Aubert has revealed the same combination of fine feeling and scientific analysis, putting emphasis on the latter in his instruction. In terms of the ideology transmitted through Thomson's linkage of the far-seeing eye, aesthetically and scientifically sophisticated, St. Aubert's pedagogy may be read as equipping Emily to succeed to property of which less congenial father-figures will try to deprive her:

seated in the shade of the palms, St. Aubert pointed out to her observation the course of the rivers, the situation of great towns, and the boundaries of provinces, which science,

rather than the eye, enabled him to describe. Notwithstanding this occupation, when he had talked awhile he suddenly became silent, thoughtful, and tears often swelled to his eyes

(I, iii, 29)

St. Aubert's instruction has a Thomsonian breadth and a Thomsonian tendency towards sentiment; and the Count De Villefort, in whom Emily finds the most congenial surrogate father after the death of St. Aubert, has just this combination too. The text presents him, for example, teaching his daughter natural history, explaining fossils and rock strata, then "descending" to the civil history of the sublime Pyrenees over which they are travelling (IV, xii, 602). And time and again Emily's mind, thus formed, makes the Thomsonian progress up the "Great Chain of Being", which is, perhaps, the dominant image of *The Seasons*, to the "informing Author" (*Spring*, 860).

Radcliffe quotes Thomson again in chapter V of *Udolpho* when St. Aubert, Emily, and Valancourt are travelling through overwhelming alpine scenery, the sublimity of which is by definition alarming. Emily has undergone a frightening experience in a grotesque setting, and now, prior to a pleasant descent into a fruitful and cultivated terrain, "coloured with the richest hues, which a luxuriant climate, and an industrious people can awaken into life" (I, v, 55), the mood changes as the party enjoy some refreshment. While they eat, says Radcliffe adapting a passage from Thomson's *Summer*:

by breezy murmurs cool'd,
Broad o'er *their* heads the verdants colours wave,
And high palmetos lift their grateful shade.
————— *they draw*
Ethereal soul, there drink reviving gales
Profusely breathing from the piney groves,
And vales of fragrance; there at distance hear
The roaring floods, and cataracts.

(*Summer*, 673-5 and 773-7)

Between the two parts of this quotation there are ninety-eight lines omitted in Radcliffe's text. They contain another celebration of vegetable delights, appropriate to the picnic in *Udolpho*, and they sweep through some highly coloured scenes pregnant with dangerous possibilities. The alpine scene of the picnic partakes of this exoticism, and it presents its own dangers for Emily. Further, the change of mood that comes with the picnic and the descent into the spicy fertility of the Mediterranean seaboard matches the more extravagant flight of *Summer* immediately before the second part of the quotation used in *Udolpho*. Thomson's lines, having described vast tracts of desert as if by ariel progress, swoop up climactically to a vision of paradisaal pleasure-gardens in "more than Alpine mountains" (*Summer*, 764). The quotation from Thomson, both what is included and its absent centre, may be said to be claiming the status of myth for the account of Emily's journey.

Chapter VI of the first book of *Udolpho* begins with an epigraph from Thomson's *The Castle of Indolence* (1748), the first from this source in the romance.

At this point Emily is approaching another major crisis in her development, since it has become evident that St. Aubert is close to death, and in the next chapter, which contains the above-cited last instructions to Emily, he dies. Also, early in Chapter VI, Emily parts from Valancourt, and is in need of her father's assurance of "how much more valuable is the strength of fortitude, than the grace of sensibility" (I, vii, 80).

I care not, Fortune! What you me deny;
 You cannot rob me of free nature's grace;
 You cannot shut the windows of the sky,
 Through which Aurora shews her brightening face;
 You cannot bar my constant feet to trace
 The woods and lawns, by living stream, at eve:
 Let health my nerves and finer fibres brace,
 And I their toys to the great children leave:
 Of Fancy, reason, virtue, nought can me bereave.

(*Indolence*, II, iii)

In the first instance this quotation from *The Castle of Indolence* suggests the consolations available to Emily in her adversity. This is a straightforward and apt reading, for *Udolpho* repeatedly asserts that cultured appreciation of what it constructs as nature, and the morality which is assumed to emerge automatically from that culture, leads to fortitude. The context of the stanza in Thomson's pastiche of Spenserian romance extends the intertextual network by which we read Emily's journey, or, more properly now, her quest. Radcliffean romance thrusts a heroine who signifies eighteenth-century sensibility into a polysemic fantasy of a "Gothic" past, which we may read as a repressed construction of the present. Thomson employs the frame of the courtly quest romance, which itself fed the eighteenth-century concept of Gothicism, to mythologise the work ethic of a capitalist order. In both cases the language of romance is used to devalue certain senses of the word "romantic" in order to validate the contemporary ethic.

The stanza which follows in *Indolence* that quoted by Radcliffe consists of an invocation to the muse to raise the poem to the sterner matter of Canto II, in which the Knight of Industry and Arts is to undertake the painful work of culture. The idyll of Emily's early years cannot be equated with *Indolence's* false paradise, for St. Aubert takes care to prevent, through education, "the uneasy sensations of indolence" (I, i, 6). But his emphatic dying advice concerning the danger of pampered romantic sensibility and apathy accords with Thomson's text and prefigures the possible consequences for a woman in the grip of patriarchal control intent on disenfranchising her in terms of inherited wealth and property. This control is embodied in the figure of Montoni, and, given *Udolpho's* representation of St. Aubert's benign paternalism, any oppositional construction of patriarchy as an institution is necessarily divided and evasive. But such a reading is sanctioned by the text, as is the case with the treatment of property relations which, in view of the fact that the setting is neither contemporary nor English, can be handled rather vaguely.

Indolence also provides the next epigraph in *Udolpho*, heading chapter XIII of the first book, which thus starts and ends with Thomson. It is in this chapter that Emily comes under the unwelcome control of Montoni, leading to her eventual incarceration in Udolpho. He has achieved this control by marrying Mme. Cheron, Emily's rich, vulgar, and frivolous aunt, the guardian of her orphaned niece. The obvious application of this epigraph is to Mme. Cheron's vacuously extravagant display of her wealth, to the insubstantiality of the outward show by which she is obsessed:

As when a shepherd of the Hebrid-Isles,
Placed far amid the melancholy main,
(Whether it be lone fancy him beguiles,
Or that aerial beings sometimes deign
To stand embodied to our senses plain)
Sees on the naked hill, or valley low,
The whilst in ocean Phoebus dips his wain,
A vast assembly moving to and fro,
Then all at once in air dissolves the wondrous show.

(*Indolence*, I, xxx)

This elaborate simile relates to several elements of Radcliffe's text; but, from this point in the plot, the vanity and deception of rich material display constitute a significant theme, most markedly in the seductive enchantment of the essentially apathetic experience of Venice. Montoni's villa there, recycled in later fiction almost as often as *Udolpho* itself, is opulent in external appearance, but barren and decayed within. The "Venetian gold" of material wealth which Emily rejects in a poem composed just before she arrives in Venice (II, i, 169–70) is an implicit rejection too of the indolent richness of Venetian scenery with its golden sunsets (II, ii, 174–5). The original context of the epigraph from *Indolence* steers us toward such a reading, for the stanza which follows it rouses the muse to attempt the difficult task of describing the sumptuous and dangerous allure of the castle.

Just before the account of the departure of Montoni's party from Venice for *Udolpho*, Radcliffe places forbiddingly her only epigraph from Thomson's *Winter*. It is brutally short and in tone quite different from the many other citations of Thomson in *Udolpho*:

And poor Misfortune feels the lash of Vic

(*Winter*, 364)

The application of the line is self-explanatory. Emily, taken from the garden world into carceral enclosure, is simply the innocent victim of vicious Montoni. But the unaccustomed cryptic brevity invites exploration of the line's original context. The personifications necessarily generalise and suggest that Emily's misfortune is typical of many others. The suggestion is confirmed by the passage in *Winter* from which the one-line epigraph is taken – a passage which precedes, appropriately for *Udolpho* at this point, description of violent horror in the Alps, Apennines and Pyrenees (*Winter*, 389–423). In this verse paragraph the praise for the patriotic zeal

of the 1729 Jail Committee is outweighed by the lines describing the inhumanity of the prison system, which make clear that there are further abuses yet to be brought to light (*Winter*, 378–9):

And here can I forget the generous band
Who, touched with human woe, redressive searched
Into the horrors of the gloomy jail?
Unpitied and unheard where misery moans,
Where sickness pines, where thirst and hunger burn,
And poor misfortune feels the lash of vice;
While in the land of liberty – the land
Whose every street and public meeting glow
With open freedom – little tyrants raged,
Snatched the lean morsel from the starving mouth,
Tore from cold wintry limbs the tattered weed,
Even robbed them of the last of comforts, sleep,
The free-born Briton to the dungeon chained . . .

(*Winter*, 359–71)

This context makes of Radcliffe's Emily a representative "free-born Briton" and, in the light of the experience which she undergoes at the hands of Montoni, the abusive legal system which oppresses her is patriarchy itself. Contextual reading thus reveals how the romance encodes the repressed, disruptive, and unspeakable.

Reference to Thomson's poetry is ubiquitous in *Udolpho* up to the brink of the imprisonment at its core. After the short epigraph from *Winter*, where it is silence which speaks, there is, by contrast, a significant absence of such citation from this section of the romance. The unspeakable implications of the line from *Winter* are repressed, in this part of Radcliffe's text, into the more distanced vocabulary of Gothic horror akin to that employed in the two verse paragraphs which immediately follow *Winter*'s scandalised account of the prison system.

As soon as Emily is released from *Udolpho*, even if only temporarily, Thomson's verse is re-introduced, signalling a possible return to the more benign moralising sensibility, and its appropriate images in terms of setting, which have characterised Radcliffe's previous quotations from Thomson. Chapter VII of the third book of *Udolpho* is headed:

Was nought around but images of rest,
Sleep-soothing groves, and quiet lawns between,
And flowery beds that slumbrous influence kest,
From Poppies breath'd, and banks of pleasant green,
Where never yet was creeping creature seen.
Meantime unnumbered glittering streamlets play'd,
And hurled everywhere there water's sheen,
That, as they bicker'd through the sunny glade,
Though restless still themselves, a lulling murmur made.

(*Indolence*, I, iii)

Initially this quotation seems to hold out in *Udolpho* a pleasant prospect of recovery for Emily as she wakes, in the first sentence of the chapter, to a new and

beautiful landscape. But it is the apparent calm and beauty of the Enchanter Indolence's dwelling that Thomson's stanza describes, and these are later revealed as fraudulent. The signs of dangerous apathy are already inscribed in the verse, for there is heavy emphasis on the narcotic influence of the setting. In *Udolpho* Emily is now particularly susceptible to such influence, the terms of which recall her father's deathbed advice about the avoidance of apathy. Thus, for the first time, she wishes to die (III, vii, 417), making explicit the repressed reference to suicide revealed by a contextual reading of the first chapter's above-mentioned quotation concerning "the fairy-people" (*Summer*, 1672–5). Emily's consequent retirement to an "embowered chamber" (III, vii, 418), which in Thomson and in Radcliffe is often the setting for benign and invigorating reflection, is in this case a negative response, a retreat from the challenges of patriarchal culture. The bower is eventually transformed into a site of recuperation, providing a frame through which the retired observer can bring into aesthetic order the external landscape and thus transform herself. This Radcliffean motif of a woman in some version of a domestic interior, be it it prison or garden summer-house, at a transformative window, which frames both her and the world outside, is an alternative female reconstruction of the kind of retired male observer, ambiguously located in terms of social structure yet possessing encyclopaedic range, which we encounter in the speaking subject of *The Seasons*.

The three remaining epigraphs from Thomson in *Udolpho*⁷ (a) return to the Edenic theme of the first book (*Indolence*, I, xlviii); (b) induce a mood of solitary pensiveness (*Hymn on Solitude*, 1–2, 25–6, 29–32); (c) evoke Gothic medievalism (*Indolence*, I, xxxi). To a greater or lesser extent they confirm the tendencies I have examined above relating to Radcliffe's engagement with Thomson's texts. This engagement, if treated only in terms of a study in influence, is likely to have the appearance of passive reflection. But the more we pursue less overt reference to Thomson, the more we can read Radcliffe's textual strategy as transformation, sometimes radical and oppositional, of the values associated with the canonical source. Thomson's texts thus become a terrain which can be reorganised through the frame of female romance.

⁷ *Udolpho*, III, xi, 475; IV, v, 538; IV, vi, 545.

The Spirit of Luxury: Shenstone, Delille, and the Garden Theory

Thus winding through flowering shrubs we are conducted to the stables . . . but the first object that strikes us is a Venus de Medicis, beside a bason of gold-fish.

— A Description of the Leasowes

I

One cannot talk about the eighteenth-century garden without mentioning the locomotive abilities of man's body; the story of the Leasowes or Stowe belongs to the order of the foot. William Shenstone in one paragraph moves from aesthetics to politics, from the immovable eye to the mobile body. Criticizing the geometric patterns of the formal horticultural designs, the owner of the Leasowes estate writes: "To stand still and survey such avenues, may afford some slender satisfaction, through the change derived from perspective; but to move on continually and find no change of scene in the least attendant on our change of place, must give actual pain to a person of taste. For such an one to be condemned to pass along the famous vista from Moscow to Petersburg, or that other from Agra to Lahor in India, must be as disagreeable a sentence, as to be condemned to labour at the galleys."¹ As we shall see, Jacques Delille will think of spirit also in the categories of the foot and meandering path.

¹ *The Works in Verse and Prose of William Shenstone, Esq.* (London: Dodsley, 1777), Vol. II, p. 116.

II

Thus a certain science of taste is suggested, a science whose guiding signs have been partly established by Hume's thought. At the center of this science is not just a man but "a person of taste", i.e. one who is defined less in terms of a specific aesthetic preference, but one **whose being refutes the principle of constraint and rigidly demarcated boundary**. According to Hume, taste is a force which, expanding human disposition towards pleasure and pain, follows a path upon which a double alienation is possible: first, taste singles man from those deprived of its blessings, second – by making human response ever more delicate and subtle, by ever enlarging his potential for being affected by reality – it opens a possibility of estranging man from his native, proper domain. "Delicacy of taste", we read in Hume's essay, "has the same effect as the delicacy of passion: It enlarges the sphere both of our happiness and misery, and makes us sensible to pains as well as pleasures, which escape the rest of mankind."² The man of taste is thus a notion in which works a critique of at least two aspects of the mid-eighteenth-century society: of the ever growing pressure of mercantile economy, and of the falsely egalitarian ideas of the early stages of mass society. To listen to Hume again: "They [emotions cultivated by taste] draw off the mind from the hurry of business and interest" and "delicacy of taste is favourable to love and friendship, by confining our choice to a few people, and making us indifferent to the company of the greater part of men".³

To talk about "taste" implies a certain anthropology which presents man as a being which is never "completed", never "well-placed", a being which develops through distancing itself from its concerns ("business") and its human environment ("the greater part of men"). **Man is a being with and of a distance, thus never is in "one place", a being never truly "domestic"**. A step further along the same path could allow us to see in Shenstone's thoughts on the garden a Romantic theory of freedom (in Hume still restricted by social mores and conventions) which sees in aesthetic activity a disposition towards fundamental freedom of human being. We read in Schiller's 21 Letter on the aesthetic education of man that "By means of aesthetic culture . . . the personal worth of man, or his dignity, inasmuch as this can depend solely upon himself, remains completely indeterminate; and nothing more is achieved by it than that he is henceforth enabled by the grace of nature to make of himself what he will – that the freedom to be what ought to be is completely restored to him".⁴

The distance which seems to be the element of man precludes him from permanently rooting himself/herself anywhere: **to be is to see a world always as**

² D. Hume, "Delicacy of Taste", in D. Hume, *Essays. Moral, Political, and Literary* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987), p. 5.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴ F. Schiller, "Letter on the Aesthetic Education of Man", in F. Schiller, *Essays*, eds. W. Hinderer, D. Dahlstrom (New York: Continuum, 1993), p. 147.

a stranger. This is one of the principle convictions of Delille's art of gardening which advises man to look with the eye of a stranger: "voyez . . . vous-meme, aux yeux de l'étranger/ vous montrez vos travaux".⁵ This distance does not invite a radical transgression or questioning of the principles of ethics or economy; just the opposite, it suggests that the distance ought to be conceived of as a space where a shuttle-like movement between the extremes is possible, because it is only such a concept of distance which allows us to both know business and "draw our minds off it", to recognize the social merits of "the greater part of men" in order to shun them, so as to, by keeping one's distance, become again a more useful participant of the social exchange. It is a garden, with its proximity of nature and human intervention, of mercantile economy which makes it possible and rustic pastoralism that abounds in its territory, which presents us with an ideal model of such a distance.

If Hume's doctrine of taste seems to, first, recognize boundaries in order to, second, transcend them, and if the garden is an ideal spatial model of this philosophical proposition, it allows for a reading of Hume's thought which would make it a partial opening for the Romantic masterplan of removing boundaries and a transferring of cognitive abilities from the eye to imagination. This opening must be called partial because while recognizing the significance of imagination, Hume's taste, in the final analysis, functions as a measure reintroducing regularity and orderliness. We learn from Hume that "To check the sallies of the imagination, and to reduce every expression to geometrical truth and exactness, would be the most contrary to the laws of criticism . . . But though poetry can never submit to exact truth, it must be confined by rules of art . . .".⁶ Thus, while Schiller will in his 1800 seminal essay "On Naive and Sentimental Poetry" reproach critics for being "border patrol of taste",⁷ he might be attacking Hume, but on the other hand, we have to remember that his poetic principle of "disrupting boundaries"⁸ can be detected, in a budding form, in Hume's disagreement to "check the sallies [a 'sally' is a 'sudden breaking out by soldiers who are surrounded by the enemy', thus an interruption of a boundary] of imagination".

III

Shenstone seems to have learned Hume's lesson. While complaining of the endless vistas of Russia and India, he practices certain cultural and political geography which, for two reasons, locates the edges of Europe and Asia off the map of the science of taste. The first cause of Shenstone's objection to the geometrical

⁵ J. Delille, "Les Jardins", in J. Delille, *Oeuvres*, Vol. 7 (Paris, 1810), p. 154.

⁶ D. Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste", in D. Hume, *Essays* . . . , p. 231.

⁷ F. Schiller, "On Naive and Sentimental Poetry", in F. Schiller, *Essays*, p. 200.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

garden design is ocular, the other philosophical. What takes place in the horticultural theory and practice of the proprietor of the Leasowes is a discussion of the function of the eye in aesthetic process and a meditation on a difference-based distinction between nature and culture. Shenstone's argument against the "slender satisfaction" of "perspective" is based on a charge that geometry destroys the unity of the human body as well as destabilizes the relationship between man and world. A double act of dislodging which needs to be inspected in some detail. The geometry of "straight line" (of what Delille called "*une long allee droite*"⁹) privileges the eye over other organs and, by doing so, it turns the ocular into the dominating force which imposes its procedures and decisions upon them; things can become available to other organs only having been first inspected by the eye. In short, geometry spells the triumph of the immobile eye over the locomotive parts of the body, a triumph based not on the elimination of other organs but on proposing sight-based protocols of knowledge, the process not only completed but also characteristically aggravated by the seventeenth century ("Keller and Grontkowski trace the tradition of associating knowledge with vision back to Plato, and they argue that by the seventeenth century the equivalence of knowing with seeing was a commonplace of scientific discourse . . . But when Descartes discovered that the eye was a passive lens . . . he was forced to separate the seeing intellect from the seeing eye"¹⁰). Shenstone's formula for this mechanism of the "straight line" holds that it constructs a space in which "the foot is to travel over, what the eye has done before".¹¹

Two most pronounced consequences of this "ocularisation" of space are the disintegration of the body in which the eye acts somehow "against" the foot, where no simultaneous pleasure of various organs is feasible (while the eye relishes a view, the foot stands in place; while the foot marches, the eye is always somewhere else, ahead of it), and the uninterrupted jurisdiction of the law of repetition which Shenstone understands as the erasure of difference ("a repetition of the same object, tree after tree, for a length of way together"). The philosophical reason for which geometrical design is under attack is a conviction that whereas culture operates by way of transactions of identity and repetition, nature makes use of the mechanism of variation and heterogeneity. The formal French garden practice and theory (as described, for instance, by Rapin¹²) are founded not only upon the mercantile precepts of land proprietorship but, more importantly, upon a certain philosophical economy which wastes the natural supplies of difference and uniqueness in order to achieve the profit of identity and interchangeability. As Shenstone's maintains in the same passage: "identity is *purchased* [emphasis added] by the loss of that variety which the natural country supplies every where, in a greater or less degree". One should note the verb in this fragment which not only conveys the

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁰ C. Rose, *Feminism and Geography* (London: Polity Press, 1993), p. 88.

¹¹ *The Works* . . . , vol. II, p. 115.

¹² See Pere Rapin, *Of Gardens. A Latin Poem in Four Books. English'd by Mr. Gardiner* (London, 1772).

operations of economy (“purchasing” as bying) but also speaks of the eagerness of pursuit (Old French *purchacer*, to pursue eagerly) and brutality of hunting (French *chacer* and English *chase*). Thus, the identity principle which Shenstone detects as a corner stone of the French garden is obtained at the cost which Hume’s “man of taste” was not willing to pay. Rapin’s seventeenth-century theory or the practice of his compatriot Le Notre, through their strategies of interchangeability of repetitive forms exempt from the operations of surprise, perpetuated that “hurry [or ‘chase’] of business [or ‘purchase’] and interest” which Hume wanted to counter in his theory of taste. **If the seventeenth century promulgates the world of the pleasures of the eye supported by the economy of repetitive commodities, a century later the “man of taste” rediscovers other organs of the body, unconceals the pleasures of mobility which need the economy of difference, a mobile** (and certainly more democratic, as the sneering remark about India and Russia can also be motivated by the critical attention drawn to their absolutist political systems) **economy of the foot and agitation.**

Such an economy does not measure the efficacy of its operations with profit and other kinds of visual and legal appropriation, but it must take into consideration what is not at the moment visible, what has been lost from and for sight and what has only very slowly and indirectly been approached and regained by the foot (Shenstone: “When a building . . . has been once viewed from its proper point, the foot should never travel to it by the same path which the eye has travelled over before. Lose the object, and draw nigh, obliquely”¹³).

IV

To approach the object obliquely, i.e. in an ec-centric, devious, and erratic manner does not belong to the domain of mind but that of **spirit**. Before one of Blake’s proverbs of hell construes an isomorphy between the off-course track and wisdom (“Improvements makes strait roads; but the crooked roads without Improvement are roads of Genius”¹⁴), Delille will maintain that the garden is not only an achievement of an architect but also a statement on spirit and man’s relationship with it. While walking along the path of the garden, we need to remember that “l’esprit demande qu’on le mene par des routes un peu detournees,/ et qu’on lui presente des objets inattendus”.¹⁵ We can say three things about this horticultural philosophy of spirit. First, spirit (*esprit*) and man are linked by the sense of urgent care which allows spirit to request and expect obedience of man: *l’esprit demande*. Second, man when called by spirit abandons his/her individual self, ceases to be

¹³ *The Works* . . . , Vol. 2, p. 116.

¹⁴ W. Blake, *Complete Writings*, ed. G. Keynes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 152.

¹⁵ J. Delille, *Oeuvres*, Vol. VII, p. 5.

an agent, which does not mean that man responding to the demand of spirit remains passive; just the opposite – man becomes a part of a larger action, of a greater agency (since we are in the garden, shall we claim that this force is *phusis*, or the energy of growth?) which transforms the language of action from active towards neutral constructions: spirit requests a transformation from *je* to *on* (*on le mene, on lui presente*). It is not a regular human subject which encounters spirit on a garden path, but an enlarged self which belongs to “nature” understood by Schiller as “the uncoerced existence, the subsistence of things on their own, being there according to their own immutable laws”.¹⁶

Third, the call of spirit concerns not a certain point or stasis but precisely a path, not any path but a way which would be off-course and meandering (*routes detournees*, not one of fashionable seventeenth-century garden mazes, but only a gently – *un peu* – winding road) because it is only such a path that can present to spirit what it wants to see – surprising objects (*objets inattendus*). **In Shenstone as well as in Delille the foot and the (renewed) eye (see Blake’s project of a new theory and practice of vision) play essential role in the domain of spirit.**

V

Whereas formerly one general perspectival view was enough to generate a “slender satisfaction”, now the demand is for a constant change of scenery. If Rapin would be satisfied with the relationship of identity holding between the “scene” and “place” (i.e. with a design where a move from one place to another would not necessitate a noticeable change of view), Shenstone considers such a possibility in the categories of suffering, not just a metaphorical discomfort or uneasiness but a most real torture of “actual pain”. The unguarded celebration of the eye is now mitigated by a diagnosis of its illness: the long-sightedness of the perspectival vista is not any longer a solemnization of vision but the discovery of the hidden myopia, of dim-sightedness which previously was neutralized by the long-ranging prospect and thus went unnoticed. The late eighteenth-century garden theory tries to describe a certain blindness, an ophtalmological disease, inherent in the works of Le Notre, Descartes, and perhaps even Spinoza. The “man of taste” must suffer, feel the “actual pain”, when he encounters a world which has been robbed of its freedom (for Shenstone, the “actual pain” is comparable to the suffering of a slave labouring “at the gallies”) which means, let us add, a world that did not make itself available to the procedures of reading. The diagnosis of the crisis of vision, Shenstone’s repetitive critical meditation on the primacy of the eye over the foot, can be subsumed under a double rubric: that of ophtalmology (“I cannot see”, or perhaps “I see strangely, my sight is distorted”) and lit-

¹⁶ F. Schiller, *Essays*, p. 180.

erary ("I cannot read"). Shenstone's defense of the irregular garden design not only wants to retrieve a balance between the eye and the foot, between the specular and the locomotive, but it also wishes to address the issue of the text. Despite Shenstone's conviction that it is painting that ought to be a guiding art for gardening ("I think it is the landskip painter is the gardener's best designer"¹⁷), his critique of the straight line allows one to postulate the text, reading/writing, in a word, literature as the hidden agenda for the landscape architect. Even when promoting painting as his model, Shenstone approaches it with an eye of the reader: a world of the garden is one in which man has to practice a double mobility – that of his foot and of his interpretative skills. Neither can remain satisfied with what the eye sees momentarily but must proceed further and "obliquely" towards the object which thus retains the aura of what Shenstone calls "the grace of novelty". Thus we read: "Objects should indeed be less calculated to strike the immediate eye [as they do in the geometry of perspective], than the judgment or well-formed imagination"¹⁸ The eye with which Shenstone looks at his Leasowes is not an "immediate" one, i.e. neither instantaneous nor operating in hurry; the eye which one can refer to as a "mediated" one, the eye which takes its time, the prepared eye of the cultivated man of taste whose mind is "drawn off from the hurry of business".

The movement from Le Notre to Shenstone is then a therapy applied to the European perception accused of perpetuating the inauthentic vision and partial blindness which covers up the disease of short-sightedness by the pretence of long-ranging perspective. What the eighteenth-century garden recuperates is the sense of minute, short-range vision, the ability of attentive and careful reading which allows for the study of details, particular signs and in this way permits one to escape the crowds inhabiting perspectival prospects. In this sense the garden (like the Leasowes, for instance), despite its stress on salvaging nature from underneath the layers of art, is an extension of a reading room or painting gallery; not a place where one rules and dominates over large and anonymous expanses, but where one lovingly (Hume: "a delicacy of taste is favourable to love and friendship") practices the meditation on minutiae for which one needs either clear sight or a pair of good glasses. Hume modifies a paradigmatic Enlightenment metaphor of a machine in such a way so that it could be used to illustrate our point: "the judgment may be compared to a clock or a watch, where the most ordinary machine is sufficient to tell the hours; but the most elaborate alone can point out the minutes and seconds, and distinguish the smallest differences of time".¹⁹ In the Leasowes we are somewhere halfway between Enlightenment and Romanticism.

To textualize a landscape means therefore to both open it to the fluidity of walking and to, momentarily at least, freeze it in the forms which are read by our

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

¹⁹ D. Hume, *Essays* . . . , p. 7.

eye as objects which we face not only as a part of the script of the eye but also as a script independent of the intention of a maker other than the seeing eye. Textualizing is a manner of privatizing and individualizing a landscape, of liberating it from a mere relationship of property, of temporarily removing a position of the proprietor. As Barnes and Duncan put it: “. . . a landscape possesses a similar objective fixity to that of a written text. It also becomes detached from the intention of its original author, and in terms of social and psychological impact and material consequences the various readings of landscapes matter more than any authorial intentions. In addition, the landscape has an importance beyond the initial situation for which it was constructed, addressing a potentially wide range of readers”.²⁰

VI

To cure the disease of the eye is to train it in detecting minute elements of heterogeneity and difference, to free the detail from the domination of the centralist perspective and to open it to (“well-formed”) imagination, to turn the eye from the petrifying organ of immediacy into a movable organ of mediation, i.e. interpretation. Hume sees in such an operation the perfection of an organ: “It is acknowledged to be the perfection of every sense or faculty, to perceive with exactness its most minute objects, and allow nothing to escape its notice and observation. The smaller the objects are, which become sensible to the eye, the finer is that organ”²¹ This scheme which wants to achieve two purposes – to turn the garden as a model world into a script of details, and to make man aware of the cultural myopia and semi-literacy – receives auxilliary support from philosophy. First, together with the centrality of the eye and its ideology of homogeneity (“place = scene”) one must question the centrality of man as an epistemological project: the eye in Shenstone’s garden becomes peripheral, loses the support of a grand narrative of knowledge, which crisis finds its parallel in a radical rejection of the universalizing scheme of a human point of view taken to be THE perspective of creation (Shenstone: “Man is not capable of comprehending the universe at one survey”²²) and a formation of an epistemology which is not only fragmentary and, as Shenstone would put it, “oblique” (man is “endued neither with organs, nor allowed a station proper to give us an universal view”²³), but results in a fundamental overcoming of geometry and its rules: once the eye is “cured”

²⁰ T. J. Barnes and J. S. Duncan, “Introduction: Writing Worlds”, in T. J. Barnes, J. S. Duncan, *Writing Worlds; Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 6.

²¹ D. Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste”, in D. Hume, *Essays* . . . , p. 236.

²² *The Works* . . . , Vol. II, p. 126.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

of the false and inauthentically universalizing vision of the prospect, man not only finds himself in a peripheral position but in a "station" which is profoundly "wrong" according to any standard principles of geometry. In Shenstone's contention "But we are placed in the corner of a sphere",²⁴ we may read either a disclaimer of the conventional knowledge (a "sphere" is a figure which precisely does not have "corners"), or a promise of a new geometry (where spheres with corners are allowed).

The de-placed eye must reveal a profound displacement of man both as an ontological and epistemological project. In Shenstone's attempts at formulating a philosophy-based theory of gardening we may read a critique of Cartesianism with its stress upon geometrical optics (and what Delille calls superbly "pompeuse ordonnance"²⁵); **Shenstone's interest in painting as a model for landscape gardening seems to promote another protocol of thinking about reality motivated not by the operationalism of a geometry of the whole but by the careful perception of the detail.** Delille sees the garden as a struggle between an architect on the one hand, and poet, philosopher, and painter on the other ("En un mot, ses [Rapin's] jardins sont ceux de l'architect; les autres sont ceux du philosophe, du peintre et du poète"²⁶). Richard Knight will be even more severe in his judgment; for him geometrical gardens are products of "men with minds and hands of a mechanic"²⁷ (Delille speaks of such designers as "froids decorateurs"²⁸). The geometry attacked by the English *Lustgartnerei* is not only a matter of architectural design and philosophical premises but also that of economy which opposes the Baroque cult of excessive spending attached to the royal presence. It is hard to overlook the fact that a most spectacular critique of this economy must take up the garden as its main object: "The difference between baroque spending and the new attitude to prodigality . . . can be exemplified with reference to gardens. These, like metaphysical systems, may be taken as paradigms of society's ideological assumptions. The formal garden . . . might indeed be spoken of in connection with Descartes's universe . . . such gardens are the gardens of the king . . . In 1678, some 821,000 livres were allotted for the parks and gardens. The following year the costs had risen to 965,000, and by 1680 to, 1,627,000 livres . . . By contrast the landscape gardens of the type "improved" by Capability Brown implied not only a different aesthetic, based on a different metaphysics of nature, but also a new economics".²⁹

When in Shenstone we read about the garden as a painterly practice, we need to understand it partly as an aesthetic instruction which takes us away from the economy of spending and mere luxury but partly as an opening of an important

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

²⁵ J. Delille, *Oeuvres*, Vol. VII, p. 155.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁷ R. Knight, *The Landscape* (London 1795), p. 11.

²⁸ J. Delille, *Oeuvres*, Vol. VII, p. 157.

²⁹ R. G. Saisselin, *The Enlightenment against the Baroque. Economics and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 12–3.

ontological insight similar to the one traced in the work of Merleau-Ponty: "Merleau-Ponty, noting that painting, for Descartes, can obviously in no way define our access to being, speculates that an attentive study of painting would inaugurate another philosophy, one no longer enthralled by the ideals of the conceptual grasp, intellectual mastery, and technical manipulation, but willing to interrogate the unmotivated and irreducibly complex upsurge of a world 'which is not matter or in-itself'".³⁰

VII

But this project in which a universalizing perspective is replaced by a sequence of peripheral ones is also connected with the philosophically understood problematic of reading presented as an analysis of placing. Looking at the Leasowes Shenstone consistently demonstrates his belief that in the garden one can see that **the power and grace of placing has been denied to man**. Thus we read: "Art . . . is often requisite to collect and epitomize the beauties of nature; but should never be suffered to set her mark upon them: I mean, in regard to those articles that are of nature's province; the shaping of ground, the planting of trees, and the disposition of lakes and rivulets".³¹ There are at least two important observations in this passage which shed some light on the landscape gardening as a philosophical project. First, there is a conviction that art remains in a special relationship with nature, a relationship of which let us only say for the time being that it dictates an awkward form of art's presence: art is present without being seen. **Art is a ghost of nature, i.e. a relationship which the garden offers for our study is not that between nature and culture but one between the present (nature) and the nonpresent which does not mean "absent" (culture).**

This invisible intervention, a peculiarly clandestine operation without manifestation, can be discovered only by the dislodged, de-placed eye which has recognized the disease of its former myopia, the reading/interpreting eye of one who approaches objects "obliquely". Second, it is nature not art which is given a force of placing, a power of location and grounding, of "shaping" and "planting". In a word, nature has its "province"; a place belongs to nature, to *phusis*, man can only re-place but the grace of placing has been removed from him. And yet it is not incidental that Shenstone mentions art rather than just "seeing" in this context: the de-placed eye does more than merely "sees", registers in one glance the reality (as we remember from previous analysis, such an impression is false because man lacks a proper "organ" which could provide him with such a universalizing perspective), it "collects" and "epitomizes" the "beauties of nature".

³⁰ V. Foti, "The Dimension of Color", in G. Johnson (ed.), *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader. Philosophy and Painting* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), p. 294.

³¹ *The Works* . . . , Vol. II, p. 126.

One should not pass these two verbs in silence as it is on them that the Shenstonian philosophy of the garden as the reading/writing practice of the eye largely hinges. While looking with the eye no longer myopic, we not only perceive the surface of things but intervene into it, find our way to reconnoitre its texture and consistency. The eye perceiving the English garden of Shenstone cuts the surface of an object, inscribes it with a writing of one specific perspective soon to be replaced by another. **A thing is a palimpsest of points of view, a combination of invisible script of several oblique perspectives replacing one immovable frontal view.** Another consequence of this ocular scripting is that an object is condensed, abridged, to a series of views revealing its various aspects and facets. In a word, the eye does not merely perceive but “epitomizes” (*epitome*, from Greek *epitome*, *epi* + *temnein*, “to cut upon”, a “surface incision”, an “abridgement”).

Such a scripting operation of the eye makes it possible for us to see nature not as one homogeneous continuity but as a series of particular and heterogeneous shapes, thus the task of man, who is not able to place things, is to “collect” them. In this activity we should hear at least three different tones. To begin with, that of a human attempt at organizing what constitutes a part of a larger system forever closed to our perception; as Shenstone maintains, we have no proper organ which could “exhibit to us the variety, the orderly proportions of the system”.³² We “collect” in order not to lose grip upon reality which, after our eye has undergone its therapy, has become either unintelligible (in the sense of “chaotic”) or ungovernable (i.e. defying man’s power to reason and perceive). Then, there is a social dimension which allows one to recognize “collecting” as a manner of displaying one’s possessions to the public eye. Both these echoes of the verb to “collect” demonstrate what we may refer to as to the “muscalization of nature”, i.e. a process through which man tries to understand the phenomenon of “placing”. Things of nature are approached in this process as belonging to a powerful “province” to which man has no access and thus the natural phenomena can be understood only in their “abridged” (epitomized) form of a fragmentary perspective and later displayed to the eye as a “collection”. The garden is nothing else but a “collection” of natural objects, but by this fact it reveals a fundamental change in epistemology that took place in the eighteenth century.

The third echo brings us to the scene of reading, to the garden as a text. By “collecting”, that is to say, carefully looking at the minutest details of each particular fragment of a space, by living a theory that “each place is a different scene”, we open the object to reading. There is no reading of wholes; a true reading deals only with crumbs and fragments because reading consists in arranging and rearranging these details. To “collect” means to bring fragments together (*col=con-cum*) in order to make them temporarily legible (*legere* = “to collect” but also “to read”). **In the eighteenth-century English garden the eye is an instrument less of geometry and more of art** (we are moving closer and closer to Blake’s famous instruction which wants us to look “through not with the eye”): **it incises**

³² *Ibid.*, p. 127.

the smooth surface of the objects making them scriptible and legible – what we read is a writing of our eye upon “trees”, “ground”, “lakes”, the secret of whose placing is beyond our comprehension.

The eye is not separated from the world it sees, does not belong to another realm, but looks at what it creates and forms. Like in Nietzsche there is no radical fissure between language and reality, so in the Leasowes and in the eighteenth-century *Lustgartnerei* there is no gap disjoining the eye and the world. The limits of my eye are the limits of my world: “Wittgenstein was of the view that we do not have, as it were, the world on the one side and language on the other, but rather that language in some ways shapes reality . . . Experience is indelibly linguistic”.³³ The visual, as theorized by the landscape gardening in Leasowes, is deeply engrossed in the linguistics of the eye and syntax of sight.

VIII

The garden is a scene of spirit. Yet the operations and demands of spirit make it also a scene of luxury. Not only do we speak of a luxury of finances (although Dr. Johnson complains in his biography of Shenstone that the Leasowes estate ruined its owner), a prosperity of a land proprietor; we want also to point at a certain luxury within spirit itself. Its position is, as we have seen, that of a power which “demands” thus turning us into “domestics” of the realm of spirit; its paths are not engineered so as to obey the principle of minimum investment of energy coupled with the maximum turnout but follow capricious and whimsical turns of one who does not have to meet the necessities of life (the roads are *detournees*); its operations lead to “collecting”, the activity which has always been associated with prosperity and accumulation of objects and financial means allowing for their purchase. One should note carefully, it is art which performs the “collecting” in question, and it is “nature” which becomes the object of collecting. The luxury of spirit runs contrary to the luxury of merely wasteful entertainment; the views which are approached obliquely on the winding path of spirit cannot be appropriated, reified, and displayed as a part of social game of power, they must remain ethereal images sealed off from the merely curious. The realm of spirit is not only that of the eye but also of the foot, and thus it calls, “demands”, an expenditure – or investment – of energy. Remy Saisselin grasps this movement away from the geometrical luxury of the eye to the locomotive luxury of the eye and the foot well: “The end of Baroque . . . implied the etherealization of the concept of art, its purification and dissociation from mere luxury, mere entertainment, and mere desire, the distancing of art from . . . the frivolous curieux, . . . the fashionable women and the idle rich”.³⁴

³³ A. Danto, “Description and the Phenomenology of Perception”, in N. Bryson, M. A. Holly, K. Moxey (eds.), *Visual Theory* (London: Polity Press, 1991), p. 204.

³⁴ R. Saisselin, *The Enlightenment against the Baroque* . . . , p. 15.

The eighteenth-century garden offered a system of the luxury of spirit which, on the one hand, was a step towards a Romantic theory of nature but, on the other hand, (as it is evident in the work of Repton) allowed for concealing the reality of labour. The luxury of spirit was purchased at the expense of the labour of the eye and the foot; the misery of the body (of a tenant, for instance) remained outside its scope.

IX

When Le Notre pretends he sees a system of nature and thus fashions his Versailles, Shenstone thinks that he sees merely a series of views which must be obliquely approached. The garden is a medium where the discontinuity of nature is disclosed: "We perceive many breaks and blemishes, several neglected and unvariegated places in the part . . .".³⁵ This perception is accompanied by a desire to complete what has been left uncompleted and correct nature's mistaken placings. As we read on in the same fragment: ". . . we might as rationally expect a snail to be satisfied with a beauty of our parterres . . . as that man shall be satisfied without a single thought that he can improve the spot that falls to his share". This discourse of satisfaction brings us back to the "slender satisfaction" resulting from changes of perspective in the seventeenth-century garden and helps us to understand the use of the adjective: the satisfaction is "slender" because it is a fragment of a situation where human desire for the whole has no room to manoeuvre; it is a desire-less space which can only be looked at but does not leave open a possibility for action.

In the anthropology Shenstone's garden is a part of, man presents himself as fronting the fragment or ruin while his thought moves simultaneously in two directions: first, it recognizes the world in which his intellectual grasp must fail and the luminosity of his eye must be dimmed (the order of nature to which we have no access), and, second, it offers a temporary and provisional project of filling the gaps left out by nature and correcting its "mistakes". While operating within the domain of the ruin, man thinks a whole which, in fact, may not be a whole at all but merely a temporary profiling of a figure to be replaced by another profile revealed by consecutive stages of our march through the winding paths of the Leasowes. This sends us back towards the problematic of epitome as incision on the surface of things: the work of the dislodged, de-placed eye working in conjunction with the foot, ruins objects, transforms them from even homogeneous surfaces to uneven, broken, ruined arrangements of details. **The garden is an epitome of ruination which always occurs in the act of reading, of an attentive study of the detail.** In a ruin, thought works towards a completion of details

³⁵ *The Works* . . . , p. 127.

opened to the labour of thought by a previous intervention of the de-placed eye. Shenstone clearly marks both operations: "Ruinated structures appear to derive their power of pleasing, from the irregularity of surface, which is variety; and the latitude they afford the imagination, to conceive an enlargement of their dimensions, or to recollect any events or circumstances appertaining to their pristine grandeur" ³⁶ In other terms, the garden as a structure of ruination transcends the limits of the private property and opens up a perspective upon the national: to talk about a ruin is also to construct a certain image of the historical past which goes beyond the confines of the private. The garden as a ruin both points at the national identity and undermines it from within. On the one hand, it suggests a possible reconstruction of the past glory, on the other, it tells us that the greatness of this glory was merely a passing episode; the garden of ruins (particularly in a situation when history of art refers to it as the "English", i.e. of a nationally defined, garden) offers a commentary on the transcient character of not only English but generally human power: "The ruin provides an historical provenance for the conception of the British nation as immemorially ancient, and through its naturalization subsumes cultural and class difference into a conflated representation of Britain as nature's inevitable product. But at the same time, ruin imagery cannot help asserting the visible evidence of historical and imperial impermanence, for the ruin has been traditionally associated with human and cultural transience." ³⁷

If the garden is literally and figuratively a ruin, then – to be consistent – Shenstone can write and think about it only in aphoristic fragments of thoughts; all the passages quoted here come from his work called "Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening". If "Philosophy is the ruination of deconstruction; deconstruction leaves philosophy in ruins", ³⁸ then the garden of which Shenstone writes is a ruination of the philosophy of geometrical optics, although the writing of the garden is itself already ruined by a new thought which can think the garden only in ruins. The garden in aphorisms, the garden of aphorisms. In Derrida we read: "Despite their fragmentary appearance, aphorisms make a sign towards the memory of a totality, at the same time ruin and monument." ³⁹

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

³⁷ A. Janowitz, *England's Ruins. Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 4.

³⁸ N. Royle, *After Derrida* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 124.

³⁹ J. Derrida, "Fifty-Two Aphorisms for a Foreword", in A. Papadakis, C. Cooke, A. Benjamin (eds.), *Deconstruction Omnibus Volume* (London: Academy Editions, 1989), p. 67.

The Polish Sappho: Reflections on Elżbieta Drużbacka's *A Description of Four Seasons*

The entrance of women into the Polish literary world is usually associated with the intellectual movement in Poland following the trends of the European Enlightenment, but also with the conventions of social life characteristic for the Sarmatian culture. According to these conventions woman was not only a "lover" but also a "friend", a "companion". The first recorded women writers in the first half of the eighteenth century appeared in the 1740s. There were three of them almost simultaneously: Elżbieta Drużbacka, Antonina Niemiryczowa and Franciszka Urszula Radziwiłłowa. Statistically: "the participation of women among the population of 'Enlightenment writers' was only 5.3 %, 31 authors and, with the exception of the generation of epigons, this participation was marginal. It can be called a participation of feminine social elites".¹ It is worth noticing that the number of women writers was not increasing in the period of the Enlightenment Classicism.

Chronologically, the first and the most highly estimated woman writer was Elżbieta Drużbacka who lived from 1695 or 98 to 1765. In 1752 Józef Andrzej Załuski published her poetry as volume number 1 of *Collection of Rhythms by Poets both Living and Diseased in Our Time* (*Zebranie rytmów przez wierszopisów żyjących lub naszego wieku zeszyłych pisanych : Zbiór rytmów duchownych, panegirycznych, moralnych i światowych...*). Załuski's introduction to the third volume of the series informs us that Drużbacka's poems were very popular, because two years after their publication it was difficult to buy a single copy.² In 1776 Ignacy

¹ "Pisarze – generacje i rodowód społeczny", in T. Kostkiewiczowa (ed.), *Słownik literatury polskiego oświecenia* (Wrocław, 1977), p. 481.

² See K. Stasiewicz, Elżbieta Drużbacka. *Najwybitniejsza poetka czasów saskich* (Olsztyn, 1992), p. 18.

Krasicki published more of her poems from manuscripts in the periodical *Pleasurable and Useful Entertainments* (*Zabawy Przyjemne i Pożyteczne*). Though during her life she was called a Polish Sappho and though she was highly estimated by the Polish Romantic poets³, she still remains an author unknown to contemporary readerships. Even today a part of her poetry remains in manuscripts.

A recent literary critic in a three-volume work supposedly giving a representative survey of the Polish Enlightenment writers begins her article on Drużbacka saying that: "her name is an empty sound for an educated Pole without a philosophical background. A professional can find her works only in very old editions. This situation is most probably determined by the total absence of Drużbacka in school programs and handbooks, by the generally negative evaluation of the literature of this period as well as by the fact that Drużbacka's life and works are not an easy subject of research".⁴ Perhaps surprisingly, in a seemingly "non-professional" periodical – in *Playboy* – we find the following remark: "One of the first really liberated Polish women was Elżbieta Drużbacka, the author of numerous erotic poems in the eighteenth century".⁵ What attracts one's attention in this peculiar record of reception is that the author of the *Playboy* article evaluates Drużbacka's work and position only on the basis of literary texts.

Critics usually remember Drużbacka as the author of the poem entitled *A Description of Four Seasons*. The work is preceded by an introduction which begins with an attack on atheists. Then, in a series of rhetorical questions based on the conviction that it is impossible to prove that it was not God who was the first cause, Drużbacka presents the greatness and the perfection of the order of this world. Describing the beauty of natural phenomena, she convinces us that the sensual reception of the world alone reveals the power of God, "the giver of nature" and the maker of man. Due to great thematic similarity of the introduction and the description of four seasons one might suppose that the cycle gained its form in connection with the competition for a poem which fights with the ideas of deists and atheists organised by Drużbacka's patron Józef Andrzej Załuski. She declares her own position quite clearly: "on the low soil and not in heaven I walk" – she is not going to get involved in scholarly speculations. Before she begins to describe the four seasons, Drużbacka explains the assumed sense of her enterprise.

The motif of seasons gained its greatest popularity during the Enlightenment. In Poland this fact has usually been associated with the influence of Western European literature. One of the earliest and most interesting actualisations of this motif in Polish literature is Drużbacka's poem. In her case a search for literary connections with James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730) turns out to be premature, even though the literary fashion initiated by Thomson in obvious ways influenced

³ See the introduction in *Poezje Elżbiety Drużbackiej* (Lipsk, 1837).

⁴ G. Wichary, "Elżbieta Drużbacka", in *Pisarze polskiego oświecenia*, Vol. 1 (Warszawa, 1992), p. 118.

⁵ J. Komuda, "Po sarmacku, czyli jak to robiła polska szlachta", *Playboy*, No. 4 (1995), p. 76. (The Polish edition.)

the poets of the later stage of the Polish Enlightenment. Drużbacka's poem was written in the 1740s, but she did not know English, while the French versions of *The seasons* (Saint-Lambert) come from the period after the publication of *Rhythms* in 1752 (She knew French). Drużbacka, the Polish Sappho, makes use of the old Polish domestic tradition and of its Baroque interpretation. She actualises numerous poetical images characteristic of the Renaissance tradition (Jan Kochanowski) and the motif of the seasons serves the purpose of drawing a parallel between the order of nature and the position of man. The moralistic message and her wish to present the seasons in the perspective of the divine order of the universe was formulated in the introduction to the poem. Drużbacka turns God into "a mundane caring landlord".⁶

Housekeeping and practical ways of seeing dominate in the whole cycle. Time changes are marked by different organisations of the space of human holding. Time does not have a transcendental dimension here. In the stage of Spring a human being is not distinctly singled out from nature. His/her position is equal to that of "a bird, an animal, a fish" and she/he enjoys the "benefits" and "pleasures" offered to her/him by nature itself. Human activity increases in summer when he/she busily strives after the fields. In autumn she/he is most busy (images of fruit picking, making wine, harvesting, sheep shearing). Drużbacka gives us bees as the example to follow. In the end winter comes, the season which guarantees this wise order. The fear of this severe season teaches us to work and becomes the mechanism of the development of civilisation (villages, towns, castles). The reason for the fascination with nature is not the admiration for the act of creation but the appreciation of the cultural and practical order of the household-world. In vivid and suggestive descriptions the poet tries to reflect upon a variety of the phenomena which are beautiful in their physical concreteness. The fascinating order of the world is described, not only from the practical, but also from the aesthetic point of view. As Teresa Kostkiewiczowa concludes: "despite the fact that Drużbacka's poem is devoted to God's creation – the godlike sense of the world does not shine through nature, there is no 'living breath of God'. It is a humanised nature subjected to the world of culture created by man".⁷

In the subsequent parts of the cycle space is also shown differently: from the open and unlimited perspective of spring through the gradual narrowing (field, orchard) to the space of house built in order to separate people from nature. Man locks himself behind a door, and he hides the produce of nature in the granary. In this way the composition of the cycle reflects the order of the progress of civilisation and human growth into culture.

Nature is presented in four feminine figures reflecting its cyclical changeability. The first of them is a young, laughing, frivolous Flora: "the golden age in the shape of a child". Spring was usually personified by a young woman, though a mature one. Infantilization, simplicity, contraction of the presented world – an

⁶ T. Kostkiewiczowa, *Horyzonty wyobraźni* (Warszawa, 1984), p. 47.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

amalgamation of diminutive forms – a large number of references to the sense of touching, arousing the sensual sensibility of the reader, romance – like aura (Flora appears in the company of Zephyr) are the elements of the rococo imagery.⁸ Then, as full daylight approaches, Summer is identified with Ceres, her image is drafted in the poetics of baroque abundance: terrifying sounds, thunderbolts of Jupiter, and the golden coach in which arrives “The Goddess” in whose description gold is the dominating colour. Ceres’s reign is followed by the rule of Autumn-Demeter. This great and marvellous Lady does not own the land but rents it. The baroque presentation of Summer and Autumn is full of phrases underlying their care about the good use of time which is under their rule. A completely different emotional climate accompanies the approach of Winter, the season which Drużbacka describes as wild and useless. It is personified as a “severe stepmother”. Pale, old, limp, unadorned. People do not like her, but the poet in a sense identifies herself with her because she notices the pragmatic sense and deep wisdom of this order of things. The main feature of Winter – in opposition to the delicate care of the other seasons – is that she supervises the repose of soil, and takes care that people improve the conditions of their life.

As Marek Prejs rightly notices in his book on late baroque poetry, “reality in the *Description of Four Seasons* is similar to a huge opera-machine, extremely rich, colourful, supplied with a whole mythological apparatus and numerous personifications”.⁹ One by one the Goddesses – allegories of the four seasons – enter the stage of this opera.

Drużbacka’s poem is similar to Thomson’s in terms of its reference to reason and sensual experience. What makes it different is exactly this huge allegorical theatre of baroque imagination. One of possible inspirations of such a reading of four seasons is pointed to by Sante Graciotti : “Since the Renaissance the motif of four seasons has been used both in literature and in arts Plafonds of four seasons can be still seen in the palace in Wilanów. The author of the cycle of paintings, finished about 1686, is Jerzy Elenter Siemiginowski Wilanów, which first belonged to the Sobieskis, later became Lubomirskis’ property, then Sieniawskis’ (with this family Drużbacka spent her youth) to finally, via Maria Zofia from the Sieniawski family, becomes the property of the Czartoryski family. In a sense Drużbacka had the four seasons at home”.¹⁰ The Italian historian of literature emphasises that the similarities between Siemiginowski’s and Drużbacka’s representations are only partial. In the spectacle of four seasons created by Drużbacka the poet competently makes use of classical mythology. However, as Marek Prejs reminds us, in the period of the late Baroque classical mythology was understood differently than in the earlier stages of the epoch: “towards the end of the seventeenth century myths gradually begin to loose their authority. They are no longer interpreted allegorically in search for moral instruction. They are

⁸ See M. Prejs, *Poezja późnego baroku* (Warszawa, 1989), pp. 276–90.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹⁰ S. Graciotti, *Od Renesansu do Oświecenia*, Vol. 2 (Warszawa, 1991), pp. 25–6.

frequently discredited and ridiculed".¹¹ This kind of use of mythology can be easily found in Drużbacka's poem. When she describes "the frightened folk" terrified by the coming of Ceres-Summer, the Goddess ironically and kind-heartedly addresses the people saying that it is the duty of Gods "to bombastically come down to visit them" ("Bogom należy dziedzicznie /Z nieba na ziemię chodzić pompatycznie"). Describing the season of picking fruit the author actually mocks the biblical myth: a ripe apple, this "condemned fruit", makes her express a sarcastic reflection concerning the insufficiency of Adam's having been punished only with Adam's apple ("Czemu nie Adam więcej ukarany,/ Nad Ewę, tylko ogryzkiem u gardła,/ Wszak Adam tymże szatańskim zamachem/ Zwiedzion, dotknięciem, smakiem i zapachem"). Describing the image of the four "tenants" ("dzierżawczyńie") one by one ruling over the godly household of the world, Drużbacka shows them as daughters of Mother-Earth.

In Drużbacka's poetry Earth/soil (in Polish they are one word: *ziemia*) is "the great mother hurt by her own children".¹² In her poetry which consciously makes use of illusion in order to show us different visions of the world we "touch the huge and painfully roaring body of nature".¹³ In the *Description of Four Seasons* Drużbacka sees four Goddesses, allegories, personifications as the daughters of soil/Earth. At the very beginning of the poem she addresses Spring comparing her to "a daughter feeding her mother with tears" ("Ty okowaną i ściśnioną ziemię/ Od tęgich mrozów uwalniasz z niewoli/ Jak córka matki kochająca plemię"; "Pozwalasz ziemi odetchnąć swobodnie"; "Spragnioną matkę swemi łzy posilisz"). In Summer soil is metaphorised as a pregnant mother. The fruits of the pregnancy (intestines – belly) will adorn her bare surface ("upstrzyć, połatać, odziać gołą matkę"). People give thanks to Autumn as to "their good Mother". Winter is a wise step-mother who covers the soil with a feather-bed so that it is able to give birth again.

Interpreting another poem by Drużbacka written more or less at the same time (and published by Żałuski side by side with the above mentioned piece of poetry) entitled *A Description of Four Elements Both Harmful and Useful, of Soil, Water, Fire and Air* Anna Węgrzyniakowa writes: "I read the defence of Soil-Eve as the first feminist voice against the degradation of the myth of Magna Mater, the myth which sacralises the feminine principle of being Making use of the possibilities of "metamorphosis" – as metaphor was called at that time – Drużbacka constantly transforms the personified nature into a woman Man is the child of God as well as of Mother Soil/Earth".¹⁴ In the latter poem Soil is the only element described by Drużbacka without any signs of emotional distance.

In her *Description of Four Seasons*, Drużbacka drafts an image of the natural order of things shown in matrilinear continuity and cyclicity. This is particularly striking in her use of numerous somatic metaphors. Her poetic world is ruled by

¹¹ M. Prejs, *Poezja późnego baroku*, p. 296.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

¹⁴ Unpublished manuscript, quotation authorised by the author.

women (Goddesses, mothers, daughters); they guarantee the wisdom of the natural order, even if it is a difficult or cruel wisdom (the figure of the stepmother). The meaning of human existence as well as Earth's (the identification of Earth and Soil) existence is to give birth (the female principle of being). Drużbacka sees a human being as a part of nature equal to any other of its components. Behind this, there is no idea of making the Earth submit. There is no ambition to create a logic focused on man. The rhythm of the world is a multiplied rhythm of a woman's body. The world is seen as a household, the appropriate human way of dwelling is housekeeping. This emphasis on the female principle, constantly escaping metaphysical explanations, consciously speaking from the "low" position can be read as a feminist gesture.

piders, Silkworms, and Ants: Literary Entomology from Edwards to Thoreau

The book of nature has many pages. One of the most curious of them treats of insects.

– Ernst Robert Curtius

It is fairly well known that the earliest of Jonathan Edwards' juvenilia is a concise essay "Of Insects", written when the author was, if we are to believe the first editor of the manuscript,¹ less than twelve years old. As an amateur entomologist, the young reader of Newton, whose name actually appears in the text, was fascinated by the objects of his observation, that is, spiders. Unknowingly following the advice of Sir Thomas Browne—" [I]ndeed what reason may not goe to the Schoole of the wise-dome of Bees, Aunts, and Spiders?"² – Edwards watched the local Connecticut Valley arachnids not just with the scientist's curiosity but with eager enthusiasm: "Of all Insects no one is more wonderfull than the Spider especially with Respect to their sagacity and admirable way of working." (RS: 3) No wonder, then, that 150 years later, rediscovering American wilderness in the romantic mood, Henry David Thoreau could only envy the learned predecessor his original simplicity:

The old naturalists were so sensitive to nature that they could be surprised by the ordinary events of life. It was an incessant miracle to them, and therefore gorgons and flying dragons

¹ Professor E. C. Smyth edited the manuscript in the *Andover Review* for January, 1890. Cf. Jonathan Edwards, *Representative Selections*, with Introduction, Bibliography, and Notes by Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson (New York: Hill & Wang, 1962), p. 417. All quotes from this edition will be marked by the abbreviation RS.

² Sir Thomas Browne, "Religio Medici," Part I, 15, in *The Major Works*, ed. C. A. Patrides (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), pp. 77–8.

were not incredible to them. The greatest and saddest defect is not credulity, but our habitual forgetfulness that our science is ignorance.³

More specifically, admiring the spiders, Edwards was interested in the curious manner of their moving in space which he called "marching in the air", "floating", "sailing", "swimming", and even flying so "that one would think they were tacked to the Sky by one end", (*RS*: 3) virtually suggestive of Christ walking on the water, also "tacked" to Heaven by one of His two natures. Of course, the God-fearing savant himself did not dare to go that far, claiming only that "'tis Just so with the Spider in the air as with the man in the water", (*RS*: 5) yet, on the other hand, he had no reservations to compare the insect to the "soul in the brain" (*RS*: 5) agitated by external stimuli like the occupant of the cobweb. This shows that even though Edwards perused *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* only three years later, when he was already 14, his earliest arachnid epistemology evidently stemmed from the Lockean model of cognition.

Moreover, it is the mechanism of spinning out the web which is discussed in "Of Insects" in some detail. In fact, Edwards quite adequately described the coagulation of the fluid from the spider's tail in threads making up the concentric structure. The process of spinning appears to be a genuine natural miracle, a display of "the exuberant Goodness of the Creator Who hath not only Provided for all the Necessities but also for the Pleasure and Recreation of all sorts of Creatures and even the insects and those that are most Despicable." (*RS*: 7) The descriptive adjective "despicable" closes the sentence somewhat to a surprise, for its basic lexical meaning stands in sharp contrast to the entomologist's euphoria. Together with the epithet "wonderfull" which opens the text in an affective aura of delight, it constitutes a permanently valid opposition that both determines and disrupts Edwards' discourse of Nature, reaching its late climax in the long unpublished *Images or Shadows of Divine Things*.

The Puritan manner of thinking founded on the logic of cause and end – the "technologia" of divine purposes and human use of the gifts of God⁴ – counterbalances in "Of Insects" the secular authorities of Newton and Locke. By means of rhetorical displacement, the text itself prompts the idea of "a perfect equilibrium or Poise" (*RS*: 5) of the web and the air, due to which the spider may remain immobile, as if suspended high above ground in spite of the force of gravity. Having thus accounted for the physiological secret of the spider's movement, Edwards proceeded to discover

the End of Nature in Giving Spiders this way Of flying which though we have found . . . to be their Pleasure and Recreation, yet we think a Greater end is at last their Destruction

³ *The Heart of Thoreau's Journals*, ed. Odell Shepard (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1961), p. 214. Entry from March 5, 1860. All quotes from this edition will be marked in the text by the abbreviation *HTJ*.

⁴ The doctrine of "technologia" was thoroughly analyzed by Perry Miller in *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1939), esp. pp. 161–80.

and what makes us think so is because that is necessarily and Actually brought to Pass by it and we shall find nothing so brought to Pass by nature but what is the end of those means by which it is brought to pass.

(RS: 8)

As a successor to Alexander Richardson and William Ames, the seventeenth proponents of *theses technologicae*, Edwards could not admit that spiders, as “despicable” as they were, lived just for themselves, outside of the universal design of Providence. Hence, what he needed was some proper justification of their lowly existence; some evidence of their “Great Usefulness” (RS: 8) to man as God’s superior creature. Enlightened by empirical observation that each fall the New England arachnids were “Swept and Wafted in to the sea and buried in the Ocean, and Leave Nothing behind them but their Eggs for a New stock the Next year”, he formulated the final corollary that “in this wonderfull Contrivance of Annually Carrying of and burying the Corrupting nauseousness of our Air, of which flying insects are little Collections in the bottom of Ocean” (RS: 10) the Almighty showed His remarkable benevolence to humankind. Thus, the wild ingenuity of spiders, their “admirable” yet subversively vain “way of working”, became productive within the human dominion – incorporated into the biblical harmony of the “subdued earth”. By the 1860s, the divine “technologia” will have evolved into a secularized and quite familiar technology which Thoreau censured as pagan “savagism”, complaining that

We are not chiefly interested in birds and insects, for example, as they are ornamental to the air and cheering to man, but we spare the lives of the former only on condition that they eat more grubs than they do cherries, and the only account of the insects which the State encourages is of the “Insects *Injurious* to Vegetation”.

(HTJ: 209)

However antithetical, the standards of “injuriousness” and “usefulness” indicate one and the same, essentially utilitarian attitude. Consequently, and perhaps oddly enough, modern technological rationality discovers its origin in the pious orthodoxy of Puritanism.

Edwards’ youthful bliss and appreciation of the animal weavers was certainly out of place in the Puritan discourse of Nature. The dominant perspective was that of the *Application of Redemption* by Thomas Hooker (1657), where the first generation clergyman referred to the North American woods in the correct idiom of New Jerusalem settlers, anticipating the Apocalypse which was expected only after the civilizing labor of the axe had been completed:

There must be Contrition and Humiliation before the Lord comes to take possession . . . This was typified in the passage of the Children of Israel towards the promised Land. They must come into and go through a vast and roaring Wilderness, where they must be bruised with many pressures, humbled over many overbearing difficulties, before they could possess that good land which abounded with all prosperity, flowed with Milk and Honey . . .⁵

⁵ Thomas Hooker, *The Application of Redemption*, pp. 5–6. Quoted after: Mason I. Lowance, Jr., *The Language of Canaan. Metaphor and Symbol in New England from the Puritans to the Transcendentalists* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 134.

In this passage, the noun "wilderness" is qualified with the adjectives "vast" and "roaring" as an immense realm of beasts of prey ready to devour the Chosen People contrary to the divine promise of salvation. The colonial captivity narratives concretized the dangerous creatures alternatively as Indians, and the victims of Indian raids and Jesuit molestation were much more than Hooker entitled to regard their wilderness experience as nightmare. Quentin Stockwell, captured on September 19, 1677 at Deerfield, Massachusetts, wrote about the ways in the mountains as "dark and hideous", and even the "place for rest" on the forest glade is referred to in his account as "dismal."⁶ The same word to describe the mountains, "hideous", which, incidentally, was to become one of the favorite gothic epithets of H. P. Lovecraft, appears also in the narrative of Hannah Swarton, taken in 1690 from Casco Bay to Canada, who then remained in French captivity for five and a half years.⁷ In the case of the distressed captives, psychological coloring of the landscape as grim and frightful was perhaps particularly well motivated, but indeed, writes Mason I. Lowance, "the wilderness . . . is employed as a metaphor for the natural environment"⁸ throughout all historical and theological works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including, in the first place, Cotton Mather's influential *Magnalia Christi Americana*. In the strict typological perspective of the New England theologians there was little room for the beauty of the natural world: their object of concern was history with its intricate network of types and antitypes finally leading to the Millennium and the event of the Apocalypse, envisioned either after or before the thousand years of Christian happiness, depending on the pre- or postmillenarist persuasion of the preacher.

In 1741, 26 years after completing the essay "Of Insects", Edwards delivered at Enfield, Connecticut his famous sermon called "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God". In the center of the jeremiad, written according to the principles of Lockean theory of cognition to impress the audience by means of visual imagery, he put the figure of the sinner as a spider held by God over the pit of hell. As Richard Slotkin realizes, "the naive wonder at the beauty of natural creatures and processes [was thus] lost in the image of natural depravity and divine wrath",⁹ yet definitely, no matter how belated, at that stage of his ecclesiastical career Edwards stood on the side of the original Puritan orthodoxy, using the arachnids which he had admired before for the purpose of converting his lukewarm brethren and sisters. A part of nature, the spider kept its significance only as an instrument of *propaganda fide*, an ancillary device that by its persuasive potential could accelerate

⁶ "Quentin Stockwell's Relation of His Captivity and Redemption". Reported by Increase Mathew in *Puritans among the Indians. Accounts of Captivity and Redemption 1676-1724*, eds. Alden T. Vaughan and Edward W. Clark (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 81.

⁷ "A Narrative of Hannah Swarton Containing Wonderful Passages Relating to Her Captivity and Deliverance". Related by Cotton Mather in *Puritans among the Indians* . . . , p. 152.

⁸ Mason I. Lowance, Jr., *The Language of Canaan* . . . , p. 167.

⁹ Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), p. 151.

the pace of history unfolding towards the apocalyptic culmination. To fulfil its mission, the insect had to be pictured as “loathsome” and not “sagacious”, since otherwise the beneficial effect would have been lost. Appreciated first in its natural function of waste collector, at Enfield it proved useful as a “sanitary” trope, metaphorically extracting sins of which the listeners were to be purified by their spontaneous return back to Christ.

For the last time, the arachnids and a number of other insects appeared in Edwards’ rhetorical repertoire in *Images or Shadows of Divine Things*, a collection of preliminary notes to his never completed *opus magnum*, “Rational Account of the Main Doctrines of the Christian Religion Attempted”. Of the 212 entries, three refer to spiders, four to silkworms, three to “worms” in general, and one to grasshoppers, bees, and ants grouped together, all playing their more or less prominent roles in the drama of providential instruction of the humankind. The fixed typological identity of the spider becomes obvious already in first passage that brings it into play, provoking associations with the famous poem “Upon a Spider Catching a Fly” by Edward Taylor which, however, Edwards could not possibly have known, since it remained unpublished until 1939:

11. The serpent’s charming of birds and other animals into their mouths, and the spider’s taking and sucking the blood of the fly in his snare are lively representations of the Devil’s catching of our souls by his temptations.¹⁰

The similarity is indeed striking, but also misleading, for between Taylor’s and Edwards’ use of the insects there is one major difference: while the seventeenth-century poet did it no more than once, most likely following the rules of Ramistic logic which allowed for the application of tropes and figures as optional “surface ornamentation” of the articles of faith, the eighteenth-century philosopher and theologian had a more comprehensive project in mind. Another “entomological” entry is somewhat more explicit in this respect:

127. Poisonous and hurtfull animals, such as serpents, spiders, incline for the most part to hide themselves or lurk in secret places: herein they are types of devils and the dupes of men.

(JS: 97)

Although in this passage the arachnids epitomize evil as well, placed in a series right next to the familiar Old Testament incarnation of Satan, on the other hand, they also represent and imply a whole class of creatures, thus considerably expanding the domain of Nature in the idiom of Edwards’ theology. It is rather remarkable that insects prove to be almost the only kind of animals ever mentioned in *Images or Shadows*, and certainly the only one referred to quite systematically, as if the generic “thread” coming out of the spider’s tail were the fabric of the extensive typological network which determines the spiritual import of reality. That

¹⁰ Jonathan Edwards, *Images or Shadows of Divine Things*, ed. Perry Miller (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 45. All the subsequent quotes from this edition will be marked in the text with the abbreviation JS.

signifying function of the spider – the multiplication of natural bonds founded on the idea of continuous chain of beings – will be abrogated only by the Second Coming and the cannibalistic self-destruction of finally unemployed devils:

160. As spiders when shut up together so that they can't catch flies devour one another so the devils, after the day of judgment when they shall be shut in their consummate misery and can devour the miserable children of men no more, will be each other's tormenters.

(*JS*: 110)

In the Edwardsian “semiotics of the natural world” (to borrow a phrase of Greimas), the opposite of the spider is the silkworm, regardless of its relative entomological proximity to the arachnids and the same ability to weave:

142. The silkworm is a remarkable type of Christ. Its greatest work is weaving something for our beautiful clothing, and it dies in this work; it spends its life on it, it finishes it in death (as Christ was obedient unto death, his righteousness was chiefly wrought out in dying), and then it rises again, a worm as Christ was in his state of humiliation, but a more glorious creature when it rises . . .

(*JS*: 101)

Spiders spin out their cobwebs to catch other insects and thus survive, while silkworms do it for the benefit of others and this is the essential moral sense of natural types, but no matter how much inferior the arachnids are to the moths, together they form a basic meaningful contrast on which all the other available meanings may rest in their profane, pre-apocalyptic abstruseness and complexity. Here lies the gist of the spider's ambivalence, for on the one hand it does in Edwards' later texts stand for the devil, while on the other it brings into the world the underlying principle of contiguity which holds things together by means of generic categories as well as enters into a significant relationship with another typologically relevant member of its taxonomic class.

In particular the principle of contiguity or, as Edwards puts it, of analogy and resemblance, turns out important as the sacred underpinning of the cosmic order, the pattern of divine signatures imprinted on the whole world: “There is a wonderful resemblance in the effects which God produces, and consentaneity in His manner of working in one thing and another throughout all nature.” (*JS*: 44) A supplement to this passage specifies the rule of the series in an even more explicit manner, consequently granting the spider a new status of an exponent of the law which connects different levels of creation:

59. If there be such an admirable analogy observed by the creatour in His works through the whole system of the natural world, so that one thing seems to be made by imitation of another, and especially the less perfect to be made in imitation of the more perfect so that the less perfect is as it were a figure or image of the more perfect, so beasts are made in imitation of man, plants are [a] kind of types of animals, minerals are in many things in imitation of plants.

(*JS*: 65)

Of course, the arachnid does not create anything in any analogous fashion, but by spinning the thread mirrors God's connecting power in its minor craft. This is how the juvenile fascination with insects able to “float in the air” persisted in

the doctrine which, despite its stern Calvinistic tone, anticipated the Transcendentalist recognition of Nature in the next century. Actually, Edwards himself might have been at least in part aware of the radical implications of his entomo-typology, since the ambivalent identity of the spider is not the only fissure in the exegetic system of *Images or Shadows* that seems to reveal latent uneasiness. Perry Miller's edition of the notes contains a passage entitled "The Beauty of the World" which begins with the following statement that, as Miller realized in his classic essay,¹¹ sounds almost Emersonian both in its enthusiastic diction and the definition of beauty bringing to mind Chapter III of Emerson's *Nature*:

The beauty of the world consists wholly of sweet mutual consents, either with itself or with the supreme being. As to the corporeal world, though there are many other sorts of consents, yet the sweetest and most charming beauty of it is its resemblance to spiritual beauties. The reason is that spiritual beauties are infinitely the greatest, and bodies being but the shadows of beings, they must be so much the more charming as they shadow forth spiritual beauties. This beauty is peculiar to natural things . . .

(IS: 135)

Indeed, it may not be very far from this point to Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman, and the passage is so well known that perhaps quoting it here one more time is redundant, yet how does it compare with the following entry from the "main" text of the *Images*?

157. The earth or this earthly world does by men's persons as it does by their bodies: it devours men and eats them up. As we see this our mother that brought us forth and at whose breasts we are nourished is cruel to us, she is hungry for the flesh of her children, and swallows up mankind, one generation after another, in the grave, and is insatiable in her appetite. So she does mystically those that live by the breasts of the earth and depend on worldly things for happiness; the earth undoes and ruins them.

(IS: 109)

A world of difference separates this appalling image from the all-embracing eschatological vision of "Song of Myself" where death and life are supposed to be the same, indistinguishable from each other in the natural cycle of regeneration. Another locus of anxiety in Edwards' text is spring, several times interpreted as "the spiritual restoration of the world" (IS: 124), but also mentioned (though only once!) as the season which is most "dirty" and "filthy" (IS: 104–5) – a necessary but troublesome preparation "for more beautiful clothing in a living state of summer".

Miller's persuasive scheme of progress "from Edwards to Emerson" may be challenged or at least somewhat complicated in one more respect – that of the analogical method of Edwards' theology. "The semantic web of resemblance"¹² founded, among others, on the relations of *Consonantia*, *Continuum*, and *Similitudo* was used as a legitimate instrument of science till the sixteenth century and then abandoned in favor of new categories of the classical episteme. In a way, then,

¹¹ I mean, of course, "From Edwards to Emerson" (1940), included in *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956), pp. 184–203.

¹² Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 17.

Images or Shadows of Divine Things were regressive, if not outright anachronistic, and, by the same token, surprisingly revisionist in comparison to the Puritan orthodoxy. Apparently, constructing his system, Edwards was indebted to John Flavel, the author of *Husbandry Spiritualized* (1669), a popular tract interpreting all the daily chores of the farmer in terms of their supernatural significance. However, Flavel's book, written in England, referred to fields and meadows in a specific manner: his nature was not "wilderness" in its primeval splendor, but cultivated land, an effect of labor that transformed woods into pastures and orchards. The farmer was imitating his Creator, doing something to and with the forest, just as God kept working throughout the week of Genesis. On the contrary, Edwards acknowledged nature in its uncivilized state, as beautiful by itself. In his view, the job of creation did not require a human supplement but deserved attention as such, complete and perfect.

Images or Shadows of Divine Things with their sacred entomology of spiders and silkworms are the eighteenth-century version of the Book of Nature in its canonical form inherited by the American theologian from the European Middle Ages.¹³ It really is a paradox that being the foremost champion of the Great Awakening, Edwards rejected the traditional Puritan constraint which limited the effort of exegesis to a search for correspondences between the Old and New Testaments and the history of the Chosen People of New England.

"If the millennial writers of the first and second generations," claims Mason Lowance, "had restricted their arguments to specific scriptural promises or to the allegorical metaphors derived from them, and if those millennial seers during the eighteenth century had also viewed the historical process as a fulfillment of specific passages in the Bible, seeking signs of the times that would corroborate their predictions, Edwards also found scriptural authority for his vision of the millennium, but he transformed the typological system by extending it to embrace the natural and historical universe."¹⁴

His medieval habit of mind combined with the inspiration of Newton resulted in pushing the American wilderness, which he significantly preferred to call "nature", out of time. The typological model was maintained, but otherwise insects disregarded the distant future, instead subject to extinction every fall and absorbed in their own labors which had nothing to do with "husbandry". Hills and rivers were admirable at the moment, and not because of their function in the apocalyptic spectacle. "Loathsome" as they were, even spiders somehow prevailed, since they succeeded in attaching human gaze to their transient ingenuity. After all, Edwards did not set himself free from their snares: his thoughts were properly directed to God, but they had to pass through the cobweb before reaching heaven.

¹³ "The medieval understanding of the book of nature is never far away; Edwards' typology of nature is significantly medieval rather than Puritan. Although he nowhere attempted an elaborate reading of nature according to multiple levels of meaning, as the medieval exegetes had done, Edwards adopted an approach to nature whereby the natural universe came to have an allegorical, significance within a typological or figural and eschatological frame of reference." Mason I. Lowance, Jr., *The Language of Canaan* . . . , pp. 262-3.

¹⁴ Mason I. Lowance, Jr., *The Language of Canaan* . . . , pp. 202-3.

Thoreau was at home in Nature written with the capital N, and he too had a sort of predilection for the arachnids. His journal, begun on October 22, 1837, opens with a record of longing for their undemanding company:

To be alone I find it necessary to escape the present – I avoid myself. How could I be alone in the Roman emperor's chamber of mirrors? I seek a garret. The spiders must not be disturbed, nor the floor swept, not the lumber arranged.

(HTJ: 2)

The same note was again struck three years later, in April 1840:

How shall I help myself? By withdrawing into the garret, and associating with spiders and mice, determining to meet myself face to face sooner or later. Completely silent and attentive I will be this hour, and the next and forever.

(HTJ: 13)

A romantic egotist, the author of *Walden* was not interested in approaching God, but first wished to know himself and then became, as he put it, “a sincere worshipper of Aurora”,¹⁵ turning his natural experience into literature. Living in the cabin, he did not encounter any spiders, but still, among his “brute neighbors” there were other insects: ants. Observing their life, one day Thoreau was a witness to a vicious battle between red and black ants, described in *Walden* in some detail on more than two pages of print. Incidentally, the motif of insects that may appear in great numbers comes up also briefly yet remarkably in the journal entry from March 30, 1851:

Nations! What are nations? Tartars! ad Huns! and Chinamen! Like insects they swarm. The historian strives in vain to make them memorable. It is for want of a man that there are so many men. It is individuals that populate the world.

(HTJ: 43)

Clearly, the entry introduces the topic of the relationship of vermin and history. Swarming insects are the allegory or, as Edwards would have preferred to say, the type of exotic and populous nations whose systems of recording the past differs from that of Western civilization. The historian from the outside, overwhelmed by the sheer number, is helpless, since reality which transgresses his imagination and methods cannot be put under control. In *Walden* the type is literalized: it is neither Tartars nor Huns, but ants that escape written history and Thoreau's half-serious endeavor is oriented at their “historicization” cost what it may.

The language of description gradually unfolds the scope of the project: its first signal are the Latin words *duellum* and *bellum*, evoking the authority of Julius Caesar and Tacitus, soon reinforced by Homer and Myrmidons from *The Iliad*, particularly suitable for the purpose as an entomological synonym. The effect is enhanced by the choice of some English words, such as “combatants”, “legion”, “republicans”, and “imperialists” which create a broad lexical context for more specific operations on the next page. After mentioning several famous battle-fields: Austerlitz, Dresden, Concord, and Bunker Hill (the minute circumstances of the

¹⁵ *Walden in A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers, Walden; or, Life in the Woods, The Maine Woods, Cape Cod*, ed. Robert F. Sayre (New York: The Library of America, 1985), p. 393. All the subsequent quotations from this edition will be marked in the text as *W*.

Concord Fight: names of the heroes and the echo of commands, make the reported struggle of ants quite surreal), Thoreau passes to a rhetorical conclusion which is an elaborate attempt to inscribe the hitherto anonymous conflicts within the animal kingdom in the annals of official chronology:

Kirby and Spence tell us that the battles of ants have long been celebrated and the date of them recorded, though they say that Huber is the only modern author who appears to have witnessed them. "Aeneas Sylvius", say they, "after giving a very circumstantial account of one contested with great obstinacy by a great and small species on the trunk of a pear tree", adds that "'This action was fought in the pontificate of Eugenius the Fourth, in the presence of Nicholas Pistoriensis, an eminent lawyer, who related the whole history of the battle with the greatest fidelity.' A similar engagement between great and small ants is recorded by Olaus Magnus, in which the small ones, being victorious, are said to have buried the bodies of their own soldiers, but left those of their giant enemies a prey to the birds. This event happened previous to the expulsion of the tyrant Christiern the Second from Sweden." The battle which I witnessed took place in the Presidency of Polk, five years before the passage of Webster's Fugitive Slave Bill.

(W: 507-8)

This lengthy paragraph, a *tour de force* of the myrmidon historian, crosses the boundary of nature and civilization, cancelling it for the species of ants which earn the honor of being represented in institutionalized writing. While Edwards brought the spiders out of history, Thoreau placed his Chosen Insects back there, thus rehistoricizing Nature against his own orthodoxy of Transcendentalism. Of course, the enterprise – a parody of a chronicle – is mock-heroic, yet again a short passage from Thoreau's journal (March 23, 1853) sheds on it some unexpected light that makes the jest uncanny if not sincere:

Man cannot afford to be a naturalist, to look at Nature directly, but only with the side of his eye. He must look through and beyond her. To look at her is fatal as to look at the head of Medusa. It turns the man of science to stone. I feel that I am dissipated by so many observations. I should be the magnet in the midst of all this dust and filings.

(HTJ: 109)

While Edwards could not tolerate in himself the proclivity to admire and "look directly", promptly searching for some utilitarian explanation of the miracles which he observed, Thoreau, facing Nature with no theological obligations, needed something to mediate between the senses and the mind. The bare natural world lacked proper intelligibility, so he had to impose on it some necessary meaning, referring to Aurora and other information from books that came to the rescue. The literate enthusiast might have really hoed beans for the first year spent in seclusion, but before that he had read and memorized enough to feel secure among bushes and trees. As John Carlos Rowe wrote about *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, for Thoreau "[t]he experience of nature – of human nature, of nature in itself – is always on the way to language, to the poetic saying that constitutes it as human history."¹⁶ Maybe that is why ants had to become a part of this history as well. At any rate, sharing it with spiders, they may now enjoy their separate nook in the history of American literature.

¹⁶ John Carlos Rowe, *Through the Custom-House. Nineteenth-Century American Fiction and Modern Theory* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 51.

Deus sive Natura: **The Ethics of Belief**

It is in the nature of reason to perceive things under a certain form of eternity (sub quadam aeternitatis specie).

– *E* II, 44, cor. II

Baruch Spinoza or Benedict de Spinoza (blessed Spinoza?) is far and away one of the most challenging figures in the Western intellectual tradition. Extremely abstruse, technical, precisionarian merits attention for the greatest manifesto of the world, the *Ethics*, which, when closely examined is profoundly offputting, yet literally a form of a geometrical proof, with axioms, definitions, scholia and prepositions. For scholars concerned with the interplay of seventeenth-century philosophy and the rise of the new science Spinoza's necessitarianism becomes an interesting and challenging problem. I will try, if possible, to suspend whatever prejudices I may have towards his views and follow along the most original part of his philosophy whose major goal is to awaken man to life and imbue him to the thought that everything in the world is ruled by an absolute, logical, reasonable and objective necessity. There are no such things as free will in mental sphere or chance in the physical world but everything is a manifestation of God's inscrutable nature. This and other postulates must generate objections but they seem to have been relevant to seventeenth-century scientific investigations which finally shaped the landscape of modern philosophy.

Spinoza claims that the myth of the belief in God, is no longer relevant in the age of modern Newtonian scientific revolution in which we do not look at the sky with awe (Spinoza himself was a lens grinder; he ground lenses not for glasses as he was independently wealthy, came from a Jewish merchant family, but for his experiments in optics, using microscope and telescope for his foundation research). It is high time, Spinoza seems to imply, that we stopped discovering things

and started to prove them, and if there are two methods of demonstration, analysis and synthesis, he, unlike Descartes, prefers the latter. The superiority of synthesis over analysis, in Spinoza's view, is that the former is the process from causes (of knowledge) to effects (of knowledge) whereas the latter follows the order of knowledge, from effects to causes and is the method of discovery and not proof.

Spinoza challenges the most fundamental premises of theology chief among which is that the personal, individual God created man after His own image. In his [Spinoza's] view this is a vague and false conception that violates most-desired and long-awaited scientific truths of the times whereby things must be cognized clearly and distinctly. There is nothing in common between God's and man's reason and will except the name; in fact the two share as little as "the dog-star has in common with the dog, the barking animal" (*EI*, 17, note).¹ In the name of eternal subservience to the super-personal or rather, impersonal principle, the Substance, Spinoza adopts geometrical method, quiet, consistent, clear proofs to warrant that everything in the world happens with the same ineluctable necessity with which mathematical truths develop.

Spinoza doubts that we can believe Nature as a purpose, i.e. to say he undermines the exigence of teleology, once, perhaps useful to account for the origin of things and our moving towards something but now palpably absurd in a modern scientific age. There is no intelligence behind the world and the world is a physical phenomenon, a physical substance: there is no purpose behind it and no end of it. In the *Ethics* (I,3) **Substance** is defined as: "that which is in itself and is conceived through itself", the conception of which does not require the conception of some other thing for it to be formed. To put it another way, the self-conceivability of substance is ontologically independent, i.e. it exists necessarily and infinitely (unaffected by an "external cause"). So we must remove animism, purpose and the notion of divine intent or anthropomorphic natural intent from the world since man is only a link in the endless chain of nature. Spinoza argues that man's claim for a peculiar position in the universe as a sort of "kingdom within a kingdom" for whom the world was created should not be taken literally but metaphorically. "No man is an island, we are all part of the main", the communal, the conjoint and the one and any individuality is but a symptom of passivity in the emotions which result in the confused and mutilated form of self-consciousness (imagination) and ignorance in the mind.

Spinoza accepts the whole epistemology from Descartes especially the definition of Substance, the latter at face value but rejects the thesis that thought and extension are incompatible notions.² In Descartes the substances, mind and body, are the ones which have a propensity to existence. In Spinoza ontological monism is combined with the conceptual dualism since we have mind and body which are

¹ Benedict de Spinoza, *The Ethics*, tr. R.H.M. Elwes (New York: Dover Publications, 1955). From now on marked as *E* with the relevant numbers.

² R. S. Woolhouse, *Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz. The Concept of Substance in Seventeenth-Century Metaphysics* (London and New York, 1993), p. 40.

one, i.e., now under the attribute of thought, now under the attribute of extension (*E* 2, 21). In view of this man is one in mind and body and there is no causal relation between the two; the mental and the physical are one system, a single totality. Spinoza refers to this one Substance as God or Nature, much in his attempt to offer a rational spirituality.

Spinoza's monism is expressed in a celebrated phrase: the world is *Deus sive Natura*, God or Nature. This pronouncement qualifies Spinoza to be considered both as an atheist and as a pantheist, perhaps even as "God-intoxicated man" (Novalis) for whom the divinity shines forth from the whole of nature. This famous identification of God and Nature needs to be seen against the background of the distinction between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* (*E* 1, 29). The first is nature as active and creative, conceived in and through itself. The second, *natura naturata* is nature as passive and created, i.e. whatever follows from the necessity of God's nature. Nothing exists save the one self-contained, self-sustaining, and self-explanatory system which constitutes the world. This system may be understood in many ways as God or Nature, mind or matter, creator or created, eternal or temporal. It can be known adequately and clearly through its attributes and, partially and confusedly through its modes. Everything in the world exists by necessity and it could not be other than it is.

In Spinoza there are no such ideas as "chance" and "freedom" because everything arises out of the unbreakable chain of necessity. Also the terms of "change" and "process" in which we understand the world can be attached only to modes of God (motion or rest) and not to the divine essence. To explain things, then, we cannot relate their origin to what precedes them in time (it is to relate one mode to another); rather, we must show their timeless relation to the external essence of God. In rational spirituality Spinoza postulates, the world is seen not in temporal dimension but "under the aspect of eternity" (*sub specie aeternitatis*), in the manner of a mathematical proof, i.e. how God sees the world (with which he is identical), and that is how we see it, in so far as our minds participate in the vision which is God's.

There is one Substance rather than two different ones: mind and body but described in two different ways; Spinoza calls them attributes. An **attribute** is the property of substance, "that which the intellect perceives as constituting the essence of substance" (*E* 1, def. 4). If we are to know the essence of something we must consult not the senses (sensory qualities are only accidental) but the intellect, alone capable of grasping the essence of things. The order of the intellect is based not on what is individual but what is common to all bodies as such and is the source of our deliverance from error (as opposed to imagination that throws us into error). God, as a Substance, and a perfect one has an infinite number of attributes, each of which "expresses external and infinite essence". Spinoza, however, identifies only two attributes of God: thought (the system of ideas) and extension (the system of physical objects). A science of the physical (of extension) is a self-sufficient system, beyond which there is nothing to enquire in order to explain any physical occurrence. The same with mind and body, two different ways

of describing the same phenomenon. Does God have a mind? Yes, it is in all of us as we have minds and it is what Spinoza calls human rationality, the human speculative insight, the human mind (the same as human body, hence his monism); there is no God outside of us and Nature.

Spinoza does not reject the causes of things but claims them to be determined as in the stimulus-response game. We may not understand all the causes of things but there is no reason to assume they are uncaused. He posits two principles from which he draws two logical deductions: the first is **conatus**, a desire for survival, a will to power, an *elan vital* or a survival instinct, to be alive, an animate matter by which the thing is "in itself". The second is the principle of **association**, the basis of all modern psychology. Every emotion that we have is associated with the desire for pleasure, pain or devoid of pain. This reduces all of human psychology to stimulus and response (cause and effect).

Spinoza refers to human bondage by which he understands "man's lack of power to control and check the emotions". For man at the mercy of his emotions is not his own master but is subject to fortune in whose power he lies so that he is often compelled, although he is a better course, to pursue the worse (*E*, IV, Preface). We are all in human bondage, no one can avoid it but there is a way out, a way of salvation which is not absolute and complete but nonetheless it at least gives us a chance to reach path of salvation. This is the turn to the order of intellect by which we are able to break the power of emotions over us; it is by understanding the cause, by learning scientifically how human psychology is a stimulus and response game. When we see the necessity of all our emotional states, of all our judgements, they, as it were, lose their power over us and we can achieve a certain degree of equanimity, of serenity, of equipoise towards the world. To put it another way, Spinoza offers life according to the guidance of reason, in concord and coexistence since only two or more beings can be twice as strong as each alone.

That means that we have to understand the necessity of events in the world and this bears on Spinoza's life in a very important way. The man excommunicated from the Jewish and Christian faith in addition vilified by all speculators, he comes from the tradition of Sephardic Judaism which has gone through the century of brutal persecution in Iberian Peninsula (he is originally from Portugal pushed out by the Spanish Inquisition). This however does not seem to upset him and he looks at the environment in a very sympathetic way, with compassion and dignity, as a man charming, friendly and kind amidst all the persecutions.

Spinoza's teaching is modern in the sense that his is the last sort of religion that a scientific and rational person could have, and it is interesting that he claims it is a way of salvation. All we have to do is take that sense of awe, that sense of reverence and apply it to the world and to each other, the way of liberation.

The ideas of God's unity and self-generation have also their equivalents in modern science, being tantamount to the views that all objects in the world are in thoroughgoing causal interaction and that the universe is a closed system, beyond

which we cannot search for the cause of anything within it. The task of science is to provide the complete description of the substance and its laws so that every event can be finally explained.

Spinoza's answer to the riddle of existence can be put succinctly: all things that exist, exist necessarily, in thoroughgoing interdependence. His monism generates a highly paradoxical idea of the human person, namely that man, as part of nature, seems to be no more important in the scheme of things than are rocks or stones. The identity of man, his separateness, self-sufficiency and independence are denied as pernicious in the process of the improvement of understanding and on the way to great perfection. Finally, as everything happens by necessity the whole of morality is left in doubt and man does not have the slightest choice in what he does, a fleeting mode of God with neither individuality nor self-dependence. Spinoza wished to "banish mystery from our lives at all costs" by claiming that the truth is contained only in that which can be recognized clearly and distinctly.

The origin of the submission to inexorable reason must be sought back in the time of the philosophy of the Stoa whose major asset was to renounce oneself before the face of reason, the "law". It was also in Plotinus that we heard that "in the beginning was reason and all is reason" and man's sin is the disobedience to the Law. Spinoza's frequent "Laugh not, lament not, denounce not but understand" sounds like the lamentation of Jeremiah or the prayer of Baruch from the biblical book of the eponymous title, over the fall of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews.

Highly sceptical of the Spinozist philosophy of substance which is only a direct step to modernist atheism, I resort to a less godless example of an "ethical idealism" to prove that not all writings in the seventeenth century supplant God from human mind no matter how enticing scientific temptations may be. Seductive as they are Spinoza's propositions and arguments to liberate the world from God are supported by Milton who, however, may be read, at certain points, as an imaginary example to the "natural light of reason". The Adam of Book 8 of *Paradise Lost* while showing too curious interest in the stars and the vastness of the universe as well as the cosmos, alien and incomprehensible, has his pride quickly reprehended by Raphael who hastens to explain that heaven is "the Book of God before thee set,/ Wherein to read his wondrous Works" (8.67–8). Man is not the measure of all things, and must realize that what is beyond his comprehension, far from being meaningless, is contained within God's providence: "the great Architect/ Did wisely to conceal, and not divulge/ His secrets to be scann'd by them who ought/ rather admire . . ." (8.72–5). This seems to be the best lesson of humbleness (and true humility) Raphael teaches Adam, not against natural philosophy or science but against the inversion of the priorities of knowledge. Self-knowledge is the prime wisdom and should not be obscured by conjecture and speculation concerning the matters that are hidden.

Raphael illustrates the difference between two prominent views in the seventeenth century: geocentric and heliocentric, the difference between quantity and quality, fact and value, the Ptolomeic and the Copernican (cf. Milton, *PL*, b.8, 15–38), the rationalist and anthropomorphic. From the geocentric, static view that

stresses hierarchy, we gain an awareness of man's central role in the world, served by creation in all its quantity expressing the power and mystery of the creator. In the heliocentric, dynamic view, stressing fertility and growth, man is an inhabitant of the animistic universe in which, under the providence of God, the scale of nature seeks repeatedly to rise to the production of living soul. The superfluous expenditure (geocentric with the tremendous speed of the sun) should be economically replaced by arithmetic frugality of Nature (heliocentric which prevents the waste of energy) and the very indeterminacy of the theory, a surprising inversion of hierarchy has a tremendous impact on literary discourse, resulting in a shift of discursive allegiance. Spinoza, unlike Milton, repudiates imagination as fictitious and false because he finds in it only a charming poeticism of a prescientific discourse, affected by physical and particular objects.

In the passage to the domain of science, we become, like Milton's Adam, "not deceav'd, / but fondly overcome with Femal charm", "charm of Beauties powerful glance" (8.533), the seductive workings of our mind even though we know that it closes the way to the ultimate truth despite Raphael's warning addressed to Adam: "Solicit not thy thoughts with matter hid"?³ Is not reason a monarch whose power is absolute and restraining ("formal, daylight knowledge") and more as idol than image (that image in which we were created by God) that prevents the direct appeal of revelation? Milton's man, unlike the Spinozist, is offered free choice, a complete freedom

to stand or fall
Free in thine own Arbitrement it lies.
Perfect within, no outward aid require;
And all temptation to transgress repel.
(8.640-3)

The proper balance, proportion of reason (Raphael) and will (Adam) seems to refine the image of God in man. Is not the alert poise (as in *Paradise Lost*) more essential to the ethical life than a complete lack of balance offered by Spinoza in rejecting entirely the providential context that leaves no choice for an individual action?

Whatever is decreed by God must be good so there is no evil and negation exists only on the level of finite things when they are viewed as the parts of the whole. Is it really that what unites us to the whole is positive and what preserves the appearance of separateness, individuality, arising mainly from passions and sensations rather than mind, should be rejected as distracting and obscuring our intellectual vision? Is it freedom, as Spinoza teaches us (*E IV*), when we become self-determined and in bondage when we remain determined by outside causes? In his preaching on self-seeking and self-preservation the Nietzschean tones seem to reverberate long before twentieth-century Dionysus begins the conquest of the

³ Elizabeth D. Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus (eds.), *Soliciting Interpretation. Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry* (The University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 83.

world. If there are no external causes and, accordingly, nothing bad can befall man nor anything bad can happen to the universe as a whole how to explain both disastrous calamities (the II World War exterminations and others) and, conversely, fortunate events that take place in the world? Is it that man as a part of universal nature attains freedom only through the understanding that helps him clearly and distinctly grasp the sole reality of the whole?

Spinoza postulates that the union of thought and emotion in the apprehension of truth allows for the intellectual love of God which, however, "holds the chief place in the mind" which only misleadingly sounds as the gist of metaphysical matter. When we take the gilt off the gingerbread it turns out that only through understanding can we acquire the love of God, a symptom of "ethical idealism" so distant from moral exhortation since, as we learn from this curious metaphysics, this love is unrequited ("one cannot endeavour that God should love him in return"). In a number of proofs Spinoza adduces what is involved is not ethical precepts but logical necessity and the latter frequently fails as absurd in the search for truth. Only clear and distinct knowledge "begets a love towards a thing immutable and eternal" and here lies the advantage of love of God over love of human beings, the latter transient and changeable.

With Spinoza, man who was formerly presented with "free will" as a "dowry from a higher order"⁴ is deprived even of will that is no longer understood as a faculty: the will no longer effects anything nor does it move anything. "To make himself perfect", we read in Nietzsche (*A*, 135), man

was advised to draw his senses back into himself into the manner of the tortoise, to cease to have any traffic with the earthly, to lay aside his mortal frame . . .

and all this, according to the philosopher, precluded the perfection of man's organism, impeded his freedom and immured him within the walls of his spirit. The parallelism between the seventeenth-century and the nineteenth-century decadence is striking in terms of the frustration and dissatisfaction with God who, as Nietzsche notices with a vitriolic remark, had to descend to the cobweb damp "underworld-empire, a hospital, a souterrain-empire, a ghetto-empire" (*A*, 138) himself degraded to "a spider, a metaphysician" spinning the world out of himself *sub specie Spinozae* (the hint to Spinozism is evident here). This "monotonism" (*A*, 139), the reduction of God to the "thing in itself" bears all the symptoms of modernist decay, degeneration, void, disease and the absence of the sense of direction that Nietzsche proclaims at the outset of *The Antichrist*.

What Nietzsche vilifies was mocked long before by Spinoza: the same rejection of the "imaginary beings (God, souls, spirits), imaginary natural science (anthropocentrism), an imaginary psychology (feelings, the religio-moral idiosyncrasy, the proximity of God) and an imaginary teleology (the kingdom of God, the last judgement, etc.). For both, these are purely fictitious things from the world of dreams

⁴ F. W. Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, tr. R. J. Hollingdale (Penguin Books, 1990), p. 134. Marked as *A* with the page number.

(A, 135) that falsify, devalue and deny actuality. If Nietzsche, and Spinoza long time before him, understand Christianity as a mere hatred of the natural or a profound discontent with the actual, then it is the greatest misunderstanding of the whole idea that has survived for almost two millenia now and will, perhaps, last for another.

One can hardly deny Spinoza's and Nietzsche's brilliant style and the allure of strength of argumentation especially because the sophistications of both have seldom been matched. Nonetheless it is difficult to silently response to their gestures of raising men from the alleged Christian weaklings (cf. God reduced to a "staff for the weary, a sheer anchor for all who are drowning", A, 137, much as the Spinozist God of fear for the multitude) to a powerful self-master, one in the name of the veneration of Substance, the other in his worship of man-animal, will to power or superman. The Spinozist as well as Nietzschean values are equally contemptuous of both objective validity of the world and the testimony of the senses and history, and all this the result of the rootless synthesis that both were attracted to.

It may be interesting to resort to Norman O. Brown's short summary of Spinozism expressed in the following remark:⁵

In Spinoza, the demystification of the mystical body takes the notions of communication, community, communion, communism from the imagination and transforms them into rational goals: becoming one body becomes the goal of social action.

Despite my objection to the communist view I think N. O. Brown's observation is pertinent as it reinforces collective participation in one body (rather than unification through the sovereign representative) and the totalizing character of Spinozist philosophy of the power of a single individual in conatus with others. All this because of the unlimited and still undiscovered possibilities of the body and its natural laws which makes Spinoza an apologist of extention rather than the mind:

... many actions are observed in the lower animals, which far transcend human sagacity, and that somnambulists do many things in their sleep, which they would not venture to do when awake: ... the body can by the sole laws of its nature do many things which the mind wonders at

(E III, 2 note).

Man can never speak and act from the free decision of his mind, and if he thinks he can, he is a dreamer who "dreams with his eyes open" (*ibid.*) since a mental decision and a bodily appetite are simultaneous or even the same thing. In the name of total or mass psychology (unlimited expansion of the body power) Spinozism deprives us of the right to take any free and individual endeavour to decide (we cannot decide with our mind unless we have remembrance of having done so), a ruthless antiteleological philosophy of organism with no purpose, form and function replaced here by process, motion and rest and impersonal objectivity (body as "a high energy construct", an individual a high composite, intensive unit of energy defined by a certain ratio or proportion of motion and rest and the union of bodies constrained by other bodies). The crux of the Spinozist matter is the demystification of the mystical body.

⁵ Norman O. Brown, *Apocalypse – and/or – Metamorphosis* (University of California Press, 1991), p. 134.

The Dark Room of the Baroque

I

Burton who, as he claims, was forced to “prostitute [his] muse in English” as he would “have exposed this more contract in Latin”,¹ writes away from the master language, the language of the upper hand, whose privilege is to punish and coerce, the language which functions as the sole pattern/father of thought and the time-honoured tongue of divines and scholars, who, as the elite, the elected ones for whom it is legible, construe it as the safeguard and guarantor of their power; the language which produces writing of influence, repute and prestige, writing which dazzles and blindfolds (the etymology of the word “prestige” bears witness to the liaisons between status and illusion, a glamorous but deceptive play). Thus Burton is exiled from the language he adopted to father his thought and returns to his mother tongue: it is an itinerary back from the surrogate father to the natural mother; from the father whose language is concise, terse, pithy and compact to the mother whose language prostitutes his muse. It is with reference to his mother tongue that Burton decides to enter the play of genders: he not only personifies his genius but strongly feminizes it; emasculating his writing and emphasising its effeminate aspect as he claims to surrender it to the unlawful and indiscriminate penetration of the public eye. To invoke his mother tongue, Burton resorts to the vocabulary of exposure, unveiling and denuding: his mother tongue is the language which renders secrets vulnerable and susceptible to inspection, divulgence and merchandising. In his paradoxical play of genders, Burton refuses his mother tongue the maternal attributes of shelter, receptacle or penetralia where a secret could be confined into safe keeping. Rather, it is the ossified language, the language which, by proxy, executes pa(t)ernal functions, that seems to be endowed with the womb like capability of concealing/sealing the entrusted *secreta Minervae*. It is the language of the father that seals, paralyses, petrifies and the language of the mother that disseminates.

¹ R. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (London: J. M. Dent, 1948), p. 30.

II

The moment Burton unfolds writing he puts on a mask. When Burton declares "I have masked myself under this visard",² he performs a Janus-faced act of both concealment and visibility. He conceals *his/him* self in a *spectacular* move of defacement on the strength of which he attempts to render his face illegible to the eye of what he terms Gentle Reader, disguising it with a visard or the irreducible visibility of writing. The mask, a hallmark of the ritualistic theatre of war as well as of death, appears to be a stratagem by means of which Burton eludes light, a subterfuge which facilitates his escape from the lustre, lucidity and luminosity of light. Evasion of light, hiding, shyness is, in terms defined by Levinas's philosophy of the face, a mode of existence characteristic of the feminine. It is the feminine principle that moves away from light, in a direction contrary to consciousness, into the uncharted regions behind the mask with its lining of darkness.

The withdrawal from light coincides with the beginning of writing as if to write was to dwell in darkness, in the nocturnal space behind, a space where light is not necessarily eliminated but hindered, deterred, delayed. It is a space "of such as trauaile in this kinde of night workes, and busie themselues at the lamps",³ a space designed and furnished by the Baroque, which, nonetheless, never masters it. The Baroque is an epoch whose project seems to consist in a certain method of explicating and, by the same token, exploiting the night and its folds (light, shadow, darkness, melancholy, mourning, the horrible, oneiric vision, death, void). Among the incipient stages of the Baroque which literally foreshadow/adumbrate/overshadow the unfolding of the Baroque night, mention should be made of the studies in chiaroscuro done by Leonardo da Vinci. According to Vasari, the studies focused on darkness becoming even darker, darkness shading toward the utterly black tones completely devoid of light and possessed of the profundity of the night rather than the subtlety of the day.⁴

Out of the rich palette of attributes designating black, Vasari selects and thus privileges the one which endows it with the dimension of depth traditionally accorded the night. Black tones are distinguished for their profundity, which is also a distinct feature of thought, silence and sleep, activities of a mind detached from the concerns of the exterior: its movement is that of withdrawal, of holding back, of reaching to the bottom, to the *fundus* and the act of *fundo*. The problem of foundation lies at the bottom of profundity, founds profundity, constitutes – in an *en abyme* manner – its linguistic foundations.

To qualify night as being profound implies underlying and undermining it with *fundus* which constitutes both its founding and foundering principle (since to discuss foundation is to discuss roots, we are entitled to summon the other derivative of

² *Ibid.*

³ T. Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie* (1586), p. 1.

⁴ G. Vasari, *Żywoty najslawniejszych malarzy, rzeźbiarzy i architektów*, Vol. 3, "K. Estreicher" (Kraków: PIW, 1980), p. 305.

fundus which is embodied in the verb “to founder”). Blackness, being profound with “the profundity of the night”, has access to this ambiguous constructive/destructive, concealed/exposed, contained/ubiquitous *fundus*. Blackness founds the Baroque painting, forms its *fundus*. “This is a Baroque contribution: in place of the white chalk or plaster that prime the canvas, Tintoretto and Caravaggio use a dark, red-brown background on which they place the thickest shadows, and paint directly by shading toward the shadows. The painting is transformed. Things jump out of the background, colors spring from the common base that attests to their obscure nature, figures are defined by their covering more than their contour.”⁵ Blackness (it is also the blackness of the ink used to cover with writing the voluminous spaces of the Baroque books) fills the painter’s space to the utmost capacity reaching the critical point where the whole structure begins to founder, i.e., move towards the *fundus*, where it becomes reduced to the *fundus* which now is all that remains, exhibiting itself as irreducible blackness.

Leonardo’s desire to reach the achromatic blackness seems to be a desire to eclipse light, absorb it completely in the depths of blackness, reach a state of blindness (for a painter blindness betokens death: Leonardo’s research in black becomes, to speak the language of Freud, a reification of and compensation for what seems to be a death wish on the part of the painter, who, following the footsteps of his father, refuses to father his children, i.e., his works).

To annihilate light is to reduce it to the nothing of darkness, to nullify it, assigning it the nil of Leibnizian 0 borrowed from his binary arithmetic which considers light and shadow as two characters: 1 and 0, respectively. This kind of logic spells out the terms of existence for the two phenomena: light, designated by a positive value, connotes life, being, productivity, whereas shadow is consigned to death, chaos, void.

A paradox: Leibniz, whose fold theory excludes void, who, in fact, fears void (horror vacui, as seventeenth-century philosophy teaches, is Nature’s inherent feature), makes void a twin composite of his binary arithmetic, which results in reality (void, regarded as non-existent, is not taken into account when one considers reality) being transcribed into 1 and 0 where 0 may and does designate void (the binary project is a matter of transcription: writing licenses the introduction of an arithmetic order based on absence). Thus void, which philosophy abhors as unnatural, becomes, together with its reversed double (the pair constitutes a paradigm of difference, its characters are opposite by degree, not by leap, which would entail a void and there is no void as in Leibniz “Everything is always the same thing, there is only one and the same Basis” and “Everything is distinguished by degree, everything differs by manner”⁶), a legitimate mode of economical notation. In a self-contradictory gesture, Leibniz renders reality translatable into a bipartite system combining on the one hand plenum and on the other 0/void/

⁵ G. Deleuze, *The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque*, tr. T. Conley (London: The Athlone Press, 1993), p. 31.

⁶ *Ibid.* . . . , p. 58.

shadow (in all the haunting, insubstantial and deathly aspects of shadow). A printing parallel: in the printing process to produce blank spaces pieces of wood or metal called "furniture" are placed round type: blank spaces are imprints of furniture, i.e., of that which furnishes (a house), occupies (a space), fills (crevices), decorates and provides with a frame.

A different, Baroque, reading of the binary notation is equally plausible as Leibniz endows void with power to represent value other than zero, somewhat contradicting king Lear's statement claiming "Nothing will come of nothing" as now nothing makes present, it is yoked in the name of presence to designate presence. Thus, in the binary arithmetic, Leibniz and the Baroque seem to come to terms with the fear of the void, void which is now cultivated, domesticated and furnished with an accountable meaning. Void is turned into another saturable space of the Baroque, space to be satiated, replenished, charged up to the limit of its capacity.

Zero and one, the void and the full being intertwined, the order Leibnizian binary notation imposes traditionally assumes a certain primacy of that which is classified under zero (zero, the arithmetic symbol of nothingness, nullity, non-being, informs myths of beginnings where it is transformed into an emblem of an egg exemplified by the Orific Egg laid by Chronos, the egg from which the god of Love and Light, Eros-Fanes was hatched). Thus shadow seems to function as the founding principle, the primeval womb of light, itself undifferentiated, it begets difference which is but an evanescence against the dark background, the Leibnizian *fuscum subnigrum* which decorates the room of the monad as monads have no windows, by which anything could come in or go out; there are neither openings nor doorways. "Essential to the monad is its *dark background*: everything is drawn out of it, and nothing goes out or comes in from the outside".⁷ Darkness being a ubiquitous principle, conditions the Baroque world as it includes, envelops, circumscribes the world to design it in a manner of a dark room, a cell severed from all communication with the outside.

The Baroque existence is confined to a dark room (dark because of lack of windows, as we learn from Leibniz), the dark room which was considered a proper place of confinement for madmen ("both man and master is possess'd . . . They must be bound and laid in some dark room"⁸; "Love . . . deserves as well a dark house as madmen do"⁹);. It is, according to Burton, an existence "translated to a dark room"¹⁰. Hence, the urgent, pressing, burning need for some source of light. The Baroque light appears as *lume particolare* whose illustration is the glow of the lamp alluded to in Bright's statement: "such as trauaile in this kinde of night workes and busie themselues at the lamps"; it is the artificial light of man who now is depicted as a nocturnal creature plunged in darkness.

⁷ *Ibid* . . . , p. 27.

⁸ W. Shakespeare, *The Comedy of Errors*, iv.iv., pp. 94-6.

⁹ W. Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, iii.ii., pp. 426-7.

¹⁰ R. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, p. 323

What salvages luminosity then, is *lume particolare*, so much depreciated by Leonardo in his writings which (unlike his – as Kristeva claims – mother influenced painting, which he casts in sfumato or the veil of darkness) instil the scientific or father dominated sphere of his life. It is the father in Leonardo, the powerful man of high social standing and authority, who disapproves of the drama of contrasts effected by *lume particolare*. To take it further, we could argue that it is reason itself which is against the disordered and violent turbulence that kind of light introduces (it is a light which, following a single duct, conduit, pierces the entrails of darkness) to the structure of the painting and to the retina of the viewer.

III

The resulting chiaroscuro, whose light and darkness Ortega y Gasset compares to two arms of a pair of pliers cruelly tormenting almost tearing apart its objects, becomes an instrument of torture; torture inflicted upon the body placed within the scope of the (dis)/(con)torting force or rather forces, which for the Baroque mind implies the whole existence since each body as *corpo opaco*, to use a painter's term, constitutes an indigenous form of darkness. The illuminating, lucid, resplendent moment is a moment of torture as the Baroque light, rather than laying objects open to inspection, wrenches them out of darkness, twisting and turning their limbs, misshaping and disfiguring their bodies, putting them into a convulsive motion.

Curve becomes the operative principle of the Baroque imagination; consisting of a series of turning points, it traces a tortuous line of deviation, detour and digression whose progress is a progress of a parenthetical discourse. Parenthetical discourse seems consonant with the Baroque architectural project featuring an architecture of extension, horizontal widening and embracement of space: it provides a textual solution to an architectural conundrum of "How can a space be filled with the fewest possible voids, and the greatest possible number of figures?"¹¹ Parenthetical discourse disturbs the harmony, integrity and purity of thesis, postponing the realisation of its *design* as it is a discourse which paraphrases the scientifically rooted thesis into the language of mis/displacement, play and disease; a language which should be diagnosed in terms of pathology: as a sign of pathological discourse as well as a sign of a pathological mind. According to Thomas Adams, to incorporate parentheses into the body of discourse is to evince a manifest sign of pathology as the use of parentheses is symptomatic of a disease he classifies as Head-ache and Braine-Sickness.¹² Thus the sign of parenthesis is a sign which a serious scholarly treatise and a serious scholar must treat with reserve. The ob-

¹¹ G. Deleuze, *The Fold Leibniz and the Baroque*, p. 66.

¹² Th. Adams, *The Diseases of the Sovle* (1616).

lique perspective (the staging of the Jacobean drama executed by Inigo Jones was resolved in such a way that only the King was privileged to view the masque from the point where all the lines of perspective met so that he was the only person who had the true picture of events, which, of course, has its political reverberations) generates biased, incomplete, disproportioned images.

Curvilinear thought of the Baroque not only witnesses but, taking into account its particular interests, we should claim that it actually fosters and nourishes a profuse growth of vocabulary stemming from the Latin word “torquere” meaning “twist”. Tortuosity (1603), tortive (1606), contort (1622), contortion (1611), distort (1586 and 1634), retort (1602 and 1625), torturable (1655), tortile (1658), torsion (1660), tortuous (1682), enter the seventeenth-century lexicon, augmenting it with language affiliated to torture and its policy of a twisting, writhing, torment. The memory of pain inflicted by torture seems now side-tracked, as the new lexical entries mark a shift towards the unnatural and the errant in the turning movement of the twist (Shakespeare juxtaposes tortive with errant to qualify the course of growth in *Troilus and Cressida* i.iii. 9). Tortured is not only the body but the entire being (tortive and errant growth) as perceived by the Baroque sensitivity. The column which the Baroque erects to support its architectural order stems from the Latin roots of torture as the French *colonne torsadee* testifies. The tortuous inflection of being is extended to discourse as the semantic value of two lexical items such as “torment” and “torture”, words long established in the context of the body, itself is deflected (deflection, according to *Roger Thesaurus*, is an event synonymous with an act of twisting or turning) to become inclusive of the body of language. Rather than coin new phraseology to speak about the style, sense, meaning or form of discourse (strangely enough, it is at this particular juncture, i.e. in mid-seventeenth century, that the need to find the idiom describing a certain type of discourse is noted: as if the verbs were to refer to the century’s own discursive activity), the epoch rereads the dictionary, keeping a close eye on the body, to invest in the already existing stock of vocabulary.

Thus, we are dealing with an epoch when, to evoke Bright again, the lamp sheds light on the body that travails in night works. The mode of existence at the lamp is stigmatised by *trepalum*, an instrument of torture, whose signs of torment, suffering and distress are inscribed in the body that travails (etymologically speaking, the Latin *trepalum*: *tres* three and *palus* stake lies at the root of travail). Travail implicates the body in torment, toil, labour as well as in the pains of child-birth. Thus it is expressive of the feminine or, to be more precise, maternal body, the body that is fertile, productive, creative. Travail, in the language of the beginning of the seventeenth century, also means the outcome of labour: a finished work of a literary production. Referred to as travail, a literary work reverberates with the torture of being composed. It is perceived as still subject to the travail of being unfinished, to the weariness of travel deprived of destination. Signifying journey, travail implicates the body in the distance implied by travel, which in terms of a literary work is a distance of digression, whose vagaries increase the tortuosity of writing.

In the (con)text of travail the pen begins to pointedly mark its presence. It would be pointless to ignore the remarkable task of memory the pen punctiliously executes in the double act of travail (an act of writing and an act of torture). Functioning as an instrument of recording, the pen pertains to the paraphernalia of torture turning the scene of torture into a scene of writing. The pen becomes a notable/note-taking witness to the scene of travail at the lamp, which in Burton appears to be a scene at a torch (now the very source of light partakes in exploiting the Latin source of torture, torment and tortuosity as torch derives its name from the Latin *torquere*; besides reading torch as a source of light, the ever expanding seventeenth-century lexicon of twist reinterprets torch figuratively as a source of illumination, enlightenment, guidance).

Burton chooses the torch to shine in his writing as an example in his discussion of the body and its noblest parts: once to illuminate the operations of the heart and then to clarify the relations between the body and the soul; as if by way of comparison ennobling, elevating, giving the prime of place to the source of light whose name is intertwined with the language inaugurated by *torquere* (to discuss surfeit or want of matter in the body, i.e. strictly physical aspects of the body, he lights on the example of the lamp). The figure of the burning torch contradicts his earlier denunciations of “fustian phrases, tropes, strong lines, that like Acestes’ arrows caught fire as they flew”.¹³ This pre-emptive bid to exclude writing of fire seems to spell a fear of language being turned to ashes. Claiming plainness of style, professing to resort to language which does not catch fire, which keeps at a safe distance from fire, Burton, nevertheless, for a brief but dazzling moment, finds himself attracted, seduced, blinded by its comparative power as he brings to its light the close relation between the torch and the body. To illuminate darkness, after all he writes about darkness as he writes about melancholy, the black humour, Burton draws on the most resplendent object within his reach, within the space of his dark room, the object within the vicinity of which Burton writes and which, over ages, he shares with his reader; its rhythm of gradual extinction measured out by the amount of oil in the fount (to which Burton alludes as parallel with the rhythm of life) exacts the rhythm of writing, which, in fact, should be referred to as the rhythm of lucubrating, i.e. writing by the lamp.

The lamp which sheds light on his subject appears and disappears in the course of his writing: as it illuminates a particular space of his dark room, the space of writing, it also illuminates a particular cell of his text, a relatively dark cell, to be sure; it does so, however, at an angle which renders his own face illegible.

¹³ R. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, p. 31.

ord of God and the Problem of Authority in Seventeenth-Century Polish Religious Disputes

It is quite often not scholars but poets who recognize the chief point of social, political or religious events. John Dryden described religious controversies of his age with great cleverness:

For did not Arius first, Socinus now
The Son's eternal Godhead disavow?
And did not these by Gospel texts alone
Condemn our doctrine and maintain their own?
Have not all heretics the same pretence,
To plead the scriptures in their own defence?

The problem of the authority of Scripture had been of crucial importance for all Christian denominations since the outbreak of Protestant Reformation in 1517. The progress of Reformation and establishment of many new churches, especially those described later as the “radical Reformation”, made clear to everybody that the problem of the authority of the Word of God became an important issue. The relation between authority of the church and the authority of Scripture had been one of the main topics of the Reformation since its very beginning. Nevertheless, it was only at the turn of the sixteenth century that intellectuals of both sides appreciated all dangers. The main issue was clearly revealed by one of the first reformers, Heinrich Bullinger: “Because it is the Word of God, the holy biblical scripture has adequate standing and credibility in itself and of itself.” Later generations realized that the problem is much more complex.

It was only the most radical groups, such as Socinians or Anabaptists, who drew the most radical conclusions from the Reformation rule *sola scriptura* – “by scripture alone”. Lutherans or Calvinists were much more conservative in their attitudes, not rejecting traditional doctrines (such as divinity of Christ, doctrine of Trinity or infant baptism) which – according to radicals – were unacceptable as inconsistent with Scripture.

Disputes between Socinians and Jesuits are a good example of the fundamental controversy that involved two extremely different fractions of one religious denomination accepting the Bible as the main source of worship. There were two strong groups of intellectuals in the seventeenth-century Poland. On the one hand, Socinians – radicals who accepted *sola scriptura* rule as they were referring uncompromisingly and with no exceptions to the pre-Reformation theological tradition. On the other hand, Jesuits who tried to support the traditional teaching of the Roman Catholic church confirmed by the Council of Trent. Disputes between these two groups are a significant example of major differences in theological and anthropological thought of that age. Word of God was the main subject of the discussion. The way of understanding the authority of this Word implied understanding of man and universe. One could not, however, expect any joint conclusions.

Piotr Skarga (1536–1612) was a Jesuit scholar, preacher and lecturer. He published collections of sermons, lives of saints and disputes with non-Catholics. Hieronim Moskorzowski (c. 1560–1625) was a friend of Faustus Socinus and a follower of his doctrine. He published several original theological works and translated into Latin a famous Racovian Catechism published with a dedication for James I. From 1604 to 1615 these two intellectuals were publishing a fascinating series of works in which they argued with each other about how to understand Scripture, Holy Trinity, divinity of Christ and several other issues. The main issue, however, was AUTHORITY. The Jesuit when he attacked the Socinian minister used the allegory of tribunal. Who had the power, who decided?

The heretic is accused. The Jesuit mentions many authorities who are tribunals opposed to a small group of heretics misinterpreting the Word of God. Skarga wants to make them feel ashamed facing seven tribunals. The tribunals are: 1) Jesus Christ himself; 2) apostles and Christ’s disciples; 3) bishops from all over the world; 4) doctors of the Church; 5) saint martyrs; 6) miracles produced by God to condemn the Socinian faults; 7) spiritual and imperial laws.

The problem of authority (called here a “tribunal”) has a fundamental significance in this case. Is Scripture alone a sufficient authority (described here as “statute”) or, rather, we need an explanation of Scripture made by a man (described here as “judge”) who is entitled (has an authority) to produce such an explanation. The problem of the authority of God’s Word emerged in this dispute. According to the reformers the authority of Scripture came from God’s inspiration and the authority of its interpreters came from the Scripture alone and was subordinate to Scripture. Scripture itself was reliable enough. One hundred years after Luther’s first public appearances as a reformer of the Church only Socinians accepted the

original optimism of Dr. Luther. In the first period of his activities he opposed those who – like John Eck – argued that “Scripture is not authentic without the authority of the church”.

The next issue is closely related to the previous one. The two antagonists discuss who makes people understand the word of God. Socinians claimed that Christ himself does it and therefore mediation of either the Church or the pope is not necessary. In such a case Scripture becomes always both a statute and a judge. Catholics on the other hand claimed that Scripture is only a statute, and that there are several judges: Saint Peter and his successors – representatives of the hierarchic church (as the Jesuit said: “Scripture alone is not a tribunal just as statute alone is not a judge”).

The dispute about ways of understanding the authority of Scripture deals with the fundamental ideological difference between the two writers: radical interpretation of the *sola scriptura* principle was set against the Roman Catholic rule as explained by the Council of Trent in the following statement: “nobody who adapts the Bible to his views can find the courage to explain the Scripture against its real meaning which is explained by the Holy Church. The Church alone has the right to judge the true meaning and explanation of the Holy Scripture.”

The allegory of a tribunal is a central figure in the dispute between Skarga and Moskorzowski. Let us consider main points of this discussion.

The first argument of the Jesuit deals with the substance of which the copies of the Bible are produced: “Scripture is made of paper and printing ink; everybody can erase, falsify and burn it and above all can misunderstand it using his own reason.” The Socinian writer replies that it is impossible to “erase, falsify and burn” all copies of the Bible.

The next argument deals with the obscurity of many passages of the Bible: “The Holy Scripture is obscure and profound and difficult to understand, so I don’t know how everybody is able to judge something that cannot be understood by everybody.” He admits, however that: “Obviously, there are other things in it that are easy and useful for morals and other needs.” The Socinian writer replies: “You can judge a simple man according to what he understands, and a wise man according to what he understands, but still you can judge everybody.”

Using a rhetorical figure of *congeries* consisting of a series of amplified rhetorical questions, Skarga wants to prove that Socinians are usurpers and have no right to explain the Word of God: “Who opened their minds? Who gave them the Holy Ghost? Who entrusted them with the keys to mysteries of the Kingdom of God? Let them tell this.” And he says: “Because of the weakness of the human mind God gave us medicine – translators and explainers in order to make us suspicious about our own understanding and remember about what Our Lord said: *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*” Moskorzowski observes only that “The Bible does not say that God gave us explainers of Scripture because of the weakness of human understanding, but it says only that our understanding is dull in earthly things and much more in heavenly things”.

In this part of the discussion one can see the fundamental difference in attitudes towards human understanding, human reason. According to the approach accepted by all Socinians "healthy human reason" is the only judge in religious matters. Scripture is a norm ("statute") and every human being "can understand Scripture thanks to the blessing of reason". The Jesuit writer discredits the role of reason calling it "a tiny reason". As we can see, a completely different understanding of authority makes any agreement impossible.

A few years before the discussion between the two writers, Socinian scholars at a theological seminar in Raków concluded that "God appointed nobody on the earth to an office of a judge commissioned to give decisions dealing with religious controversies". Consequently, human reason can be the only judge here.

The Jesuit writer devoted much of his work to the question of judge because in his opinion it was extremely important. He argues that "if Scripture was a judge in religious matters, all heretics will soon achieve agreement". He thinks that the external authority is essential for the process of interpretation of the Bible, so he presents another important argument: "A statute is not a judge and a judge is not a statute but he should only pass judgements according to statutes and the law." He says that Scripture is silent, so one should go to the tribunal who will make an interpretation. Counter arguments of the Socinian are based on his faith in reason: "Statute will judge a clever man at his home And if a statute can judge him at home, the God's law can do it as well and even much better."

The next point made by the Jesuit polemist is a comparison of a thief and a heretic. When a thief robs him, he goes to a court; when a heretic leads him to hell and robs him of his truth he is not allowed to go to a judge. He should be allowed to go there, because the Bible is silent and everybody takes a different view of it. This argument is based on several assumptions: a Roman Catholic knows the only truth and his opponent does not know it, he is a thief and leads the Catholic astray. The Socinian writer replies that theft and heresy are two different things. Theft is an obvious evil and studying the Bible is not an evil, but a good deed and virtue recommended by Lord himself.

At the end, the Socinian disputant tries to impair the juridical kind of arguments used by his antagonist. He claims that the Scripture is a very specific norm, not a legal one; it cannot be compared to earthly statutes and its interpretation is not similar to decisions of earthly judges: "for universal earthly peace an earthly judge is needed, but for the peace of conscience we do not need such a judge. Faith comes from listening to the Word of God and not from constraint or judge's decree".

The whole discussion was fated to fail from its very beginning because each of the arguers based his opinions on assumptions he could not renounce. The Jesuit disputant assumed that the heresy is an objective evil, a painful blow to the unity of the church. For the Socinian disputant freedom in Bible studies was the main value. The human reason (called "a tiny reason" by the Jesuit arguer) was claimed to be the main key to this study. For the Jesuit the Scripture is a statute and representatives of the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy are judges who make interpretations of this statute and pass judgements in agreement with it. According

to the Socinian writer the Scripture is a norm which passes judgements on its own while a man reads it with faith and uses his reason. The authority of the Church is opposed to the authority of reason of a single human being and pressure used by the Church is set against the free will of an individual.

We cannot simplify the whole issue by saying that the dispute between the two writers was a dispute between representatives of "Counter-Reformation" and "Reformation". Denominations of the so-called "magisterial Reformation", i.e. Calvinists and Lutherans were at that time far away from the original "exegetical optimism". Such an optimism was then typical only for Anabaptist or Socinian radicals. *The Institutes of Christian Religion* by Calvin, Luther's catechisms and other works of such kind had tried for a long time to orientate Bible studies towards the needs of established churches. The freedom of Bible studies was restricted also in Poland by systems of rules such as the Sandomierz Confession: a joint announcement of Lutherans, Calvinists and the Czech Brethren. It was specific for Socinians that – with all catechisms and treatises that already existed – the freedom of theological research was immense, with actually no limits and restrictions and at the same time the difference between socinianism on the one hand and catholicism and even Calvinism on the other was enormous. A dispute with a Socinian was a great challenge for a Roman Catholic theologian because from the very beginning it was fated to fail: understanding of main theological and anthropological principles was completely irreconcilable. The history proved of course that God sides with the strongest. This rule has, however, nothing to do with disputes about his Word. Nobody was a winner in this battle.

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Hobbes and the Body Politic

Animalcules and Homunculi

Nature (the Art whereby God hath made and governes the World) is by the Art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an Artificial Animal. For seeing life is but a motion of Limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principall part within; why may we not say that all *Automata* (engines that move themselves by springs and wheeles as doth a watch) have an artificiall life? For what is the *Heart*, but a *Spring*; and the *Nerves*, but so many *Strings*; and the *Joynts*, so many wheeles, giving life and motion to the whole Body . . . For by Art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMON-WEALTH, or STATE, (in latine CIVITAS) which is but an Artificiall Man; . . . and in which, the *Soveraignty* is an Artificiall *Soul*, as giving life and motion to the whole body . . .¹

The dream of the artificial man, of an exact superposition of the body of a man and the Body of the state occupies a relatively short chronological period; a period that roughly coincides with the great rationalisms of the seventeenth century. No doubt political events in this age of intrigue and revolution favoured the construction of an artificial man, a vast automaton, whose monolithic body has the Sovereign at its centre, an immobile spring; the bureaucratic apparatus, so many strings and pulleys, as its nerves and tendons; and the people, the wheels and cogs, as its working parts. Thus Thomas Floyd, in 1600, compares the state to a living body of a man in *The Picture of a Perfect Commonwealth*; in 1606, the first English edition of Jean Bodin's major work of political economy, *Six Bookes of a Commonweale*, which explores, among other things, the analogies between a human

¹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 81. [All future references to this work will be marked by the letter *L* and the page number.]

and a political body is published; in the same year Edward Forset's *A Comparative Discovse of the Bodies Natvral and Politiqve* appears; in 1616 the work of Sir John Fortescue, *De Laudibus Legum Angliae*, which compares the body "natvral" and the Body "politqve" is translated into the vernacular; and Hobbes' *Leviathan*, in which the image of the Body of the state is given its most sustained treatment, is published in 1651.

What was so new in these images of the state as a human body, upon its head a crown, that captured the imagination of the seventeenth century so much? After all, it was not the first time that such a comparison had been drawn. The metaphor of the state as a great body composed of many men with the king as head had long been in existence. Most obviously these images were new in the sheer wealth of their detail. It was no longer a question of a superficial resemblance between the state and a man's body, but of a meticulous meshing of correspondences, of a reduction of differences, and of excluding from the analogical pairing all those elements that could not readily be assimilated. As Edward Forset put it: "In the knitting and according of things divers into one point of agreement . . . we must avoid their diversities as sands, and rocks, and keep the right channell of an allowed likenesse."² Just as important in these images was the general intent. It was not or was no longer simply a question of the effects of these images which in variously mutilated and truncated forms served as graphic reminders of the horrors of political subversion, but of the desire to realize and idealize order, to elaborate codes of coercion, characteristic of so many sovereign forms of social organization when under the threat, perceived or real, of decomposition.

Hobbes' *Leviathan*, graphically illustrated by the engraved title page which prefaces the first edition (see Fig. 1) and by the less familiar drawn version of the emblem prefixed to the manuscript copy presented to Charles II (see Fig. 2),³ is an exemplary instance of all that was new in these seventeenth-century images. The centre of the large panel in both the engraved and drawn versions is dominated by the great crowned figure of Leviathan. In his right hand he holds a sword; in his left hand, a pastoral staff; his body is composed of a myriad of men. And herein lies the most startling difference between the two versions. For the engraved body of Leviathan is composed of homunculi, Lilliputian figures, in regimental order, who give in their turn a sharp outline to the sovereign body. Their backs are all turned to us the spectators of this scene, which seems no longer symbolically, though no doubt still materially, ours; their faces are all uniformly turned towards the sovereign head. In contrast, the body of the drawn version is made up of many heads. The heads are all looking outwards, but not uniformly so. Absent from this scene is the sense of regimental-like order. Absent too is the sharp profile

² See the "Introduction" to Edward Forset's *A Comparative Discovse of the Bodies Natvral and Politiqve* (London: John Bill, 1606).

³ Keith Brown, *The Artist of the Leviathan Title-Page* (British Library Journal IV, 1978), pp. 24–36, attributes the drawn version to Wencelas Hollar. The author of the engraved version remains unknown.



Fig. 1. The engraved title-page of the first edition of *Leviathan* (1651)



Fig. 2. The drawn title-page of *Leviathan*

of the sovereign body: broken up by the curve of a nose, the roundness of a brow, an angular chin or cheekbone. There is something grotesque about this drawn version. Quite literally, a many-headed monster! But perhaps it is only in virtue of hindsight that it appears so to us. For let us not forget, the drawn version was destined to adorn a copy for a king. It would therefore seem more politically and historically sensitive to read into it a different order. An order that is linked to the doctrine of the Great Chain of Being which gave to the head of a man a central place in the hierarchy of bodily organs. Viewed from this way, the many-headed sovereign is a more noble, more rational, more exalted, image than its engraved counterpart, it being entirely composed of that superior organ – the head – in the microcosm of each man's body.

The Cosmic Egg

The imagery of the Great Chain of Being, with its ordered system of hierarchies, is in a more general way subtly present in both versions of the emblem: for in the great figure of Leviathan rising commandingly above an arched landscape, below him two columns of smaller panels whose binary motifs lead us through a series of ever-diminishing images of order and control, until, coming to the bottom left hand panel, we reach the State of Nature, a war of all against all, it is difficult to dismiss echoes, frequently to be found in Christian iconography, of the Almighty enthroned above the world, spreading out below Him the cosmic order – angelic beings, human beings, beasts of the earth, of the air, of the sea, etc. Yet despite these echoes the two images of Leviathan remain secular ones; anti-ecclesiastical, even. How else explain that slightly ironic, sometimes bullying, criss-crossing of vertical and horizontal lines that order the whole arrangement of the emblem and which in the upper-most pair of panels contrasts a castle elevated upon a hill, reinforcing the idea of secular power, with a church quite plain in style, clearly situated at ground level? How explain that thorny-looking line of spiky spires on the far horizon which threaten to prick the flesh of Leviathan? And how explain the church in the foreground of the large panel with its curious twin towers and spires that commands only a modestly prominent place, and is so positioned as to point to Leviathan's staff, giving greater weight to this symbol of pastoral power?

Certainly, these anti-ecclesiastical registers are in evidence in the text of *Leviathan* of which the emblem is an expression, a cipher. In part, they are a response to the role that religion had played in legitimizing the revolt against Charles I. Even in 1642, in a privately circulated edition of *De Cive*, Hobbes can be found contemplating the dangers of religion (that "root" as he calls it): "What civil war was there ever in the Christian world which did not either grow from

or was nourished by this root?"⁴ The *Body* of the state, if it is to maintain its integrity, must have the power over the minds of men and women traditionally accorded to religion. Integrity demands unity in obedience to the sovereign alone. As Hobbes does not fail to remind his readers again and again, men cannot serve two masters: God and King, the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of Earth, must be or appear to be coterminous.

The Sublime Body of the Sovereign

First and foremost, though, text and emblem, verbal and visual image, represent an idea of unity, of social homogeneity. The term social homogeneity indicates here the commensurability of parts and functions of an elaborated and measurable society (a sense echoing that which George Bataille attaches to this term⁵). For Hobbes, as for many other seventeenth-century political theorists, the ideal of homogeneous society necessarily takes the figural or representational form of an individual subject, a singular body, to which all other subjects are attached, thus turning the state, whether consciously or not, into a representation of that *Absolute Subject*, that ultimate unity, namely God.

In principle, homogeneous society constitutes a region free from domination. Domination requires the clash of unequal forces, in short, it requires difference: the difference of the master from the slave, the king from his subjects. But in the Hobbesian state each subject is said to be the author of the sovereign's acts; the plurality of individual wills, a single will; the multitude of people, one person. Difference is excluded by the ordering of human multiplicities into a single body. The unity of the body politic becomes identified with the unity of the state's power. Circulating in an uniform and comprehensive manner power appears to be equally distributed throughout the whole body in the form of a *Covenant*. Power becomes law. And to the formal homogeneity of power corresponds the reduction of all modes of domination to an effect of obedience.

However, this vision of social homogeneity that the text attempts to construct by closing the gap between the sovereign and his subjects ultimately remains unrealizable. This is not simply because the animating spirit of the artificial man, the sovereign himself, is, in a very obvious sense, absent. For outside the limits of Hobbes' text-world, beyond the margins of his book, the head, the code and key to the body, has already been, as it were, swallowed up. Rather, it has much more to do with the fact that this vision of social

⁴ Thomas Hobbes, "Philosophicall Rudiments Concerning Government and Society": A translation of *De Cive*, which appeared in a privately circulated edition in Paris in 1642, reproduced in *Divine Right and Democracy*, ed. D. Wooton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p. 476.

⁵ See George Bataille, "The Psychological Structure of Fascism", in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1936*, ed. A. Stoekl (Manchester: MUP, 1985), pp. 137-60.

homogeneity is itself structurally incoherent. This is most clearly in evidence when we consider the figure of the sovereign. For although the sovereign is profoundly tied, at least in principle, to the body of the state, as the “head”, “heart” or “soul”, he does not completely identify himself with the body. He maintains his separate character to the extent that “he that carryeth this Person is called SOVERAIGNE, and said to have *Souveraigne Power*; and every one besides, his SUBJECT” (*L*, 228). Unification, the principle of social homogeneity, does not bear upon the person of the sovereign representative. At the same time, the sovereign is said to be the life force, the material and symbolic centre, in and through which homogeneous society establishes its *raison d’être*. In order to paper over this contradiction at the *heart* of the state, the sovereign person must act in such a way that social homogeneity “exists for him”.⁶ This in turn presupposes that the sovereign is associated with heterogeneity. It hardly needs to be stated that the heterogeneous character of the sovereign does not take the chaotic or impoverished form associated with the heterogeneity of the body politic.⁷ The heterogeneity of the sovereign is unconditional. It constitutes the sublime otherness of the sovereign body. An otherness guaranteed by a system of exclusions, prohibitions and taboos, and which is aptly captured in Deleuze’s and Guattari’s rhetorical question: “Who is able to touch the full body of the sovereign?”⁸

The principle modality by which the sovereign maintains his otherness in relation to the body is exclusion. As superior, noble, exalted, he must exclude everything which is inferior, ignoble and base. “If the heterogeneous nature of the slave is akin to that of filth in which his material situation condemns him to live,” writes Bataille, “that of the master is formed by excluding all filth”.⁹ Taking the text and emblem at its word, the exclusion of everything which is inferior, ignoble or base by the sovereign takes on the character of a masochistic activity. A structurally incoherent, though realizable, project.¹⁰ The masochistic impulse of the sovereign is as a rule directed at all those parts of the body that are unproductive or those which it cannot effectively control: vagabonds, political agitators, rioters, madmen and madwomen and the like. But as the actual

⁶ Bataille, “The Psychological Structure . . .”, p. 147.

⁷ In “The Psychological Structure of Fascism”, Bataille distinguishes two forms of heterogeneity. An imperative form allied with all that is noble, superior, etc. This is the king or fascist leader removed from the necessity of labour but dependent nonetheless on the labouring classes. The other impure form is associated with everything ignoble, base, filthy, etc. Both forms are excluded from the homogeneous activities of society which are dependent upon and defined in terms of the productive forces. The former (imperative form) because it is unproductive and the latter (impure form) which is made up of the workers, the poor, etc., and because alienated from the means of production their labour is always *for another*.

⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, tr. R. Hurley et al. (New York: Viking Press, 1977), p. 199.

⁹ Bataille, “The Psychological Structure . . .”, p. 146.

¹⁰ See Sigmund Freud, “The Economic Problem of Masochism”, in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, Pelican Freud Library, Vol. 11 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p. 413.

material subduing or excluding of these elements tends to fall to the military, the judiciary, or the church, and therefore appears only remotely connected to the sovereign, the masochistic instinct at the heart of the state always appears under the guise of a sadistic activity.

No Heart, No Hands, No Feet

Born of a philosophical reflection, what a contemporary of Hobbes' coined "that Columbus of our New World of Philosophy",¹¹ the artificial man represents the ideal figure of sovereignty and a very real limit of subjection. For if it evokes an image of an ordered rational body where members and parts act in concert for the production of a common object, if it embodies simultaneously the idea of a harmonious union of body-and-soul, subjects-and-sovereign, it also brings with it the possibility that the body might fall into disorder, that the left foot might supplant the right, that one hand might cut off the other, the fingers scrape out the eyes, rendering the whole body infirm, or worse still, leading to a violent separation of the body from the soul, the subjects from the sovereign.

The struggle for the modern state is a struggle against disease and disorder. Philosophers and Physicians, Pathologists and Political Anatomists, speak a common language of signs, symptoms and diseases. For William Petty commenting on the "naturall" body and the body "politick" and the "arts of preserving both in health and strength", it is obvious that as anatomy is the "best foundation" for understanding the natural body, it will be no less so in understanding the political body.¹² And it is not only texts in which the artificial man figures that the affinity between philosophy and medical science manifests itself. Elsewhere, though contemporary with the *oeuvre* of the artificial man, Descartes in the *Discourse of Method* dreams of a space "free of an infinitude of maladies" and the "infirmities of age" and declares his intention of "devoting all [his] life" to the study of medicine.¹³

According to Hobbes, as each organ in the natural body finds its corresponding organ in the body of the state, so the common diseases to which the human body is subject find their counterparts in the political body. Thus on a perceived homology between the circulation of money and the venous circulation of blood, erratic levying of taxes in the Commonwealth resembles the feverish symptoms of ague where "the fleshy parts being congealed, or by venomous matter obstruct-

¹¹ Benjamin Laney, *A Letter about Liberty and Necessity* (London, 1676), p. 89.

¹² William Petty, *The Political Anatomy of Ireland* (London, 1691), quoted by Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform 1626-1660* (London: Duckworth, 1975), p. 421.

¹³ René Descartes, "Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting Reason", in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, 2 vols., tr. E. Haldane and G. Ross (London: CUP, 1931), Vol. 1, p. 120.

ed" (*L*, 373), the blood is unable to circulate properly through the arteries giving rise to "first a cold contraction, and trembling of the limbes; and afterwards a hot and strong endeavour of the Heart, to force a passage for the Bloud" (*L*, 373). There is pleurisy in the Commonwealth if a few private men have a stranglehold on the public treasure; worms, if corporations are allowed to proliferate unchecked, "which are as it were many lesser Common-wealths in the bowels of a greater" (*L*, 375); and bulimia if it pursues reckless expansionist policies.

All these diseases as in the natural body are not in themselves generally fatal. But there are others. Fatal ones. These derive, says Hobbes, from a "Defectious Procreation" (*L*, 364). For example, all those states whose sovereign representatives lack absolute power, which like the offspring of diseased parents are "subject either to untimely death, or to purge the ill quality, derived from their vicious conception, by breaking out into biles and scabbs" (*L*, 375); or from the "poyson of seditious doctrines" (*L*, 365) such as private conscience, tyrannophobia, the canon of two Kingdoms (Earth and Heaven), and all theories which advocate constitutional limitations on sovereignty. Here too belong all forms of what Hobbes calls "Mixt Government", where power is divided between Sovereign, Parliament, and Judiciary:

To what Disease in the Naturall Body of man, I may exactly compare this irregularity of a Common-wealth, I know not. But I have seen a man, that had another man growing out of his side, with an head, armes, breast, and stomach, of his own: if he had another man growing out of his side, the comparison might have been exact

(*L*, 372–3)

The vocabulary of disease however was only ever approximate. And while it is true – as Michel Foucault has variously illustrated in charting the birth of modern medicine and the history of insanity – that there existed in seventeenth-century medicine a qualitative instability in the representation of disease, the political theorists, unlike the physicians, never attempted to define a statutory correlation between signs and diseases in the individual body and the body politic. Signs were contradictorily invoked. What Hobbes diagnosed as pleurisy in the Commonwealth could for Forset or Bodin signify pneumonia or plague. Even the images of monsters which appeared in almost all the texts which dealt with the artificial man, never approached, even in their deviancy, anything remotely resembling an uniformity of composition. Instead their forms yielded sometimes to current political exigencies — so contemporary with the debates about the union of England and Scotland under James I, two-headed monsters are not uncommon (and there is anecdotal value in the inverse image, a monster with two bodies and one head, alluded to by James in his speech to the Commons in March 1607) — and at other times to the ravages of the imagination.

If the analysis of disease was unstable, the corporal space of the artificial man was just as indecisive. For Hobbes, the sovereign is the soul of the artificial man; viceroys, the nerves and tendons; those who judge or instruct, the voice; enforcers of the law and order, the hands; spies, the eyes; and those who receive petitions, the ears (*L*, 289–94). For others, the sovereign is simply the head. Jean Bodin,

on the other hand, considers the body of the sovereign to be composed of three estates: the *Ecclesiastical*, that resembles the faculty of reason in the natural body; the *Martial*, which “resting in the heart, representeth the soldiers and other martiall men”; and thirdly, the *Productive* estate “resting in the liuer”, the organ that is according to Bodin both the repository of “brutish lust and desire” and the “fountaine of blood”, and which, not unsurprisingly, “betokeneth the common people”, the life-force of the body politic and its beasts of burden.¹⁴ “[E]xalted aboue all his subjects” the sovereign is “exempt out of ranke”¹⁵ from being compared to any organ in the natural body. If, however, the order of the Commonwealth instead of being figured in the body is figured in the mind of man, then, says Bodin, he may be fitly compared to the “Vnderstanding”, which according to scholastic doctrine is the faculty that unifies and binds fast all members and parts.

William Harvey’s discovery of the circulation of the blood certainly exerted an influence on the organology of the artificial man. This can be seen in the dedication to Charles I with which he begins his treatise:

The heart of animals is the foundation of their life, the sovereign of everything within them, the sum of their microcosm, that upon which all growth depends, from which all power proceeds. The King, in like manner, is the foundation of his kingdom, the sum of the world around him, the heart of the republic, the fountain whence all power, all grace doth flow.¹⁶

And if for Hobbes the “heart” is metaphorically rather than strictly physiologically the emblem of sovereign power, he is nevertheless in agreement with Harvey in viewing it as the organ of haemopoiesis. Whereas for Bodin, writing well before Harvey’s discoveries, it is the liver which is seen as the organ of haemopoiesis (“the fountaine of the blood”) and the heart, merely its cistern.

Yet only a thoroughgoing reductionism would attempt to explain the less than formal referential play of organs and diseases that characterize the *oeuvre* of the artificial man by appealing solely to the history of anatomy and physiology. And in doing so, it would have to submerge those elements which if they belong to the corpus of anatomical and physiological knowledge, belong no less to a disposition of power that is committed to the creation and maintenance of productive and docile subjects.

The artificial man is as its name implies a stratagem. If it mirrors the physiological space of the body, if it imitates the diseases to which the human flesh is subject, it does so only in order to make it as similar to life as possible. And as La Boétie once remarked:

Your oppressor has but two eyes, two hands, one body, and has nothing that the least of your infinite number of citizens does not have – except the advantage you give him, which is the power to destroy you.¹⁷

¹⁴ Jean Bodin, *The Six Bookes of A Commonweale*, a facsimile reprint of the English translation of 1606, ed. K. McRae (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 790–1.

¹⁵ *Idem*.

¹⁶ William Harvey, *The Works Of*, tr. R. Willis (London: Sydenham Society, 1847), p. 4.

¹⁷ Étienne La Boétie, *Slaves by Choice* (Egham: Runnymede Books, 1988), p. 43.

ompacts, the Public Sphere and the Subject of Journalism

This paper proposes to explore journals of political and social/literary interest of the early eighteenth-century press in Britain as represented by Daniel Defoe's *Review* and the *Tatler* and *Spectator* of Steele and Addison. It will address the issue whether these journals assisted in the formation of a new human subject emerging from an altered social formation and to what extent they articulated the relationship between this new formation and its political expression in a civil society.

A particular emphasis will be placed on the role of the named writers and their liminal positions in discursive genealogy; all three are located on the thresholds of enlightenment, novelistic discourse and professional journalism while occupying an intriguing and sometimes plainly contradictory position between didacticism, entertainment and political propaganda.

As well as highlighting many areas of relevance for the informed political subject of that time, the practice of these periodicals retains a relevance to contemporary debates around issues of press responsibility and the role of the public sphere.

By the start of the eighteenth century in England, the question of citizenship, how an individual political agent was to participate in the process of government, had undergone rapid and contradictory alterations. The Civil War, Commonwealth, subsequent Restoration and Glorious Revolution had combined over a short number of years to a complex of profound questions to do with issues of monarchy, religion all of which impacted upon political authority and responsibility. In all this the place of the subject and his status as a political actor was paramount.

As a chronicler of these times, *The Tatler* writes of a certain magical liquor in a state weather glass

. . . some Time after finding my Glass rise, returned to my native Country with the rest of the Loyalists. I was then in Hopes to pass the Remainder of my Days in *settled Fair*: But alas! during the greatest Part of that Reign, the *English Nation* lay in a *dead Calm*, which,

as it is usual, was followed by high Winds and Tempests till of late Years: In which, with unspeakable Joy and Satisfaction, I have seen our Political Weather returned to *settled Fair*. I must only observe, that for all this last Summer my Glass has pointed at Changeable.¹

Although the growth in the commodity of news was an integral part of an earlier development in mercantile trading, Habermas has identified the growth of the press as a particular feature of a specifically bourgeois society in the end of the seventeenth century. For Habermas, the new communication of the public sphere was a process of rational discourse in the construction of the public opinion:

... on the one hand the society now confronting the state clearly separated a private domain from public authority and ... on the other hand, it turned the reproduction of life into something transcending the confines of private domestic authority and becoming a subject of public interest, that zone of continuous administrative contact became "critical" also in the sense that it provoked the critical judgement of a public making use of its reason.²

In disagreement to Benedict Anderson's assertion that "reading a newspaper is like reading a novel whose author has abandoned any thought of a coherent plot",³ it is my contention that in their different ways the discourse of the journals of Defoe, Steele and Addison served the role of opinion formation very much bound to a consistent plot of the emergent British nation.⁴ In addition, it was the language, the very substance of the journals which was relating and structuring sentiments of nation-based citizenship. In the case of the newly united British state, language and its circulation in a newly liberated press was a crucial feature of the cementing of the new state's legitimacy.

For once national unity had been posited there then remained the task of erecting a mythical form of equality in the area of citizenship. Here too the representations of language were important, since in such depictions the language became the cipher for those qualities of liberality, decency and freedom which were also held to be characteristics of Britain society.⁵

Until 1695, when the licensing laws lapsed, most administrations had attempted to retain formal control of the medium. By 1688 and the accession of William of Orange the eventual decision to lift restrictions could be interpreted as having as much to do with the direct and skilful use of journalism as a means of consolidating the Hannoverian dynasty as a popularisation of the Protestant ethic of debate and vernacular dissemination. Broadsheets and newsletters, private and government sponsored may have created news as a commodity, as a subsidiary of trade, but it was the periodicals which initiated the concept of opinions and taste as commodities essential to the interpretation of the world. For a readership which needed to learn how to respond to changing conditions, how to develop a sensitivity to their subjective judgements – discourse enters the fray.

¹ *The Tatler*, No. 241.

² J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Polity Press, 1989), p. 24.

³ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (Verso, 1987), p. 37.

⁴ L. Colley, *Britons* (Pimlico, 1994), pp. 40–1.

⁵ T. Crowley, "Bakhtin and the History of Language", p. 77, in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory* (Manchester University Press, 1989).

Locke's thought is of particular relevance for the emergence of this particular style of writing and also for the place of periodical journalism in the construction of civil society in the early eighteenth century. He is primarily the philosopher of liberalism, of the rational political player and, as such, highly influential in the development of a freely negotiated place for the human subject in the political affairs of the nation state of the propertied classes. His empiricism, though not absolute, accumulates special importance in the historical context in which new forms of knowledge were being shaped, grounded in a community based on new forms of political experience. His thinking is crucial in its rationalization of how political societies may best order themselves in terms of the rights of property and also how ideas about that society might circulate within it. Both of these issues are central to the function of the literary and political journals of the early eighteenth century. As well as being a herald of this era he also had a direct influence on the writers of the journals under discussion.

Education was an essential tenet of his philosophy as a preparation for moral and virtuous behaviour. Most significantly, the definition of that behaviour as virtuous was largely negotiated pragmatically, in contract with other members of society for the good of the majority of that society. Property and the benefits and responsibilities which accompany it, he believed, could only cohere in such a socially negotiated moral framework.

Labour becomes, quite literally, what divides nature and man's place within it from socially created property.

The labour of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property.⁶

Defoe illustrates his debt to such a position in his praise for money. Here he aligns himself with the Lockean construction of the human subject of civil society compacted by property.

O Money, Money! . . . All power, all policy is supported by thee; even vice and virtue act by thy assistance . . . Well art thou called the god of this world; for in thy presence and absence consists all the heaven or hell of human affairs . . . Subjects honestly labouring, honest possessing, ought to be left quietly, enjoying what they are masters of; and this is the foundation of what we call, law, liberty, and property, and the like modern words very much in use.⁷

Such a philosophy enshrines a seamless bourgeois rationalism in which all can be accounted for by an unchanging consensual formation. But such appropriation can only exist, in Locke's holistic view of the cycle of property and individual rights,

⁶ J. Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*, Section 27, ed. P. Laslett (Cambridge University Press, 1967).

⁷ D. Defoe, *The Review*, Vol. IV, No. 106, in Payne (ed.), *The Best of Defoe's Review* (Columbia University Press, 1951).

within a framework of tacit consent to observe the compacts of custom and practice valid in that society.

Nothing can make any man so, (a perpetual subject of that commonwealth) but his actually entering into it by positive engagement, and express promise and compact. This is that which I think concerning the beginning of political societies, and that consent which makes any one a member of any commonwealth.⁸

A philosophy such as John Locke's, so dependent on the notion of public discourse where words are for the public expression of thoughts and only of any worth if supported by ideas which have a compacted support in a civil society clearly has direct relevance to the content and style of the journals in question. His views on the intelligibility of ideas and the communicative imperative are vital foundations of the prescriptive nature of his thinking. Furthermore, as sensation or reflection upon sensory experience are the two sources for our knowledge and ideas about the world, according to Locke, then the content and discourse of journals are of clearly didactic importance.

He claims that words must,

excite, in the Hearer, exactly the same *Idea*, they stand for in the Mind of the Speaker. Without this, Men fill one another's Heads with noise and sounds, but convey not thereby their Thoughts and lay not before one another their *Ideas*, which is the end of Discourse and Language.⁹

Meanings are concerned with the agency of the individual and his ability to desire communication to take place for communicative ends. He sees the individual agent as a free entity in charge of his destiny to improve the communication of ideas in civil society. Implicit in the shift from Locke's state of nature to the negotiated democracy of civil society is a movement from individualism to communality. It is contained in the switch from the sameness of signification so prevalent in feudal and absolutist paradigms to a negotiated compact of signification which depended for its acceptance on the shared status of its discursive authority. Its weakness lies in the neglect of the covert power relations embedded in the structures and functions of the public sphere, the social compact.

The Lockean educational project and the inclusion of the propertied classes into the political dynamic of Britain called for a qualitative reassessment of the abilities of a wider section of society at self-interested, social action, often referred to as purely rational. Reading and opinion forming were an intrinsic moment in the construction of this new subject, presented as citizen. In articulating just these sentiments the journals are clearly textual links between the emerging bourgeois political order and the new political subjects who were taking their place in that order through their property and their labour.

⁸ J. Locke, Section 122 . . .

⁹ J. Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book III 2, 8, ed. P. Niddich (Clarendon, 1975).

Attention has often been drawn to differences in the tone and content of the publications of the authors in question. For instance, Defoe's forthright propagandist flavour has been contrasted to the varying degrees of elegance and wit in the pages of Addison and Steele as "more 'modern' than the charmingly artificial world of Mr Spectator".¹⁰

His interest was not in the "social scene", in the sense in which Addison and Steele described it to the delighted eyes of men and women who would have liked to be part of it, as well as to those who were already there. . . he was less interested in sociological problems than in political and economic questions of the day.¹¹

However, for our purpose, and in particular with regard to the areas of comparison with the didactic and liberal agenda of Locke's philosophical writings, it seems more useful to examine what these authors share. Both Defoe and Addison and Steele expressed a mistrust of political extremism and subsequent acrimony.

. . .the Government ought to be of no party at all. . .Statesmen are the nation's guardians.¹²

Such a statement is regarded by one of his biographers as "very nearly a complete statement of Defoe's mature political philosophy".¹³

In similar vein, Steele writes,

There cannot be a greater Judgement befall a Country than such a dreadful Spirit of Division as rends a Government into two distinct People, and makes them greater Strangers and more averse to one another, than if they were actually two different Nations. The Effects of such Division are pernicious to the last degree, not only with Regard to those Advantages which they give the Common Enemy, but to those private Evils which they produce in the Heart of almost every particular Person. This Influence is very fateful both to Mens Morals and their Understandings; It sinks the Virtue of a Nation, and not only so, but destroys even Common Sense.

. . . . For this Reason there is scarce a Person of any Figure in *England* who does not go by two contrary Characters, as opposite to one another as Light and Darkness.¹⁴

On learning, style and content of their journal, Steele recognizes the potential of the genre for the improvement of public virtue through its pages. Despite its rhetorical modesty, the passage is clearly in tune with Locke's desire to use ideas as a means of improving understanding.

Now as I am very desirous my Readers should have their Learnings as cheap as possible, it is with great Difficulty that I comply with him in this Particular For my own part, I have endeavoured to make nothing Ridiculous that is not in some measure Criminal. I have set up the Immoral Man as the Object of Derision: In short, if I have not formed a new Weapon against Vice and Irreligion, I have at least shown how that weapon may be put to a right use, which has so often fought the Battels of Impiety and Prophaneness.¹⁵

¹⁰ M. Nicholson, in Introduction to Payne (1951), p. ix.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. xvi.

¹² D. Defoe, *Preface to Vol VII*.

¹³ J. Sutherland. *Defoe* (Methuen, 1937), p. 100.

¹⁴ R. Steele, *The Spectator*, No. 174, ed. D. F. Bond (Oxford University Press, 1965).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, No. 445.

While maintaining a didactic perspective, Defoe is able to divide language used into two distinct types; one as separate from the world as an ornate embellishment which cannot be matched in context to the harsher realities of the world of business, the other – a plain discourse of the social:

Let not those gentlemen who are critics in style, in method or manner, be angry that I have never pulled off my cap to them in humble excuse for my loose way of treating the world as to language, expressions, and politeness of phrase. . . .but when I am upon the subjects of trade, and the variety of casual story, I think myself a little loose from the bonds of cadence and perfections of style, and satisfy myself in my study to be explicit, easy, free, and very plain.¹⁶

Clearly through, elegant writing is not incompatible with the achievement of virtuously directed prose. He makes this plain in his praise of the language and the ambitions of *The Spectator*:

There is not a man in this nation that pays a greater veneration to the writings of the inimitable *Spectator* than the author of the *Review*; and that not only for his learning and wit, but especially for his applying that learning and wit to the true ends for which they are given, viz., the establishing virtue *in* and the shaming vice *out* of the world.¹⁷

However, such deliberations on style and the use to which it may be put are not simply rhetorical exercises. They indicate the importance of language and discussion of language as a feature of the formation of the very public sphere which their journals were creating. Among twentieth-century cultural critics, Gramsci has indicated the significance of language's entry into public discussion.

Every time the question of language surfaces, in one way or another, it means that a series of other problems are coming to the fore: the formation and enlargement of the governing class, the need to establish more intimate and secure relationships between the governing groups and the national-popular mass, in other words to reorganise the cultural hegemony.¹⁸

At the opening of the eighteenth century, the hegemonic forces and definition of the national in British terms were being negotiated through the discourse of public debate as never before.

In writing of the value of trade and the new merchant classes so which moulded the acceptable norms of British political and religious life so emphatically during these years, Steele is very much a man of moderation and respect for the complementary assets of gentry and merchants and is convinced of the undesirability of negligence and virtue of industrious behaviour:

. . .this is always the Case of the landed and trading Interest of *Great Britain*: the Trader is fed by the Product of the Land, and the landed Man cannot be cloathed by the Skill of the Trader; and yet those Interests are ever jarring.

¹⁶ D. Defoe, *The Review*, Vol. 1, Preface.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, No. 82.

¹⁸ A. Gramsci, *Selection From Cultural Writings* (Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), pp. 183–4.

Tis the Misfortune of many other Gentlemen to turn out of the Seats of their Ancestors, to make Way for such new Masters as have been more exact in their Accompts than themselves; and certainly he deserves the Estate a great deal better who has got it by his Industry, than he who has lost it by his Negligence.¹⁹

Defoe praises the merchant more unequivocally as the true embodiment of all that is fine and noble in his brave new world in a polemic as hostile to divisions prejudicial to the merchant classes as it is insistent on the need for the language of plain speaking about matters of policy.

I wonder sometimes at the ignorance of those people and nations whose gentry pretend to despise families raised by trade If we respect trade, as it is understood by merchandising, it is certainly the most noble, most instructive, and improving of any way of life A true-bred merchant is a universal scholar . . . his foreign exchanges, protests, and procurations speak all tongues . . . the merchant makes a wet bog become a populous state; enriches beggars, ennobles mechanics, raises not families only, but towns, cities, provinces, and kingdoms.²⁰

In their common preoccupation with the educational task of the literary profession and the appropriate rhetoric for this purpose and awareness of peculiarities of the readership's competence and attention, in their respect for the varied levels of political and economic participation across traditional barriers and in their common concern for the health of a unified and coherent national political body merchants can be seen clearly as fulfilling the major concerns expressed in Locke's social compacts and are major contributors to the formation of a specifically bourgeois public sphere.

Defoe sees the nation state and its economy as a rational engine and attempts to outline coherent strategies for them to achieve their potential. He was a didactic moralist and a great individualist by nature and by conviction. However, as political propagandist Defoe occupies a problematic position. The extent to which he was a direct mouthpiece for the Tory government in the person of the moderate Secretary of State, Harley, is a point of much debate,²¹ but there is no doubt that while writing *The Review* he worked on missions for Harley, most notably in touring Scotland to gauge support for the Union of 1707. On occasions he implies this in his writings in *The Review*.

. . . when I launch out in the barque of my own imagination, I every minute discover new success, new advantages, and the approaching happiness of both kingdoms. Nor am I an idle spectator here; I have told Scotland of improvements in trade, wealth, and shipping that shall accrue to them on the happy conclusion of this affair . . . to show these nations their reciprocal duty and obligation one towards another.²²

¹⁹ R. Steele, *The Spectator*, p. 174.

²⁰ D. Defoe, *The Review*, Vol. III, No. 2.

²¹ Cf. L. Hanson, *The Government and the Press 1695–1763* (Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 94; J. Sutherland, *Defoe*, pp. 103–4.

²² D. Defoe, *The Review*, Vol. IV, No. 21.

Yet he shares the desire of his class to build a civil national pride based on enterprise and industry. There is no contradiction on this point between his overt political work and the very Lockean desire to use his writing to articulate and to propagate an increased sense of national community.

The attempts by Addison and Steele to communicate an ideology of civilised consensus based on fine perceptions and the acquisition of good taste and restraint in all matters may constitute a more subtle propaganda, but they were nevertheless pervasive for all their lack of Defoe's punch.

But it is still a more pleasing View to an *Englishman*, to see his own Country give the chief Influence to so illustrious an Age, and stand in the strongest Point of Light amidst the diffused Glory that surrounds it.

If we begin with Learned Men, we may observe, to the Honour of our Country, That those who make the greatest Figure in most Arts and Sciences, are universally allowed to be of the *British* Nation; and what is more remarkable, That Men of the greatest Learning are among the Men of the greatest Quality.²³

Political comment and positions for debate could be woven into the character features of various members of the Club. Sir Roger Coverley is described on one occasion as,

a Man of great Probity, Wit, and Understanding . . . His Taste of Books is a little too just for the Age he lives in; he has read all, but approves of very few. His Familiarity with the Customs, Manners, Actions, and Writings of the Antients, makes him a very delicate Observer of what occurs to him in the Present World . . . His Notions of Trade are noble and generous . . . He is acquainted with Commerce in all its Parts, and will tell you that it is a stupid and barbarous Way to extend Dominion by Arms; for true Power is to be got by Arts and Industry.²⁴

There was also support for a particularly Lockean form of sensory, individualistic bourgeois criticism in Addison in particular.

He [Addison] is poised at the point where the static, neo-classic, genre-based criticism, the discussion based on classification of works, was slowly giving way to a more "psychological" criticism, a discussion directed to the *process* of appreciation (in the reader or viewer). Such an affective criticism receives powerful impetus from Locke's epistemology based on sense impressions . . . Addison is not a technical philosopher, and he holds an eclectic body of ideas in balance by his urbane tone of friendly detachment.²⁵

Direct praise of this popularisation also flowed from Addison's collaborator:

Addison . . . brought Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables and in Coffee-Houses.²⁶

²³ R. Steele, *The Tatler*, p. 130.

²⁴ R. Steele, *The Spectator*, No. 2.

²⁵ A. Ross (ed.), *Selections from "The Tatler" and "The Spectator"*, Introduction (Harmondsworth, 1982), p. 46.

²⁶ R. Steele, *The Spectator*, No. 10.

Certainly the date and stylistic particularities of the journals would indicate that a new articulation for a new epoch was being formed; politically this was the creation of new reader/subject in relation to the changed conditions of society and government. It is the aspects of Foucault's work which relate to this assertion which I will sketch here.

The public sphere and the role of journalists in its construction form part of the project of a science of order, carrying the implication that it had to be paralleled by an accompanying genesis of consciousness, as it was from Locke onwards. What Locke's analysis ignores, as which privileged the Habermas' does to a point too, is the possibility that new forms of power structure did not simply allow a more rational arrangement of human affairs but one from specifically economic perspective. Foucault's thesis that the emergence of techniques of subjection and objectification together with procedures of individualization provided the appropriate conditions in which the human sciences could emerge allows a different view of the power implications of the journals in the public sphere.

There is great potential in viewing the articulation of taste and opinion of these early journals as engines for the classification, control and location of the human subject and the position of the professional writer. In their didactic mission the journals articulate a variety of perspectives, ways of seeing and interpreting the flux of events in metropolitan England of the early eighteenth century. Consistency of authorial voice,²⁷ regularity of appearance and, probably most importantly, the focus of the reader in the coffee-house as a forum of discussion and debate among a cross section of his social peers, gave the journals their power to structure public debate. Since reciprocity is an essential ingredient in this process, the position of the subject of the journalist was also to be constructed in his relationship to public consumption and discussion.

Foucault's insights into the nature of language have important implications for the structuring of opinions in the national narrative and the shift towards discursive probing of the borders of this emerging social space in the journals in question.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the peculiar existence and ancient solidarity of language as a thing inscribed in the fabric of the world were dissolved in the functioning of representation: all language had value only as discourse. The art of language was a way of "making a sign" – of simultaneously signifying something and arranging signs around that thing; an art of naming therefore, and then, by means of a reduplication both demonstrative and decorative, of capturing that name, of enclosing and concealing it, of designating it in turn by other names that were the deferred presence of the first name, its secondary sign, its figuration, its rhetorical panapoly.²⁸

And yet for all that, he is insistent that changes in order are by no means synonymous with facile conceptions of progress of human reason.

²⁷ Richetti, *Daniel Defoe* (Twayne, 1987), p. 17.

²⁸ M. Foucault, *The Order of Things* (Tavistock, 1970), pp. 42–4.

Not that reason made any progress: it was simply that the mode of being of things, and of the order that divided them up before presenting them to the understanding, was profoundly altered.²⁹

Such a Foucauldian perspective allows us to analyse the beginnings of an institutionalization of power through which individuality has been articulated as enlightened discourse in the language of the press. In addressing the notion of journalist's work as "art of visualizing order",³⁰ Hartley stresses its role in the alignment of forces:

Such a position emphasizes the readership, creating a demand for its enlargement and enlightenment in order to bring the whole of society, not just its literate leadership, into the pursuit of truth. The job of the journalist in these circumstances is above all to unify, to make common, the community of readers; it's a job of generalization.³¹

It also sheds light on the figure of the journalist as a player in the public sphere as a result of the epistemological alignment which produced man as both the subject and object of knowledge and as subject in both senses of the word:

subject to someone else by control and dependence and tied to their own identity by a consistence or (of) self-knowledge.³²

Defoe, Addison and Steele are not just providing information but also identity and behaviour which were included in the discourse of the press. For the first time journalists acquire names and their masks, even if deliberately transparent, were of a different nature from the authoritarian mask of the likes of Lestrangle. They were distinguishable from the power-brokers they represented and different from the total and understandable anonymity of the pamphleteers and their law-breaking predecessors while, at the same time, they played an important part in the structuring of the public sphere.

The relationship between the writers and their political patrons is of particular interest. One should remember the debates around Defoe and the pragmatism of the early journals. Was Defoe, in the greater scheme of things any more or less a propagandist because he was being paid directly by a government minister than Addison and Steele who were equally constituting a moral and educational mission with a clear social and didactic thrust which was in no way contradictory to the direction of Defoe's project or, from what we can gather, of his paymaster's?

The coffee-house becomes an appropriate locus for the exchange of information, reading and debate concerning the content of journals and other printed matter. It is the site of consumption of a commodity whose appropriation was an index of the changes in trade and economic life. It is the meeting point of men of business

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xxii.

³⁰ Ericson, Baranec and Chan, *Visualizing Deviance* (Open University Press, 1987).

³¹ J. Hartley, *The Pictures of Politics* (Routledge, 1992), pp. 148–9.

³² M. Foucault, *The Subject and Power*, in H. L. Dreyfus and P. Rainbow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Harvester Press, 1982), p. 212.

who come to exchange information beneficial to their particular trade. The coffee-house is the recreational space of the new commercial classes. It is metropolitan, and in their different ways the three journals stressed the centripetal effect of the metropolis on the affairs of Britain. Men of commerce and writers mingled in the clubbish atmosphere of the coffee-houses. *The Review* has been called, "a coffee-house harangue on current affairs",³³ and the role of discussion and debate among these groups is clearly indicated in the pages of *The Spectator* itself:

Every Man about him has, perhaps, a News-Paper in his Hands; but none can pretend to guess what Step will be taken in any one Court of *Europe*, "till Mr *Beaver* has thrown down his Pipe, and declares what Measures the Allies must enter into upon this new Posture of Affairs.

. . . Men . . . come to the Coffee-house either to transact Affairs, or enjoy Conversation . . . The Coffee-house is the Place of Rendezvous to all that live near it, who are thus turned to relish calm and ordinary Life.³⁴

Such characteristic passages reveal how such discussion and social mixing brought about a new sense of co-operative understanding which is very much a part of Lockean discourse, and as has been observed:

. . . club life has its advantages. It brings out what men have in common; it helps them to set up common standards of judgement; it smoothes away the idiosyncrasies which hinder co-operation in common tasks.³⁵

The journal writer, like his successor the journalist, is an ambiguous creature of margins and borders acting as a diaphragm of exchange and as a constituent of power. The biographical details of all three authors would indicate the extent to which they were located between political and civil discourse. Such a position is expressed, not without some irony, in the opening copy of *The Spectator*.

Thus I live in the World, rather as a Spectator of Mankind, than as one of the Species; by which means I have made myself a Speculative Statesman, Soldier, Merchant and Artizan, without ever meddling with any Practical Part in Life . . . I have acted in all the Parts of my Life as a Looker-on, which is the Character I intend to preserve in this Paper.³⁶

If we accept Foucault's assertion that between the Renaissance and Classical ages there opened up a differentiated episteme, then the figure of the journal writer, the observer and negotiator of opinion and acceptable social behaviour is an essential articulation of that change. Unlike his precursor in the Renaissance Europe, the English journal writer of the early eighteenth century is characterized by his relationship to language and its discursive nature. Castiglione's narrator

³³ J. Sutherland, *Defoe*, p. 11.

³⁴ R. Steele, *The Spectator*, No. 49.

³⁵ G. Clark, *The Later Stuarts* (Oxford History of England) (Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 358.

³⁶ J. Addison, *The Spectator*, No. 1.

indicated a shift from the political significance of the medieval knight to a renaissance courtier in the same way as these three journals signal the structuring of a public sphere around a new alignment of power. What the journals leave us is,

not so much their discourse as the element that made it possible, the discursivity of their language.³⁷

The journal writer becomes a self-conscious guarantor of the language and mores of the times, a position very much informed by Lockean empiricist pragmatism but equally informed by a newly available perception of political existence and confident in the enhanced discursive power of their language as a way of acting upon and ordering the world. This new formation allows, in the same way, the appearance of the twin-faced journalistic subject as well as his narrative sibling, the novelistic viewpoint.³⁸

In detailing what he considers to be the limitations of the notion of “carnival” in Bakhtin, Hirschkop writes,

What is lacking is an account of some figure comparable to the novelist, whose job it is to rework the local materials of everyday life into a “participatory description” of the world, one capable of reconnecting the obligations and commitments of the everyday world to the necessarily more abstract processes of public historical life

The democracy of carnival is indeed a collective democracy, grounded in civil society, in which the abstract identity of the citizen or subject is replaced by that of one who eats, drinks, procreates and labours. Utopian in the extreme, it describes a condition in which history is directly experienced in the texture of public social life.³⁹

Indeed, the figures who authored the early journals of the eighteenth century could claim, preceding the novelists, that they constituted that figure who could rework the connections between public and social life at a particular historic moment and in a particular generic form.

The new style of journal writing can be cited as evidence to support Foucault’s contention that the epistemological alteration implicit in changing linguistic categorizations between epistemes constituted an integral part of the changing categories of order and social control. Such a perspective would indicate, first, a solution to the apparent lack of a source of power in Locke and other voluntarist theories of public association while, at the same time, locating the writers and their discourse in the creation of the social compacts necessary to the new order of civil society and its expression in the form of a public sphere.

³⁷ M. Foucault, *The Order of Things* (Tavistock, 1970), p. 87.

³⁸ I. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Chatto and Windus, 1967), p. 51–2.

³⁹ K. Hirschkop, *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory* (Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 35.

Adam Smith's "Invisible Hand": A Study in Eighteenth-Century Magic Thinking

And now I found, as in many instances before, how true the fairy tales are, for I was waited on, all the time of my meal, by invisible hands. I had scarcely to do more than look towards anything I wanted, when it was brought me, just as if it had come to me of itself.

– George MacDonald, "Phantastes"¹

"Somehow or other", said he "notwithstanding the beauty of this country of Faerie, in which we are, there is much that is wrong in it. If there are great splendours, there are corresponding horrors, heights and depths, beautiful women and awful fiends, noble men and weaklings. All a man has to do is to better what he can" . . . "But he will not always come off well," I ventured to say. "Perhaps not," rejoined the knight, "in the individual act, but the result of his life will content him".

– George MacDonald, "Phantastes"²

Smith's theory of the "Invisible Hand" seems to stem from a rather pessimistic view of the human nature. Its main assumption is that egoism and self-interest are the main driving forces of man's activity, and that the contrary instincts of mutual aid and human solidarity are too weak to be relied upon:

It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest.³

Such a doctrine has to resolve the basic contradiction between the assumed ubiquitous egoism and the persistence of the society, which is clearly something more than a sum

¹ George MacDonald, *Phantastes. A Faerie Romance* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.M. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), p. 70.

² G. McDonald, *Phantastes* . . . , pp. 170–1.

³ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (London: Everyman's Library, 1991), p. 13.

total of isolated individuals bent on satisfying their needs at the cost of other individuals. The concepts of the "mercantile system", the "division of labour", and the "Invisible Hand" are all meant to explain how the private interests can be translated into a social benefit without ceasing to be private. In other words, the principle of inequality can be sustained in Smith's mind only if it yields equality of some kind:

The rich only select from the heap what is most precious and agreeable. They consume little more than the poor, and in spite of their natural selfishness and rapacity, though they mean only their own conveniency, though the sole end which they propose from labours of all thousands whom they employ, be the gratification of their own and insatiable desires, they divide with the poor the produce of their improvement. They are led by an **invisible hand** to make nearly the same distribution of the necessities of life, which would have been made, had the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants; and thus, without intending it, without knowing it, advance the interest of the society, and afford means for the multiplication of the species.⁴

Smith's argument may seem to be paradoxical in the extreme, he argues that the seemingly irrational and haphazard structure of the society achieves, after all, a kind of harmony that only the most rational and precise organisation would have achieved. It may sound like arguing that unreason, far from undermining reason, is in fact the supreme reason. Smith's argument flies in the face of the eighteenth-century rationalism while remaining, or at least striving to remain, rationalist at bottom.⁵ In a way, Smith only follows and develops Leibniz's doctrine that we live in the best possible world, and he encounters the same difficulty of how to explain the evil side of the world.

The apparent pessimism of Smith's position with regard to human nature turns out to be going hand in hand with a rather complacent optimism in relation to the social order. Again like Leibniz, Smith believes firmly in the harmonising effect of the divine Providence, and, using this notion, he tries to show that what in our eyes appears as inequality need not be such from a more sublime point of view:

When providence divided the earth among a few lordly masters, it neither forgot nor abandoned those who seemed to have been left out in the partition. These last too enjoy their share of all that it produces. In what constitutes the real happiness of human life, they are in no respect inferior to those who would seem so much above them. In ease of body and presence of mind, all the different ranks of life are nearly upon a level, and the beggar, who suns himself by the side of the highway possesses that security which kings are fighting for.⁶

⁴ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: J. Hay and Co, 1816), p. 419.

⁵ The non-rationalist nature of Adam Smith's "Invisible Hand" theory has of course been noticed by critics. As R.L.Heilbroner says, for example:

Smith's critically important conception of the Invisible Hand – an indirect intervention of the Divinity into the mechanisms of social life – is based on the inability of human reason to achieve social harmony by itself. Reason has its role to play, but the passions are both the bedrock and the driving force of human society.

Cf. Robert L. Heilbroner, with the assistance of Lawrence J. Malone (eds.), *The Essential Adam Smith* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 2.

⁶ A. Smith, *The Theory . . .*, Vol. 1, p. 420.

The striking stoicism of this statement, some people would even say cynicism, is more understandable in the context of some other statements which show his commitment to a certain philosophical quietism:

Philosophy, by representing invisible chains which bind together all these disjointed objects, endeavours to introduce order into this chaos of jarring and discordant appearances, to allay this tumult of the imagination, and to restore it, when it surveys the great revolutions of the universe, to that tone of tranquillity and composure, which is both most agreeable in itself, and most suitable to its nature.⁷

It is also the people who displayed that “tranquillity and composure” even in the most adverse circumstances that gain Smith’s highest praise and admiration:

In the confinement and solitude of the Bastille, after a certain time, the fashionable and frivolous count de Lanzun recovered tranquillity enough to be capable of amusing himself with feeding a spider.⁸

A sign of weakness, even if it is perfectly natural and bears no reference to the general conduct of a man, comes under Smith’s severe censure:

How did it disgrace the memory of the intrepid duke of Biron, who had so often braved death in the field, that he wept upon the scaffold, when he beheld the state to which he was fallen, and remembered the favour and the glory from which his own rashness had so unfortunately thrown him?⁹

Such utterances make it abundantly clear that for Smith the acceptance of economic liberalism, i.e. of the free play of market forces, entails of necessity a great deal of social conservatism, understood as the ability always to “look at the bright side of life”, regardless of the circumstances, even though there is nothing conservative in that play itself, a play that may bring the undoing of everything that is well-established and time-honoured. Ultimately, capitalism, or what Smith used to call the “mercantile system”, implies not only the division of labour, but also the division into social classes, without which the division of labour would be, in the long run, unthinkable, and which, while it may not be as rigid as in feudalism, remains a fundament of the social order.

It might be helpful to adduce the following statement, in order to make more clear what Smith understands by the equality that can be achieved within the capitalist system. It comes after Smith has ascertained that although the “savage nations” divide labour more or less equally and suffer no idlers, they still often live below the subsistence level

Among civilised and thriving nations, on the contrary, though a great number of people do not labour at all, many of whom consume the produce of ten times, frequently of

⁷ Adam Smith, “The Principles which Lead and Direct Philosophical Enquiries: Illustrated by the History of Astronomy”, in ed. J. Ralph Lindgren, *The Early Writings of Adam Smith* (London: Augustus M. Kelley, 1986), p. 45.

⁸ A. Smith, *The Theory . . .*, Vol. 1, p. 332.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 105–6.

a hundred times more labour than the greater part of those who work: yet the produce of the whole labour of the society is so great that all are often abundantly supplied, and a workman, even of the lowest and poorest order, if he is frugal and industrious, may enjoy a greater share of the necessities and conveniences of life than it is possible for any savage to acquire.¹⁰

Thus, even an extreme inequality among "civilised and thriving nations" is preferable to the most perfect equality among the "savages", and it is preferable exactly because that "civilised" inequality is more egalitarian than the "barbaric" equality, in the sense that it allows both the rich and the poor to have access, albeit in unequal measure, to "the necessities and conveniences of life", while the only thing "barbarians" may offer is, at best, an equal share of misery.

The deeply traditionalist argument that Smith is putting forward here, i.e. that every station of life has its curses and blessings and that we should be basically satisfied with the walk of life for which we seem to be destined, has of course little to do with the dynamics of capitalism seen as a system that favours individual improvement, and allows for free exercise of one's egoistic ambitions. Smith's "Invisible Hand" also cannot be taken as just a synonym of the divine Providence. Apart from guaranteeing a certain measure of social harmony, the "Invisible Hand" also guides the ambitious individuals and allows them to achieve lofty purposes, while turning a blind eye on their, usually base, motives. Here is a story Smith tells in *The Wealth of Nations* to illustrate the working of the market forces:

In the first fire-engines, a boy was constantly employed to open and shut alternately the communication between the boiler and the cylinder, according as the pistons either ascended or descended. One of those boys, who loved to play with his companions, observed that, by tying a string from the handle of the valve which opened this communication to another part of the machine, the valve would open and shut without his assistance, and leave him at liberty to divert himself with his play-fellows. One of the greatest improvements that has been made upon this machine, since it was invented, was in this manner the discovery of a boy who wanted to save his own labour.¹¹

The boy in question is the hero of Smith's capitalism in many ways. First of all, he achieves a socially beneficial improvement for egoistic reasons, secondly he replaces a physical action with an action of the mind that makes that physical action redundant, and such seems to be the essence of the technological progress. Thirdly, and perhaps the most importantly, he discovers that if the right path is pursued, the correct order of things will be reached automatically, i.e. "without his assistance". The paradox of the situation consists of course in the fact that the clever boy, through his improvement, makes himself redundant, and loses his job, even though he cares little about it, preferring, this time in a very uncaptalist fashion, to play with his "play-fellows", in the same way as Smith's beggar preferred to "sun himself by the side of the highway".

¹⁰ A. Smith, *The Wealth . . .*, p. 2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

One can easily have an impression that the logic of Adam Smith's "Invisible Hand" has something in common with the logic of the fairy tale, or the tale of magic. My claim is that such an impression would be correct in more ways than one. The story, adduced by Smith, of the clever boy who improves the steam engine is basically a kind of fairy tale in which, true to the rules of the genre, a lazy and pleasure-loving hero shows himself to be more successful than his perhaps more dutiful, but less imaginative fellows. His success has the nature of a miracle, analogical to the miracle of the "Invisible Hand", the pursuit of a narrow, personal interest leads unexpectedly to a beneficial social effect. Concerning the fairy tale hero, Max Lüthi, the great Swiss student of the folktale, says the following:

The hero does not have to be more principled than his brothers or companions; he may treat the creatures of the Otherworld more roughly than they, he can break his promises, or be a perfect lazybones, and yet it is only to him that fish imparts a magic spell due to which he will effortlessly achieve whatever he may wish.¹²

And even more appropriately:

It is through pursuing his own purposes that the hero saves others, very often without any such intention. Or he helps others, without thinking of his own interests – and exactly through this he finds the right way to achieve his own purpose.¹³

There is then a mechanism that operates within the tale of magic which harmonises the individual interests of the hero with more general social benefits. But it is clear that the hero himself knows nothing about the working, or even about the existence of such a mechanism. He makes the right decisions, which by no means need to appear wise, or logical to an external observer, because he is, as Lüthi puts it, "the blessed one", i.e. he is endowed with an infallible intuition that allows him to sense what the principle of the universal harmony (*der Zusammenhang des Weltganzen*) requires from him at a given moment. While doing it, the hero of the tale of magic, like Smith's heroes, shows always a perfect composure and self-confidence.¹⁴

The intellectual project of capitalism, as put forward by Smith, seems to contain a similar kind of dream, and a similar belief in the benevolent structure of the universe which requires from us only trust, and takes care of everything else. This is certainly a religious concept, though it is not necessarily Christian, or even monotheistic, it does not even need the idea of God, or a god. Although it has its utopian aspect, it is fundamentally different from all systems that make the collective bliss depend on the realisation of some kind of utopian project. The difference consists in the fact that Smith's capitalism, instead of idealising the past or the future, as is the case in collectivist utopias of all kinds, lends a dreamlike quality

¹² Max Lüthi, *Das europäische Volksmärchen. Form und Wesen* (Tübingen: A. Francke Verlag, 1985), p. 54. The translation of the fragments of M. Lüthi's book from German into English is mine.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 54: "Wie von einem Magnet geführt, geht er, der Isolierte, seinen sicheren Gang und zieht genau die Linie, die der Zusammenhang des Weltganzen von ihm fordert."

to the already and actually existent world, with all its apparent inequalities and absurdities. Also in this respect Smith follows the spirit of the tale of magic, of which Lüthi said that:

The tale of magic does not show us a kind of world that has been put in order, it shows the actual world that has been put in order. It shows us that the world is exactly such as it should be. The tale of magic is a realistic and a utopian genre ("Seinsdichtung und Seinsollensdichtung" – ["what-there-is-writing" and "what-there-should-be-writing"]) in one.¹⁵

In this respect it is remarkable that Smith finds itself on the opposite pole in relation to J. J. Rousseau, with his famous dictum, "Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains." Smith's argument suggests that man is born in the chains of his egoistic passion, but everywhere he is, at least potentially, *already free*, in the sense that his basic needs (both material and spiritual) are satisfied, if only he does not interfere with the nature of the world and his own nature, i.e. if only he does not get in the way of the magic of the "Invisible Hand". "Rousseau's man" stands thus in need of being liberated from his chains, which looks like a task that requires enormous and revolutionary changes, while "Smith's man" is asked only to make a minimal mental effort to find out that becoming free, and materially prosperous, is much easier than could be expected.

Naturally, Smith's heroes do not rely on magic spells, or magic helpers, but these motifs are not essential in the tale of magic. As was shown by the Russian scholar Dimitr Lihačov, they are rather external trappings added to what really matters, i.e. to the principle of the low resistance of the material world in the tale of magic, owing to which the fairy tale heroes can move so quickly and effortlessly, and achieve such impossible feats without being subject to such limitations as illnesses or ageing.¹⁶ Of course, what we find in Smith is only a distant reflection of the world of the tale of magic, a shadow only of the lightness of being that typifies magic, but then Smith's vision is based on science and technological progress, instead of magic. On the other hand, it is useful to be reminded at this point of the deep affinity between science and magic, the affinity that was perhaps discovered by George Frazer in his *Golden Bough*:

Thus the analogy between the magical and the scientific conceptions of the world is close. In both of them the succession of events is assumed to be perfectly regular and certain, being determined by immutable laws, the operation of which can be foreseen and calculated precisely; the elements of caprice, of chance, and of accident are banished from the course of nature. Both of them open up a seemingly boundless vista of possibilities to him who knows the causes of things and can touch the secret springs that set in motion the vast and intricate mechanism of the world.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

¹⁶ Cf. D. S. Lichaczow, "Świat wewnętrzny dzieła literackiego" (The Internal World of the Literary Work of Art), tr. J. Faryno, in *Studia z teorii literatury. Archiwum przekładów "Pamiętnika Literackiego"*, Vol. 1 (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdańsk: Ossolineum, 1977), pp. 253–68.

¹⁷ Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Reference, 1993), p. 49.

In Smith's system the elements of chance and accident obviously do appear, a market economy cannot function as smoothly as a scientific theory, or a tale of magic, but in the long run the market forces are capable of balancing the results of most accidents, and introduce a feeling of peace and security:

Commerce and manufacturers gradually introduced order and good government, and with them, the liberty and security of individuals, among the inhabitants of the country, which had before lived almost in a continual state of war with their neighbours and of servile dependency upon the superiors.¹⁸

If our analogy between Smith's capitalism and the tale of magic is correct, we have still to point to the figure of the antagonist in Smith's world, because perhaps the most essential aspect of the fairy tale realism is that it shows us a world which, however idealised in some respects, is still torn by the strife between the forces of good and evil. The name of that antagonist, who seems to correspond to the evil sorcerer, the bloodthirsty dragon, or the wicked stepmother, is the monopoly. It is the monopoly that destroys the subtle play of market forces and upsets their delicate balance:

A monopoly granted either to an individual or to a trading company has the same effect as a secret in trade or manufactures. The monopolists, by keeping the market constantly under-stocked, by never fully supplying the effectual demand, sell their commodities much above the natural price, and raise their emoluments, whether they consist in wages or profit, greatly above their natural rate.¹⁹

There are then such individuals whose greed surpasses the limits of the "ordinary greed" on which the "Mercantile System" is based. The egoism of the monopolists cannot be contained within the market economy. What makes them different from other merchants is that their position is founded on a "secret".

The notion of a secret or mystery plays of course a great role in the folktale. But there seem to be two basic kinds of mysteriousness that can be found there, two types of what might be called the folktale sublime. The simpler kind consists in the fact that there are in folktales many motifs, characters, and creatures that must strike the reader as fantastic, unearthly, or uncanny, and which, granting that we can suspend our disbelief in them, will undoubtedly provoke a feeling of awe and wonderment. In other words, it is the kind of the supernatural that is closely related to the notion of the taboo. Let us look at a typical example of how the taboo works in a folktale. It is a summary of an Eskimo tale about a supernatural wife:

A man finds his house put in order by a mysterious housekeeper. He discovers that the housekeeper is sometimes a woman and sometimes a fox. They marry and are happy until one day he makes mention of her origin as a fox, and she leaves him in anger.²⁰

¹⁸ A. Smith, *The Wealth . . .*, p. 363.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

²⁰ Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1977), p. 353.

The husband's mistake, or the way he broke a taboo, was to refer to his wife's ability of uniting the nature of a human being and that of an animal. Now the wife's ability consists in breaking a very strict taboo and places her firmly among supernatural, or even monstrous creatures. It is she who makes an illicit connection, a connection that potentially threatens the established way of being of the human community. Her husband breaks, as it were, a secondary taboo according to which it is illicit in some circumstances to refer to the breaking of a taboo. His rash act destroys a precarious equilibrium, called "marriage", which is based exactly on keeping silent about certain matters. Taboos then are essentially conservative, they favour strongly some connections, namely those that keep a community together, and equally strongly disfavour others, namely those which may prove disruptive to that community. The feeling of awe only helps the taboos to stay in their place.

But let us come back to our fairy tale. It is in fact a representative of an extensive class of tales, called "tales about supernatural wives", and the breaking of a taboo by the reckless husband in those tales may take various forms, but the outcome is remarkably similar:

In any case, the hero marries the supernatural woman and lives happily with her. On one occasion he wishes to go home on a visit. She consents, and gives him a magic object, usually a wishing ring, or else the power to make three wishes come true. But she warns him in the strongest terms against breaking certain prohibitions. He must not call for her to come to him or utter her name When he goes home he tells of his adventures and is induced to boast of his wife. He calls upon her to come, so that they may all see how beautiful she is. Sometimes it is another one of the prohibitions which he breaks, but in any event she does come, takes the ring and disappears, giving him a pair of iron shoes which he must wear out before he can find her again.²¹

In the above passage the essential nature of the taboo is revealed, it is another word for an exorbitant price that an individual has to pay for establishing an unusual relationship, or for entering, literally, charmed and exclusive social circles. The temporal motif seems very important here, it takes a lot of time to wear down social barriers, in this case, also gender barriers. It is quite likely that such tales contributed to the rise of the courtly love culture in which the hero has to spend long years in the service of his beloved before he can unite with her.

The other type of the folktale sublime, or rather of the attitude towards the mysterious and the uncanny, is exclusively the property of the tale of magic and it is to a large extent opposed to the former kind, even though it may co-exist with it in particular tales. In that type the mystery consists in making the most improbable and wild connections, with apparent disregard for all taboos, even though ultimately it turns out that "there is a method in this madness" and a state of affairs is reached where the traditional class divisions and community bonds are reconfirmed. M. Lüthi contrasts in this respect tales of magic with family sagas, associating the second type of mysteriousness or uncanniness with the former genre, and the first one with the latter:

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

If in the saga an animal suddenly starts to speak, the humans are filled with horror. In the wondertale the hero shows no amazement or fear in the face of the speaking animals, winds, or stars. It does not happen because he is familiar with speaking animals or stars, they do not belong at all to the environment he is used to, and there is no sign that he knew about their existence beforehand. And yet he is not surprised or afraid: the feeling of the strange is unknown to him. It seems to him that everything belongs to the same dimension. It even calms him down when a wild animal starts to speak; a wild animal could awake his fear: it could tear him to pieces, a speaking one is not uncanny from his point of view.²²

The above does not mean, as I have already shown, that the tale of magic ignores the idea of the taboo, but only that it allows for a suspension of many taboos to clear the way for the hero, whose privilege it is to enjoy with impunity many connections that normally would be considered a taboo. Again, this does not mean that the hero establishes those connections in order to make them last. On the contrary, he abandons them, or forgets about them the moment they are no longer useful to him, and reminds himself of them only when, and if, they become useful again. All this redounds to an impression that all connections within the tale of magic are possible, and that they may be made and unmade with equal ease. Lüthi calls this state of affairs, *Allverbundenheit*, or “universal interconnectedness”.²³

The hero's relations with animals or the denizens of the Otherworld, unless they have a sexual character, are essentially mercantile, i.e. they are centred on an object, an act, or a piece of information that one side possesses and the other is prepared to furnish at a certain price. Even if the hero offers help and is not immediately rewarded, we may be sure that the reward will come later, and that it will more than fully compensate the trouble he has taken in the act of helping. Of course, it is certainly very important for the hero to be prepared to take risks, to act boldly so as to make contacts, rather than lose them, even in situations where no immediate reward can be foreseen. It is exactly such an action that can bring about the miracle of the invisible hand, for example, the grateful ants, whom the hero rescued from drowning, will sort out almost in no time a large quantity of scattered seeds, i.e. perform a difficult task assigned to the hero so swiftly and efficiently as to create an impression that it all happened miraculously and “by itself”.²⁴

Clearly enough, it is the second type of the folktale sublime that corresponds to Adam Smith's miracle of the free market, while the first symbolises the functioning of monopoly, and the fact that all monopolies are not only based on secrets shared and jealously guarded by a group of influential accomplices, but justify their existence by means of a “secret”, i.e. by means of a taboo. Smith, like a true man of the Enlightenment, challenges, when talking about the system of apprenticeship as an example of a monopoly, the foundations of such a taboo:

²² M. Lüthi, *Das europäische . . .*, p. 10.

²³ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 49–62.

²⁴ Cf. S. Thompson, *The Folktale*, pp. 56–7.

Long apprenticeships are altogether unnecessary. The arts, which are much superior to common trades, such as those of making clocks and watches, contain no such mystery as to require a long course of instruction.²⁵

The nature of such a monopoly is, as in the examined folktales, to "take away the magic ring" and withhold it until "the iron shoes" are worn out. As Smith said: "The price of monopoly is upon every occasion the highest which can be got."²⁶ The purpose of a monopoly is permanent possession, i.e. the end of the tale of magic, but the tale of magic is not about permanent possession but about a swift circulation of possessions and about a mutability of relationships.

The very first sentence of *The Wealth of Nations* indicates that Smith does not connect real wealth with accumulated possessions as such, but rather with assets that can be immediately used to satisfy the current needs of people:

The annual labour of every nation is the fund which originally supplies it with all the necessities and conveniences of life which it annually consumes, and which consist always either in the immediate produce of that labour, or in what is purchased with that produce from other nations.²⁷

Of crucial importance is here the word, "annually", which makes the apparently static concept of "wealth" depend on ephemeral temporality.

The problem with monopolies and what makes them invariably attractive to some people is that they grant a feeling of group solidarity and social security for the few at the cost of increasing dramatically the general inequality by creating shortages and raising the cost of living for people at large. Smith emphasises that it is not the market forces that breed a really serious inequality, but the monopolistic practices of all kinds.²⁸ This is how Smith envisages the results of a shortened time of apprenticeship, which in practice means the elimination of a very lucrative monopoly:

In a trade so easily learnt he would have more competitors, and his wages, when he came to be a complete workman, would be much less than at present. The same increase of competition would reduce the profits of the masters as well as the wages of the workmen. The trades, the crafts, the mysteries, would all be losers. But the public would be a gainer, the work of all artificers coming in this way much cheaper to market.²⁹

This is of course a paradoxical statement because, in the long run, if the public is a "gainer", so will be the "artificers". But those two groups, i.e. the public and the monopolists, are presented here as belonging almost to different orders of existence. Very telling here is the very word, "mystery", with its double meaning,

²⁵ A. Smith, *The Wealth . . .*, p. 111.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1. The importance of this sentence is emphasized by Edwin Cannan in Edwin Cannan (ed.), *Adam Smith – The Wealth of Nations*, Vol. 1 (London: Methuen, 1961), p. 1.

²⁸ Cf. A. Smith, *The Wealth . . .*, p. 107: "But the policy of Europe, by not leaving things at perfect liberty, occasions other inequalities of much greater importance."

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 111–2.

“profession” and “secret”. Even though they are in fact two words with different etymologies, “mystery” in the sense “secret” being a Greek word, while “mystery” in the sense “profession” is a Latin word derived from *ministerium*, i.e. ministry, service, they were, no doubt, associated with each other in historical usage, and they come together in Smith’s thinking to denote the idea of the professional group as being naturally liable to strive for or defend a monopoly, i.e. a system based on the notion of “secret”, or taboo.³⁰

Smith’s obsession with the idea of a dynamic equilibrium, conceived of in the spirit of “universal interconnectedness”, can be also observed in his, rather little known, linguistic treatise, “Considerations concerning the First Formation of Languages and the Different Genius of Original and Compounded Languages”, where he finds that “the preposition *of* may be regarded as by far the most metaphysical of all prepositions” since:

The preposition *of* denotes relation in general, considered in concrete with the co-relative object. It marks that the noun substantive which goes before it, is somehow or other related to that which comes after it, but without in any respect ascertaining, as is done by the preposition *above*, what is the peculiar nature of that relation. We often apply it, therefore, to express the most opposite relations; because the most opposite relations agree so far that each of them comprehends in it the general or nature of a relation.³¹

The preposition *of* is thus, in Smith’s interpretation, the sign of a relation that can replace all other relations, a veritable “joker in the pack”, freely attachable and detachable, expressing the principle of “universal interconnectedness”, but also a symbol of the “mercantile system” with its versatility and superficiality of relations.

Smith is well aware of the fact that languages that rely on prepositions for the expression of relations are all “new” languages differing sharply from such languages as Latin or Ancient Greek, which preferred to use inflected endings to achieve the same purpose. But, curiously enough, he does not welcome the rise of analytic languages as a sign of progress, and civilisation. On the contrary, he sees it, in a very conservative fashion, as a symptom of corruption which goes together with the growing impurity of the “new” languages, consisting in the fact that they are increasingly dependent on loan words, and foreign importations of all kinds. Hence, Smith’s distinction between “original” and “compounded” languages, English being of course the most notorious example of the latter category, as it is a hotchpotch of German, Scandinavian, French, Latin, and Greek elements. He sees this, to be sure, as a necessary price to be paid for the grammatical “simplicity” of English and other modern languages:

³⁰ Cf. T. F. Hoad, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 307.

³¹ Adam Smith, “Considerations concerning the First Formation of Languages and the Different Genius of Original and Compounded Languages”, in J. Ralph Lindgren (ed.), *The Early Writings . . .*, p. 235.

In general it may be laid down for a maxim, that the more simple any language is in its composition, the more complex it must be in its declensions and conjugations; and on the contrary, the more simple it is in its declensions and conjugation, the more complex it must be in its composition.³²

But Smith ascribes very little virtue to that simplicity, and contrasts it sharply with technological progress, where such a simplicity would indeed be recommendable:

The simplification of machines renders them more and more perfect, but this simplification of the rudiments of languages renders them more and more imperfect, and less proper for many of the purposes of language.³³

It appears then that also Smith had its zone of exclusion, or of taboo, where he did not like the market forces to operate.

In fact, language was not the only such zone for Smith. Another such zone is aesthetics, where Smith refuses to believe that beauty is entirely a matter of convention, i.e. a matter of the market:

I cannot, however, be induced to believe, that our sense, even of external beauty, is founded altogether on custom. The utility of any form, its fitness for the useful purposes for which it was intended, evidently recommends it, and renders it agreeable to us, independent of custom.³⁴

Another such zone is evidently ethics, or morality, which Smith does not found on whatever is accepted in the market place, but on the inner voice of conscience. He asks the rhetorical question:

But what makes the difference? When our passive feelings are almost always so sordid and so selfish, how comes it that our active principles often be so generous and so noble?

And here is what makes this difference:

It is reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct.³⁵

As D.D. Raphael asserts, also Smith's economic liberalism had its limitations, and that he allowed such considerations as "national defence", or even "humanity" to interfere, at least marginally, with the rules of the free market.³⁶

To conclude, I would like to emphasise that my comparison of Smith's way of thinking with certain archetypal forms derived from a study of folktales is not

³² J. R. Lindgren (ed.), *The Early . . .*, p. 246. It must be borne in mind, when reading this passage, that what Smith means by a language's "composition" is that language's indebtedness to other languages for its means of expression, so that a language with a great number of loan-words taken from various sources would be, in Smith's terminology, regarded as having a "complex composition".

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

³⁴ A. Smith, *The Theory . . .*, Vol. 2, p. 14.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 304–5.

³⁶ Cf. D. D. Raphael, "Introduction", in A. Smith, *The Wealth . . .*, p. xxvi.

meant to detract in the least from the objective validity of Smith's conclusions. On the contrary, I believe that I have contributed, at least to a very small extent, to a better understanding of the profound anchoring of Smith's thought in the great, and universally valid, archetypes of mankind's intellectual history. Donald Winch complained that, "Smith is one of the most elusive authors of distinction that ever a biographer and historian of ideas set himself to cope with".³⁷ One of the reasons why this should be so, is that Smith, in my view at least, was a figure bestriding the dividing line between the Enlightenment and Romanticism, a rationalist who firmly believed in progress and civilisation, and a sorcerer who knew many kinds of magic, and was fully aware of the limits of man's speculative reason. Whether he could be regarded as a forerunner of Romanticism is a question I do not pretend to be able to answer. The Romantics, on the whole, seem to have sided with the world of taboos, and closely-knit communities, such as nations or classes, that sought to assert their "uniqueness" and "identity", which of course had little to do with Smith's free-market philosophy. On the other hand, Romanticism re-discovered the value of the tale of magic, e.g. Novalis and Tieck in Germany, and many Romantics believed, together with Smith, in the existence of an "Invisible Hand", such as Hegel's "World Spirit", that governs the world, dispassionately and guided by no Christian love or mercy, though, ultimately, for the good of mankind.

³⁷ Donald Winch, *Adam Smith's Politics. An Essay in Historiographic Revision* (Cambridge, London, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 3.

hevalier D'Eon and the Problem of Wo/manhood

Sir, or Madame, chuse you whether,
Since Report has made you either;
Bulls and Bears can't find you out;
But with me there is no doubt.
Whatever Nature may design;
A Petit Maitre is Feminine.

– Dr. T Morell, 1771

From the birth of Charles-Geneviève-Louis-Auguste-André-Timothée D'Eon de Beaumont in 1728 to the present day, biographers, historians, and gender theorists have struggled to comprehend what Gary Kates terms the “greatest hoax of the eighteenth century”.¹ In this paper, I will focus upon the Chevalier D'Eon in order to illustrate how gender differences were conceptualized in the eighteenth century. I hope to show how D'Eon can be interpreted simultaneously as a product of the early-modern two gender/one sex model which depicted gender as fluid and protean, and as a transgressive figure who threatens to break down the necessary boundaries of the emerging modern sex/gender binary. This modern duality, which was constructed as natural and prediscursive, decrees that the aberrant individual either must be contained within the system and stripped of his/her potentiality for subversion, or pushed outside the margins of the system where s/he will be viewed as monstrous and grotesque. D'Eon's assertively ambiguous position was only possible from within a masculine identity; once s/he was marked as female, defined by an ideology of feminine weakness and delicacy, s/he was no longer able

¹ Julia Epstein and Kristina Staub, *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), p. 173.

to challenge effectively the inflexible ordinances of a gender hierarchy which seeks to obliterate enigmatic indeterminacies.

D'Eon's gender crisis is first documented in his/her baptismal certificate; according to Michaud, s/he is named Charlotte in the parish register. Although possessing "womanly" features, D'Eon was raised as a man and in 1763 s/he was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary from Versailles to London to achieve the signing of the peace treaties ending the Seven Years War. In October 1763, D'Eon's hopes of attaining an ambassadorship were thwarted when the Count de Guerchy arrived in London. Jealous of D'Eon's secret correspondence with Louis XV, De Guerchy, after several unsuccessful attempts to poison and kidnap D'Eon, hired several hack writers to slander him/her, declaring that s/he was not only mad, but also a hermaphrodite! De Guerchy was indicted and exiled for the assaults made upon D'Eon's life on February 12, 1765; however, the debate over D'Eon's gender status which he had initiated was only just beginning. By 1769, all of polite London society was buzzing with suspicions that D'Eon was not male; members of the London Stock Exchange began placing bets upon his/her gender status. When Louis XVI ascended to the throne in April 1774, he hoped to put an end to the scandal which was casting ridicule upon both the French and English courts. Having just discovered the secret correspondence between Louis XV and D'Eon, he employed Beaumarchais to convince D'Eon to sign away his/her rights to both the state papers and to his/her amphibian gender status: D'Eon was coerced to declare, once and for all, his/her "true" sex.

According to Thomas Laqueur, in the early modern discourse of sexuality, gender, not sex, was constructed as natural and prediscursive. While gender was divided into two categories, male and female, sex was a singular entity. The body was sociologically produced within a continuum which corresponded to gendered characteristics: to be an anatomical man, one must have possessed those qualities associated with maleness, such as strength, bravery, and rationality; to be an organic woman one must have been weak, passive and emotional. Within this continuum, the male and female bodies were similar; Guillaume Bouchet writes, "La matrice de la femme n'est que la bourse et verge renversé de l'homme."² The only marked difference between man and woman was that excessive heat, "Nature's primary instrument", forced the male's genitals outside.³

Laqueur asserts that sometime around the eighteenth century, "sex as we know it was invented".⁴ Somehow, the body, instead of depicting a physical embodiment of a gendered self, represented incommensurable differences. It was not so much an inversion of systems, a gender/sex system which was flipped over, as it was, a differentiating and proliferating process. The woman's organs, which had previously been denoted by the same names as the male's, now gained their own

² Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 63

³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

distinct nomenclature. The physical body slowly became the standard against which other characteristics were determined. Biology began to displace gender as the primary agent, and forced gender to succumb to its "natural" laws. Sex was thus distinguished as the foundation for gender.

Gender Jump rope

If D'Eon believed that sex and gender were inextricably linked within a system that sees biology as a determinant, then s/he could be labeled an impostor when s/he declared that s/he was a woman.⁵ However, if D'Eon considered sex and gender to be fluid and mutable, to categorize him/her meant to confine him/her to a discourse of sexuality to which s/he does not subscribe. D'Eon was once again caught between two conflicting ideologies. On the one hand, s/he upheld the premodern gender/sex relationship; yet on the other s/he comprehended the emerging sex/gender system and found it too confining. For D'Eon sex and gender could be understood as above and beyond what Judith Butler terms performativity.⁶ For Butler, gender is that which is performed through publicly repeated acts and gestures; gender, and indeed sex, is not internal or inherent, but is produced. There is no interiority (interiority is a fiction constructed by the discourse of sexuality), but only surfaces. Gender is continuously, though not consciously, re-produced upon the superficies of the body. Each time the gendered act is repeated, it is altered ever so slightly and erases the traces of its predecessor. But, because the gendered acts which are reinscribed upon a body do not necessitate the involvement of the subject occupying that body, there is no possibility for agency. To explain D'Eon's transgression, the performative act would not suffice; instead one must look at how D'Eon played with performative reproductions in order to subvert the sex/gender

⁵ The *Public Ledger* for August 24, 1776 commented:

As there is no doubt of her being a woman, the shortest method of dealing with her is to enforce an Act of Parliament with inflicts a punishment on those who are dressed in a garb improper to their sex. It is most probable that the quarrel of this woman with her native country is all a hum. She may or may not have been the best spy that the French ever had in England. At any rate, this is not an age for the English to be bamboozled by any foreign impostor who prefers breeches to petticoats.

And again on Monday September 2, 1776: "The question with Englishmen is not, what this or that French Duke may have chosen to say of D'Eon; but whether she is not, in very truth, an absolute impostor."

⁶ In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the *surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), p. 136.

system which performativity actually reaffirms through a reiteration of socially sanctioned beliefs and acts. D'Eon introduced agency into performativity in order to create him/herself through ludic repetitions of chosen actions. S/he seemed to wish to evade being classified as either/or, as male or female. Perhaps, s/he hoped to be shrouded in ambiguity in order to fully explore the female and male parts of him/her. By not confining him/herself to a single sex and its corresponding gender, D'Eon would have been able to create an identity for him/herself which was not prescribed by social mandates and regulations.

For D'Eon male and female coexisted within both man and woman. Masculinity and femininity were not rivals, but were interchangeable. When one mode was no longer appropriate, then D'Eon would adopt the other. It seems to me, that although s/he contested that male and female parts were coextensive, s/he did not depict him/herself as an androgyne; s/he did not appear to be a mixture of both parts that have merged together to form a unified male/female whole, but an individual who used masculinity and femininity to suit the moment. S/he blurred the gender boundaries in the sense that s/he could incorporate both genders within a single anatomically male body; neither of these genders emanated directly from the body, which, instead of being an encasement for the soul (the physically male container for a masculine soul), was a playground for the game of gender jump rope.

In *Pieces Relatives*, D'Eon reveals how the two genders coexist and function within him: "Je vous supplie, Monseigneur, d'être bien persuadé que, quoique femme, j'ai la vertu & le courage d'un homme, & de l'homme le plus courageux."⁷ In "AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE FACTS, MOTIVES AND REASONS, which lay Mademoiselle la Chevalière D'Eon under the Necessity of making, in her life-time, a Public Sale of all she possesses in London, in Order to satisfy and pay her Creditors before her Departure for Paris," published in 1790, the author catalogues the objects that are for sale in a list which indicates the way in which D'Eon's male and female parts commingled:

On Thursday the 15 May . . . she will dispose of everything she possesses in England, and cause to be publicly sold at the Great Rooms of Mr. Christie (Auctioneer), *Pall-Mall* all her books, Manuscripts, (a Catalogue of which is hereunto annexed); also her Prints, Furniture, Effects, Clothes, Regimentals, Gowns, Petticoats, Hoops, Pistols, Guns, Bayonets, Cutlasses, Swords, Cuirasses, Stays, Helmets, Steel and Lace Head-Dresses, Diamonds, Jewels; in short, every thing that constitutes the Wardrobe of a Captain of Dragoons, and of a Lady who is resolved to carry nothing with her out of this Island but her integrity, and her regret at leaving it.⁸

What has been conventionally classified as strictly masculine (the sword) and strictly feminine (stays) are now inextricably conjoined, but have not fused together.

⁷ Chevalier D'Eon, *Pieces relatives au demêles entre Mademoiselle d'Eon de Beaumont . . . et le Sier Caron dit de Beaumarchais*, etc. (Amsterdam, 1778), p. 59.

⁸ "An Historical Account of the Facts, Motives, and Reasons which lay Mademoiselle la Chevalière D'Eon under the Necessity of making, in her Life-time, A public Sale of all she possesses in London, in order to satisfy and pay her Creditors before her Departure for Paris" (1790), p. 28.

The notion of play is essential to understand D'Eon's unique position. For him, gender was a game, but not a competitive sport. His/her male and female parts did not contend, but endlessly supplanted one another; neither was ever victorious. If D'Eon believed, as did most of late eighteenth-century society, that a core gender identity⁹ existed, then s/he would comprehend that the amount of permissible gender play would be strictly and severely rationed. Indeed, the only manner to breakout of the gender core was through a temporary and hedonistic lapse into carnival or masquerade. But, for D'Eon, this centre was a socio-cultural fabrication which served to imprison the soul within the anatomical body and to reinforce gender hierarchies. Without such a center, gender totalization cannot occur and ludic activity and substitution are permitted. One gender substituted for the other, opening up a wide range of possibilities. By denying a delimiting center, D'Eon asserts that his/her gender identity could not be fixed; every time s/he paused for a moment as a man, s/he emancipated him/herself from the social constraints which attempted to confine him/her within a predetermined gender role. Through the supplementation of the masculine for the feminine and the feminine for the masculine, "true" gender identity was continuously deferred.

The Prison of Femininity

For D'Eon free play only worked prior to being constructed as a female. We see him/her struggling to come to grips with the limitation of ludic reproduction. Although D'Eon declared himself to be an anatomical woman to Beaumarchais, s/he did not attempt to structure her remaining days around feminine gender codes. Instead, s/he continued to vacillate between acting the male and female role. In an article printed in the *Gentelman's Magazine* in April 1778, D'Eon is portrayed as a woman who has not learned how to behave in a female manner (i.e. passively, gracefully, silently and delicately):

D'Eon is so little reconciled to her new metamorphoses, that whenever she is in company with any knights of St. Lewis, and one of them is called "Mr. Chevalier," D'Eon turns about, thinking that she is meant. She is not yet accustomed to the usual ceremonials established between the sexes; or rather it is obvious that having always, in her former state of life, shown great attention to the ladies, she finds it difficult to restrain it: at table when she sits near them, she is always ready to fill their glasses: at coffee, no sooner has a lady emptied her cup, then D'Eon springs from her chair to hand it to the table . . . To a lady who was giving her some advice with regard to her behaviour, &c. she replied, "Madame, I shall be always sage, no doubt; but I can never be modest."¹⁰

⁹ The word core here implies an essential and identifiably real or true gender identity which is founded upon biological sex. A core identity necessarily eliminates the possibility, as Marjorie Garber explains, for "complex interplay, slippage and parodic recontextualization of gender markers and gender categories which characterize the transvestic fantasy". Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing & Cultural Anxiety* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 134.

¹⁰ *Gentelman's Magazine*, Vol. XLVIII (1778), pp. 164–5.

D'Eon appeared in women's clothing for the first time in London on April 6, 1777; but, at this point, s/he was still experimenting with genders roles. S/he wore an elegant black sack and diamond head-dress more for the shock value than as an expression of her true feminine self. However, when s/he returned to France, s/he was forced to comply with the mandates of the covenant. Beaumarchais writes: "I gave her to understand, through you, it was the King's desire that she should not do so [return to France] unless in the character of her sex, and that she should lead a quiet, virtuous, and circumspect life, such as she should never have departed from."¹¹

After playing dress-up in women's clothing in London, D'Eon decided blatantly to disregard the regulations of the settlement and immediately left for Paris wearing breeches and his military uniform. When s/he appeared before Vergennes in Versailles equipped as a dragoon, s/he received an order on August 19, 1777 to "lay aside the uniform of a dragoon, which he had been in the habit of wearing, and resume the garments of her sex, and is forbidden to appear in any part of the kingdom in any other garments than those suitable to females".¹² Claiming that s/he did not have any gowns suitable for the society at Versailles, D'Eon still attempted to persuade the King's ministers that it was necessary that s/he continue to appear in military outfit. But, Marie Antoinette offered D'Eon 24,000 livres to be used for the purchasing of a feminine trousseau; the banknotes were hidden in a fan along with a message reading, "Tell her, I arm her with a fan and create her Chevalière."¹³ From this day, D'Eon was entrapped within a feminine core gender identity. Faced with exile or imprisonment if s/he transgressed,¹⁴ D'Eon was now forced to wear female dress for the remainder of his/her life. Trapped within a hoop petticoat and stays, s/he now realized that the free play of gender substitutions was now terminated by the imposition of a gendered center. Not only must s/he dress the woman's part, but s/he now must conform his/her behavior, speech, actions, manners and thoughts to it:

Mademoiselle Bertin . . . undertakes not only to them[articled of female clothing] made for me during my absence, but also to turn me into a passably modest and obedient woman . . . Only my extreme desire to appear irreproachable in the eyes of the King and my protectors, such as Count de Vergennes and de Maurepas, could impart to me the strength I needed to conquer myself and adopt a mildness of disposition in conformity with the new existence which has been forced upon me. It would be easier for me to play the

¹¹ Captain J. Buchan Telfer, *The Strange Career of the Chevalier D'Eon de Beaumont* (London: Green and Co., 1885), p. 281.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 289

¹³ Edna Nixon, *The Royal Spy: The Strange Case of The Chevalier D'Eon* (London: Heinemann, 1966), p. 196.

¹⁴ In March 1779, D'Eon became very ill. S/he appealed to Vergennes to be allowed to wear male clothing on weekdays so s/he could take his/her exercise. D'Eon assured Vergennes that s/he would wear the feminine dress which corresponded to his/her "real" person on Sundays and feast days. Vergennes denied him/her leave to resume his military dress. However, D'Eon disregarded Vergennes' prohibition. D'Eon was imprisoned for wearing the clothes of the "other sex" from March until May.

part of a lion than that of a lamb, that of a captain of Volunteers than that of a gentle and obedient girl. After Providence, the King and his ministers, most of the merit of my miraculous conversion will be due to Mademoiselle Bertin.¹⁵

The female or feminine only existed as a male construction – the queen's voice was a reiteration in feminine form of the patriarchal order. The female exists as a representation "constituted by an alien subject, man, who substitutes himself for female subjectivity".¹⁶ The female D'Eon can no longer be the same as the male D'Eon; now s/he must appear meek (as a lamb), soft-spoken, tame, and refined. Yet, s/he could not become the "obedient girl" on her own; s/he needed the Queen, and Mademoiselle Bertin to construct her. S/he must be made from the recipe of gentility, poured into the mold of femininity, baked for several hours in the oven of the finishing school, and flipped out of the mold to meet the patriarchal world with ivory skin, angelic features, downcast eyes, and a mild, but sweet, temperament.

This constructed nature of woman is apparent when one examines the way in which the woman, the female and femininity were defined in opposition to the predominant discourse of masculinity in eighteenth-century literature. In Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language*, the female is defined as "not masculine; belonging to a she", and feminine is denoted as "soft; tender; delicate". Through his well-chosen quotes, Johnson shows how this "not masculine" figure is constructed as necessarily and naturally weak, imperfect and unmanly, as that which is fit to be subjugated and obedient:

Man, more divine,
Lord of the wide world, and wide wat'ry seas,
Indu'd with intellectual sense and soul,
And masters to their *females*, and their lords.

– O! Why did God,
Creator Wise! that peopl'd highest heaven
With Spirits *masculine*, create at last
This Novelty on earth, this fair defect
Of nature? And not fill the world at once
With men, as angels, without feminine....
– Milton, *Paradise Lost*

Man, on the other hand was depicted as "firm, brave; stout, undaunted; undis-mayed": "His long beard noteth the air and fire, the two masculine elements exercising their operation upon nature being the feminine" (Peacham).¹⁷

When set against contemporary connotations of masculinity and femininity, D'Eon's constructed female self is seen to involuntarily mimic that of the con-

¹⁵ Ernest Alfred Vizetelly, *The True Story of the Chevalier D'Eon* (London, Tylston and Edwards and A.P. Marsden, 1895), pp. 296–7.

¹⁶ Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge (eds.), *A History of Women in the West: Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes*, Vol. III (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 315.

¹⁷ Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1775 edition (London: Times Books, 1979).

ventional, proper lady. S/he was produced, by the society around her, as sweet, mild and pitiful, and this mutation was depicted as sudden and spontaneous. When Lord Ferras saw D'Eon for the first time as a woman, he allegedly thought that "the soldier's bold eye seemed to him as shy and modest as a maiden's, his loud voice sounded soft, his scarred and tanned face became white and smooth as if he had grown a new skin".¹⁸

The female was seen as excess that has been weaned down and is devoid of agency and power. In eighteenth-century discourse, the woman was equated with sex: Johnson defines sex as "womankind; by way of emphasis". To be sexed, then, was to be already marked, formulated and constructed. For D'Eon to be sexed meant to be limited and contained; it signified a lack of freedom and a suppression of the fluidity of gender and the possibility of play: "Only the feminine gender is marked, that the universal person and the masculine gender are conflated, thereby defining women in terms of their sex and extolling men as the bearers of a body-transcendent universal personhood."¹⁹ Man, as a symbol of the universal, of patriarchal domination, escaped the Cartesian dualism of mind and body. For the male, the body functioned to support the liberated mind: the body which was strong, powerful and penetrating, reaffirmed man's ability to dominate; his rational mind freed him from physicality and conjoins the material with the mental. But for woman, the body was confining and repressive: "I cannot express my repugnance, my grief, my pain, my troubled state, my vexation, and my shame, at having to appear thus publicly at Court in the dress and position of a female"²⁰

If D'Eon was sexed, or marked as female, and if s/he was locked within the confines of the body, is agency possible? For Michael Foucault, agency is never a possibility, as identity is always socially/culturally/historically constructed. Intelligible identity is that which maintains a fusion of sex/gender/sex-object choice/sexual practice/desire into one harmonized body. The intelligible being is then an effect of the discourse of sexuality and is produced by power relations; it is a socially fabricated self, which because of the elusiveness of power, thinks itself natural, prediscursive and capable of action. The pervasiveness of power limits personal action. If power is everywhere, and if it has succeeded in sexing the individual (making the individual a woman, as in the case of D'Eon) then the potentiality for action is dismissed as a mere chimera. For D'Eon this notion of the inequality of the sexes is crucial in order to understand his/her role in the production of his/her identity. As a man D'Eon evaded being sexed; s/he was able to play with conventional gender roles while hiding behind the symbols of traditional male power: the phallus, the sword, and the breeches.

Thus, for D'Eon as a woman, we see that performativity is not an option. S/he cannot create him/herself, as s/he has already been socially constructed as a sexed female. S/he is enclosed within the body, where agency is no longer possible.

¹⁸ Antonia White, tr., *The Memoirs of Chevalier D'Eon* (London: Anthony Blond, 1979), p. 227.

¹⁹ J. Butler, *Gender Trouble* . . . , p. 9.

²⁰ J. B. Telfer, *The Strange Career* . . . , p. 292.

Dressed solely as a woman, D'Eon found him/herself contained within the rigid sex/gender system. S/he misses his/her former freedom: "my heart is broken. My body is like my spirit. It does not like to be tied up in lace."²¹ D'Eon's dressing in female clothing symbolizes the growing desire to stabilize gender codes. Women's clothing, particularly the restraining stays and the voluminous hoop petticoat which prohibit movement, becomes for D'Eon the icon of a fixed gender economy in which gender role re-ascription, or the continuous writing and re-writing of gendered behaviour, is no longer possible. Entrapped in female clothing and "stripped of man's estate and of my uniform, I am divested of every vice and every danger incidental to such a condition; and being invested with the character of a female, am forced, in spite of myself to adopt the vocations and virtues incumbent thereon".²²

Amphibians and Amazons

It is also through clothing that one can perceive how the eighteenth century satirized D'Eon in order to establish its boundaries of sanctioned behavior. In *The Westminster Gazette* for Saturday August 31 through Tuesday September 3, 1776, it is reported that:

A traveller who left Paris someday last week, informs us that there is now making at the celebrated hair-dresser's, Monsieur L'Esprit, a lady's tete of a very uncommon shape and magnitude, it measures three feet and a half in height, by two and a half in breadth, it is shaped in the form of a tower, flanked with bastions, in the battlements of which is placed a number of pieces of artillery; the *aigrette* is a heap of grenades, shooting forth a bunch of double barrel'd pistols, set also with precious stones. Instead of the unmeaning feather so much worn, stands a representation of the culverin of Nancy (something like a great queen's pocket pistol, shewn at the tower) – This is no less bedecked with diamonds, gems &c., the pins securing that immense fabric, which are all shaped, some like toledoes, some like swords, daggers, &c. &c. – In fine, this elegant new tete is in point of propriety and ornamental attributes, truly characteristic. It is whispered in Paris that it is intended as a present from a crowned head, to an *august relation*,²³ now in England waiting for a decision of the Court of the King's Bench, relative to a punctilio in point of DRESS.

This sort of satirical jab at D'Eon was common throughout the eighteenth century. Here, the satirist pokes fun at the comic character of the "epicoene D'Eon" (*The Westminster Gazette*, Tuesday August 6 through Saturday August 10, 1776) by combining revered masculine images of war and bravery with feminine super-

²¹ G. Kates, p. 184.

²² J. B. Telfer, *The Strange Career . . .*, p. 293.

²³ In an article which appeared on Tuesday August 27, 1776, *The Morning Post* falaciously asserts that D'Eon was actually the "natural daughter of Lewis the 15th, and that in the will of this monarch she was acknowledged as such, under the name of the *Princesse Auguste*".

ficialities such as the wig and gems, in a manner which much resembles Alexander Pope's "The Rape of the Lock". The author here plays upon epic proportions, as heroic actions are fought out on the battlefield of lock and curls, where wounds occur from hairpins.

Through parodying D'Eon's strange situation as a man-woman *and* as a woman-man, the satirist reveals just how preoccupied eighteenth-century society was with the desire to delimit sex and gender, in order to contain subversive elements within a rigid and fixed framework of sex/gender identity. In many of the cartoons and lampoons, there appears to be a general tolerance of doubleness and ambiguity, which functions to demonstrate that this multiplication of gendered selves is unacceptable, unnatural, and illicit. For example, *The Morning Post* and *Daily Advertiser* for Tuesday, August 29, 1776, reports: "or shall I, like that perplexity to the city — Mr. — Mrs. D'Eon, appear in both capacities" This simultaneous doubleness and nonexistence are portrayed in much of the satirical poetry directed at D'Eon. In "Impromptu sur Mademoiselle D'Eon, qui lui a été remis à Londres par M. Angel, père, maître d'armes de la famille Royale D'Angleterre", D'Eon is depicted as both Minerva and Mars, in order to contrast his/her unheroic being with epic figures:

D'EON, ce double habit, qui frappe nos regards,
Semble nous annoncer ton double caractère.
Oui, tu sus dans la paix, au milieu des hazards,
Cultiver d'une main politique et guerrière
L'olive de Minerve, et les lauriers de Mars.²⁴

In James Perry's "AN EPISTLE FROM MADEMOISELLE TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE L—D J——E OF THE C——T OF THE K—NG'S B——H ON HIS DETERMINATION in regard to her SEX", D'Eon is ridiculed for having produced him/herself as such a monstrous figure: "Hail! thou production most uncommon, /Woman half-man and man half-woman!"

These satires, by reveling in the parody and hyperbole, expose eighteenth-century society's anxiety over indeterminacy. By ridiculing D'Eon's ambiguous duplicity, these satirists demarcate the boundaries of acceptable and licit behavior. Like the cartoons and lampoons, contemporary letters help marginalize what they deem is aberrant behavior by suppressing ludic activity within the confines of normalcy. For example, the young Miss Wilkes writes:

Miss Wilkes presents her compliments to Monsieur the Chevalier D'Eon, and is very anxious to know if he is really a woman as every body asserts, or a man. It would be very kind of Monsieur the chevalier D'Eon to communicate the truth to Miss Wilkes, who entreats, with all her heart, to be informed of it. It would be still more kind of him if he would come and dine with her and her papa, to-day or to-morrow, or, in fact, as soon as he is able to do so.²⁵

²⁴ J. B. Telfer, *The Strange Career* . . . , p. 346.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

Miss Wilke's polite request reflects the growing desire to determine and validate the correlation between sex and gender. By appealing to know the "truth" of D'Eon's sex, she exposes the growing desire to locate authenticity within sexual identity. Behind her innocent pleading is a deeper and more demanding assumption: that beneath even the most ambiguous of appearances there is a validated and sanctioned gender identity. It becomes necessary to search for truth "at the bottom of sex".²⁶

Other contemporary letter writers are just as inquisitive as the young Miss Wilkes, but instead of inquiring into the truth behind D'Eon's peculiar position, they utilize his/her gender crises to expose his/her deviant defiance of propriety. Horace Walpole, obsessed by D'Eon's enigmatic ambiguity²⁷ writes to Mann on 16 March 1786:

This savage story is a little relieved by Cagliostro's memorial and by the exhibition of Mlle La Chevalière Deon, who is come over – I trouble myself little to inquire into either of their histories – one shall never know the real truth of either – and what avails it to scrutinize what is unfathomable?²⁸

Walpole's letter exemplifies the confusion surrounding D'Eon's bizarre situation; the quest for undeniable facts is inextricably bound up with the horror that the "truth" does not exist. The urge to ground gender in physical, scientific proof reveals the contemporary preoccupation with the need to impose a semblance of order upon anarchic or ambiguous elements. Although some writers, indulging in friendly bantering, seems to endorse D'Eon's eccentricities, they still presumed that there exists some external source from which D'Eon's situation must stem. Marquis le Camus addressed D'Eon, "Gallant creature, if I had your ability to write I would not be embarrassed to find my first words; I have therefore chosen the epithet that seems to me to suit you best. I hope you will approve me when I put you above all sex, for good reason I fear to make a mistake"²⁹ M. Genêt, also desiring not to err, not to go against "truth", finds refuge in the English language, "which has no determining gender in word of appellation and recognizes the female only in cats and ships".³⁰

The apprehension of making a mistake, of defying truth, of transgressing which is rearticulated in the satirical portraits of D'Eon and contemporary letters, reveal the eighteenth century's fascination with ambiguity. It was an unsanctioned allure that enticed the otherwise conventional person into the phantasmagorical realm of the masquerade; yet when travesty transcended its ephemeral nature and entered daily life, it was dreaded that enigmatic behavior would dissolve the boundaries

²⁶ Michel Foucault, *Herculine Barbin* (Great Britain: The Harvester Press, 1980), xi.

²⁷ Walpole inserted prints of D'Eon appearing as a man and as a woman, in which D'Eon appeared more masculine when dressed as a woman and more feminine when dressed as a man, into his copy of D'Eon's *Letters*, 1764.

²⁸ Horace Walpole, *Correspondence*, ed. W. S. Lewis (New Haven, 1932–1983), Vol. 25, p. 631.

²⁹ Nixon, *The Royal Spy* . . . , p. 204.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

separating the licit from the indecent. Eighteenth-century society was preoccupied with D'Eon because s/he was a prime example of that which was necessary to delimit and contain. By decreeing that D'Eon chose only one sex for the remainder of his/her life, the modern discourse of sexuality sought to assert its dominance. But why D'Eon voluntarily chose to be a woman is problematic. It seems to me that D'Eon wished to challenge the prevailing modern discourses of sexuality by arguing for a free play of gendered signifiers. However, s/he did not comprehend that by declaring him/herself a woman, s/he would trap him/herself within the same codified system of sex/gender relations which s/he was attempting to overturn. If D'Eon had chosen to be male, s/he would have been sexed or marked and his/her self would not have been imprisoned within the physicality of the sexed body. The male escapes being marked because his inherent masculinity stands for the universal; since the man is not locked inside the body, he is able to create a self which is not directly linked to sex. The woman, on the other hand, is stripped of her ability to rationalize and to construct her own identity, since her mind cannot be separated from the body. While D'Eon willingly chose to be a woman, s/he did not choose to be sexed. S/he was not necessarily repulsed by her femininity, but by being subjected to a fixed and rigid gender code which would not permit him/her to experiment with gender differences.

nlightened Stratagems in *Tristram Shandy*

The term “enlightened”, and *the Enlightenment* the paper pays its concerned due to, is to be explicated as only partially signifying the epoch which it is commonly associated with. We will first of all treat it as a term standing for an onto-epistemological principle sought to underlie the developmental productivity of culture at any stage of its historical evolution. The dialectics of the *Enlightenment* cannot be regarded as an exasperated blundering of a one-sided metaphysics as a position of thought least conscious of the inevitable changes in discursive authority being the fate of any articulatory claim. Indeed, the dialectics of *the Enlightenment* latently sets a communicative ground with its dormant negations, it contemplates its intelligence and enterprising craftiness in which faculties it hopes to invest its theoretical and ideological ambitions. The manner this will be viewed in, is considerably inspired by philosophical theses of Horkheimer and Adorno presented in their work *The Dialectics of the Enlightenment*. Our reflections on the enlightened consciousness haunting the thoughtful quests of the occidental culture will then attempt at relating the general, philosophical pattern to a literary product of an epoch whose civilisational achieve has apparently been nobilitated in being referred to as the age of reason, or the Enlightenment.

The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, the work in question, will be the basis of determining the character of the enlightened outlook at a certain historical stage of its development.

Tristram Shandy has been beyond doubt celebrated as a work in which textuality and its linguistico-philological aspect are astoundingly self-conscious and blatantly challenge a reader who would like to experience the novel basically as a prime specimen of English literary tradition, or as a more sophisticated and ambitious choice amongst the writerly entertainers available on the cultural market. Anyhow, here, we would like to perceive *Tristram Shandy* as a work which at times views itself as a text in a sombre setting of its enlightened period. Hence,

we would be apt to consider it to be an ideologically responsive and a polemising off-spring of a cognitive regime of what we will throughout the paper refer to as the dialectics of *the Enlightenment*. We might assume the work's status to be that of an epistemological metaphor with an undisputably high degree of openness.

It is said that epistemological metaphors are structural derivatives of the current theoretical consciousness,¹ they reflect the current achievements of the contemporary methodological ventures. The scientific categories are to be verified on a *novel* ground, which is prompted by the need of tracing the bonds and existential limits of the concepts-in-fashion. Having assumed this, we have inevitably erased the demarcation line projecting the difference between science and aesthetics. Since the aesthetic act checks on the discursive capabilities of an concept, both metaphors as well as the essential categories relate to each other as the spokes-entities of an ideological system. Such would be the actual function of the dialectics of *the Enlightenment* craftily masking its expansive right, pregnant with ideological suggestiveness within the form of the apparently non-ideological.

The work as an epistemological metaphor will be suggested to work out a two-levelled reflective model of self-acknowledgement of the enlightened dialectics, of which the first level, a level of critical *immediacy*, provides a satirical critique of the analitico-empirical strategies of an enlightened ratio. This is represented by the order of the plot, that is to say, by all the components of the novel which would ascribe it the status of a literary work as perceived by a reader involved in the social, historical and literary polemic. This includes the developments comprising the existential setting of the novel's characters, their individual "histories", opinions, hobby-horsical obsessions disturbed by the jovial intelligence of the narrative. The other level, being that of philosophical and linguistic sophistication, transcends into the contemplativity of textual abstraction, posits itself in the moment of auto-knowledge whose refined advancements emulate the representational conventions of the Enlightenment as a historically determined period. In this respect, the novel might be regarded as an epistemological metaphor that in its exposures of textuality has been far more successful in anticipating the prospective methodological ventures of the subsequent centuries than the academia proper of the Enlightenment was. That is not to say that we shall consider the narrative experimental "break-through" to be a successful abandonment of the authoritative power of the dialectics of *the Enlightenment* in its wider sense. The fact is that the poetics of distortion and eruption in *Tristram Shandy* will be denounced to have entered an ideologically-valid forum of a rampant revaluation exercised by no faculty other than that of the enlightened dialectics. The dialectics has to adapt itself to the historical contingency, it is destined to the necessities of evolution and a change in its economical proactivity as well as its representational policies.

The Enlightenment as a general principle of cultural generativity wields generalisation and objectivisation as its methodological tools. It can talked of as an glo-

¹ Umberto Eco, *Dzielo otwarte* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1994), p. 165.

riously emerging force at the stage of historical, or rather pre-historical basis where thought thrusts itself into self-recognition by distancing itself from things and myth.² The Enlightenment treats things as a dictator does his subjects, man of knowledge knows things as long as he continues to create them. Being-in-itself becomes a being-for-thought in which conversion the essence of things becomes a substratum of power. Myth is undermined as inferior to intelligence of a progressing consciousness; the latter disqualifies nature with which myth enjoys a primeval unison, an unbothered unicity. Nature now stands as a chaotic matter succumbing to the differentiating action of essential abstractions projected by the omnipotent consciousness – which is an abstract identity and pure possessiveness. The authors track the proceedings of the enlightened consciousness in the course of historical evolution. The notions of possessiveness and substitution infiltrating the abstract beings of the dialectics push it onto a politically-articulable plane. The mode of substitution exerted in a primitive ritual of offering is a step toward discursive logic. An animal sacrificed in such a ritual comes as an exemplary item of certain class of things, then to become a quasi-representation of a species.³ The dialectic is rooted in a myth, or rather in the principle of fatal necessity which destroys the authority of mythical characters and manifests itself as a logical consequence – hence the essential content meandering within, and consequently overpowering the frail doctrinal forms of a myth. This is propelled by the incessant indignation toward the lack of sufficient clarity and exactness. *The Enlightenment* speaks of its objects as its fate whose concept it struggles to eliminate; it appears therefore, as the dialectics that is stifled permanently by its own intelligence ultimately never able to walk by its mythical origin, or compete with myth without becoming one.

The excess of thought investing itself in empirical factuality works to the disadvantage of reason whose autonomy languishes in the reality-oriented positivism. At some point, the dialectics which proclaims itself a science *par excellence* with language to proclaim its curiosities, and settle the dire accounts with myth, can operate within two domains of cultural expression. The first of these is epitomised by the order of the sign representing the exactness of science, the other one appertains to the aesthetic expansionism of the image. The image which was to reflect nature was excluded from intellectual cognition, it was to relieve the strain of conceptual pretentiousness. Yet the commonly recognised antithesis of arts and science, nevertheless brings the two domains under one management; being contraries and by virtue of being capable of their own tendencies, science and aesthetics merger together. Art in its dynamic development becomes a derivative of neopositivist science, it then takes on the quality of an ideological duplication, a supple reproduction. The division between the signly and the imaginary order exists as a formal aid.⁴ Yet art truly figures now as a system of detached signs which is apt to break the system and apply the modus of a game, or a play; which modi were put to such an enlightened domain as mathematics.

² Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektyka Oświecenia* (Warszawa, 1994), p. 25.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

Our exposition of *Tristram Shandy* as an explicit and “vulgar” reaction to the scientific strictness of its epoch is that of an autonomous domain unrestrainedly whipping the analytical methodicality of ratio with jovial lashes of satire.

Dionisac gruesomeness and pseudoerudicy of Walter Shandy’s outlook on life seems helpless in the narrative’s grip of cynicism likely to use any articulatory medium. Chapters at times speak as grotesquely distorted courses of strict reasoning patched with analytical schemes of inferring hiperbolised to a degree where their pretentious voice absolutely gives in to absurd, ambivalence of a witty pun or *doubles entendres*. At some point, the mega-rationalising voice of Walter Shandy is imbued by an illumination of a promising cognitive model whose central principle is the productivity of “Auxiliaries”. The desire of concreteness of evaluation finds its apparently ephemeral fulfilment in the study of these, which becomes a grounding of a personal, “enlightened” epistemology with some bias to investigate and question the right of the code. The inquiry into the linguistic whereabouts of judgement results in a failure when the subject gets entangled in a succession of questions that were to set the assumptive base for the theory of modal structures in discourse.

The verbs auxiliary we are concerned in here, continued my father, are, *am; was; have; had; do; did; make; made; suffer; shall; should; will; would; can; could; owe; ought; used; or is wont*. – And theses varied in tenses, *present, past, future*, and conjugated with the verb *see*, – or with these questions added to them; – *Is is? Was it? Will it be? Would it be? May it be? Might it be?* And these again put negatively, *Is it not, Was it not? Ought it not?* – Or affirmatively, – *It is, It was; It ought to be*. Or chronologically – *Has it been always? Lately? How long ago?* – Or hypothetically, – *If it was? If it was not?* What would follow? – If the French should beat the English? If the sun go out the Zodiac? . . .⁵

The project appears to have been too ambitious since the multireferentiality of the linguistic sign opens the quest to an infinite number of associations. The father’s dealing with language seems to be a task resembling entering a demonically infinite labyrinth with no way out, a labyrinth of a language play where to attain a clearer outlook of one’s position means, quite accidentally perhaps, to come to the place one has started from. Interestingly, the course of reasoning concludes with a hypothetical issue of encountering a white bear, which disqualifies the theory from being taken seriously.

A WHITE BEAR! Very well. Have I ever seen one? Might I have ever seen one? Am I ever to see one? Ought I ever to have seen one? Or can I ever see one . . . How would have the white bear have behaved? Is he wild? Tame? Terrible? Rough? Smooth?
– Is the white bear worth seeing? –
– Is there no sin in it? –
– Is it better than a BLACK ONE?⁶

⁵ Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (Penguin Books, 1985), p. 395.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 396.

There is no end to questions, the satire does not give Walter Shandy a chance; a reflection on the white bear does not convince the reader who has been promised a reliable discourse on "Auxiliaries". The more serious implication behind this is the witty expostulation of the language code, its astounding flexibility and the ever-present proximity of nonsense particularly when the desire of exactness amounts to obsession.

It may be claimed therefore that (a satirical) image proclaims its triumph over sign, Dionisiac laughter takes the whole bag of marbles, the gestures of overzealous determinacy imitated and reflected in the frolic narrative bear no weapon with which to justify their totalitarian seizures of the particular; the particular which though teeming in infinite quantities will always be swept to the vagaries of the countable and accountable for, by some unifying principle.

The aesthetic communiqué of the prose is a manifestation of form as content since the world of characters and its realistic sense is at times shattered, its stakes are outlined as imaginary projections dispersed by an intense movement, or rather play of meaning. Apparently the floridity of expression of the narrative, the intensity of its deformation of reality is obliged to no obedience to conventions, it has no system it would have to pact with as long as it does not breach the literary *savoir vivre* with overtly suggested obscenity or an intolerable political innuendo toward the current authorities. Should this occur, it would have met a firm resistance of the customary censorship – yet it is not the breach of custom that is of any interest to *Tristram's* narrative, though its preference of erotic allusions goes without saying. Ultimately what it perceives as more worthy dealing with is the root of any theoretical regime, the sign and its signifiatory suppleness.

The narrative of *Tristram* picks up on the schematism of the dialectics – its spectacular strangulation of the fact. In the enlightened design the fact suffers annihilation once it occurs: the rule of the equality of action and reaction endorses the power of retrogression and repetition to the disadvantage of the being itself.⁷ The priority of repetition, the continuous comeback to the same strictures of judgement, confines man to the to a circle of immanent certainty since immanence is an untouchable post of correctness. It is this principle of correctness that treats each event it beholds as a repetition; it deludes the subject with the freedom of certitude aimed against mythical imagination. The demonic falsehood of this freedom is sardonically mourned in *Tristram Shandy* where erudite garrulity completely stifles the object of its discourse. The language of the work, a conscious communiqué as we have claimed, can not be read as one disdaining the actual content with dithirambic ignorance, the truth is that it cannot have won its name as an encyclopaedic novel for no reason. Yet though rich in factual information, its academic diction will never be taken seriously; the narrative imitates reasoning to mourn its helpless spirit unable to materialise its illusive concreteness. Father's characterology whose sole empirical input is a highly speculative theory of noses in fact bears communicative validity as long as it amuses and stimulates the reader

⁷ M. Horkheimer, Th. W. Adorno, *Dialektika . . .*, p. 36.

aesthetically. The course of reasoning is terminated by absurd; but absurdity is not purposeless, it is to provide a brisk image of the impotent ratio of which solemnity has been laid in ruins. Laughter is provoked each time father's enlightened discourse exploits its subject to a degree that it cannot come to a sensible conclusion, every attempt ends with nonsensical rupture. Laughter however, is the response of a reader willing to revel in the science clobbered silly as many times as exact inquisitiveness reaches for a worldly artefact, or a natural being and veils its in-itself with a concept of the particular.

Walter Shandy having been informed on the death of his elder son finds the heartrending event first and foremost a challenge to his oratorical talent.

All must die. 'If my son could not have died, it had been matter of wonder, – not that he is dead.'

'Monarchs and princes dance in the the same ring with us.

– 'To die, is the great debt and tribute due unto nature: tombs and monuments, which should perpetuate our memories, pay it themselves; and the proudest pyramid of them all, which science and wealth have erected, has lost its apex, and stands obruncated in the traveller's horizon.' (My father found he got great ease, and went on . . .)⁸

In this chapter is shown the father's involvement in rhetorical frenzy in which he refers to the heights of oratorical achieve of the ancients. Cicero's persuasive efficiency is called on – retrospection haunts the daring harangue to an extent it loses the hold of the present, the sententious statement *all must die*, is followed by an exasperated recollection of events from ancient history, the hobby-horsical passion urges the parade of irrelevant facts and names whose charm turns the speech into a *repetition* of rhetorical clichés. Eventually, the celebration forgets about its departed subject, paternal sentiments are quenched by fascination with the valours of ceremonial eloquence.

The satirical response to the self-deception of *the Enlightenment* might be said to have executed its critique by means of a specific and indeed *enlightened* craftiness. This refined cunning has been ascribed to the dialectics of the *Enlightenment* struggling with the unmediatedness of mythical truths. Homer's Odysseus, the prime sample of an enlightened enterprising has vividly depicted this.⁹ The epic hero acknowledges the irresistible temptation in mermaids' song. Willing to listen to the enchanted singing and knowing that no mortal would resist its delusive charm, he asks his companions to tie him firmly to the ship's mast. The crew were to row toward the demonic trap were the singing could be heard, with their ears plastered with wax. Odysseus succeeds; he listens to the sirens call, psychically yields to its charm, but fails to fall into the trap since physically rendered immobile, he is not able to dive into the sea. Here, Odysseus represents, so to speak, the faculty of enlightened cunning by help of which he has managed to veto the apparent absolutism of his fatum which becomes a concept among others, better still, a concept yielding to intellectual capability. To overpower the absolute is possible

⁸ L. Sterne, *The Life and Opinions* . . . , p. 349.

⁹ M. Horkheimer, Th. W. Adorno, *Dialektika* . . . , p. 74–5.

by means of a negative calculation, mocking of a myth needs no brute force to triumph; what suffices at this point is a communicative transaction, a cunning usage of language. A consciousness aware of its articulatory efficiency may wear an identity-disguise likely to lull a demon, and maybe any existential obstacle likely to frustrate man's aims. In Odysseus' case it was a Cyclop who having heard the hero introduce himself as nobody excluded his interlocutor from the living.¹⁰ The enlightened character discovers in words that which in the bourgeois society is referred to as formalism; words furtively abandon the content they convey once they are uttered; liberating themselves from current contingencies, they await a more general content infinitely open to speculations.

Cunning as strategy celebrates its domination as long as it does not say too much, the stream of speech accompanies the stream of consciousness and that of thinking as parody, an unstirred autonomy. It is by distancing oneself from the excessive volubility of speech trains that the control and power over reality is attained. It seems that *Tristram's* narrative is conscious of that, it pulls those "trains" merely enjoying their superficial beauty which is at times the sympathetic beauty dormant in the hushed lyricism of disabled erudicy, and at times the "technical" beauty of an aesthetic communiqué rich in assonances and dissonances of literary diction and phonic substance.

The enlightened intelligence of the text operates with a discursive mode represented symbolically by Odysseus' cunning, it uses the convention of a work to explore the bonds of its autonomy, it exhausts the propriety of expression bringing it to the peripheries of sense, pushing it to the curiously valid policy of nonsense. The work's advancement is that of a "prophetic" epistemological metaphor, it very much consists in its negative self-research, that is to say, in its moments where it is palled with reflecting its socio-political contemporariness, or historicity, but indulges in the abstract and textual with a post-modern-like mania. The work ingrains its reflections in the muteness of a non-conformist interventionism suggesting the reader to suspend his habitual perception of a literary text which seeks linear consequence in representing the course of plot's ferments; it calls for the recognition of the signfulness of language. In its metalingual exhibitionism, *Tristram Shandy* comes out in the *open* as an unaccomplished work, or indeed, an open work. An open work is capable of representing a new vision of the world not just on the plane of the content, but on that of the communicative structures as well. The awareness of the reader-receiver in *Tristram Shandy*, would imply the work aspires to the status of an overtly open one, exhausting the semantic experimentability of a pun. Pun is to illuminate the reader and indicate the aesthetic sign whose joyful emptiness provokes a daring thought that such may be the actual nature of any sign. It may be said that the auto-reflexive text takes its "pedagogical" ambition to heart, and a sentimentalising heart too, its task of delightful teaching is far from contemplating nature and being in an mimetic ease; the sentimental satire has lost its innocent role of a culturally institutionalised jester of ideology. In fact

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

its anticipatory power provided in the reserve of openness, endows it with the right to participate in the methodological dispute to come – it hence becomes a “possible” shadow of science.

The aesthetic sign, or according to other theoretical outlooks, the iconic sign is a sign whose semantic reference is not exhausted in the relation to denotatum but it is enriched as many times as it is referred to the material which equips it with meaningful structure.¹¹ The language which apparently invokes of so convincing a world of human matters as to convince the reader the book is a mere concession of digressions and opinions becomes entertainingly conspicuous. The communicative functions are never defined, but in a way they are disclosed and *open* to reflection. Digression disturbs the alleged unity of the work; *alleged*, for it is there in the form of belief disappointed with the permanent absence of coherence giving this unity its right to being – the hope of linear accomplishment is set back, a semantically dense digression is unpardonably followed by another one – what the reader is left with is a demystifying play of the narrative joyfully exposing emptiness in the imaginary *excessibility* of the communiqué. If the radicalism of such a demystification is an epistemologically valid blow inflicted against reason, the gesture bears some ideological significance, it will be believed to operate as an active factor of the dialectics if *the Enlightenment* and its productivity. What needs looking into is the movement in the consequence of which delightful teaching implicitly withdraws to the position of a medium backing the contrivances of an enlightened discourse. In the wake of the excess of reason the dialectics of *the Enlightenment* with its consciousness no longer blind to negativity, cannot speak as reason. Instead, it fulfils itself as positivism where subject is not central, discursive categories lose anthropomorphic orientation, the disdain the satire shows for rational speculation is then endorsed by science. The autonomy of Kant's pure reason as a universal subject annihilates the right of an individual one, it encourages the initiative to heel the sensually approachable material and thereby makes way for the industrial society.

Would it be possible for Tristram Shandy to be the bastion of enlightened exactness? Perhaps it would if viewed from the perspective of the actual nature of the industrial society. Paradoxically enough, as a possible epistemological metaphor for the industrial age and its theoretical facade, it is a supporter of enlightened exactness which exercises its adherence in the form of Dionisiac ignorance. The encyclopaedic text is an immerse compilation of factual data unified by a pastiche of academic essencing, yet the ultimate predomination of digression and puny conclusions make it impossible to talk of the work as abiding by any principle purposefulness or necessity. To enjoy one's autonomy means to rejoice in one's scepticism which cannot speak without being a facet of enlightened policies.

The Kantian theory, that is to say, the theory of bourgeois freedom supplants antinomies within the discourse linking the flourishing industrial culture and the

¹¹ U. Eco, *Dzieło otwarte*, p. 77.

idealist ethical objectives, hence they are discredited by pessimistic critiques of Nietzsche and de Sade. The dissolution of the human subject in discourse is by the cynical turns of civilised fate actualised in the rapidly evolving cultural industry – in a way the aftermath of fascinations with demystification-games exerted by the dialectics of *the Enlightenment*. Since the chief achievement of this industry has been the amalgamation of economico-ideological strategies with popular culture, the notion of a subject in a system is discarded to the archive of obsolete epistemological slogans of an epoch past. In its place, the revaluated language of an enlightened modernity sets the ideologically disembodied notion of a consumer fully aware of his peripheral position in the game of culture-making.

The patterns of lifestyles and standards of consumption are derived from the actual needs of consumers, the task of culture projectors therefore is to provide a hierarchy of serial values to meet the expectations of the masses which uniformised as they are, get their choice.¹² Every consumer should respond spontaneously and at ease to the already established indicators of choice, he should reach for the category of a product which is “fabricated” for his type.

Can we treat *Tristram Shandy* as an active factor of the enlightened policy which lays a solid fundament for the ideological security of the industrial culture? In a way, the work is a pioneer in divulging the impotence of language to express his right, that is to say, his centredness in the discourse of culture. The cultural industry has evolved in the age of representational crisis, the crisis of concept’s credibility, the domination of pun, ambivalence, uncertainty toward words’ meaning, exhaustion with the ontological promises projecting man as the unquestionable master of being and being as logos. A consumer has to come to terms with language as necessarily having had to subject to the power of an EFFECT, a trick, a concrete solution, which implies perhaps the triumph of a “technical” particular over a work that once was the medium of ideas.¹³ The appearance of *Tristram Shandy* in the literary canon was a gesture of vetoing the writerly conventions; it goes without saying that in an industrial society a pun, the *double entendres* the novel’s wit thrives on, has won a commercial value. Pun becomes a medium of information indispensable in the industry of advertisement, its rights are reserved by a legal code, it is by no means a demythologising agent but works as a cordial and consumer-friendly choice indicator in the pay of ideology. The means of demystifying the transparency of language, a nihilistic blow inflicted on content usurping its priority over the right of form and code, were converted to the regime of the dialectics of *the Enlightenment* with its pursuit of uniformity and exact treatment of the world and its historical contingencies.

The pun addresses man-consumer personally ignorant of ideas, a *homo economicus* pursuing his own happiness without slightest hesitation, preferring objects which provide him with the maximum satisfaction.¹⁴ Idealising and institutional-

¹² M. Horkheimer, Th. W. Adorno, *Dialektika*, p. 141.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

¹⁴ Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings* (Stanford, California, 1988), p. 35.

ising puny ambivalence for the sake of effect, is a consumed idea itself. It has been claimed that concrete object in-itself cannot be object of consumption. In order to be one it must become sign, a suggestive and readable sign external to a relation it now only signifies.¹⁵ The thriving of the consumerist society owes its success to a dynamically evolving system of signs which imposes reliable ways of fulfilling desire that inherently unsatiable as it is, may be comforted with a brisk illusion that the ultimate satisfaction is somehow possible. The dialectics of *the Enlightenment* survives in its mutant form, its ideology is a productive force that may maintain its position as a glorified uniformizer, cherishing monopoly over the mechanisms and doctrinal qualities of culture. Reflected from this position, *Tristram Shandy* is a work latently adherent to *the Enlightenment* whose survival in way was enabled by a jovial expulsion of idea faithfully advocating the right of the subject. This not to say that the Enlightenment would be suggested to have been a recessive tendency in the development of thought and civilisation in the consequence of which case *Tristram Shandy* would have to be axiologically assessed as a counter-productive gesture to some justified and rightfully acclaimed dialectics being an alternative to that of *the Enlightenment*. *The Enlightenment* has won itself the status of a discursive paragon which is a measure, if not the chief principle of civilisational evolution, *Tristram Shandy* continues to fascinate humanity and humanities in that is a vivid reflection of the past, an aesthetic and philosophical reference amazingly valid for post-modernity, and a work infinitely open to the future.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

The Conduct of Spontaneity: Function and Fiction of the Epistolary Form

The notion of epistolary form applies to fictional letters – most notably the sub-genre known as the epistolary novel – as well as to non-fictional ones, all the instances when a sender is actually mailing a letter to an addressee. In terms of function, the two categories are quite different, however. The non-fictional letter is generally aimed at receiving an answer from its recipient or at least at producing a result in this direction through the medium of communication provided by pen and paper, whereas the letter in a work of fiction, if it does get a fictive reply, is aimed in fact at more persons than its alleged recipient. A letter in a novel will contain descriptive elements, for instance, that address the readers of the novel even more than the character who is supposed to receive it. In a sense, the fictional letter will imitate and not limit itself to the actual communicative function ascribed to letters, for the purpose of the novel whose aesthetic reality it serves, while the non-fictional letter cannot be dissociated from its communicative function. Or, so it would seem.

Fiction, indeed, permeates function in the very writing of non-fictional letters. Specific to the epistolary form in larger linguistic system of discourse is the fact that letter writers cannot rely on the immediacy of oral exchange: epistolary communication is based on the consciousness of its own deferral. It follows that to perform its function, the letter depends on the quality of the written projections of the sender and the recipient who partake in the process of communication. The author of a letter has to rely on the use of written construction of the human subjects involved in the correspondence. It is in this elaboration of the human writing and reading subjects, despite its functional purpose, that the non-fictional letter verges on the representation of the subject that literature, in particular the epistolary novel, concerns itself with.¹

¹ I am here indebted to the notion of “epistolarity”, or “the use of the letter’s formal properties to create meaning” as defined by Janet G. Altman (J. G. Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* [Columbus, Ohio State UP, 1982], p. 4)

This is to say that a letter always produces a fiction of the self, in its very function of communication. The word fiction here should be understood as recourse to an imaginary model, an operation linked to the artistic process of representation in what we currently term works of fiction. The connection between letters and literature is perhaps more obvious to us when reading the letters of literary artists than those of less gifted writers. The letters by Laurence Sterne, which will be called to witness here, were intended to contribute to the elaboration of his specific persona of a lionized author, that is his fictional self.² These letters staged his idiosyncrasies and composed the complex picture of sensibility and humour he wanted to give of himself in the increasingly cosmopolitan literary world of the second half of the eighteenth century.³ Sterne's letters, to which I shall not limit myself, seem to me to be typical of the age as concerns their style, their function and the cultural ideal to which they testify.

The interest of fiction in correspondence is inseparable from the cultural representation of the function of letters in a given period: that the heyday of the epistolary novel coincided with that of the familiar letter is a historical fact, some cultural reasons for which I would like to explore within the context of this paper. The ideal function assigned to letters in the second half of the eighteenth century in England is akin to the fictional models of social behaviour provided by epistolary novels, to which actual letter writers were expected to conform as well. Manuals and anthologies, typically providing examples for beginners, defined the ideal letter writer in the same terms used by Richardson's heroines to describe their own epistolary exercises, which were to be artless, natural, from the heart, and to the moment. When Sterne advised his daughter Lydia on the rules of letter writing, these were among the very words he used.

From the most illustrious to the long-forgotten letter writers, whose correspondence was published to the delight of an ever-extending public, the consensus on what letter writing should achieve was fairly clear: rhetorical solutions to the problems of human relationships. The same consensus obtains for the masters of epistolary fiction and their epigones. Of course, the age also reflected on its own practice and the contradictions it involved, and Samuel Johnson was not the only one to cast a cold eye on the letter writer's cant.⁴

² My first interest in epistolary form is linked to my choice of Sterne's correspondence as the subject of my thesis (Madeleine Descargues, *Correspondences: Etude critique de la correspondance de Laurence Sterne dans son oeuvre* [Paris: Didier Erudition, 1993]). My purpose in it was to study Sterne's letters as part of his whole works rather than as biographical documents, and as a specific exercise in literature vis-à-vis his novels, *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey*, his *Memoirs* and his diary, the *Journal to Eliza*. In the limits of this paper, I wish to use the letters of the master of serpentine digressions as a leading thread from one aspect of my topic to the other.

³ See Madeleine Descargues, "In Pursuit of Sterne's Epistolary Persona", *The Shandean*, 4 (1992): 167-80.

⁴ Johnson's effusive praise of naturalness in letter writing may betray a certain irony: "In a Man's Letters you know", he writes to Mrs Thrale, "his soul lies naked, his letters are only the mirrour of his breast, whatever passes within him is shown undisguised in its natural process" (*The Letters of Samuel Johnson, with Mrs. Thrale's Genuine Letters to Him*, ed. R. W. Chapman, 3 vols. [Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1952], p. 559).

In the panorama of non-fictional letters in the second half of the eighteenth century, often referred to as “familiar letters”,⁵ systematic emphasis was laid on one so-called innovative characteristic that twentieth-century critics have called “spontaneity”, a term that in 1751 had fewer positive connotations than nowadays: “The fact or quality in things of being spontaneous in respect of production, occurrence, etc.” (*OED*).⁶ Eighteenth-century letter writers usually referred to “nature” versus “art” or else opposed the “heart” and the “mind”. But whether described in terms of “spontaneity” or of “artlessness”, and whether savoured by twentieth-century or eighteenth-century readers, the written result would seem to deny the absence of art and skill, and even sometimes point to self-proclaimed “naturalness” or “spontaneity”.

The Panorama of Letters: Models, Old and New

To define the function of spontaneity, we shall study a few examples à la Sterne, whose letters were particularly in vogue. In the craze for sensitive eccentrics, he was appreciated for his effortless altruism, flowing just as freely from the quill as the idiosyncrasies he was famous for: emphatic punctuation and dashes standing out among other characteristic traits. Obviously Sterne was imitated, but, despite his undeniable originality, he himself belonged to a general trend, as testified by the letter manuals that frequently quoted from his best-known purple patches.⁷

A case in point is that of *The Complete Letter-Writer; or, Polite English Secretary*, whose sixteenth edition was published in 1778 and boasted the addition of “a Few Select Letters, by the Late Rev. Laurence Sterne and Others”.⁸ Incidentally, the letters by Rev. Laurence Sterne added to the book were mostly sentimental and spurious. *The Complete Letter-Writer*, as its full title indicated, purported to be a conduct book and, as the rules of the genre would have it, it consisted of different chapters, offering to uninspired correspondents model responses for every social circumstance. The ambition of the book was to teach a semi-

⁵ Among the few general studies of the genre, see William H. Irving, *The Providence of Wit in the English Letter Writers* (Durham: Duke UP, 1955).

⁶ Later, from 1826, the definition comprised a reference to possible superficiality and, more positively, to innocence: “The fact or quality of coming without deep thought or premeditation” (*OED*).

⁷ Sterne was imitated because, in his very originality, he corresponded to some expectations of the age: “the sentiment and gesture of Sterne were diffused everywhere . . . and letters of business were punctuated with the dash and the star”, wrote Wilbur L. Cross (W. L. Cross, *The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne* [New Haven: Yale UP, 1929], p. 83).

⁸ *The Complete Letter-Writer; or, Polite English Secretary. Containing Familiar Letters on the Most Common Occasions in Life. Also a Variety of More Elegant Letters for Examples and Improvement of Style, from the Best Modern Authors, Together with Many Originals . . . The Sixteenth Edition. To which is Now First Added, a Few Select Letters, by the Late Rev. Laurence Sterne and Others . . .* (London, 1778) title page.

educated public how to master typical situations for the best social and psychological results, as demonstrated by the table of contents, proposing, among other examples, a letter "From a Brother at Home, to his Sister abroad on a Visit, Complaining of Her not Writing".

For a closer insight into the tastes of the age, it might be worth comparing this selection of letters by Sterne, or rather attributed to him,⁹ to that of another manual, of a later mint, which presented itself as an anthology: *The Correspondent, a Selection of Letters, from the Best Authors*, published in 1796.¹⁰ The letters that were presented in it leaned towards the comical rather than towards the sentimental, though they also reproduced Sterne's amiably philanthropic answer to Ignatius Sancho's plea in favour of slaves.¹¹ Sancho was a self-educated man, a former slave become grocer who after being emancipated by his owner, became a celebrity in the London of the 1760s and 70s, and prided himself in writing in the manner of Sterne, in homage to the latter.¹² Among the other Sternean excerpts in *The Correspondent* were a few short petulant notes and the account of a journey in the south of France, a good example of the vivid sort of expression the public and the critics praised:

Good God! we were toasted, roasted, grill'd, stew'd and carbonated on one side or other all the way – and being all done enough (*assez cuits*) in the day, we were eat up the night by bugs, and other unswept out vermin, the legal inhabitants (if length of possession gives right) of every inn we lay at.¹³

Besides its reference to Sterne, *The Correspondent* had a lot to say about models. The author of its preface aimed at forming wiser and better minds, not copyists, the difficulty here being to offer models while rejecting servile copying, a paradox that the author-editor disposed of with zest:

In the writing of letters, where the chief aim ought to be to follow nature in her most genuine simplicity, and to discard everything which may be construed into affectation, nothing can

⁹ As indicated above, the letters presented to the public were in the sentimental vein: they came from Lydia Sterne's edition of her father's letters. She had gathered them with an eye on financial success, and on the preservation of her mother's reputation as well, which did not inspire her with too many scruples as to the authenticity of the material she published. The case of her editing is discussed at length by Arthur H. Cash (A. C. Cash, *Laurence Sterne: The Later Years* [London and New York: Methuen, 1986], pp. 351–2)

¹⁰ *The Correspondent, a Selection of Letters, from the Best Authors; Together with Some Originals, Adapted to All the Periods and Occasions of Life: Calculated to Form the Epistolary Style of Youth of Both Sexes; to Impart a Knowledge of the World and Letters: And to Inspire Sentiments of Virtues and Morality*, 2 vols. (London, 1796) title page.

¹¹ See Madeleine Descargues, "Ignatius Sancho's Letters", *The Shandean*, 3 (1991): 145–62.

¹² Sancho was moved by the fact that Sterne had indeed "had a tear to spar[e] for the distresses of [his] poor moorish brethren" (Laurence Sterne, *Letters of Laurence Sterne*, ed. Lewis P. Curtis [Oxford: Clarendon, 1935], p. 282) and he entreated him to plead the cause of slaves, in answer to which Sterne promised to do his best: "for in honest truth, it casts, a great Shade upon the world, that so great a part of it, are, and have been so long bound down in chains of darkness & in chains of misery" (Sterne, *Letters*, p. 287). All subsequent references to Sterne's letters are to the same edition.

¹³ L. Sterne, *Letters*, pp. 182–3.

be more dangerous to the reputation of the writer than a style servilely copied from any particular individual, however animated, eloquent, or graceful. How many periods of ponderous inanity are committed to paper from an absurd endeavour to imitate Johnson! – How many childish observations, and ridiculously affected half-sentences, flow from the copyists of Sterne! If such are the effects to be dreaded from an imitation of the best originals, how much more have all persons interested in the education of youth to apprehend from their perusing those compilations daily vended under the name of *Letter Writers*, where a barren fancy and uninformed judgement present only such models as would serve to instruct by the exposure of absurdity, and, in the hands of an able tutor, afford a selection of the modes of composition which ought to be avoided (iv-v).

Although leaving us to ponder the unresolved contradiction between “genuine simplicity” and the need nevertheless for some literary examples, these remarks reveal the very high demands on epistolary art as well as the consensus it formed among the barely literate and the highly cultured. The wish to re-examine the authority of models, whichever social class puts it into practice, implies self-confidence and self-assertion, which are linked to the emphasis on naturalness or spontaneity. Of course, it was also through imitating that letter writers with little education, like Winifred Jenkins in Smollett’s epistolary novel *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, could acquire a taste and occasionally a gift for letter writing, therefore sharing in the innovative aesthetics of a cultured elite and sharing in the general philosophy that underpinned this aesthetics.

They did share and share alike, all the more so as the familiar letter in Britain had remained close to the humanist ideal of the Renaissance, generally commending unbounded freedom in study and conception and exploring in the epistolary field the potential of letters for infinite variety of expression. For Janet Altman, this spirit of independence had not been deeply affected in Britain by the imposition of norms after the Renaissance period:¹⁴

Most striking, in contrast to the French production, is the highly popular strain of letter manuals that stress independence and self-reliance: a quite different cultural ideology is operating. As early as 1586 a manual heavily influenced by Erasmus was published in English (Angel Day, *The English Secreterie* . . .), which advised “the unlearned” not to copy letters slavishly.¹⁵

¹⁴ The comparative rigidity of French manuals and norms of expression in the seventeenth century was encoded in the standards determined by the Académie Française, created in 1635. “What was published as model epistolary writing in seventeenth-century France,” writes Altman, “was *not* what we call ‘familiar’ letters (that is, letters to close friends and family, representing one’s interior life and world view to a person addressed as an equal), but only those letters that situated the epistolarian as the humble servant of courtly milieux revolving around an absolute monarch” (Janet Altman, “Political Ideology in the Letter Manual [France, England, New England],” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 18 [1988]: 106). Nevertheless her analysis gives no grounds for questioning the contribution of the famous great French letter writers to epistolary art. The latter owes its richness to its ability to include extremes: Voiture, Bussy-Rabutin, Guez de Balzac’s refined letters at one end of the spectrum, and at the other the models offered by English manuals to the benefit of socially mobile labour.

¹⁵ J. Altman, “Political Ideology in the Letter Manual (France, England, New England),” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 18 (1988): 114.

The fact that there were more literate people in England than in France bears on the notion of spontaneity indeed, since the motivations that led to writing were often to provide answers to concrete problems, such as delays in payment, or the delegation of legal power. The letters offered as examples in manuals are often "sample letters from shopgirls, farmers, and apprentices who speak of their activity as workers".¹⁶ Such motivations would of course favour simplicity and polite directness in style.

The development of autonomy of expression among increasing numbers of letter writers who were also the rank and file novel-reading public provided a base for the consensus in praising what was later termed "spontaneity". As a commodious and accessible medium through which the flexibility of individual aspirations and shifting social and psychological relationships could be expressed, the epistolary form also proved its Protean ability to adapt itself to the times in its very thematic diversity, from practical matters to philosophical reflection, not forgetting introspective forays. No wonder that the eighteenth century should often be associated with epistolary art, whether in terms of epistolary fiction or in terms of the development of actual epistolary exchanges. This was the culmination of the on-going critical reflection on society and literature, disseminated by such manuals as the ones cited above for the benefit of their specific public and in the wake of earlier initiatives: at the dawn of the century, *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* had had recourse to the letter form considered appropriate for intelligently tolerant and didactic commentaries on social and cultural life. It was all one to develop exchanges and contacts and to experiment with flexible artistic forms.

In that sense, the letter can be aptly compared to the novel with which it shared a "detailed concern with the analysis of human character and problems of social life".¹⁷ Stylistically, the letter retained a respect for classical precedents while emphasizing recent trends,¹⁸ which also bore on the novel. But the preoccupation with spontaneity was symptomatic of more complex spiritual needs. Literary writers reflected and articulated a common concern for the ways of and to self-expression. More and more, the avowed business of the familiar letter was to display its writer's intimacy.

Letters and the novel also intersected in the new relationship between the writer and the expression of his interior self which is ever assumed in the commitment to letter writing. In the familiarity of its style, the letter lent itself to an exercise in interiority as well as to the imperatives of social cohesion. In the Britain of the rising middle class, consolidating the balance it had achieved in its system of government,

¹⁶ J. Altman, "Political Ideology in the Letter Manual (France, England, New England)", *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 18 (1988): 111.

¹⁷ H. Anderson, P.B. Daghljan and I. Ehrenpreis (eds.), *The Familiar Letter in the Eighteenth Century* (Lawrence and London: U. of Kansas Press, 1966), p. 281.

¹⁸ H. Anderson and I. Ehrenpreis thus describe "the emergence, during the Restoration, of the general features associated with a flexible, 'natural', modern prose but also a smaller trend relating to letters as such, and based on an accumulation of published specimens, particularly French and Latin" (H. Anderson, P.B. Daghljan and I. Ehrenpreis (eds.), *The Familiar Letter in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 270).

the letter was probably the literary form most able to incorporate certain social contradictions: on the one hand, more freedom from the former constraints of social space and its corollary, added space for the individual person; on the other hand, the survival and development of a system of relative social balance and stability thanks to the care devoted to the bonds of the community. The letter kept open a space for conversation, not restricted to an aristocratic elite as had formerly been the case, but still able to contain its participants within the bounds of reciprocity. The familiar letter in the second half of the eighteenth century could fulfil these missions because the missive, in the ease with which it could traverse physical distance, could also imaginatively traverse the communal space of society and ideally relieve psychological tensions. Did Mr B. not fall in love with his humble servant Pamela's letters?

Spontaneity as Conduct: the Fiction of Intimacy

Richardson indeed gave the potentialities of the epistolary form their full scope when he elaborated on his conception of a letter manual to guide young girls and wrote *Pamela* instead, thus moving from the model letter to the novel, and making fiction a model to educate youth and society, offering remedies to social tensions by advising relationships based on discussion and conviction. These sentimental values were governed by sensibility. Of course, Richardson was too great a novelist not to imagine also the destructive effects of the epistolary medium on human relationships. But his letter-oriented fiction confirmed the regulating function devised for letters by the aspirations of the century to harmony, social and psychological, between people, between men and women as the occasion arose.

With the move away from classical philosophical conceptions and the emphasis on sensations rather than on reason, the individual person, unlike universal human types, could feel more isolated than ever before. Against solipsism, the necessary correction of sensibility and sympathy based itself on the assumption, or rather on the wilful belief that individuals could sympathise with each other's feelings, in particular through the channel of imagination. In the quest of the self, humour and sensibility were two major assets, the one allowing the putting at a distance of one's own interests and emotions, the other allowing their sharing with others. On this new system of values, a new sense of community could be grounded:

Community in commiseration is a precondition of community in merriment, Sterne seems to affirm. . . . [T]he eighteenth century's growing approval of humor runs exactly parallel to the growth of its cult of sentiment and benevolence . . . the growing approval of laughter, and of emotional responsiveness in general, may be regarded as parallel manifestations of the dethronement of reason as the primary human faculty.¹⁹

¹⁹ H. Anderson, P. B. Daghljan and I. Ehrenpreis (eds.), *The Familiar Letter in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 325–6.

The fiction of spontaneity in letters obscured their programmatic social function. Spontaneity was rejoiced in and insisted on, with the proviso of sensibility, insuring sympathy with others' sensibilities:

Let the Style of Friends be loose and irregular, let them be bold and unconcern'd in giving their Thoughts their full Scope; their Thoughts themselves should be naked, not dress'd in the borrow'd Ornament of Rhetoric, as being not ashamed of their native Simplicity. For a Friend will be more pleased with that Part of a Letter which flows from the Heart than with that which is the Product of the Mind.²⁰

These injunctions from another letter manual epitomize the rules prescribed to letter writers in the guise of naturalness.²¹ The unsaid precondition for the exercise of individual freedom by means of a "loose and irregular" style, allowing thoughts "their full Scope", is the belief in the loving social heart, with the assumption that even opposite interests can share in its bounties. It seems obvious to a critical eye that the openness of epistolary writing could only be permitted among those who were able to select those desires that might be compatible with their correspondents', so as to air their individuality without endangering the fragile harmony of the sensitive social fabric. Despite its favouring the expression of personality, the "natural" "freedom" vaunted here owed its practicability to the concealed presence of codes and conventions, promoting rules for expression that emulated the well-bred man.

The epistolary writer committing thoughts to paper in the second half of the eighteenth century was at pains to explore his personal style as much as to pay allegiance to classical rules of polite reciprocity:

If a good letter-writer had to appear candid and spontaneous, if he had to reveal his character in his manner, he was nevertheless expected to supply a substitute for the courtesy of visible gesture through the courtesy of his style, where finished periods and coherent paragraphs indicated to the recipient that the author had been at some pains to make him comfortable.²²

Let it be added that throughout the century the recipient paid for the letter: therefore, instead of metaphorically paying your respects to the addressee, you entrusted him or her with the power to pay literally for and accept your letter. Since letters were often circulated among a close circle of friends or partly read aloud, they also gained in value within this postal pattern of reciprocity.

The vigilant sensibility required for successful reciprocity, which makes every letter a sentimental journey, was described by Sterne: "I believe . . . that man has a certain compass, as well as an instrument; and that the social and other calls have

²⁰ *Polite Epistolary Correspondence. A Collection of Letters, on the Most Instructive and Entertaining Subjects* (London, 1751), vi.

²¹ Sterne admonished his daughter Lydia, for instance: "— write soon, and never let your letters be studied ones — write naturally, and then you will write well" (L. Sterne, *Letters*, p. 302).

²² H. Anderson, P. B. Daghljan and I. Ehrenpreis (eds.), *The Familiar Letter in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 274–5.

occasions by turns for every key in him; so that if you begin a note too high or too low, there must be a want either in the upper or under part, to fill up the system of harmony."²³ Away from the classical emphasis on character types and models, yet preserving and even extending the rules of polite conduct for individual persons, spontaneity seems to have struck an ideal middle chord in the late eighteenth century in that it offered to respect the communal interest of every person: a functional as well as fictional ideal, a golden mean, in the sensible age of sensibility.

To use Sterne's metaphor, the notes could sometimes be off-key. The desire for truthfulness often degenerated into mannerism, thus justifying *The Correspondent's* caveat against affectation and inanity. One of the curiosities of Ignatius Sancho's correspondence, already mentioned above, remains the printed blot on one of the pages – "confound the ink! what a blot!" – attesting, somewhat laboriously, to the spontaneity of the composition.²⁴ The intimacies of the writer were in constant danger of revealing, not themselves, but only the conventional forms of the epistolary writing of sensibility.

Most epistolary writers feigned to underestimate their letters; yet they trimmed them and spent more time on them than they would have acknowledged, since they could send a letter to one addressee in particular and nevertheless contemplate the possibility of having a wider audience. Complying with the rhetoric of modesty, they insisted that they did not embellish their letters with an eye to publication. They could count on their friends or relatives to do justice to their talent. Writing a letter to his wife before he sets abroad, Sterne again gives us a hint to the current view and practice:

In Case I should die abroad.

My Letters, in my Bureau at Coxwould & a Bundle in the Trunk with my Sermons – Note. The large pile of Letters in the Garrets at York, to be sifted over, <for> in search for some either of Wit, or Humor – or what is better than both – of Humanity & good nature – these will make a couple of Vols more. – and as not one of 'em was ever wrote, like Popes or Voitures to be printed, they are more likely to be read –²⁵

"If his eye rested chiefly upon the literary value of his letters," Curtis comments, "he did not resent publications of details of his private life. It might turn a penny for his daughter Lydia."²⁶ Whereas Pope or Voiture would have disclaimed any particular work on their letters for publication, the late eighteenth-century writer just made intimacy, whether scandalous or not, a more public matter.

This ambiguity between private and public discourses indeed characterizes epistolary performance, which depends, in Bruce Redford's words, on "constant adjustments of voice and mask, text and subtext".²⁷ There were good reasons to

²³ L. Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*, ed. I. Watt (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1968), p. 89.

²⁴ *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho* (London, 1782), p. 142. Sancho's correspondence went through six editions between 1782 and 1803.

²⁵ L. Sterne *Letters*, p. 146.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. xxiv.

²⁷ Bruce Redford, *The Converse of the Pen: Acts of Intimacy in the Eighteenth-Century Familiar Letter* (Chicago and London: Chicago UP, 1986), p. 2.

tip the scales in favour of private discourse in letters as the eighteenth century went on and the public could gradually have access to more reliable and better circulated news items through the press: the topical interest of letters could better relate itself to those news items that were more private than public. This made epistolary matters even more ambiguous in their fluctuations between private and public polarities. Connecting a private mind to a public of one or more readers, the letter asserted the introspective mode of the self through the desirability of its consumption by reading public. Sterne's awareness of the fact that his correspondence was "more likely to be read" because it had not been meant for publication simply rests on the paradox of the added value granted by the public to what was not meant to be publicized. It was as if the readers could get more from reading what was not addressed to them because they could imagine they were actively capturing the writer's intimate self. Reading itself became the essential act that might penetrate the human core by intruding on the epistolary representation of the person.

This time, fictional and non-fictional letters intersect at the point where the letter form is endowed with a power of revelation. The attraction of the reading public to epistolary literature in the eighteenth century should then be related to the replacement of traditional notions of human nature by empirical observation, a replacement that yielded troubling questions rather than reassuring answers. In the wake of the general questioning of man, the anxiety for a closer definition of the human self is a clue to the enduring fascination for correspondence, whether non-fictional and reworked for publication, or fictional and conventionally presenting itself as a collection of actual letters.

Evidence of palpable authenticity was sought in affected spontaneity. It takes minor epistolary novels to press the point, like *The Correspondents* (1775) telling the idyll in letters of an aged gentleman and a young lady. "Let me inform you, my good friend, (for you are possibly ignorant)," the gentleman explains, "what is the chief merit of my letters. 'Tis Their incoherency. A strange recommendation, but one that proclaims them the effusion of the moment, which ought to be the characteristic of all familiar writing."²⁸ "God knows", he continues in the same fashion, "I very seldom take the pains of reading what I write to you, lest any striking tautology should induce me to *correct* or *transcribe*."²⁹ Facing the disquieting potential of vacuous incoherence at the core of the literature of intimacy, the recipient's complying gaze here is a comforting remedy. In some cases the quest for the self seems content to be gratified by its own reflection.

Spontaneity in the eighteenth century opened the lid of Pandora's box and discovered strange signs of unrest in the self it purported to celebrate. The optimistic exercise of sensibility through artless writing gave letters writers and readers invaluable possibilities of self-awareness and led the most penetrating of them to explore the category of intimacy. The reader hoping to steal more meaning from

²⁸ *The Correspondents, an Original Novel. In a Series of Letters* (London, 1775), p. 242. For a study of this novel, see Rose M. Davis, "The Correspondents", *PMLA*, 51 (1936): 207–20.

²⁹ *The Correspondents*, p. 243

epistolary fictions avowedly not intended for his or her eyes sought in this theft some ontological dimension that could never be guaranteed: sometimes more mirror effects were provided than substantial clues to the self. Indeed epistolary art implied the definition of the introspective mode of the self as well as the consciousness of its possible dissipation in the literary discourse of intimacy. The conduct of spontaneity according to the rules of polite reciprocity may well have been the consoling virtue provided by epistolary art, that hope at the bottom of Pandora's box for an age that would try to relinquish classical temperance.



n Postal Revolutions

Wednesday, April 12

I will pursue my melancholy story.

When we were alone, Mr Lovelace besought me to be better reconciled to myself, and to him. He repeated all the vows of honour and inviolable affection that he ever made me; he promised to be wholly governed by me in every future step; he asked me to give him leave to propose, whether I chose to set out next day to either of his aunts.²

I told him I wished not to go to any of his relations; that my reputation was concerned to have him absent from me; that, if I were in some private lodging, it would be most suitable both to my mind and my situation; that this might be best. I should think, in the country for me, in town for him – And no matter how soon he was known to be there.

If he might deliver his opinion, he said, since I declined going to any of his relations, London was the only place in the world to be private in. Every new-comer in a country town or village excited a curiosity; a person of my figure (and many compliments he made me) would excite more. Even messages and letters, where none used to be brought, would occasion inquiry.

If you hear anything of my father and mother, and of their health, and how my friends were affected by my unhappy step, pray be so good as to write me a few lines by the messenger if his waiting for them can be known to you.

I am afraid to ask you whether upon reading that part of my narrative already in your hands, you think any sort of extenuation lies for

Your unhappy
Clarissa Harlowe¹

¹ Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady*, ed. Angus Ross (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), pp. 387–98. The above is an abridged text of the Letter 98: Miss Clarissa Harlowe to Miss Howe. All page references to *Clarissa* are to this edition.

When having been tricked by Lovelace into an escape from her parental home, Clarissa must consider what place she should go to after her rash flight, she connects privacy and safety with her seducer being at a distance from her, and in terms of location with the country, saying: "if I were in some private lodging . . . , it would be most suitable both to my mind and my situation: that this might be best, I should think, in the country for *me*; in town for *him*" (389). Her ignorance of the town and its busy ways (740) makes her incline towards the country, to which she is accustomed and with whose rhythm her own nature agrees. The contrast between the country and the city she presents is a traditional and moral one involving an opposition between nature and art, innocence and vice, femininity and masculinity. Lovelace's definition, or perhaps experience, of privacy, which for him signifies concealment and camouflage against detection, has to be a contradictory one since he associates it with the city, thus grasping what John Bender refers to as "the central paradox of the urban metropolis . . . that the more tightly people pack together the more isolated they become".² Intense and elaborate architecture of London made Fielding once remark that:

whoever considers the Cities of London and Westminster, the late vast increases of their suburbs, the great irregularity of their buildings, the immense numbers of lanes, alleys, courts and bye-places, must think that had they been intended for the very purpose of concealment, they could not have been better contrived.³

What Lovelace recognises as the essential condition of the city is the experience of anonymity and estrangement whereby he favours the metropolis which can act as an accomplice in his villainous dealings; it is in the urban element that contrivances may thrive and where they can easily steer clear of exposure.

In order to privilege the town and make his preference hers, the postal criterion is introduced as the one which decides the difference between the two locations:

. . . London was the only place in the world to be private in. Every newcomer in a country town or village excited a curiosity: a person of [Clarissa's] figure . . . would excite more. Even messages and letters, where none used to be brought, would occasion inquiry.

(389)

Belonging to the order of civilisation, and therefore technological refinement, the metropolis belongs to the order of the post whose dense network criss-crosses its territory, coincides with its scope. To reside in the town is to abide in the thick of postal connections, private or public, no matter. The penny post service, established in 1680, was by the mid-eighteenth century well developed and efficient, and spread throughout the country. Yet, originally it operated within a 10 mile radius of the capital where all transmission paths converged; it started as a met-

² John Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary. Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 83.

³ Henry Fielding, *Inquiry into the Cause of the Late Increase of Robbers* (London, 1751), p. 76. Quoted in Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1993), p. 145.

ropolitan invention focused on London and the focus of whose system was London pulling all postal strings. While letter-writing developed as a sheltered suburban affair,⁴ the post, the technology of dispatch and delivery, was more of a town matter, one of its many organised patterns. Praising the Penny Post, Daniel Defoe marvelled at the extent of the service and application of the couriers:

Letters are delivered at the remotest Corners of the Town, almost as soon as They could be sent by a Messenger and that from Four, Five, Six to Eight times a Day, according as the Distance of the Place makes it practicable.⁵

What might be read as a praise of efficiency of the all-embracing system, precariously transforms itself into an approval of discipline, since while Defoe pays his compliment to the competence of the post (taking, curiously enough, interest in the delivery aspect of its technology) he points to a certain monitoring faculty that goes together with the process of assigning letters to their addresses or addressees. It is not the wonder of outward transmission, ability to go beyond the city limits and thus as if expand its territory that evoke Defoe's fascination with the post, but, rather, he discovers in it a technique of containing the urban space together with its inhabitants. Indefatigable messengers, dedicated to their task, make their rounds as walkers and watchers⁶ patrolling all streets, reaching the innermost recesses of the metropolis. The service seems to penetrate the town, catching its citizens in a web of postal ties as all places, all people prove accessible, or perhaps vulnerable, to the invasion of the letter.

Yet, this intensity of the system that the city could boast, inevitably modified the status of the letter, made it a commonplace, and therefore inconspicuous, event. The town deals with a multitude of messages transmitted by a train of couriers crowding its streets, whereas in the country, the messenger comes as a figure from without as well as a carrier of without, an emissary whose errand darkens what used to be a blank space of transmission, yet untouched by mail, and turns it into a postal province.⁷ In a small, local, community, a new arrival comes as a postal and social interference: the coming of a letter in the place "where none used to be brought", itself a curiosity, evokes curiosity of others; so manifest that almost sensational, the letter is brought to the brink of becoming everyone's property. Once turned into a spectacle, a public incident, it discovers its nominated receiver to whose privacy it willy-nilly begins to make threats.

⁴ See Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel. Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 211–2.

⁵ Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, 3 vols. (London, 1726), reprinted in a limited edition with an introduction by G.D.H. Cole (London, 1927), I, Letter V, pp. 343–4. Quoted in Ruth Perry, *Women, Letters, and the Novel* (New York: AMS Press, 1980), p. 64.

⁶ Cf. John Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary. Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England*, pp. 76, 79.

⁷ As *OED* indicates, *province* used to signify administration or region of a conquered territory.

In a community operated by correspondence, where “all subjects are enmeshed in networks of exchange”,⁸ one cannot seduce the other without seducing the post, one cannot gain mastery of the other without mastering the post, without becoming the Master of Postal Ceremonies who directs emissions and deliveries and confuses them at need or on a whim. Placing oneself at the centre of the system, one places oneself also without it, one belongs and does not belong to the structure, one holds it together while escaping its toils. In order to extricate or exempt oneself from the principles of post, one’s mastery of them is imperative, and with mastery of the rules a postal coup is never far-off.

If “The entire history of postal *tekhne* tends to rivet the destination to identity”,⁹ the history of postal trickery records the process of preventing the connection from taking place. As Maud Ellmann remarks, the postal network is in the main a “system of names and addresses that assigns each subject to a destined place”.¹⁰ Hence, as a form of organising society, preoccupied with identity and identification, it becomes instrumental to the law: having a name and an address is enough to qualify one as a member of the postal community, one who may dispatch or receive a letter, a letter whose trajectory may be reconstructed in order to hunt one down. For every letter is a trace, every letter leaves a trail that will direct the law, no matter who represents or impersonates it, to the point of emission or reception: one cannot simply evade the letter, which is the letter of the law. One cannot circumvent the law without outwitting the letter, without playing some postal trick, like a false and coded name, without putting the letter, but also one’s name, into play and thus disarming it.

“I have changed my name: Changed it without an Act of Parliament. ‘Robert Huntingford’ it is now,” (417) boasts Lovelace to Belford by the same token announcing the onset of his manipulation of/with the post. While screening one’s identity behind an invented name belongs, together with cipher for example, to disguising techniques by means of which one wishes to baffle pursuit and avert a peril of detection, the change of name by creating an extra station in the epistolary itinerary relocates one within the circuit. Itself an illicit gesture, performed “without an Act of Parliament”, it allows Lovelace to slip the postal snares and hence to operate out of the range of the law.

It is not only one’s name that can be played since one can do it with an address too by withholding it, whereby the letter is suspended by the principle of *poste restante*: having translated his name Lovelace postulates a change of direction: “‘To be left till called for, at the posthouse at Hertford.’” (417) While the letter remains at rest, “till called for”, so does the law which must defer its operation and subject itself to the waiting game that is at the heart of the *poste restante* strategy. Re-

⁸ Maud Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists. Starving, Writing & Imprisonment* (London: Virago Press, 1993), p. 76.

⁹ Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card. From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, tr. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 192.

¹⁰ Maud Ellmann, *The Hunger Artists*, p. 77.

versed is the postal order for now the letter, no longer in motion, must await, be in readiness for, an arrival of its nominated recipient who may come late or even fail to come and collect it.¹¹

Having put pursuit off the scent, Lovelace can manoeuvre the post and weave its web around Clarissa. To the legitimate, that is to say ingenuous, network used by her, there is opposed his postal secret service, a party of his vigilantes stationed in the vicinity of points of emission or reception, always keeping a lookout for the comings and goings of letters, recording their rhythm. His order is to invigilate the post ("The post, general and penny, will be strictly watched likewise," (817)) so as to know names and whereabouts of senders, routes and routines of emissaries, know when to intervene, when to intercept. Although Clarissa may escape from Lovelace, no escape from the postal circuit is possible for a letter will catch her one way or another, its mission being one of detection, of matching the givens for the purpose of identification, linking up the direction with the person. "I am afraid this horrid wretch will trace out by the post offices where you are, if not careful," (995) Anna Howe warns her since as long as Clarissa dispatches or receives letters, she can be hunted down, always a quarry of the postal pursuit.

Although prey to Lovelace and his machinations, Clarissa's true dependence is, however, on the post. Thus again pressured to decide on the place of abode, she makes a choice which is never her own, since, on the one hand, adroitly primed by Lovelace, while on the other, dictated by the demands of postal conveyance. As she objects to Windsor which is an option proposed by Lovelace, although, as he reports to Belford, he "had no design to carry her particularly thither" (448), she incidentally happens to define a more eligible location. Yet it is not a question of a specific place for she never names it, but rather characterises it only as one whose position should be determined by "the distance from Miss Howe, of whom [she] should be glad to be always within two or three hours' reach by a messenger, if possible." (442)

Between Harlowe Place from which she has fled and Sinclair's brothel in which Lovelace will confine her, between the father and the seducer, the two authors of her detention, there lies space for choice, an enclave of independence. Yet the autonomy it seems to spell is but a delusion, for as soon as the gap opens there comes an authority to claim it, an obscure figure of a messenger, an ambassador of the postal empire to put its subjects in their allotted place. The autonomy is but a delusion when all the motions have to conform to the supreme authority of postal dictates which establish or regulate the radius within which one is licensed to change position. Wherever one goes, it is always to move in the other's epistolary orbit. Wherever one goes, it is to discover that, indeed, one is tethered to the post.

¹¹ "The post is always *en reste*, and always *restante*. It awaits the addressee who might always, by chance, not arrive." With Derrida, one can never be sure which ambiguity of the post is being played on, for "*La poste, le poste*, the two love each other and send back to themselves the other (what a couple!), this is the law of the genre/gender as was said in the note of the *Facteur* . . . : '*Le poste* [in the sense of position] differs from *la poste* [in the sense of mail] only by gender,' says Littre." Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card*, pp. 191 and 421.

Whatever position is taken, postal issues immediately begin to press close. And among the postulates that one should pay heed to, there are economic demands that the system makes on its members: after all, as in other systems of exchange one must pay for the privilege of participation. "With so little money as you have, what can you do at such a place as London!," worries Anna Howe, "You don't know what occasion you may have for messengers, intelligence and such like." (475)

When Derrida elaborates on *philately* he begins by tendering, and immediately withdrawing, a spurious and playful etymology which pays tribute to what is the origin of all epistolary and postal action, that is to say distance: "philately does not mean love of distance, of the term, of the *telos* or of the tele-, nor the love of letters . . ." ¹² Having alluded to distance without which the post, and therefore also stamps, could not have come into being, he then invades the word differently, moves the border post to its legitimate position: no longer is it philately, but philately. Once the post is back in its proper place, the word changes its semantic bearings becoming somewhat money-oriented: "it is a very recent word," Derrida goes on, "it is only as old as stamps, that is of the State monopoly, and it treats of *ateleia* . . . *Ateleia* is franking, the exemption from taxes, whence the stamp. It is true that it maintains therefore a relation with one of the senses of *telos*: acquittal, exemption, payment, cost, expenditure, fee." ¹³

Clarissa's solitude in London, the place already identified with privacy and isolation, articulates itself in a scarcity of faithful servants always ready to turn messengers. Her separation from home entails a financial loss which inevitably brings conveyance of letters into peril. Limited by money and deprived of trusty messengers, she has to accept a detour of Lovelace's assistance and the service of his attendants whereby her hold over the letters she sends and receives slackens. The alternative to one's own or borrowed couriers was the general mail, declaring its financial requirements in the very name of the service, the penny post. "The post is a banking agency," proclaims Derrida referring thus to the fiscal policy it pursues, that is to say to the rule of prepayment which demands that the bill come before the letter, ¹⁴ that the bill should be settled beforehand to set the letter going. It is exactly the moment of payment that was at issue of the Post-Office Reform advocated by Rowland Hill in 1836. If the history of mail has its revolution, that revolution comes perhaps with an introduction of the stamp, an adhesive piece of paper that was to serve as a token of remittance. For the reform that Hill recommended aimed at regulating the question of payment, or, rather, at reversing its poles. Since the launching of the penny post in 1680 the moment of payment would arrive together with the letter for which the charge of one penny was to be collected from the receiver, who thus paid the debt contracted by the sender at the start of transmission. So letters were sent on credit with payment being deferred until they reached their destination, until they found the designated recipient who could not accept the letter without accepting liability for the other's debt.

¹² Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card*, p. 55.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 55–6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

Unless it was brought by a private messenger, the pleasure of the letter was not the pleasure of a gift. In the days of Hill the distance the letter was carried determined the charges which were so high that they virtually hampered letter-writing. Behind the innovation that Hill suggested in a booklet *Post Office Reform; Its Importance and Practicability*, there lay a desire to remedy the postal service itself but also a wish to re-animate writing. This could be effected by introducing the uniform postage of one penny for a standard letter (now letters were to be charged by weight and not distance), yet the more momentous change was to come in the shape of the stamp, a prepaid carrying charge. In order to illustrate this necessity for so dramatic a reorientation, for a fiscal somersault, Hill reaches for a certain painful recollection from childhood:

I early saw the terrible inconvenience of being poor . . . my mother was afraid the postman might bring a letter while she had no money to pay the postage.¹⁵

Thus the recollection that haunts his memory (and haunts it so effectively that somewhen it sparks off a postal revolution) concerns collection of a letter which the postman holds to ransom. The moment of delivery seems to have been framed by an exclusively economic context when poverty could exclude one from the system to which one apparently possessed a passport, in the form of a letter addressed in one's name. Lack of money with which to pay the charge deprived one of the place one aspired to, and invalidating the passport deported one from the postal domain. This financial condition must have inevitably given the experience a stamp of dread, making one live in fear of a letter and await the coming of a postman with trepidation. For when he came, he arrived not as a bringer of tidings but rather as a debt collector and what he carried was not a letter but rather a note of charge. For Hill the event of delivery would signify unease, and the letter itself became a reminder of poverty. However, it sufficed to reverse the order and redirect the payment to the sender to move the letter away from the sense of misfortune and give it back its proper economic meaning, which is that of a gift. With his reform, implemented in 1840, Hill put both the letter and the messenger back in the framework once described by Robert Burton:

The very carrier that comes from him to her is a most welcome guest; and if he bring[s] a letter, she will read it twenty times over . . .¹⁶

¹⁵ Rowland Hill, *Post Office Reform; Its Importance and Practicability* (London, 1836). Quoted in *The History of Postcards*, p. 22.

¹⁶ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Vol. iii (London: Everyman, 1949), p. 167.

I Read, Therefore I Am: Formation of the Autobiographical Subject in Rousseau's *Confessions*

Remember

First to possess his books; for without them
he's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not
One spirit to command

– William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

On the final page of J-J. Rousseau's *Confessions*, the author acknowledges that he cannot confine himself to writing his autobiography. He feels obliged to read the text, as well. As a matter of fact, Rousseau's reading does not follow his writing; both activities are concurrent, i.e. they intersect and underlie each other. Imposing his text – and his reading which is silent but obtrusively present – upon the reader, Rousseau problematises the relations between the three subjects involved in his autobiographical project: the writer, the reader and the character. Although they are largely implicit, those relations affect the confessional mechanisms of the book in an unprecedented fashion.

Despite the fact that the very word “autobiography” (literally the writing of one's own life) was not used until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the concern to depict one's past has been present in literary history since the Antiquity. Rousseau, who is frequently recognised as the father of modern autobiography, may have initiated the debate on the issues of autobiographical truth and the validity of the author's signature¹ but much earlier such writers as St August-

¹ See, for example, Paul John Eakin, *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 4 and Peggy Kamuf, *Signature Pieces: On the Institution of Authorship* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 25.

tine or Michel de Montaigne also contributed their projects to the autobiographical corpus. Though without realising (or at least verbalising) the technical aspects and philosophical implications of his work, the Renaissance man indulged freely in describing himself, fascinated with his reflection in the mirror of literature. Finally, when John Locke undertook the analysis of the concept of personal identity in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*² the literary interest in the individual human subject gained a kind of additional reinforcement from the domain of philosophy.

The proliferation of autobiographical discourse in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is to a large extent a response to certain socio-cultural or even theological stimuli. Western art remains on close terms with religion, be it the orthodox Catholicism or any other denomination. Judeo-Christian models described in the Bible and other canonical works of the Church prove the most influential literary characters and, at the same time, exemplary figures representing human types. Reading Holy Scriptures, the Renaissance autobiographer finds a convenient life pattern and a flexible allegorical structure which can be easily adapted to his own vision of personal development. Thus his spiritual autobiography focuses on the parallels between the life of its author and a parabolic story of a biblical character. The image of one's "I" is subordinated to the personality of a chosen "patron"; no matter what shape the writer's experiences have had they are interpreted beforehand and portrayed in a manner corresponding to a pattern selected from the Bible. Linda H. Peterson points out that it was a common practice especially among Puritans and Evangelicals to apply the Old Testament types to the lives of individual Christians.³ Autobiography fulfilled the role of a commentary or an exemplification of a biblical story; an essentially hermeneutic function closely related to the Protestant mode of thinking according to which every man is responsible for himself and, left to his own devices, must find a satisfactory relationship with God. Hence man reads.

While biblical types coincided with the social and moral codes of society and the formative influence of other people was limited to the autobiographer's closest vicinity, Christianity offered the individual an opportunity to discard whatever was in the way of following a sacred model. By establishing the sacrament of confession at the beginning of the thirteenth century the Church channelled the transgressive elements of the self into a discourse. However, conducive to introspection as it is, this opportunity soon turns against the confessing subject. He is encouraged to explore the interior of his soul in quest of a slightest flaw; he can define his self only on the basis of what is forbidden or abominable in him because "the most elementary rule of humility requires the faithful to discover traces

² See D. W. Hamlyn, *A History of Western Philosophy* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990), p. 174.

³ Linda H. Peterson, *Victorian Autobiography: The Tradition of Self-Interpretation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 7.

of sin everywhere and to suspect beneath the more or less appealing exterior of the individual person the horrid decay of the flesh".⁴ The privilege to give shape – and voice in the first place – to one's identity proves to be a painful obligation. Michel Foucault claims that, to make matters worse, the confessional impulse is so deeply ingrained in us that "we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us".⁵ The inner compulsion that forces one to speak of oneself is "an inverted image" of the instrument of restriction. Foucault describes the process of inculcating the confessional injunction into the Christian community as that of "an immense labour to which the West has submitted generations in order to produce – while other forms of work ensured the accumulation of capital – men's subjection: their constitution as subjects in both senses of the word".⁶

Without losing sight of this "millennial yoke of confession"⁷ one should perhaps also acknowledge its contribution to the individualisation of the human subject. Man became aware that he was responsible for his own actions and thoughts; the penitent believer found a means of being "authenticated by the discourse of truth he was able or obliged to pronounce concerning himself".⁸ Increasing attention was drawn to each individual existence and its relations with the world, which advanced man's self-consciousness and induced him to interpret and evaluate his conduct; to read himself, in a sense.

In order to grasp the moment of transition from the oral confession to the written one it is necessary to realise the performative function of the discourse. The sacrament governed by the injunction to free the subject from his erroneous past must meet a number of requirements validating the act. Those felicity conditions include "liturgical, juridical, and – in the Modern period – psychological or psychoanalytic rituals that despite their evident diversity have as their common purpose some form of individual or social purification".⁹ Thus the impulse to reveal one's guilt is usually reinforced by the promise of a positive transformation that takes place in the soul of the sinner the moment he acknowledges his transgressions. The significance of confession consists in a kind of transaction; it is a qualitative exchange in which the sinner produces his self-revealing statement and, in return for that, gains what is commonly termed a clear conscience. The act of avowal is so instrumental because "the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation".¹⁰ In short, confession turns out to be quite a temptation.

⁴ George Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography", in James Olney, ed., *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 34.

⁵ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: Vol. 1, An Introduction* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990), p. 60.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁹ Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 76.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 62.

In reading various confessional texts, some critics attach particular significance to the ethical and epistemological issues which appear to structure those works. Richard Terdiman claims that "confession has always been a conduct of ethics"¹¹ whereas Paul de Man insists that

to confess is to overcome guilt and shame in the name of truth: it is an epistemological use of language in which ethical values of good and evil are superseded by values of truth and falsehood, one of the implications being that vices such as concupiscence, envy, greed, and the like are vices primarily because they compel one to lie. By stating things as they are, the economy of ethical balance is restored and redemption can start in the clarified atmosphere of a truth that does not hesitate to reveal the crime in all its horror.¹²

Although the confessing subject may sincerely aim at separating the wheat of truth from the chaff of falsehood, he cannot avoid excusing himself at the same time. A written statement of one's guilt is anchored in the recognition of what is good and evil. It entails an evaluation of the subject's transgressive past and contains an implicit apology; "*qui s'accuse s'excuse*", as Paul de Man has it.¹³

The performative dimension of a written testimony is restricted by the medium of language which must embrace all its aspects. And yet the ritual of confession requires two acts which are essentially non-verbal. Neither contrition nor expiation can be carried out by means of discourse, at least in most cases. Moreover, traditional confession presupposes the presence of a confessor whose task is to receive and judge the self-revealing statement. In literary confession, this action is suspended and dependent on the attitude of the potential reader; its performance is by necessity infinitely deferred, so to speak.

Finally, confession, which is supposed to symbolise rebirth and regeneration in God, proves to be a thanatological enterprise. To be valid, it demands a statement forcefully repudiating the past. The sinner must dissociate himself from what he has done. Only then can the absolution effectively eradicate the sins from his soul and erase the penitent's erroneous history. But, simultaneously, by annulling his past, confession strikes at the present identity of the sinner founded upon the stabilising investment of his personal history. The confessing subject is compelled to perform symbolic suicide by severing what has constituted the guarantee of his self-consciousness. As Richard Terdiman has it, "confession undoes the subjectivity that is both the source and the referent of its own articulation".¹⁴

In his *Confessions*, Rousseau undermines the qualities he most persistently prides himself on before the reader, i.e. the sincerity and validity of his own discourse. As an instance of confessional performance, the text contains a passage which, according to Peggy Kamuf, can be read as a *mise en abyme* of the whole

¹¹ Richard Terdiman, *Present Past*, p. 76.

¹² Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 279.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

¹⁴ Richard Terdiman, *Present Past*, p. 77.

book.¹⁵ When the protagonist passes himself off as a Parisian he meets the French ambassador and is exhorted to give an account of himself;

He asked me who I was, and exhorted me to tell the truth. Having promised to do so, I asked him for a private audience, which was granted me. The ambassador led me to his study, and shut the door. I threw myself at his feet, and kept my word. I should not have said less even if I had made no promise, for a continuous need to pour myself out brings my heart at every moment to my lips.¹⁶

Intimate and secluded, the ambassador's study is provisionally turned into a confessional. The confessor's status and authority make him fit for a substitute of a priest. The penitent's motivation, however, seems to be of dubious origin. The eagerness with which Rousseau discloses his secrets and exposes his true identity leads one to suspect that the confession is only an excuse to reveal his past and parade his disgrace.

Another episode soon proves that the protagonist of *The Confessions* subverts the mechanisms of confessional performance and tries to play them to his own advantage. Having anonymously staged his play *Narcissus – nomen omen* – he realises that it is a failure and admits that in public, acknowledging his authorship of the piece:

This public confession by the author of a poor piece and a failure was much admired, though I did not find it very painful. I even discovered some satisfaction for my self-esteem in the courage with which I made it. Indeed I think that on this occasion my pride in speaking was greater than my foolish shame would have been if I had kept quiet.¹⁷

Evidently, the true aim of confession is perverted; Rousseau's declaration is a source of pleasure and satisfaction and his apparent self-degradation serves the purpose of fortifying his self-esteem. Simultaneously, though perhaps unconsciously, the confessing subject breaks the sacramental bond between himself and the recipient of confession, be it God or whoever else. The validity of the sacrament is negated and Rousseau's story, having failed to comply with the rules of confessional performance, becomes a mere fiction. The details of the protagonist's life narrated in the book cease to have any extra-textual relevance since the internal attitude – the sinner's contrition and repentance – is what should testify to their veracity. Rousseau abuses the conventions of the discourse and thus impugns the sincerity of his avowal to tell the truth.

The Confessions provide no reliable epistemological knowledge about their author because the protagonist of the book belongs to the order of fiction and cannot authenticate the actual person existing outside the text. Rousseau, having broken the confessional contract, discredits his own truthfulness and allows his book to be read as a self-contained structure deprived of any extratextual ref-

¹⁵ Peggy Kamuf, *Signature Pieces*, p. 26.

¹⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1953), p. 152.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

erence.¹⁸ Rousseau the character is autonomous and independent from his author. Furthermore, no value-judgements can be applied to him since as a literary persona he is not subject to ethical evaluations. Accordingly, Rousseau's text functions neither within the domain of epistemology nor that of morality.

The theories of autobiography which insist upon the link between the author and his literary *alter ego* posit as the *sine qua non* of the discourse the existence of a firm and stable subject belonging to the order of reality; a subject whose ontological constitution should guarantee his referential productivity in relation to the protagonist of his book. Such critics as James Olney or Jean Starobinski, postulating some form of referentiality within the realm of autobiography, implicitly situate the author prior to the text, and prior to discourse in general.¹⁹ James Olney claims that, although there is no immediate connection between the two autobiographical subjects, the figure of the writer is encoded in the image of the protagonist by means of what he terms "the metaphorizing imagination".²⁰ Olney admits that the self of the autobiographer is not perceptible and can be encountered only in the guise of its textual metaphor, like Kantian noumenon accessible to our senses exclusively as a phenomenon. Nevertheless, the ungraspable author is the sole source and origin of his literary image by which he is metaphorically represented.

Jean Starobinski, for that matter, attaches particular significance to the individualising role of autobiographical style which "refers back to the moment of writing, to the contemporary 'me'".²¹ Accordingly, without consolidating the reliability of the autobiographer's past, "the text will at least present an 'authentic' image of the man who 'held the pen'".²² Style appears thus to be another metaphor of the author responsible for the creation of his text which, in its turn, cannot help giving some sort of indication of its writer.

Reading Rousseau's *Confessions* proves that human identity (and its synonyms: soul, self and essence) may become inextricably interwoven with fiction. Rousseau demonstrates how his protagonist performs as a reader and consequently discloses the impact of books upon the formation of his personality. Reading constitutes the foundations of his consciousness;

I know nothing of myself till I was five or six. I do not remember how I learnt to read. I only remember my first books and their effect upon me; it is from my earliest reading that I date the unbroken consciousness of my own existence.²³

¹⁸ This is precisely how Paul de Man defines fiction when he writes that "fiction has nothing to do with representation but is the absence of any link between utterance and a referent, regardless of whether this link be causal, encoded, or governed by any other conceivable relationship that could lend itself to systematization". Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading*, p. 292.

¹⁹ See especially: James Olney, *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 3–50 and Jean Starobinski, "The Style of Autobiography", in James Olney, *Autobiography: Essays...*, pp. 73–6.

²⁰ James Olney, *Metaphors of Self*, p. 31.

²¹ Jean Starobinski, "The Style of Autobiography", p. 74.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

²³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions*, p. 19.

In other words, the book is before the self; Rousseau cannot perceive himself as an autonomous subject until he begins to read. Language is instrumental in the process of awakening his self-awareness. But, significantly enough, it is the language of literature, the language of fiction.

The formative elements of Rousseau's identity are structured on the basis of his readings. What he cannot find in the actual world he borrows from his favourite characters on whom he models his behaviour. His identity formation turns into identification:

I became indeed that character whose life I was reading; the recital of his constancy or his daring deeds so carrying me away that my eyes sparkled and my voice rang. One day when I was reading the story of Scaevola over table, I frightened them all by putting out my hand and grasping a chaffing-dish in imitation of that hero.²⁴

Literary fiction informs Rousseau's personality and encourages his imitation of fictional types; his reading controls his maturation and exerts its power over his self-consciousness. Who he is largely depends on what he reads.

Fiction and reality become so inseparable for him that he easily combines them and tries to have the best of both worlds. Being a character in the fiction he builds around himself, Rousseau succeeds in forgetting his "real condition, which so dissatisfied me".²⁵ Books absorb him into their own reality, one of their greatest appeals being that, in Nietzsche's words, they belong to "those things which free me from myself, which allow me to saunter among strange sciences and souls".²⁶ Thus freed from himself, freed from **his** self which no longer belongs to him but is only a part played according to a pre-established text, Rousseau fictionalises his own identity, so to speak. That his ontological status is a source of confusion even to himself is manifested on the opening page of *The Confessions* where, in the apostrophe to God, he makes his book stand for his self;

Let the last trump sound when it will I shall come forward with this work in my hand, to present myself before my Sovereign Judge.²⁷

Such is his confidence in the power and reality of the text that he hopes his own writings shall preserve his true picture being "a witness in my favour that will sooner or later triumph over the machinations of men".²⁸

Nurtured on books he commits himself to writing about fictitious characters realising "the impossibility of attaining the real persons".²⁹ In "the land of chimeras" Rousseau imagines into existence the protagonists of *Julie* but no sooner does he finish his work than he becomes "captivated" by his "two charming models"

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20–1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979), p. 56.

²⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions*, p. 17.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 525.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 398.

and identifies with “the lover and friend”. Even though the reading public believes that the writer must have drawn on his experiences to create the characters of *Julie*, it turns out that they are real only to the extent that Rousseau can vividly visualise their emotions:

Everybody was convinced that it was impossible to express feelings so vividly unless one had felt them, or so to depict the raptures of love except with one's own heart as model. In that they were right, and it is true that I wrote the novel in a state of burning ecstasy. But they were wrong in supposing that I had required real objects to produce the condition. They were far from imagining how enraptured I could be by creatures of the imagination.³⁰

He is so “enraptured . . . by creatures of the imagination” for he himself lives in the realm of fiction. Actually, both autobiographical subjects designated by the name “Rousseau” are but literary characters; Rousseau the writer is primarily Rousseau the reader – the reader of himself as a literary text in the first place – while Rousseau the protagonist, being created by another fictional persona, remains at two removes from reality.

However detrimental to the writer's identity, reading assumes in *The Confessions* a life-sustaining function. While staying at Les Charmettes Rousseau suffers from a sudden fit and subsequently finds his health deteriorating. Fearing an imminent death he feels attracted to study and, indeed, reading proves so delightful that he is able to forget about his affliction. He does not realise, however, that therapeutic value of his books results from a life-long “addiction”. His remedy is actually a predicament he cannot escape from because that might mean an escape from oneself. If one chooses not to read one runs the risk of going insane like Friedrich Nietzsche who resolves to abandon reading in an effort to give voice to his “deepest self” which has been “buried and grown silent under a constant *compulsion to listen* to other selves (– and that is what reading means!)”.³¹ That he manages to speak only posthumously is due to his writings in which his fictional *alter ego* tempts us to believe in the reality of his voice. But fiction, which was before Rousseau and Nietzsche, is eventually the only thing that remains after their deaths.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 506.

³¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, p. 93.

“**U**rtica”

1. A Manifesto

Basho teaches that how to be a bamboo one must learn from a bamboo. Zygmunt Haupt instructs us “not to think of trefoil as trefoil”. And what is one supposed to think about the nettle, and what lessons shall one learn from it? This is not a simple knowledge, a homely type of knowing, knowledge in which we nestle; the nettle makes us think differently, in a crooked manner, a nettle does not allow us to nestle in our knowledge. In Polish a nettle does not fall neatly into the net of clear linguistic categories of naming as its nickname is constituted by a partial reversal of the very name *pokrzywa* – *koprzywa*, whereas a folk tradition referred to it also as to *żagawka*, i.e. as to something which “burns” and “pricks” us. Shall we trust etymology and believe that it is called *koprzywa* because it “kicks” (*kopać* = “to kick”)?

To sum up, the knowledge is blistering, wisdom is stinging and the fire is mysterious. Modern science has yet to learn the composition of the protein substance in its stings. One cannot pass it with indifference – it will not allow that! It has taught a lesson to many people, the lesson of green written on our skin in red ink. “The greener a nettle green, the hotter it is.” This “blistering monster” is in the order of imagination a relative of the jelly-fish, porcupine and electric eel. In the flora kingdom it is comparable with carnivorous orchids, and yet it is still familiar and common. A belligerent plant, although blooming in white, it is proud, haughty, impertinent – as folk wisdom claims “The thunder never strikes a nettle,” “Frost is no harm for nettles.” Whoever takes it in his hands, according to the seventeenth-century book on *Women’s Secrets*, “is free of any fear”. But sometimes it is trampled, transformed, eaten, in a word – it can also be useful. Of its fibres they make paper for grub-writers, textiles for the poor, ropes for suicides. It is more important as nourishment: the saving dish of both human and animal starvelings, a relish of preharvest days. But even a well-fed person may like salad made of its young sprouts, a

nettle soup cooked on pork fat, not to mention the intriguing charm of nettle beer. If one is an asthmatic one may consider smoking a nettle cigarette. Since time immemorial it has been considered to be a medicine (Hippocrates includes her among “Herbs moderately laxative, that means dietetic”). Let us be more specific: it works as an antiseptic, detoxicant, desiccant, as a bactericide, anthiphlogistic; its effects are diuretic and cholagogue, it is an antihæmorrhagic, antidysentery, antidiabetic and antirheumatic plant. It is also a highly estimated aphrodisiac and, even more, it “brings help to sterile women”. It is gentle to animals. It heals young horses’ “glanders”, it doubles cattle’s milk, chicken’s eggs, and it appears that “some kinds of butterflies make use of it”. But let us not exaggerate with that friendship – “When nettles blossom lungers go west”. It is a guardian of ruins and graves, a weed that torments gardens. A friend of the virago, witch and vixen, it shares the responsibility for Ophelia’s death, it is a mocking toy of Grabiec and Chochlik as well as Poświętowska’s pungent selfportrait, a melancholy sigh of Julia Hartwig, the posthumous destiny of Krasński and Grochowiak, Leśmian’s dark inspiration.

Bataille learns from a sunflower, Derrida from a heliotrope, Deleuze and Guattari from bulbs and all kinds of root-stocks (the nettle is also rhizomatic), Eliade and other Romanians (for example Brancusi) prefer to read trees with a pile root. There is also a philosopher who stopped by a nettle, but it is poets who think more often and more willingly about it:

Oset, pokrzywa, łopuch, belladona
Mają przyszłość. Ich są pustkowia
I zardzewiałe tory, niebo, cisza.

[Thistle, nettle, burdock, belladona
have a future. Barren lands belong to them
And the rusty tracks, sky, silence are also theirs]

The nettle has a future we are afraid to think of. Czesław Miłosz looks with anxiety on its subsoil – “a grammar-less turf”. Eliza from Andersen’s fairy tale stood on that sepulchral land “with fear filling her heart”, but she had noble reasons to overcome the dread, the pain and the repugnance:

With delicate hands she took the ugly nettles, they were stinging her like fire, enormous blisters covered her hands and arms but she tolerated everything with grace in order to set her brothers free. She trampled each nettle with her bare feet and she twisted together green threads.

So we weave a garland of nettles, we weave a story of nettles to liberate brothers and sisters. To liberate from what? Could it be from what is simple and pleasant and not leaving any trace? And also from monotony, because as the author of *Beniowski* claims – “Variety can be a nettle”. *Urtica* itself also can be various. When you soak rough wool in its juice, it gets greyish green; and delicate silk becomes of a cream colour.

A ja – w jakiej swą duszę sparzyłem pokrzywie
– B. Leśmian, *Przemiany*

[And me – in what nettles have I stung my soul]
– B. Leśmian, *Metamorphoses*

2. Sins of Childhood

Isn't it an exaggeration? Is there not too much of some sweet sourness and exaltation in this manifesto? What one can learn from "blind nettles"? Maybe it is not the wisdom but the "stupidity of the dotty weeds" as Bruno Schultz warns?

It is impossible to pass it with indifference, even though some time ago one mercilessly trampled on a nettle corpse. The murderer of the "dotty weeds" may even be forced to return to the place of the crime. Some have for a long time remembered their imprudent violations done to nature. The author of *The Issa Valley* cannot forget the hunting initiation, the victim of which was a young squirrel, and in the poem *Rue Descartes* he confesses a similar sin:

A z ciężkich moich grzechów jeden najlepiej pamiętam
Jak przechodząc raz leśną ścieżką nad potokiem
Zrzuciłem duży kamień na wodnego węża zwiniętego w trawie

But, about the destruction of nettles he seems to think without any misgiving:

Schodzi uczeń marzenia na północne kraje,
ogniem błyszczący jak Cyrus, morduje pokrzywy,
przewiązał gałąź wiśni i chce wody żywej
szukać w jeziorze. O, wy ziemskie ciernie,
cóż znajdę w tej przepaści, która leż nie daje,
na połamanych polach, w lodowej cysternie.

But can we be sure of this? later on we read:

Dziecko, niedobre dziecko, gdzież twoje zasługi,
jakie dla ciebie dary ptaków żal wyjedna?
Patrz, nawet z twojej ręki, zranionej o głogi,
chłód wypływa, na ziemi znacząc ślad ze srebra

Miłosz is not being sentimental here, because that is the young Miłosz, a young barbarian. He himself is afraid of his own ruthlessness discovering in himself Mickiewicz's "evil child". This reckoning with the cruelty of childhood, especially with hostilities against nettles, seems to be a Lithuanian speciality. The youngest of this pleiad, Tadeusz Konwicki, makes a truly detailed confession:

I was really cruel only to nettles. I tortured them and killed them with a thick withe, stick or boots. But they didn't treat me any better. From spring to autumn I was walking all covered with blisters. Nettles and myself had some old scores to pay off. We were in war with nettles. But the old mountebanks, old witches warned us, that even a nettle is a God's creation, that even a nettle can cure people suffering from rheumatism and that it glorifies God in its own way. So today, as an old man, even that I do not see any living nettles, I want to apologize to the great grandchildren of my Vilnius nettles. I apologize for the pain, the ill-treatment, the lack of respect, I am sorry and I ask for forgiveness. I bow in front of them with all my being and my blossom, which means with my old sad gob, I bow to the very earth who gave birth to all of us, to those who creep, to those who fly up in the sky and to those who stand still in the moss.

But when one is apologizing, the other is disregarding the “**nettling**” qualms of conscience. Maybe because he is a “square townsman”

Gdzie chaos zielska i rozbrzęczeń,
Gdzie parzę się o dziec pokrzywną
I siekę kijem, mały wariat,
Roślinny lumpenproletariat
[Where the chaos of weed and buzzing
Where I stung myself on the savage tribes of nettles
I, little lunatic, slash with a stick
The vegetable lumpenproletariat]

The author of *Polish Flowers* is not ashamed of the “little madman” inside him, he even takes pride in the “joy of destruction” so demoniacally demonstrated by Roger Caillois:

So we see how there rises from everywhere long restrained joy of destruction, pleasure of leaving behind oneself a thing so completely disfigured that it is unrecognizable. The bliss of torturing a miserable body eventually transformed into an anonymous stub. In short, this whole liberating fury which is taken away from man from the moment when he does not have any toys left to break because they stopped to please him.

What is interesting, another poet who is familiar with the world of childhood toys, Jan Brzechwa also dislikes this *evil and envious weed*. But he is still far from Tuwim’s brutality which is best shown in “The Scent of Happiness”:

Żywiłem zachłyśnięty, zziąany w rozpędzie,
Ileś pokrzyw posiekał, ile traw stratował!
A kijem obtłukiwał szyszki i żołądzie
Ileś żeś mil po drzewach małpio przecwałował
[Ravished with the element, breathless in the gallop
How many nettles you’ve slashed, how much grass you’ve trampled!
And bruised cones and acorns with a stick
How many miles have you apishly galloped through trees!]

Demonstrating a psychological moment of the destructive bliss – “slashing” and “trampling” – Tuwim shows also the aspect of an uncontrolled activity, “momentum” and “gallop”. The nettle with its stinging aggression and condensed energy, rouses the insane motion. Słowacki’s imagination reacts to this instigation with the most literally understood gallop:

Na koniu wiedźma gałęzią pokrzywy
Smaga po zadzie konia i tak leci
W srebrnej koronie, jak anioł straszliwy
O którym roją napół senne dzieci
[A witch on a horse with a branch of nettles
swishes the horse on the croup and so she flies
with a silver crown, like a demon angel
about whom dream drowsy children dream]

But it is more than just a fervour of the gallopade. The courser which hurries through the pages of *Beniowski* is carrying other meanings:

Na nim siedziała jakaś wiedźma ruda
 Gałąź pokrzywy miała zamiast bicia
 Tu widzę, że mi się poemat uda,
 Że mi muza swoich łask użycza
 Więc dalej! wieszczów galopem wyprzedźmy,
 Jest ex machina Deus – w kształcie wiedźmy
 [Some red-haired witch was sitting on it
 with a branch of nettles instead of a whip –
 Here I see, that the poem will be successful,
 That the muse grants me her grace
 So let us hurry! let us outpace the poets in a gallop
 Ex machina Deus is – In shape of a witch]

The nettle whip warrants not only the obedience of the horse but also the graciousness of the Muse. Let us learn from the poet: in order to make this text successful we have to hurry “further!”. There should be no sad returns to the places tarnished with the green gore, but only a gallop towards a place where nettles grow:

Jesteśmy dzikie konie o rozwianych grzywach
 Hej!
 Tabunami w zielonej trawie się nurzamy –
 Radość w nas warczy jak motor
 Hej!
 Po piersiach wiatru tnie pokrzywa
 – S. Flukowski, *Konie*

[We are the wild horses with streaming manes
 Hey!
 In herds we plunge in the green grass
 Joy whirrs in us like an engine
 Hey!
 A nettle of the wind slashes our chests]
 – S. Flukowski, *Horses*

3. Where Nettles Bloom

A question seems to be where they grow and bloom. Almost all over the world excluding tropical forests. In Central and Eastern Europe they grow, as we can learn from any compendium, “almost anywhere”. Of course, they have their favourite domains. Those would not rather be forests, but if they happen to grow there they would choose clearings, edges of groves and all kinds of borderlands. More frequently brushwoods, but most often they could be found in alder swamps. One can see them in ditches (“Dusty patron of ditches” – says Małgorzata Hillar). Thus,

by the road, lane, path and also along rivers and lakes. But in nature books they more often speak of “ground adjoining the fence and the hut” than of “roadsides”, “riverrains and lakesides”. The expression “ground adjoining the hut” (*przychacie* – a beautiful but rare Polish word) is incontestibly the most frequent description of the nettle’s home territory. And this tendency of the nettle to appear in those “grounds adjoining the huts” and any other place “close to something else” gives us undoubtedly something to think about.

Father Andrzej Klimuszko, a clairvoyant and herb expert finds in this regularity something puzzling:

A very mysterious symbiosis exists between the nettle and man. It grows only on the areas inhabited by man. Basically where man is, there the nettle is.

We do not have to inquire more about the nature of the environment of the nettle – it is a human territory. And into this area forces its way the border entity, the living margin, the botanical supplement, the most faithful friend and, at the same time, enemy of man. Starved for man’s trace, as the children’s poem says “It stands by the road on one leg, who ever touches it gets burned”. Or it stands where man is trying to separate himself from the world : (a folk riddle) “Stands by the fence in a green cloak. Whoever moves her must swear.” Finally, it locates itself in the area of man’s discreet presence – on the garbage dump, or where the presence melancholically makes room for absence – among ruins and graves (“A haughty grave gets covered with nettles” – thinks Leśmian). The place of great importance is the house: we do not necessarily have to leave it, it is enough to neglect it in order to invite there the green guests:

One had not lit the fire in the stove for seven years, he went inside it and got burned. How is this possible?

We know the answer to that folk puzzle because the audacity of the nettle is not something unknown. I know something about it from the time when on my desk in the pot with exotic flowers I found, in the middle of a winter, some small stinging plants.

We are witnesses of a historical expansion of the urticaceous into our habitats. Perhaps it is love, perhaps hate, but in any case *Urtica* forces fences and moves systematically towards the cottage. And it will not hesitate to reach the very centre of the Polish house, into its heart which is described on the pages of *Pan Tadeusz*. But let us begin with the presentation of the yeomen’s settlement:

Wszystko w kupie, jak bywa u szlachty zwyczajnie;
Wszystko nadzwyczaj stare, zgniłe; domu dachy
świeciły się, jak gdyby od zielonej blachy,
Od mchu i trawy, która buja jak na łące.
Po strzechach gumien niby ogrody wiszące
Różnych roślin: pokrzywa i krokos czerwony,
Żółta dziewanna, szczyru barwiste ogony;

[All in a heap, the gentry's wont of yore
 All was exceeding old and much decayed
 The roofs shone green, as though of copper plate
 With moss and grass that like a prairie throve
 Beneath the thatch, like gardens hang above
 The nettle and the ruddy crocus trailed
 And mullein gold, and mercury bright-tailed;]

Not without irony the poet shows the gardens of the yeomen's Semiramis which are dominated by the nettle. In the thrifty seat of Soplicowo weeds were not so saucy: they settled at the edge of the orchard. This homely view must have sunk deep into Tadeusz's memory because at his return he immediately notices the change of the crop:

Podróżny stanął w jednym z okien – nowe dziwo:
 W sadzie, na brzegu niegdyś zarosłym pokrzywą,
 Był maleńki ogródek, ścieżkami porznięty,
 Pełen bukietów trawy angielskiej i mięty.
 [The traveller to the window went to look:
 And saw, where nettles once grew by the brook,
 A little garden all laid out with paths
 And clumps of fragrant mint and English grass;]

Due to the intervention of a diligent, clean and calm Zosia the nettle was replaced by the aromatic mint, its more noble *alter ego*, combined with it in many proverbs. But is it possible to eradicate once and for all the ordinary nettle? Shortly the male martial disarray will bring to daylight her secret presence; during the foray the Count struck the Assessor with the flat of his sword which was enough to make the latter "go hide in the nettles". And a similar scene: when the battle was raging, Bucket, having drunk some liquor, "dives into the thick grass/ . . . where the nettles grew". And later on:

Już szereg jęgrów w marszu na pokrzywę wkracza,
 Gdy Konew ruszył z cyngla i z paszczy garlaczka
 (.....)
 Długo szukano Płuta; on w krzaku pokrzywy
 Zarywszy się głęboko, leżał jak nieżywy;"
 [The yagers reached the nettles; Bucket saw
 And touched the trigger; from his weapon's maw
 (.....)
 Long did they long for Płut; for he had fled,
 And lay among nettles as if dead;]

The nettle will be always connected with Soplicowo, and its literary, old and new, variants and remodelings. It is not unlikely that the most beautiful adaptation of this manorial landscape has been done by the author of the extremely crooked and nettle-like *Bigos hultajski* (*The Rascal's Stew*):

In a village, not too big, stood a mansion, not too large, wooden, low with a thatched roof with a porch supported by two poles, with windows big and small. One could tell that the rooms had been added to the mansion which was only slightly better than a simple

cottage. The courtyard was lavishly overgrown with nettles and bents and all this formed a very nice rural scene together with a dung-hill sticking out by the stables and a puddle in front of the bakery entrance appropriated by a huge hog.

The nettle would be then inseparably connected with everything vile in man, with what belongs to the yard, rubbish dump, and the pig. And, of course, with that which brings the chaos of adventure, war and historical turmoil. Here is another traveller, a protagonist of Syrokomla's yeoman's tale, approaching the rundown threshold of the settlement Podkowa. A mournful guardian of that place, the Beggar, welcomes him with a question:

Czy widzisz za kaplicą gruz pieców ceglasy?
 Widzisz tam komin wyniosły?
 Czy widzisz stopy węgla, pokrzywy i chwasty,
 Co na popiele wyrosły?
 [Can you see the brick ruins of stoves behind the chapel?
 Can you see there a high chimney?
 Can you see coal heaps, and nettles and weeds
 Which have grown on the ashes?]

Another Polish wanderer, Aleksander Wat, looking at the nettles overgrowing Roman ruins plunged in a cemetery silence, meditates on burned out Warsaw. But ashes are not necessary for nettles to grow – sadness and a painful and harsh aura of the insurgents' defeat surrounding the walls of the yeomen's settlement will do:

Miss Helena sighed, walked towards the mansion caving in among elder bushes, in clumps of wild flowers and in nettles as big as trees.

The sad inhabitant of the Bohiń estate "went in the bushes of flowers which were growing along the mansion walls, but these flowers were already overgrown by the impudently luxuriating nettles". When walking on a gloomy overgrown path, she discovered the darkest secret of the house.

Would the nettle be a flower of the era of partitions and occupation, and would it breathe the fragrance of their spiritual poison? And maybe we should extend this historico-botanic regularity unto the times of the totalitarian coercion? *The Garden of King Martin* by Ewa Szelburg-Zarębina seems to be the Polish equivalent, or even a vegetal mutation, of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. The rebellion takes place in a yeomen's settlement rather than on a farm, and the pigs have been replaced by nettles. *Kulawka* (Limp), *Garbuska* (Hunch-back), with Nettle as their leader, turn out to be equally intelligent and crafty, ambitious, ruthless, demagogic and efficient, and, ultimately, equally destructive. Their green colour is as burning as the revolutionary red, and "green jealousy" dictates them similar slogans:

We have lived on the laystall and that's why now we take the whole garden under our control. You have to know about it, You who have so far been scared of people and have served them allowing them to do to you whatever they liked . . . You liked growing where they told you to grow, and you wanted to get into favour of man, and you wanted people to praise you for your docility . . . No! You have no rights now to our garden . . . Who

would ever ask for a permission such overworked old folks of prejudice and routine? You, Youngsters have the decisive voice. Not only your future but the future of the whole garden is in your hands!

The scenario of this foray and its finale is well known to Orwell's readers. A slight difference between these two allegorical fairy-tales is marked in the linguistic and aesthetic layer. The protagonists of Szelburg-Zarębina, those "maliciously giggling geezers", reveal their evil intentions by repetitive mocking laughter – "Hi! Hi! Hi!". Are we supposed to hear in this laughter the diabolical giggle which scoffs at the effects of human weakness? We read in the Biblical *Book of Proverbs* (24,30,31): "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down." And perhaps one should rather think of the "sneering laughter of generations"?

Borowski's catastrophical imagination traces out the road through the wildly overgrown landscape:

Zaplątani w kłącza paproci,
w korzenie brzoź, w kłęby dzikich malin
płyniemy, umilkli, dokąd i po co?
dalej, dalej - - -
[Tangled in fern's root-stocks
in birch-tree roots, in whiffs of raspberry patches
We float, silent, where and what for?
further and further on - - -]

What can lie further? Perhaps Miłosz's wilderness overgrown with nettles? Let the answer be another fairy-tale, this time a "futurolological" one, in which we can see the continuation of *King Martin's Garden*:

This wonderful world of plants did not have any enemies any more, nobody disturbed, nobody destroyed and nobody polluted them. Previous rulers of the planet firstly exterminated almost every living being (fortunately except plants, although their extermination was at hand), and then, of their own free will they latched the trap behind themselves. They injured the ecosystems and thus caused the snowball process which did not spare even them. And the earth started waving, the waters agitated, the atmosphere, almost completely deprived of oxygen but saturated with carbon dioxide and other dross, revolved; the light of the day darkened, the heavy dust floated above the earth and nothing could now save the mighty rulers of the planet of the bygone days, . . . – The plants now were the rulers and they knew it.

But the title hero of *The Gentle Nettle* was the most informed one. A little naive, ecological futuristic novel by Zbigniew Dworzak (published, of all possible places, in *The Young Technician*!) brings to light the already mentioned paradox of the *Urtica* family – her symbiotic relation with man. The nettle became gentle because it did not have to defend itself against anybody. But on the deserted planet only the nettle preserved the memory of the *homo sapiens*:

The lonely nettle knew about the existence of other worlds, but nothing pleased it now, and the enormous longing and sorrow deepened its sadness . . . It beckoned then the picture of the legend about the Great Gardener – a legend the mystery of which could not be penetrated by any plant.

The nettle can be a grave-digger, but also the last witness of man's existence. And even if it forgets about man, it will still remember God. And as Cioran puts it, that souvenir left behind by man is possibly the last, and sad evidence, of a god dwelling in man:

Plants more than animals are delighted that they have been created. Even a nettle is still worshipping God and its heart swells with it; God suffocates only man. Is it not this feeling of suffocation that ordered me to become different from the rest of creation, to take on the role of a voluntary exile who accepts this situation of an outcast.

Would this Romanian separated from God remain in a biological, symbiosis with nettles, and learn from them the strategy of an exile, a choice of the place by the fence?

4. *Contra Rosa*

In the language of flowers, I would like to sing an extraordinary war – a war of flowers. “By the fragrant flower even a nettle sprouts”; such a picturesque and risky neighbourhood is an announcement of many adventures. Both a hostile separation and a misalliance are possible. Poets are often attracted by these sources of a possible conflict.

Rej, a Polish Renaissance poet, was always amazed by the violet which grew among this “nettling” weed; Koszutski, Chrościński and Żeglicki were indignant at the similar position of the lily. Krasiński's imagination was tormented by a nightmare which “turned white camellias into nettles”. But the confrontation of the nettle and the rose is a real scandal: how to reconcile the “Queen of flowers” and the “vegetal outcast”? “The most beautiful” with the “ugly”? The source of “divine fragrance” with the scrap-heap smell? In the classical view of the world there is no place for such a couple. That is why in Leopold Staff's poem these two orders are dramatically exclusive of each other:

Gdzie miały róże rozkwitać wesela,
Wzrasta pokrzywa, piołun i szalej
[Where roses were supposed to blossom,
There grows a nettle, wormwood and cowbane]

The only meeting place might be a magic cauldron in which rules the paradoxical maxim of *compositum oppositorum*:

Tak postępuje zaklinaczka-akuszerka:
wywar gotuje z pokrzywy i płatków róży

– A. Szamri, *Tak postępuje czas*

[That is how a conjurer-accoucheuse behaves:
She cooks the brew from nettles and from rose petals]

– A. Szamri, *That is how time acts*

The truth (I mean the botanical truth) is that this dichotomy is alien to nature. The rose can quite well coexist with a wild weed, but under one condition: it must be a dog-rose. It is getting more difficult when we are dealing with a noble specimen, and it is most difficult when the meeting takes place in a garden where the rules are dictated by man. In this beauty factory there is no place for unwelcomed guests, and the “dirty nettle” is thought to be an extremely dangerous intruder:

Ledwie się róża zjawiała na niwie,
Ledwie wietrzyki, pijąc świeże wonie,
Niosły jej sławę na zielone błonie:
Już robak siedząc na brudnej pokrzywie,
Topiąc wzrok krótki w nowości podziwiew,
Zaczął snuć chęci w nienasytym łonie,

– J. N. Kamiński, *Sonety*

[As soon as the rose appeared in a field
As soon as the breeze, feasting on fresh fragrance,
Took her fame to green meadows:
The worm sitting on a dirty nettle,
Eying her with the admiration of novelty,
Began to desire her in his insatiable bosom],

– J. N. Kamiński, *Sonnets*

This is of course a defamation of the nettle: we all know that “the worm breeds in a rich bloom” and for the rose he has a special weakness. “O Rose, thou art sick! / The invisible worm . . . Has found out thy bed” – is a piece of popular knowledge, at least since Blake. The nettle demands satisfaction for being affronted so many times and now the confrontation becomes unavoidable. Nobody has ever described this combat better than the general Franciszek Morawski:

Przykra dla wszystkich, z wszystkimi zwaśniona
Dla siebie tylko słodka i tkliwa –
Tak się wśród licznych kolców nasrożona
Gorszyła z róży pokrzywa:

Bawi mnie – rzecz – ta róża tak sławna
Co niby skromną udaje przed światem,
Znam ja tę skromność od dawna,
Któż się nie pieścił z jej kwiatem?

Mnie taka płochosć nigdy się nie zdarzy,
Wszystkim wiadomo, jak jestem surowa,

Moim godłem są te słowa:
Kto się dotknie, ten się sparzy.

I po cóż by się tykał? tak jej rzeczy z boku,
 Jakiś pasterz, w wieczornym dumając mroku:
 Można by dla róży mniej na kolce zważać,
 I na ranę się narażać,
 Lecz któżby mając kwiat tak wdzięczny, tkliwy,
 Chciał się parzyć dla pokrzywy?

[To everyone unpleasant, in war with everybody
 Only to herself sweet and tender
 Bristled among many thorns, the nettle
 poked fun at the rose
 It amuses me – she says – that rose so famous
 Pretending, in front of the world, to be modest,
 I have known for a long time this modesty.
 Who did not caress her flower?
 Such thoughtlessness will never happen to me
 Everybody knows how severe I am,
 These words are my device:
 Who touches me gets blistered.

So why touch at all? asks her
 Some shepherd, musing in the evening gloom:
 One can pay less attention to rose's thorns
 And expose oneself to wound,
 But who, having a flower so charming and tender,
 Would like to get blistered for the nettle?]

“The nettle and the rose” is an eristic-military tract which sparkles with a play of resemblances and differences. From beyond the aesthetic contrast arises the aggressive filiation of these two plants: who would ever think that the “annoying” nettle would raise such an accusation against the rose. But this explosion of outrage is not convincing; this presumed satire sounds like a palinode. Would the dispute about the inborn tendency to quarrel be solved by the confrontation of arms? One has got “a great number of thorns”, the other – imperceptible but ubiquitous “severe look”. We can assume where Nietzsche would place himself:

To have thorns is a wasteful, even double, expenditure when one can do without thorns at all, only with open hands.

Being a “tooth fungus” discloses the sin of affectation. And also a tendency to pretend. Why would a living thing so “sweet and tender” prick? Such roses are something strange to a simple-hearted nettle (“Everybody knows how severe I am”), a plant severe but honest and truthful. And very constant and efficient – “Whoever touches me gets blistered”. And these martial virtues ensure her inviolability. Meanwhile, the rose seems to have problems precisely with virtue. And both in the knightly and in the maidenly meaning of the word: “She pretends in front of the world to be humble”, but in fact “who did not know the caress of its flower?”. The “nettling” rethoric strikes in the very heart of the “rose’s fame” because it questions the symbol of the “purest one”. It takes away from it the attribute of virginity which has been adored both by mystics and ordinary gardeners:

Ja róża pierwsza wiośniana
Jeszcze nie jestem tykana
– F. Karpiński, *Róża*

[I, the first youthful rose,
None has touched me yet]
– F. Karpiński, *The Rose*

“Inconsiderateness” of the rose is denounced, “But who, having a flower so charming and tender would like to get blistered by a nettle?” The juror of this dispute, “some shepherd”, despises the peasant’s nettle and prefers the delicately feminine rose for which it is worth “even to expose oneself to injury”. But this is an ambiguous victory because the enlightened poets used to mock similar triumphs:

Tulipan okazały patrzył na to krzywo,
Że fiolet w przyjaźni zostawał z pokrzywą.
Nadszedł pan do ogrodu tego właśnie z rana
Widząc, że pięknie zeszedł, urwał tulipana.

– I. Krasicki: *Tulipan i fiolet*

[The magnificent tulip looked with disapproval
That the violet kept friendship with the nettle.
The master came to this garden early in the morning
And, seeing him bloom beautifully, he plucked the tulip].

– I. Krasicki, *The Tulip and the Violet*

Marquis de Sade in a similar way treated the rose, reaching for the most beautiful specimens, “to throw into the marshy moat its ravished petals” (and is not the “marshy moat” a nettles’ kingdom?). The combat does not end but moves from the garden to the drawing room. Here the encounter becomes a conflict of signs demonstrated best in the so-called “speech of flowers”. In parlour sentimental games, in the system of erotic game and exchange, both plants play a role of oppositional signals. If the rose permanently assents to feelings, the nettle usually denies them:

Nettle – “adversity” (Bruno Kiciński, *Dictionary of the Significance of Flowers*, 1840),
Nettle – “severity, viciousness, causticity” (Józef Strumiłło, *The Emblematic Role of Plants, Flowers, with the Colours of Which One Can Speak in Somebody’s Absence*, 1844),
Nettle – “only contempt I can have for you” (Józef Chociszewski, *Talking with Flowers*, 1833),
Nettle – “cruelty and severity” (Franciszek Buterowicz, *The Symbolic Meaning of Colours and Flowers*, 1924).

Fortunately not all the flirt books scare us with a sign of the nettle:

Nettle (Urtica) – “the wounds of your heart arise from love” (*Talking with Flowers – the Role of Plants, Composed in Polish and Latin for the Use and Amusement of Both Sexes*, Białá, 1860).
Nettle – “audacity” (*The Speech of Flowers. Parlour Game for Adults*, Lwów 1903).

Appreciating the semantic variety of this “game for adults” we must not forget “That most of the assignations from the domain of the flowers’ speech have an

accidental and shallow character". Georges Batailles, who is thus warning us, complains of the ease with which the word dominates the plant's image: "The appearance would bring the essential meaning of things . . ." He looks then into the flower's corolla finding there what is sexually ambiguous, unpleasant or even ugly; "Nothing can possibly impair the truth so natural that a beautiful girl or a red rose are signs of love."

So the revision of the role of the nettle demands the audacity of a micrological inspection, like in a poem *A Close View of a Nettle*:

Z nasępionych krużganków,
Z galeryj obronnych,
Skąd zieleni, ogniem prażąc,
Wrogów upomina,
Wychylają się kwietne, półcalowe donny,
W mantylach fioletowych,
W różowych dominach –
I namiętnością gorsząc
Surową fortecę
Otwierają ramiona,
Tęskne i kobiece . . .

[From the gloomy arcades,
and fortified ramparts,
From where the green warns enemies
With the cannonade of fire,
Lean out flowery, half-inch maidens
In violet mantillas,
In pink dominas
And open their arms,
Nostalgic and feminine,
Thus shocking
The austere fortress . . .]

Pawlikowska, like Morawski, combines the military and erotic discourse, but inscribes it in the interior of the nettle world. In accordance with the nettle augury which holds that "Wounds of your heart arise from love", and this perplexity turns the nettle into a figure of a dramatic sentiment. In Staff's, as well as Pawlikowska's, erotic poems the nettle will be linked with the old age, in Włakiewiczówna's poems – with madness. Scandalizing with passion, *Urtica* leads us to the antipodes of the rosy happiness. But one must be careful with building oppositions because both plants are signs of loving women. And one must be equally careful trying to divide women into sweet roses and bitter nettles. That is a gesture as harmful and insipid as segregating angels and harlots. Cannot the same woman be simultaneously a weed and a hothouse flower? "At home – the nettle, the rose – outside" – as Fredro says. The wantonness of Fredro's concept eases off the rigidity of the polar thinking based on binary oppositions. Why *rosa sempre prima*? Do poets have to compare the girls of their choice to roses? And the women, do they have to aspire to the ideal of the rose? And, perhaps, they prefer to be a nettle?

Halina Poświatowska had the courage to start such a mutiny:

I am very mutinous, I am bristled up and I sting just like a nettle. Do you know how to tame nettles? First, you needn't be scared, and then – they only smell nicely.

With such an excited sensibility even tenderness can have a nettle aroma:

W tym krajobrazie
twoja tkliwość
rozkwita
jak zapach
pokrzywy
[In this landscape
your tenderness
blooms
like the fragrance
of a nettle]

In the blistering erotic landscape

uciekła spod nóg
ziemia
którą trzeba całować jak usta chłopca
ciepła
której w bolesne uszy pokrzyw
trzeba wszeptywać
namiętną ciemną miłość
do końca
[Slipped from under our feet
the earth
which we should kiss like boy's lips
warm
which in the nettles' painful ears
must be whispered
the passionate dark love
till the end]

The passionate, dark love, cannot avoid painful kisses:

She wanted to tear out her hand from his, but she tripped over the table's leg and suddenly she rested her chest against his, or perhaps he found himself so close, and suddenly she felt his terribly blistering lips, like nettles, on her cheek . . . Jesus Christ, what happened, she thought in despair, sinking in some horrible and enticing numbness.

– Tadeusz Konwicki, *Bohni*

The female protagonist of the novel shouted afterwards “How dared you, you hebe”. But in spite of the indignation she gave up being a governess for whom Słowacki reserved “a similar nettle kiss”. But that nettle had a completely different taste: the fire on the mouth liberated her from the widow's corset of the Polish rose. A lash of the nettle destroys all kinds of stereotypes (national, racial, class, patriotic, literary) and sets one free from the rose myth saturated

with the intangible, ideal, abstract, aesthetic falsehood founded on visions and delusions.

Let us brutally, after Zabłocki, keep this convalescent thought: “the nettle, I suppose, is good for womanish imaginings”. Or, with greater subtlety, a quotation from the – *nomen omen* – *The Name of the Rose*:

A little nettle is enough – said Wilhelm – or roybra, or olieribus, in order to defend oneself from visions. I presume you have these herbs.

5. Sigh and Therapy

Snowdrop, you have visited me. Nettle, blooming white, oh most withered frailty aiming at the light, you have visited me tonight.

– J. Hartwig, *Selected Poems* (Warsaw, 1983), p. 136

Nettle-stinging will be eased by rubbing the stinging place with crumpled sorrel leaves (*Rumex obtusifolius*).

– L. Bremness, *A Great Book Of Herbs* (Warsaw, 1991), p. 196

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Słowo – Podmiot – Natura

Szkice o kulturze siedemnastego i osiemnastego wieku

Streszczenie

Tematyka prezentowanych tu artykułów skupia się na problemach natury, podmiotowości i sposobach ich przedstawiania w literaturze i filozofii europejskiej siedemnastego i osiemnastego wieku. Jak na początku swego artykułu zauważa Svend Eric Larsen, problemy te stanowią swoiste “opowieści o naturze, w których zawsze współwystępują trzy elementy: słowo, natura i podmiot”. Staramy się więc naszkicować topografię tego współwystępowania celem osiągnięcia pewnej wizji rzeczywistości, zastrzegając się od razu, że już same te pojęcia (“wizja” i “rzeczywistość”) także stanowią istotny problem epistemologiczny i filozoficzny. Tło filozoficzne zamieszczonych w oferowanym Czytelnikowi tomie artykułów stanowi przekonanie o tym, że nie posiadamy ani jednoznacznej teorii rzeczywistości, ani precyzyjnej teorii jej “oglądu”, co zmusza do poruszania się pośród metafor (czasem tak zaskakujących jak metafory pajaków lub pokrzyw, o których piszą Marek Wilczyński i Aleksander Nawarecki). I choć z jednej strony w osiemnastym wieku mamy do czynienia z brutalnym – zdaniem Francisa Ronnau-Bradbeera – systemem własności ziemi, wspieranym silnie represyjnym systemem jej ochrony, to, z drugiej strony, systemowi temu niejako przeciwstawia się percepcja krajobrazu jako sfery harmonijnych relacji i równie harmonijnego rozwoju, a więc także jako sfery etycznie pozytywnej.

Nie można tu pominąć milczeniem słowa “percepcja”. Ronnau-Bradbeer stwierdza: “Interesuje mnie prześledzenie ścieżki [...] wiodącej ku owej **percepcji** [...] krajobrazu jako miejsca moralnie nacechowanego”. Tą drogą, czy też ścieżką właśnie, podąża wielu autorów niniejszego tomu. Ścieżka ta nie wiedzie jedynie poprzez angielskie i francuskie ogrody (takie jak Leasowes Shenstone’a czy *Jardins Delille’a*), lecz także poprzez wąski teren pomiędzy rzeczywistością i jej postrzeganiem, pomiędzy krajobrazem a okiem, zmuszając do zastanowienia nad obydwoima tymi kategoriami.

W osiemnastowiecznej epistemologii postrzegania świat musi być widzialny i opisywalny w swych konturach, spojrzenie zawsze należy w nim do domeny sztuki. Sztuka “oka” polega na takim postrzeganiu rzeczywistości, które umożliwia usytuowanie przedmiotu pomiędzy naturą i kulturą. Oko śledzi sztukę bez sztuki – “naturę metodyczną”, którą może dostrzec tylko oko uzbrojone w możliwość widzenia tego, czego nie widać i czego nie można pokazać, tego, co należy wyeliminować. Stąd też – zauważa Tadeusz Rachwał – “sztuka projektowania stanowi czynność sekretną”, mającą na celu nie tyle skomponowanie tego, co jest, ile tego, co być powinno. W osiemnastowiecznym angielskim ogrodzie widzenie stanowi niejako czytanie zapisu oka w księdze świata (Liliana Barakońska omawia w swym artykule metaforę pisania jako widzenia). Rzeczywistość jest tam, gdzie oko jest aktywne, gdzie konstruuje, a nie biernie odzwierciedla. Takie rozumienie widzenia i widzialności sytuuje kilka zamieszczonych tu artykułów w dziedzinie, którą można określić mianem “kulturowej topografii”, dokonującej interpretacji krajobrazu nie jako materialnego skutku interakcji pomiędzy społeczeństwem a środowiskiem, lecz jako próbę spojrzenia na związek pomiędzy tym co społeczne a ziemią, odczytania “wizualnej ideologii” miejsca i obecności w nim człowieka, co wiąże się z kwestią ludzkiego “ja” i ludzkiej podmiotowości.

Metamorfoza “ja” – zdaniem Martina Conboya – zaczyna się od konstrukcji racjonalnego podmiotu wysławianego przez Daniela Defoe, podmiotu usiłującego odnaleźć swe miejsce w wyłaniającym się nowym porządku politycznym, lecz także podmiotu rozwijającego nowe sposoby opanowania słowa

(np. rozwój dziennikarstwa). Sfera publiczna musi przekształcać się jednocześnie z podmiotem, dotykając w ten sposób ludzkich pragnień, dążeń i cierpień, lecz także – o czym pisze Debra Bronstein – sfery płci. Andrzej Wicher wykazuje, iż pogodzenie *amour propre* z dobrem publicznym stanowi istotną część projektu filozoficznego Adama Smitha. Jednakże konstrukcja racjonalistycznego „ja” podważana jest przez dwa ważne procesy zachodzące w łonie osiemnastowiecznego dyskursu. Jednym z nich jest zwrócenie uwagi na czytanie jako czynnik „wytwarzający podmiotowość” (Leszek Drong śledzi ten proces w *Wyznaniach* Rousseau). Drugi proces to wyłanianie się kategorii „dyskretnego porozumiewania się”, która zagraża niejako przezroczystości sfery publicznej i stwarza nowy gatunek literacki – powieść epistolarną (zagadnienia te stanowią temat rozważań Małgorzaty Nitki i Madeleine Descargues).

Portret „ja” skazany jest na stałe niedookreślenie, na niemożność pełnego wyrażenia samego siebie, znajdując, paradoksalnie, oparcie w tym, co nierozumne i niejasne. Charakteryzuje go niekompletność, stan przypominający gotycką ruinę, która w osiemnastym wieku zaczyna stanowić ważny element angielskiego ogrodu, a którego plan, w pewnym sensie, rujnuje geometrię ogrodu francuskiego. Ową gotycką niekompletność omawia w swym artykule David Jarrett na przykładzie widm i duchów z powieści Ann Radcliffe. Także sentymentalizm Richardsona, a przede wszystkim Lawrence’a Sterna (o którym pisze w swym artykule Maciej Nowak), to jeszcze jeden aspekt niekompletności jako istotnego wątku klasycystycznego dyskursu. Jeśli w ogrodowej scenerii Leasowes istnieje miłość (pamiętajmy, że Fragonard i Watteau są dziećmi tej samej epoki, w której Angelika Kaufman malowała sceny z *Podróży sentymentalnej* Sterne’a), jest to przede wszystkim miłość ruiny i zrujnowanego podmiotu.

Tadeusz Rachwał i Tadeusz Sławek

Mot – Sujet – Nature

Essais sur la culture des dix-septième et dix-huitième siècles

Résumé

La thématique des articles présentés dans ce recueil se concentre sur les problèmes de la nature, de la subjectivité et des modes de leur présentation dans la littérature et la philosophie européennes du dix-septième et du dix-huitième siècles. Comme le remarque Svend Eric Larsen au début de son article, ces problèmes constituent dans un certain sens “des récits sur la nature dans lesquels co-existent trois éléments: mot, nature et sujet”. Nous essayons donc d’esquisser la topographie des relations entre ces éléments afin d’obtenir une vision de la réalité tout en ayant conscience que ces derniers concepts (“vision” et “réalité”) posent d’importants problèmes épistémologiques et philosophiques. Les auteurs des articles présentés dans ce volume partagent la conviction qu’on ne dispose ni d’une théorie du réel unique et homogène, ni d’une théorie bien établie de sa “vision” ce qui oblige de recourir aux métaphores (parfois surprenantes comme celles des araignées et des orties dont parlent Marek Wilczyński et Aleksander Nawarecki). D’un côté on a affaire, au dix-huitième siècle, à un système brutal de la propriété terrienne à la garde duquel se trouve un système fortement répressif de sa protection (Francis Ronnau-Bradbeer), de l’autre côté pourtant à ce système s’oppose la perception du paysage considéré comme la zone des relations et du développement harmonieux et partant d’un espace positif du point de vue éthique.

On ne peut pas passer sous silence le mot “perception”. Ronnau-Bradbeer constate: [...] ce qui m’intéresse c’est de retracer le chemin qui mène à cette nouvelle perception [...] du paysage comme un lieu moralement qualifié”. C’est sur ce chemin ou sentier que se rencontrent la plupart des auteurs qui ont contribué à ce recueil. Ce sentier ne mène pas seulement à travers les jardins anglais ou français (comme Leasowes de Shenstone ou les *Jardins de Delille*), mais il suit aussi la mince zone entre le réel et sa perception, entre le paysage et l’œil en obligeant ainsi à réfléchir sur ces deux catégories.

Dans l’épistémologie de la perception admise au dix-huitième siècle, le monde se doit d’être vu et décrit dans les cadres qu’on lui assigne. Le regard appartient toujours au domaine de l’art. L’art du regard consiste en une perception du réel permettant de situer celui-ci entre la nature et la culture. L’œil perçoit l’art sans l’art – une “nature méthodique” que ne peut percevoir qu’un œil doué de la propriété de voir ce qu’on ne voit pas et ce qu’on ne peut pas montrer, ce qu’il faut éliminer. Il en résulte – comme le constate Tadeusz Rachwał – que “l’art de projeter est un acte secret” visant non pas ce qui est, mais ce qui devrait être. Dans un jardin anglais du dix-huitième siècle la vision constitue pour ainsi dire la lecture de ce que l’œil écrit dans le livre du monde (Liliana Barakońska décrit cette métaphore de l’écriture comme vision). La réalité est là où l’œil est actif, où il construit et non pas là où il ne fait que refléter passivement. Cette compréhension de la vision et de la visibilité situe plusieurs articles dans un domaine qu’on pourrait appeler “la topographie culturelle”, c’est-à-dire l’interprétation du paysage non pas comme un effet matériel de l’interaction entre la société et le milieu, mais la tentative de rendre compte de l’importance du rapport entre ce qui est social et la terre, de déchiffrer “l’idéologie visuelle” du lieu et de la présence dans cet espace de l’homme ce qui est lié avec la question du “moi” humain et de la subjectivité humaine.

D’après Martin Conboy, la métamorphose du “moi” commence par la construction du sujet rationaliste vanté par Daniel Defoe, d’un sujet s’efforçant à retrouver sa place dans le nouvel ordre

politique, mais aussi d'un sujet développant les nouveaux modes d'expression, les nouveaux modes de maîtrise de la parole (p. ex. le développement du journalisme). La sphère publique doit se transformer parallèlement à la transformation du sujet concernant les désirs des hommes, leurs aspirations et leurs souffrances, mais également la sexualité (comp. l'article de Debra Bronstein). Andrzej Wicher prouve que la conciliation de l'amour propre avec le bien public fait partie du projet philosophique d'Adam Smith. Pourtant la construction du "moi" rationaliste est subvertie par deux processus important se déroulant au sein du discours du dix-huitième siècle. L'un d'eux consiste à mettre en relief la lecture comme facteur contribuant à construire la subjectivité (Leszek Drong suit ce processus dans les *Confessions* de Rousseau). L'autre, c'est l'émergence de la catégorie de la "communication discrète" qui menace la transparence de la sphère publique et fonde un nouveau genre littéraire – le roman épistolaire (les articles de Małgorzata Nitka et de Madeleine Descargues).

Le portrait du "moi" ne peut être jamais défini, le sujet ne peut s'exprimer pleinement et, paradoxalement, recourt à ce qui est déraisonnable et imprécis. Ce qui caractérise le "moi", c'est l'incomplétude, état qui fait penser à la ruine gothique qui, au dix-huitième siècle devient un élément important du jardin anglais et dont le plan ruine, dans un certain sens, la géométrie du jardin français. Cette incomplétude gothique est le sujet de l'article de David Jarrett; celui-ci la présente à l'exemple des fantômes et revenants d'un roman d'Ann Radcliffe. Le sentimentalisme de Richardson, et surtout de Laurence Sterne (dont parle Maciej Nowak) constitue un autre aspect d'incomplétude considérée comme un important thème du discours classique. Si dans le décor du jardin Leasowes il existe un amour (et n'oublions pas que Fragonnard et Watteau sont les enfants de la même époque dans laquelle Angélique Kaufman peignait les scènes du *Voyage sentimental* de Sterne), c'est l'amour de la ruine et du sujet ruiné.

Tadeusz Rachwał et Tadeusz Sławek

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